Linear OTT channel creation and monetization

How Tastemade is delivering linear channel and VOD content to multiple vMVPDs, and OTT platforms using pure cloud playout

QUICK FACTS

- 300+ assets delivered to VOD platforms
- 09+ OTT platforms supported
- 01 solution for delivering linear and VOD content
TASTEMADE

Tastemade, based in Santa Monica, CA, is a global media company with a mission to connect the world through food. Through its platform, studio and network of culinary talent around the world, Tastemade produces a wide range of programming designed to inspire people to learn and spread their passion for food. Tastemade's global network includes the #1 most-subscribed food channels on YouTube in the UK, Australia, France, and Brazil.
Business requirements

Tastemade had multiple requirements in terms of delivery and content monetization that added complexities to the solution implementation.

1. **Broadcast-grade linear channel playout and VOD with rich graphics:** Tastemade wanted to create a TV-like experience for its audience, building on a strong viewer following for its VOD content.

2. **Delivery to OTT platforms:** Tastemade planned to deliver channels to both linear and VOD platforms such as YouTube TV, Philo TV, Sony’s PlayStation Vue, Roku, T-Mobile, Comcast, Hulu, Facebook, Apple TV+, DirecTV (AT&T) and Roku. This meant catering to unique technical requirements of these individual platforms.

3. **Advertising trigger insertion:** Along with launching the linear channel, Tastemade also wanted to monetize it, and needed to insert HLS cue tags to enable monetization with demand-side platforms such as Google DFP.

4. **User-friendly, ‘light’ playout management:** As a digital-first media company, Tastemade wanted simplicity and automation to ensure a minimal transition and training period.

The challenge

One of the challenges faced by Tastemade was ensuring broadcast-grade linear OTT experience, including capability to play dynamic graphics. Tastemade needed the flexibility to deliver content to both linear destinations as well as VOD. Additionally, Tastemade expected broadcast SLAs up to 99.999% while using a variety of transport methods including fiber. For the operations, Tastemade needed scheduling to be a part of the platform. The key challenge for Tastemade was delivering the channels using a solution that not only used minimum or no hardware but was also acceptable to its key distribution platforms.
Amagi used a true cloud playout to deliver linear channel as well as VOD content to multiple OTT & vMVPD platforms. Advanced automation was deployed to automatically ingest content asset and metadata from mRSS feeds, and to insert ad-markers for server-side ad insertion and platform monetization.
Content ingest
Asset metadata was captured using the media RSS feeds. For the linear channels, assets were automatically transcoded in the cloud, while for VOD delivery, assets were picked up in original format.

• The S3 poll investigated the mRSS feed every hour and whenever the feed was updated, S3 poll picked up the URL from the feed and started the ingest. This cut down on the time required to ingest assets
• Ingest summary was generated every 6 hours and sent out to both Amagi and to the customer
• A resolute plan to create a system that would transcode any asset to any said formats and deliver as required was executed

Scheduling
CLOUDPORT’s Web UI-based scheduling application was used for scheduling by Tastemade. The edit feature of the scheduling application made the entire process simpler and more effective by empowering the Tastemade team to have total control over the scheduling process such as:

• Simplified workflow with automated validation of assets as per schedule
• Ability to create multiple schedules for multiple feeds with minimum human intervention, using pre-defined rules
• Automation of complex processes such as content rights management and graphics generation

Assets and playlist QC
Once assets and playlist were ingested, Tastemade could use automated validation of playlist to ensure that the final schedule is error-free. All assets went through frame-by-frame QC to ensure broadcast-grade quality.
CLOUDPORT workflow: Playout & delivery

True cloud playout
Amagi used native cloud playout setup that allowed Tastemade to monitor the streams through the web dashboard. Media library, asset metadata, and schedule were also accessible through the web dashboard, which ensured role-based secure access. With AWS batch delivery protocol, multiple IPs were created, and the assets were delivered to respective platforms within hours. With this new protocol in place, TAT was cut down from 5 days to 3 hours. Amagi used pro-res file format for Apple TV+ and Hulu. H.264 format was put into use for all the other platforms.

THUNDERSTORM workflow: Monetizing content with HLS cue tags

Amagi used on-demand computing infrastructure to fulfill the ad insertion requirement.

1. Ad spots were automatically identified based on the playlist uploaded by the Tastemade team and marked using SCTE35 markers.
2. Amagi used on-demand processing module to convert the SCTE35 markers to HLS cue tags.
3. Unified HLS stream containing the content as well as cue tags was created and delivered to various platforms like Roku, Hulu, Apple TV+, Philo TV, DirecTV, and more.
Benefits for Tastemade

**The cloud advantage**
- Scalable infrastructure with enterprise-grade security
- Centralized management of content, playlist, graphics, and closed captions

**Playout automation**
- Automatically perform QC, validate assets, and get metadata from mRSS

**Monetization of VOD content**
- Serving mid roll, pre-roll, and post roll ads on VOD assets published on vMVPD or OTT platforms

**Integration with leading ad networks**
- Ability to dynamically source relevant ads via integration with leading ad networks