

2010 Editors' Picks

Our annual list of the most innovative, most important,
and just plain coolest stuff in online video

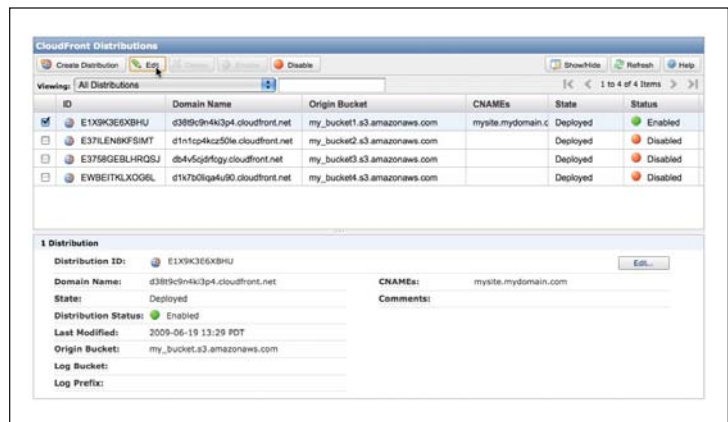
By Eric Schumacher-Rasmussen

When the end of 2009 rolled around, we were faced with the annual challenge of coming up with our Editors' Picks, our choices for the top 10 technologies, products, and services in the world of online video. It had been such a huge year for our industry that we found ourselves a bit overwhelmed by having to make the choices, so we did the only sensible thing: We procrastinated.

Of course, in the meantime, a few new candidates emerged, which made our task that much more daunting. On the other hand, we think the list we arrived at does a better job of capturing what's hot in online video than we could have done 4 months ago. Taken as a whole, the winners indicate not only the technological advances that were made over the past 12 months or so but also the growth of online video in the mainstream.

Amazon CloudFront

Debuting in November 2008, Amazon's entry into the CDN market quickly became a major player. It's still not a threat to Akamai or Limelight, but the addition in December 2009 of Flash streaming to its offerings could truly disrupt the market. Even without Flash, though, CloudFront was winning customers based on its pay-as-you-go rate structure and its self-service model; take a look at Larry Bouthillier's "How to Get Started With Amazon CloudFront Streaming" (www.streamingmedia.com/article.asp?id=11733) to get an idea of just how easy the service is to use. As Dan Rayburn wrote on his Business of Video blog, "Amazon will be in the driver's seat to own the market for small and medium sized content owners who need simple delivery at a great price."



BoinxTV



As Sherm Schlar wrote in his review in the December/January issue, BoinxTV transforms a desktop Mac into a full-blown video production studio, for a fraction of the price of doing the same thing on a PC. The software can capture from multiple cameras and microphones via a variety of inputs (USB, FireWire, composite, HDMI, and SDI), and the output supports up to 50 layers and effects including text crawls and video filters. Add the built-in chromakey feature and custom backgrounds, and you've got everything you need to assemble a professional video production on an amateur budget—BoinxTV sells for as little as \$159 for a “sponsored version” that features the BoinxTV logo in any output; the full version without the logo goes for \$499.

Encoding.com

At the beginning of 2009, it looked like cloud transcoding was about to explode in much the same way that online video platforms had the year before. But while a handful of others have entered the market, there's already a clear leader of the pack. Encoding.com, as Dan Rayburn writes in his Stream This! column on page 14, has got everything going for it; the company understands what its users need—fast, easy-to-use, and reliable transcoding to multiple formats—and has poured all of its resources into doing that better than anyone else out there. In the past few months, the company raised \$1.25 million in Series A funding and



rolled out plenty of new features, including an Adobe AIR application that lets customers drag-and-drop files to be encoded right on their desktops. No wonder they're doing an average of 30,000 transcodes a day.

Howcast



It's hard to think of a type of content that's better suited to video presentation than the how-to variety. As anyone who's ever done any technical writing (or anyone who's tried to assemble children's toys) will tell you, text is a surprisingly limited medium when it comes to walking someone through a given process. But if you give that same frustrated parent a video, then putting together that toy is a piece of cake. So it's no surprise that we've seen more than a few instructional video sites pop up over the past 5 years, but Howcast has risen to the top by being smart about the content—it pays freelancers about \$50 for a 3-minute clip, and it provides them with scripts and graphics to help them out—and about the business—many of the site's videos feature advertising overlays, but most of its revenue comes from branded content from sponsors such as 1-800-Flowers and Kodak. What's more, the videos are as entertaining as they are instructional. Where else can you find both “How to Mill Rough Lumber” and “How to Impress the Crap Out of Your Doctor”? One million downloads of Howcast's iPhone app can't be wrong.

Kyte

Kyte is one of (at last count) more than 50 online video platforms on the market. So what sets it apart from the rest? In a word, vision. It started out as a consumer-focused platform, but one of the few (at the time) that allowed for mobile video uploading and publishing. In the last year, it's expanded even more, putting increased resources behind the professional version of its offering, landing major broadcasters such as MTV and superstars like Lady GaGa. It's also been making a big push among nonmedia brands like HomeAway.com, providing the video for the vacation-home-listing company's "Hotel Hell" microsite, which was featured in an ad during the 2010 Super Bowl. In just the last few months, it's added wireless live broadcasting and upgraded its video management console to simplify the workflow and improve mobile and social video distribution.



Livestream Livepack



Livestream is another one of those more than 50 (or maybe the number's gone up since you read the last paragraph) online video platforms, and its strength can also be captured in a single word: focus. Live isn't all that Livestream does, but it's what it does best, whether red carpet interviews at the Oscars or even much more highly celebrated events like the Streaming Media Readers' Choice Awards. In 2009, it became the first North American reseller of LiveU's LU-30, which the company accurately describes as a "satellite truck in a backpack." Just plug in a DV camera and broadcast live H.264 at data rates up to 1Mbps over any 3G/EVDO network (or Wi-Fi or Ethernet, if you want to kick it old school). Webcasting from the field just got a whole lot easier. (To be fair, just before this issue went to press, Kyte also started reselling the LU-30 under the Livepack name. Still, props to Livestream for getting there first.)

Netflix

This is the Editors' Pick that's had the biggest impact in the "real world," if by "real world" you mean 3-year-olds watching *The Wiggles* on a laptop while mom and dad (that'd be me) watch *Putney Swope* on the big screen, both streamed over the internet. Of all the entertainment brands that are delivering their content via streaming, Netflix is doing the best job of making it accessible via as many devices as possible—PC, Roku, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and soon the Wii. What's more (and now we're back in the the business of online video world), it's doing it for a rock-bottom delivery cost of about 6 cents per SD movie and 9 cents per HD film, according to Dan Rayburn's calculations. That doesn't take into account licensing fees, but clearly Netflix is looking at streaming as a way to bolster its bottom line. The one negative is that the number of films and shows available for streaming is still a



small percentage of those available on DVD (still, I've got 301 items in my "Watch Instantly" queue, so there's plenty to choose from). But when it comes to making "content anywhere" mainstream, Netflix is clearly the leader, and if the rumored Netflix iPhone app comes to fruition, it'll only put the company farther out front.

Visible Measures Trends

CAMPAIGN	INDUSTRY	AGENCY	BRAND	CREATIVE	REACH	COMMENTS	RATINGS	DISTRIBUTION
The Man Your Man Could Smell Like	Health & Beauty	Wieden + Kennedy	Old Spice	Humor	1,188,568	1,163	3,312	28
Steve Martin	Pet Care	TBWA	Pedigree	Short Film	1,065,056	1,051	3,889	5
Live Young	Beverages	B&B Euro RSCG	Enten	Animation / Humor / Musical	1,041,271	463	887	1,000
Crean	Online Services	The Brand Agency	Disco Dharma	Humor / Sex Appeal	1,037,208	108	213	10
Crash The Super Bowl 2010	Food	Goodby Silverstein & Partners	Doritos	Humor / Contest	742,836	1,006	1,579	816
Oh Africa	Beverages	Pepsi	Celebrities & Sports / Humor	531,076	568	1,122	29	
Embrace Life	Community & Activism	Director: Daniel Cox	Sussex Safer Roads Partnership	Community & Activism / Musical / Short Film	524,658	417	1,305	13

If you're looking to evaluate the effectiveness of online video advertising, there's no better tool than Trends, which Visible Measures introduced in February. Trends tracks the reach of ad campaigns—as of this writing, nearly 300 of them—and lets users see the cumulative or interactive reach of those campaigns as measured by the company's True Reach metrics. It also lets you see the number of comments and ratings, as well as how many points of distribution each campaign has achieved. Campaigns are sortable by brand, agency, industry (automotive, financial services, etc.), and type of creative (the 15 categories include humor, sex appeal, market challenge, and product demo). The results are not only fascinating but actionable, letting agencies and advertisers see what's working and where.

Winnov Cbox S1

The Cbox S1 certainly isn't the only presentation capture appliance out there. In fact, it's often overshadowed by competitors with more name recognition. But it's about time it gets its due for all the power it packs into its relatively tiny form factor. Just about the size of a tall shoebox, the Cbox S1 offers all the input options needed for most applications (four composite, two S-Video, one VGA, and one DVI-I), DVI-I output, four USB ports, a FireWire port, 500GB of storage, and a DVD drive. But its ace in the hole is its text recognition capability on the RGB source, allowing it to detect slides and extract the text. It's also powerful enough that Qumu made it the hardware core of its Video Control Center. Who says big things don't come in small packages?



YuMe

In early 2010, 6-year-old YuMe achieved the dream of every startup: profitability, even as it raised another \$25 million in funding. It's done so by delivering more than a billion in-player video ads per month, according to comScore, on sites like MSN, Funny or Die, and FOX News. Those videos aren't just being delivered to the PC either; YuMe has led the way in mobile and set-top box advertising. It's all powered by the company's ACE video ad management platform and 14 different ad formats.



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