

# Sky Italia

## Flexible broadcast monitoring

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Mr. Massimo Bertolotti, SKY Italia's  
Processing & Transmission Manager



SKY Italia is the Italian pay-TV owned by News Corporation Limited. Launched in 2003, it has grown so rapidly as to reach 4,800,000 subscribers (March 2009). SKY currently offers more than 180 thematic and pay per view channels, with a rich offer of cinema, sport, news, entertainment and programs for children. SKY Italia attributes its success to a variety of factors, including its passion for innovation, quality and technology. “We are not content just to keep current with technological advances, we work to connect the world,” News Corp. writes in its annual report. SKY Italia’s choice for Barco’s innovative NBMS solution perfectly illustrates this motto.

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"Audio and video are key elements in our Technology Operation Center, where our engineering teams work 24/7 to control all SKY transmission platforms. As we wish to work with the most advanced systems available, we have been using Barco solutions to monitor broadcasting for many years now," explained Massimo Bertolotti, SKY Italia's Processing and Transmission Manager. At its Rome site, SKY Italia relies on ten Barco iStudio solutions, including the monitoring system of SKY Meteo, SKY TG24, the disaster recovery suite and the play-out area. In Milan, Barco's iStudio solution was used as the monitoring system in the production rooms.



### More signals, more sources

"The iStudio solution includes displays, software and Hydra controllers which monitor up to 60 analog or digital inputs on a single display," Bertolotti continued. "That system did a good job but when our technical infrastructure moved to the new site in Milan, an update and expansion to more advanced technology seemed logical. After all, with our business becoming ever larger and more complex, our team has to view and control a growing number of signals from a variety of sources simultaneously." SKY Italia did not hesitate and turned to Barco again. They soon felt confident that Barco's new Networked Broadcast Monitoring System (NBMS), which distributes video sources and metadata over an IP network, was the right solution.

### An Italian premiere

As behoves a tech pioneer like SKY Italia, the TV operator was the first in Italy to implement Barco's NBMS solution. "Which made it a quite challenging project," Bertolotti admitted. "It took a few months to install the system and fully configure and tune it to our complex architecture. We succeeded thanks to the great teamwork of Barco's and SKY Italia's engineers, Barco's know-how and their flexibility."

Since August 2008, the Milan-based Operations Center has featured the new IP-centered NBMS system, which is composed of a state-of-the-art hard- and software suite. It currently handles 522 sources: 200 SDI and 352 PAL inputs along with their relevant audio.

### Towards facility-wide monitoring

In traditional broadcast monitoring and management environments, control rooms require a variety of input cards, e.g. for analog, SDI and HDSI video signals. Networked visualization, as offered by the NBMS, enables the use of widespread Ethernet networking technology as the backbone for distributing real-time content wherever it is needed, both within and beyond the monitoring room. This flexibility was SKY Italia's main reason for switching to the NBMS. Their expectations have been met. "We wanted to configure the system and the display configuration manually as well as automatically, in line with our needs," said Bertolotti, "and manage the large variety of sources at the different sites of our transmission center. NBMS offers invaluable flexibility, allowing the high-quality and low-latency distribution of video sources and metadata on any display."

### Continuity guaranteed

Apart from the increase in flexibility and, as a consequence, efficiency, the new system also helps SKY Italia save costs, as the required router capacity and monitoring inputs can be greatly reduced. SKY Italia further praises the NBMS's security and continuity warranty, which is key in a 24/7 environment. The system can detect fault conditions on the incoming feeds – both audio and video – and notify the operator. If an alarm is monitored on screen, the operator can bring the entire network process diagram alive with a single mouse click, detect the failure and take the necessary steps. In addition, the hardware platform offers redundancy features including redundant networking and redundant power supplies. In case anything does go wrong, SKY Italia can rely on the support of the Barco team.

"Barco has been a partner for many years now. More than lending technical assistance, they listen to our questions and comments and use our feedback to further optimize their solutions," Bertolotti concluded. With Barco's high-tech products and partnership, SKY Italia is equipped to continue down its growth path.

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