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Fox Weitzel, Head of Video at Battlebots Destruct-A-Thon

Company name:
BattleBots Inc.

Industry:
Media & Production

Company website:
battlebots.com

Geographic region:
California, USA

Battlebots Destruct-a-Thon: how NETGEAR helps its live production team deliver a winning AV theatrical experience.

INTRODUCTION

Based on the massively successful TV Series, Battlebots Destruct-A-Thon is a high-energy, ground-breaking live show that attracts large daily crowds during its season, all keen to see some world-famous robots in combat in the famous Battle Box arena. This spectacular extravaganza relies on creating an exciting theater experience, made possible by the highly skilled live production team using superior quality AV, which in turn, relies on the stable performance of a NETGEAR AV network switch.

BACKGROUND

With multiple seasons completed over the years, the Battlebots TV series has become a worldwide phenomenon, available to millions of viewers in over 150 countries worldwide. And now, its creators have brought to Las Vegas the world's first daily robot combat show, watched (during the run of each season) by an audience of up to 800 people a day. This intense, fast-moving, family-friendly fight-fest stars robots that have delighted fans globally – such as Witch Doctor, Kraken, Mammoth, HyperShock, and Whiplash – plus several new bots created especially for this live show.

Battlebots Destruct-A-Thon is an incredibly fast-paced 75 minutes show featuring a combination of live action and instant replays. Creating engaging theater and an immersive sports-fan-style experience of this kind depends on someone who knows how to orchestrate those elements while also ensuring the performance of the AV system on which the show depends. Fox Weitzel, Head of Video at Battlebots Destruct-A-Thon, brings a perfect blend of those skills through their comprehensive background in IT technology, theater production, and live sports events.

SUPER-FAST LIVE PRODUCTION

The speed at which Fox and their team have to work is incredible. "We are cutting a live show, and we are moving quickly. Everything has to be lightning-fast, and I have to know it will work exactly how I want it to every time I punch a button. Full control of the show is essential, and it has to be seamless. If there is an issue, my team or I have a 90-120 second window to sort it out."

Fox has the Battlebots control room so that they can run the media, replay system, and switcher simultaneously; which is a worse case scenario. During a normal show they have a technician plus a team of five running cameras on the floor. "We have our world designed to mitigate disaster and recovery quickly. If anything goes wrong, my team or I can fix it immediately."





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THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF NETGEAR’S M4250 SWITCH

A critical element of ensuring the smooth running of this breakneck situation is a NETGEAR M4250-26G4F-PoE+ network switch designed specifically for AV, to which is connected the BlackMagic Production switcher and Video Hubs, all the Panasonic PTZ cameras, as well as all the equipment monitoring the show. The PoE functionality of the NETGEAR AV switch is also used to deliver power to three of the PTZ cameras.

Fox was no stranger to NETGEAR, as they explained, “I’ve worked with NETGEAR in the past, and they’ve always been solid. This time, the M4250 was the right tool for what we needed, with the right amount of horsepower and the right budget. And the ease of use means it is easy to configure and back-up.”

“NETGEAR has worked out really well for us because the switch has all the required AV profiles with native integration that fits our needs. I think the AV profiles are fantastic with the way the wizard walks you through configuration. The process removes tedium and ensures it works once you’re done with setup.”



PRO-GRADE NETWORK SUPPORT

However, despite the simplicity of the NETGEAR switch and Fox’s own IT network know-how, there were still some queries, and with no time to lose before the opening of the live show, a call was made to the NETGEAR Pro AV design team. Says Fox, “Nicole at NETGEAR was amazing. In just ten minutes, she had walked us through the process, and everything was up and running. Boom – it was done – we could move on to other concerns during our setup.”

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Concludes Fox, “I can say the NETGEAR AV switch has been one of the most solid pieces of equipment we’ve installed with zero issues, and it has been great for us. We also take care to make sure no robots are firing pieces of other robots at it, the same cannot be said for our cameras. However, if I did experience an issue I could not solve, the NETGEAR Pro AV team would be there.” It is good to know that this switch is delivering the performance and reliability that this exhilarating, pioneering show deserves, playing a role in providing an excellent theatrical experience while supporting Fox and their team.

Find out more on the NETGEAR AV switches and other gear at: netgear.com/av

