



# MEET THE... RISING STARS

JANUARY 2017

## THE EVENT

The media sector has become obsessed by disruption.

Large organisations are mesmerized by the notion – unsure of whether they should see it as a threat or an opportunity. But meanwhile there are a growing number of small companies who are betting their future on their ability to disrupt: to genuinely change the established business models of the media industry.

Many such companies became Members of the DPP in 2016 – contributing hugely to the rich and diverse dialogue that powers our work.

In December 2016, with the support of media business specialists and DPP Member, Kingston Smith, the DPP created an opportunity for DPP Members to meet some of these new, small, and exciting Member companies at **Meet The Rising Stars**.

## THE RISING STARS

The logo for auditionist features the word "auditionist" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "i" in "auditionist" is purple, and the "t" is also purple. The "i" has a dot, and the "t" has a vertical bar.The logo for BASE media cloud features the word "BASE" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font. The "B" is red, and the "A", "S", and "E" are black. Below "BASE" is the text "media cloud" in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font. A red cloud-like shape is positioned behind the "A".The logo for LIMECRAFT features a green lime with a gear-like shape on top. To the right of the lime is the word "LIMECRAFT" in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font. Below "LIMECRAFT" is the text "CONNECTED CREATIVITY" in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.The logo for M2A Media Ltd features the text "M2A Media Ltd" in a red, sans-serif font. The "M2A" is larger and bolder than "Media Ltd". A red cloud-like shape is positioned behind the "M2A".The logo for sundog Media Toolkit features a blue and white geometric shape resembling a dog's head or a stylized "S". To the right of the shape is the word "sundog" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below "sundog" is the text "Media Toolkit" in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font.The logo for seenit features a black and white geometric shape resembling a stylized "S" or a square with a diagonal line. To the right of the shape is the word "seenit" in a lowercase, sans-serif font.The logo for screenhits features the word "screenhits" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The "i" in "screenhits" is yellow, and the "t" is also yellow. The "i" has a dot, and the "t" has a vertical bar.

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS

*Here is how the Rising Star companies gave their elevator description of what they do:*



## AUDITIONIST

Will Crosthwait  
Co-Founder

"Auditionist is a cloud casting service for actors – and we also handle the payment as well: you can pay unlimited actors with a single invoice. With our actor search, you can search via credits, the director's name or attributes – such as 'red hair' or 'redhead'. Then if you click on one of the actors, you can see instantly what they've done. You can see a clip – see them acting and beside that clip you've got a bio and credit information.

You can then invite an actor straight to a production or audition from their profile. Or if you prefer, you can post the job generally to our database of 2,000 actors. When you post the job, the actors see the role information, and you get to give specific instructions, such as to submit a show-reel or do a self-tape.

We're looking for investment; for partners; and for people whose casting we can streamline."



## BASE MEDIA CLOUD

Ben Foakes  
Managing Director

"Base Media Cloud is a ready-made cloud services company: we do all the hard work and then we rent you the finished service. Think of it like a virtual facilities company.

We look after everything from storage, editing, delivery and distribution – and the platform is growing every few months.

This is the vision of the business: you ingest your data into cloud storage where we hold it in multiple copies so it's super-secure and highly resilient. We run the software that you enjoy using – including the big-brand tools for editing and post – in the cloud, and we enable you to connect to those services via the internet. So you can work on Wi-Fi, from home, from the office, from anywhere in the world. Everything is pay as you go so you can adapt it to your production budgets.

We have twenty peer companies on the platform, and we've just launched in the US as well."

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS



## LIMECRAFT

Maarten Verwaest  
CEO

"Limecraft is a next generation content management platform, helping you all the way from file acquisition, right through to refined post production. When working with high resolution content from drama shoots, we pre-process the rushes before we send them to the cloud, make sure audio is synced properly with them, and create proxies.

By analysing the content we're able to automatically rough cut shots into scenes; we can group shots, to save a lot of time for producers.

For documentary producers, we will happily transcribe content. It's all time-coded to give you the extra benefit that you can search for a particular word in the library. Limecraft is capable of taking you exactly to those fragments where that word has been used. We're now also turning the transcription into captions.

So in short, we're presenting you with an integrated approach on asset management: cloud-based and automated."



## M2A MEDIA

Marina Kalkanis  
CEO

"M2A Media is a cloud based media services company specialising in creating great media services built in the public cloud. Here are two examples of what we do.

The first is live streaming. Online sports publishers have lots of big events happening at the same time. They've got new acquisitions coming in, all at once, and they need to launch them quickly. You also get huge random spikes of demand when an event like a goal happens. So we've built a set of online tools and components that a sports publishing company can use to tackle all of these problems.

The next one is catch-ups. A major event is happening, it's live and people want to catch up on it immediately. It's critical to deliver the catch-up content within minutes of the end of the event. Using cloud services, you can have massively parallel systems, all running at the same time, with very fast delivery, frame accurate trimming, and easy integration.

We're also all about APIs, so everything we do will fit into an existing ecosystem. We know how to deploy and get the most out of public cloud services: we can go from a standing start to a live service in 12 weeks."

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS



## SUNDOG MEDIA TOOLKIT

Richard Welsh  
CEO

"Sundog is a client software platform for film and television post production.

We are able to work from simple processes such as transcoding right up to hardcore processes like super-resolution pixel reconstruction, all running in the public cloud. To orchestrate this scale, we have a workflow system which allows us to glue together a whole range of tools. We currently have about 300 image and sound processing tools in our library, and that's constantly growing.

That library includes a lot of branded tools from manufacturers such as Dolby, RealD and Digital Vision, and so it's becoming something of a marketplace for post production.

We can do digital cinema mastering, IMF, review, 3D subtitling, stereoscopic QA, and client asset management. We can also reach into other systems and do full-blown automation. And of course it is all backed by hardcore security."



## SEENIT

Emily Forbes  
Founder

"At Seenit we help broadcasters and video production companies to scale the way they produce video, by engaging their own communities of customers, employees, and super-fans to actually become the films themselves. This is breaking down the barrier of traditional production and enabling companies to collect video from anyone, anywhere in the world. Some of our clients are BBC, NBC Universal and BT Sport. And here's how it works.

We set up a customer with their own private online studio. From there you can load a filming script or a storyboard into an app. You can then invite selected people to join the app via their mobile phone, follow your instructions, record a film and upload. Everything is then processed and analysed on upload and also all the legals are signed off in the app, which means that our clients can push the video straight out online or to broadcast TV.

Seenit makes our clients so much more reactive and relevant with their stories, and enables them to achieve a much more diverse message. As all the video is uploaded, they can review, edit and share online."

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS



## SCREENHITS

Rose Adkins  
CEO

“Everybody is making content these days. But what is the single most important thing that needs to happen when making content? Selling it. You want somebody to see it; and you want to make money from it. Well, ScreenHits has created a tech platform that allows you to do just that.

This is how it works. Professional content owners are able to upload their content to our platform. Buyers from broadcasters or digital platforms like Netflix are then able to use the ScreenHits platform to source content by searching by genre, price, territory, avails, rights, etc. They are then able to watch the entire episode, place an offer, conclude a deal, and receive deliverables – all online.

They can also be more direct and place a buyer request that can be as specific as them saying, “I want a documentary targeting 18-34 year olds in Finland.” The distributors on our platform are then notified of this request and if they don’t already have content on the platform that matches it, they can upload their video directly to the buyer. The technology curates and filters all submissions to buyers. So if an upload doesn’t match the buyer’s request 100%, the seller will not be allowed to submit it.

We also have analytics, so if you’re a seller, you get notified via email when buyers around the world have watched your content or are interested in acquiring it.”

# IN DIALOGUE

Our Rising Stars responded to a wide range of questions from the audience – and gave great insight into both the problems their companies are seeking to solve, and the shifting needs and opportunities in the media sector.

Here is a taste of the conversation. It fell into four broad themes:

- 1 THE SPEED AND SCALE OF CHANGE**
- 2 CREDIBILITY AND TRUST**
- 3 MANAGING CONTENT IN THE CLOUD**
- 4 QUALITY**



# THE SPEED AND SCALE OF CHANGE

***Do you sense there is a significant moment of disruption coming in production?***

SEENIT

I think the world is now being kind of divided into two. You've got traditional production and then this kind of crazy, wild, user-generated content that sits online. But people are getting savvier at producing their own content, so the traditional ways of creating it are going to have to shift. And as we become more global, people are going to have to be able to create at a global level.

***How does the globalisation of content impact companies like yours?***

AUDITIONIST

Global companies are now looking towards the UK as a production hub for talent itself. So a lot of the studios that we're working with are now doing a lot of voiceover casting through us – but they don't just want a voiceover in English, they want it in Dutch, Brazilian Portuguese, Portuguese, Spanish, Latin American Spanish – the list goes on and on. And they want all those people to be based within the UK. But that's fine, because we are a global company in a global nation. The UK is second only to Hollywood in that regard, and it's obviously something that cloud based services can really build and capitalise on.

SEENIT

All of the logistics that previously were barriers in production have now been broken down, and that means that companies want to find a wider voice.

For example, when the Brexit referendum happened the BBC wanted not just to send a videographer onto the streets of London but to get voices from all over the UK and Europe. That more open message is more transparent and diverse. And if you pull in more voices from around the world into a story you're going to connect with a greater group of people on the other end. So both the distribution and the engagement is so much higher.

***Some of you have highlighted a vision of a future where production and post are all run in the cloud. Have we got there yet?***

SUNDOG MEDIA TOOLKIT

As a single company we don't do all the things you can do in the cloud; but if you look across this group of companies you can do quite a lot of the things that you would want to do in a production and post environment.



## THE SPEED AND SCALE OF CHANGE

I think the connectivity for all this is now there. The telecoms providers now have products where people can scale up and down bandwidth in days and weeks. So you can have gigabit connectivity for much less than £1,000 a month. That's a game-changer for what we do in terms of the cloud – especially when you're dealing with uncompressed content as we are.

But I think the challenge is more about those bits that glue it all together – and those aren't all there yet. No one company is going to build every process you want to do from pre-production all the way to screen. So it will take more of us to get us fully there.

### BASE MEDIA CLOUD

There are three key benefits already to be found in cloud.

The first is that it's more secure than traditional formats. It's just the nature of the way everything is built – to be highly available and super secure. The infrastructure is way more heavily invested in than any of us could do as small businesses. That's the reason we work with companies like AWS, IBM, Microsoft, using their infrastructure, so that when you upload your files, they're the safest they can be.

The second area where cloud really makes sense is in sharing content. If you want to upload your rushes for backup, or deliver a show to a broadcaster or for international distribution, cloud is the logical way to do it. Couriers are dead. Hamemberrd drive shipping is dead. It's at least half the price to do it in the cloud now and that's a really compelling case.

And the third area is collaboration. We've had a few documentary productions working in the cloud, and this really opens the door for having people in different time zones editing the same content through one central storage point.

So forgetting all the super techy stuff, cloud already enables us to work in a whole new way that we haven't been able to do before.

## CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

### *Is the culture of your customers ready for you?*

#### LIMECRAFT

We were taking on quite a big project, offering services for six television studios, and at the start, the CTO invited us to do a tour and to check the appetite of the individual producers. We found there was a preparedness to start producing using cloud based tools. But then it came to the point that we had to integrate with some of the legacy systems, and that created some risk. And immediately the producers said 'sorry guys, get out.' So getting the technical departments on board to help provide confidence is important.

#### SUNDOG

A couple of years ago we'd go in and it would all be about 'I've got this legacy kit I've got to pay off, and I could work with you but it's just a hassle.' But now it's more likely people will say, 'actually I can't survive as a business if I can't be flexible and access a marketplace on demand.' Frankly the media industry is pretty much the last business to go to this model. The financial sector, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing – they're all doing it. So we have to get on that boat, otherwise our industry is just not going to be viable.

### ***Historically production culture has been built on human relationships, and so a company operating in a virtual environment immediately makes producers nervous. Are you experiencing these issues of trust from your potential customers?***

#### SEENIT

I think trust is an issue within any industry, and it is definitely something we're experiencing with production. For us – being a start-up with a new technology – it's about finding the innovators, finding the people who are willing to give it a go. But once we've worked with one broadcaster, if they champion us and talk about what we're doing, things start to pick up.

#### AUDITIONIST

Bigger broadcasters are worried about starting working with a company that might not be around in 12 or 24 months time. They fear they'll have changed lots of processes and systems and workflows – and then the company folds, and they've wasted their time. But I think we're going to see more and more resilient startups that are going to start shining through by working with bigger productions. And with that resilience will come trust.

## CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

### SCREENHITS

For the first two years people didn't trust that technology could do a better job than they could or that they feared it was going to do too good of a job and replace them. But when they realised that our technology was more of a tool to help them monetise their content in new and creative ways and when they saw real transactions happening on the platform that improved their bottom line, then the trust was created. In addition, we understand the importance of relationships in our industry, especially between the buyer and seller. So when we created ScreenHits, we wanted to weave a personal element into the technology and we have been able to successfully do that while maintaining a great tech product, as well as providing ways in which our customers can continue to build on their existing relationships.

***Do you have to be careful of the language you use if you are to persuade production companies to be interested in what you have to offer?***

### BASE MEDIA CLOUD

Yes we do. In traditional post production you don't go to a Production Manager or a line producer and talk about the spec of the Avid and the ISIS storage and the networking. You say, 'it's £150 a day for an edit suite and it's £150 for an HDSR playout.' So we've learnt in the last couple of years that we have to switch the way that we sell cloud services. We've gone from charging gigabytes to charging hours of content. So now a customer can say 'I've got one hour of ProRes' or 'two hours of XDCAM 50' and we have the rate card for that.

## MANAGING CONTENT IN THE CLOUD

***What are the challenges for cloud-based working when dealing with completed programmes in pressurised environments? Is it all about resilience of service?***

M2A

What media publishers are seeing is that they need to react very quickly. The competition is coming at them from places they have never even imagined. So it's about being able to innovate very quickly. Yes it's certainly about resilience – but that's just a given. It's more about what cloud is going to offer.

The thing to me that's most different when you make the step to cloud is the way in which you work: it allows you to move so much more quickly, and we're now in a world where it's all about how quickly you can move. It's about the speed at which you can innovate. If you build something yourself you have to use what you've built because that's the thing you have, and it defines your boundaries. In the cloud, there isn't a boundary – and that's the speed I'm talking about: the speed of change.

BASE MEDIA CLOUD

Yes, it's about the speed of being able to set up and provision services.

One of our clients called up and said we have 189 hours of tapes that need to be digitised and published on YouTube. We sorted it out in a day. We digitised the assets, they got transcoded into the format required and they were uploaded to YouTube. If I was doing it in my old post house I'd have had to buy the servers, license the software, provision an engineer. It would have been a week later and they'd still be waiting.

But the speed of cloud is really defined by your connection, and I know there's a lot of concern around how you get an affordable fast connection into your building. 90% of the customers we have are on a leased line or domestic broadband. It's quite a low cost and they do get access to cloud services. But to do the really hardcore 4K UHD work – that requires a dedicated IT connection.

***How suitable is cloud now for long term archiving and preservation?***

M2A

What's most interesting about cloud is that because you can access your content all the time, you can know exactly how good it is. One of the problems with content is that in theory it can be on a very well preserved medium – until you need it and suddenly realise maybe it wasn't quite as well preserved as you'd thought. With cloud you can move it around more readily, and in moving it, understand how good it is.

## MANAGING CONTENT IN THE CLOUD

### SUNDOG MEDIA TOOLKIT

What you have to think about with cloud is that you're not buying a storage medium; you're buying a data retention service. You don't have to worry about legacy formats or whether your data is even still there. It will be there because the job of the people you are buying that service from is to keep your ones and zeros safe. That's what you're buying off them. It's a different way really of thinking: forget about the storage medium; think about how much you're being charged to store ones and zeros.

### *Can cloud work for small operators as well as large ones?*

#### BASE MEDIA CLOUD

Our smallest customers are one man bands, or a couple of people running a small production house and they're spending under £100 a month. And at the largest end, it's many thousands of pounds a month.

The whole beauty of cloud is it doesn't really matter how big or small you are, you can have a gigabyte and a user, or you can have a petabyte and a whole system. But if you are running your own systems there's a lot of hidden costs that traditionally the media industry has maybe taken for granted – things like support contracts. But when you move to a cloud service, all of that stuff is bundled in. So you can literally sit at home on your laptop and that's the only kit you need.

#### SCREENHITS

From the selling side, a lot of production companies are becoming more savvy about how they can monetise their own content and a number of production companies are wanting to bring their own distribution solutions in-house. However, most production companies are quite small and they don't have huge sales teams or budgets to go to festivals or markets to sell their content. So this is where our technology can be quite helpful. It provides instant access and a way for producers to get in the self-distribution game without having to spend lots of money. And meanwhile they're able to track 24/7 how their content is selling around the world. So for example, we were approached by a family producer in LA, who was so disappointed with the existing traditional system because they felt their content was just going into a catalogue and getting lost and the sales estimates they were promised were never met. But with this new technology they're able to monitor the progress and properly predict how well their film can do globally and in what timeframe. And this is going to completely disrupt the entire buying and selling process and make monetising content simple, transparent and easy.

# 3

## MANAGING CONTENT IN THE CLOUD

### LIMECRAFT

The key element of a cloud service is that you pay for what you use. It's scalable to very large numbers, but it's just as scalable to very small numbers. Our step-up price plan is €30 monthly to manage a whole bunch of video – and you can stop that plan whenever you want. It's used by a lot of individual broadcasters – sometimes just to index their content.

# 4

## QUALITY

*For new services that provide content, just how important is quality?*

SEENIT

There's two different sides of quality. There's content that is real and you connect with and you trust, and it is immediate; and then there's the high quality beautiful production. They are both quality content; and I think you need both of them to get a story to really create impact. And also a lot of the content that we create actually amplifies 'hero' pieces of video, and brings a level of trust to it.

AUDITIONIST

Quality for us is paramount, because quality builds trust. We only take moderated actors – so they have to have credits or drama training. I think quality is something that is so important across the board – whether you're looking at short form or long form content, it always matters.

# CONCLUSION

The Rising Stars event brought to life the pace at which innovative new services are being introduced in the media sector. It also demonstrated that there is greater potential for disruption to the content production process than at any time for decades.

As we observed in our recent *New Content Creators* survey report, many new suppliers are characterised by a real focus on the business needs and constraints of their customers. This focus on business needs can be seen among our Rising Stars too – and it may well be this insight that enables them to overcome the natural scepticism many producers and broadcasters have about change.

Having said all this, there are clearly significant challenges our Rising Stars need to overcome, notably:

- The requirement for fast and reliable internet connectivity
- An inherent lack of trust in new tools
- Cultural resistance to a shift to online working practices

Together these challenges amount to a significant moment of business change. But – as we all learnt from File Delivery – major change can happen surprisingly quickly, and smoothly, when the supply chain works together, and has a coordinating body to gather around. That coordination is what the DPP seeks to provide.



To find out more about the services available from our Rising Stars, visit DPP Marketplace:

<https://www.digitalproductionpartnership.co.uk/marketplace/>

The DPP Meet The Rising Stars event was organised by **Andy Wilson** and **Jayne de Ville**, with the support of **Kingston Smith**. This report was produced by **Mark Harrison**. Design was by **Vlad Cohen**.

## ABOUT KINGSTON SMITH

Kingston Smith are the UK's leading media accountants and business advisers. With an office in London's West End specifically dedicated to the media sector, we work with clients ranging from ambitious start-ups through to large independent groups, providing a full range of compliance, tax, corporate finance and advisory services at every stage of their business.

<http://www.kingstonsmith.co.uk>

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