



# SMPTE's 2026 NAB Show: Reflections

By Russell Poole



The future of media has been hotly debated and largely unknown for the past several years. Other innovations in broadcasting, streaming, and more are being created faster than ever, and these new solutions are being implemented in shorter timeframes.

However, the 2026 NAB Show demonstrated that the number and speed of these innovations is a net benefit to the industry. Even AI, a once unreadable beast that threatened to upend the entire media infrastructure, has become a focused

tool that increases the efficiency and possibilities of production everywhere.

This year, SMPTE had two full days of educational programming, a booth in North Hall, and plenty of members and staff evangelizing the organization's mission. This was my first NAB in-person, and I had the privilege of seeing SMPTE in action. This eye-opening experience showed me just how integral SMPTE is to the industry at large and gave me hope for the future of media.

## SMPTÉ VIBE

I arrived in Las Vegas at 8:30 AM on Saturday, April 18, and headed straight to the Las Vegas Convention Center. Navigating through the crowd of WrestleMania Fans (our enthusiastic convention neighbors), I grew excited about SMPTE's full day of programming. Between the speakers and the topics being discussed, it promised to be a fascinating experience. I was not disappointed. Barring a few technical issues (they always seem to pop up during tech conferences), SMPTE VIBE was everything it promised to be and more.

The Visual Innovation and Brilliant Engineering (VIBE) Conference began with some short remarks from SMPTE Executive Director Sally-Ann D'Amato, SMPTE President Rich Welsh, and SMPTE VIBE Co-Chair Marc Zorn. The opening session, "Pushing the Boundaries of Immersive Storytelling—Sphere Studios & the Big Sky Camera System," was a conversation between Welsh and Andrew Shulkind, the Senior VP of Capture and Innovation at Sphere Studios.

Shulkind spoke about the technology used to capture the magic of shows at the Sphere, specifically the Big Sky Camera System, a 16K immersive capture system, advanced lensing, and a dynamic-movement camera attached to a drone. The system is not just innovative, but incredibly tough, able to capture extreme weather events like tornadoes, a technique that they used to augment and enhance the Sphere's special showing of *The Wizard of Oz*. As someone who saw one of those special shows in Vegas, I can say it was an incredible display.

The following session, "No Second Takes—The Next Generation of Camera Control," also discussed innovations in capture tech. Abi Hemmingway, VP of Commercial and Partnerships at M2A Media, led a panel with NODO Film System's Boyd Hobbs and Motion Impossible's Chelsea Fearnley. Hobbs showcased the



"Open Source is Ready for Prime Time" panel (L-R): Moderator Carolyn Giardina, David Morin, Carol Payne, Sean Wallitsch, and Eric Reinecke.



"Build to Broadcast to Fan Experience in Live Sports Systems" panel: (L-R) Zandra Clark, ErinRose Widner, Frank LaSpina, and Laquie Campbell.

Inertia Wheels MAX, a breakthrough that creates smooth, dynamic shots. Speaking of, Fearnley introduced Motion Impossible's AGITO system, which was used to film *Harry Styles: One Night in Manchester*. The AGITO is a system that acts as a steady camera while also being able to travel off-

track. It can even travel 20 mph!

The next session, "The Engineering Case for Content Authenticity," featured Marc Zorn moderating a discussion between EZDRM's Olga Kornienko and Adobe's Andy Parsons. The topic of conversation was C2PA, a solution intended to prevent



“Pushing the Boundaries of Immersive Storytelling—Sphere Studios & the Big Sky Camera System,” Rich Welsh and Andrew Shulkind.



SMPTTE Board members and staff gather for a photo.

the spread of altered images and fake news. The tool can track when and how changes to images were created, an important step in protecting society against those who would use AI for insidious reasons.

After a lunch break, VIBE continued with the session “Open Source is Ready for Prime Time.” Moderated by Carolyn Giardina, this panel discussion featured Strategic Advisor Steve Tobenkin, the Academy Software Foundation’s Carol Payne and David Morin, Netflix’s Eric Reinecke, and Amazon Web Services’ Sean Wallitsch, dissecting the ambitions of the Open-Source community. The session was followed by the EBU’s Willem Vermost, who presented “OGraf—Making Broadcast Graphics Open and Interoperable.”

The following session, “Amaze, Amaze, Amaze—Building Worlds Through Sound,” featured E2 sound designer Erik Aadahl, presenting his creative process for *Project Hail Mary*.

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Moderated by Carolyn Giardina, the discussion paid particular attention to the language creation for the character “Rocky,” the alien companion to Ryan Gosling’s character in the film. Attendees also got to see how Aadahl captured sounds organically by traveling to NASA to record its machinery and workstations. It was an insightful look into the world of sound design.

The next session, “From Build to Broadcast to Fan Experience in Live Sports Systems,” featured Blackblaze’s Laquie Campbell, SMPTE Membership Vice President Zandra Clark, Cosm Head of Production Operations Frank LaSpina, and Media Strategist ErinRose Widner. They discussed Cosm’s new immersive live sports experience, including one of their most recent events with the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). After seeing what it can do, I’m confident nearly every major city will want a Cosm stadium.

The final VIBE session, “The Glob-



Students from the NAB Technology Apprenticeship Program (TAP) gather at the SMPTE booth for a photo.

al Translation Layer for OTT & Live Events—Accessibility and Scale,” was a panel discussion on how AI and other technology are making media more accessible. The panel featured Deluxe’s Renae Batty, Yves Bergquist, Zac Shaw, and Veronica Pineda; Premiere League Studio’s Andy Beale; and MAV’s Rafael Parlatore, who discussed innovations such as audio scene descriptions, AI captions, and even AI sign language.

The SMPTE VIBE Conference showed industry leaders working together to create a more efficient, accessible, and interesting media landscape. This full-day program was intended to showcase new tech, solutions, and collaborations, and it achieved that goal. However, it also demonstrated a clear, exciting direction within the industry. One that people can feel good about.

**Sunday, April 19 and Monday, April 20**

The next two days at NAB were a

whirlwind of show-floor exploration, attending sessions, and, most importantly, creating connections. At its heart, NAB is a technology showcase and a networking event. However, I feel as though the term “networking” almost does the show a disservice. These weren’t just business connections being formed—friendships were formed among the innovative minds at NAB. There was a sense of collaboration in the air, one that encouraged these people and organizations to work together towards greater goals.

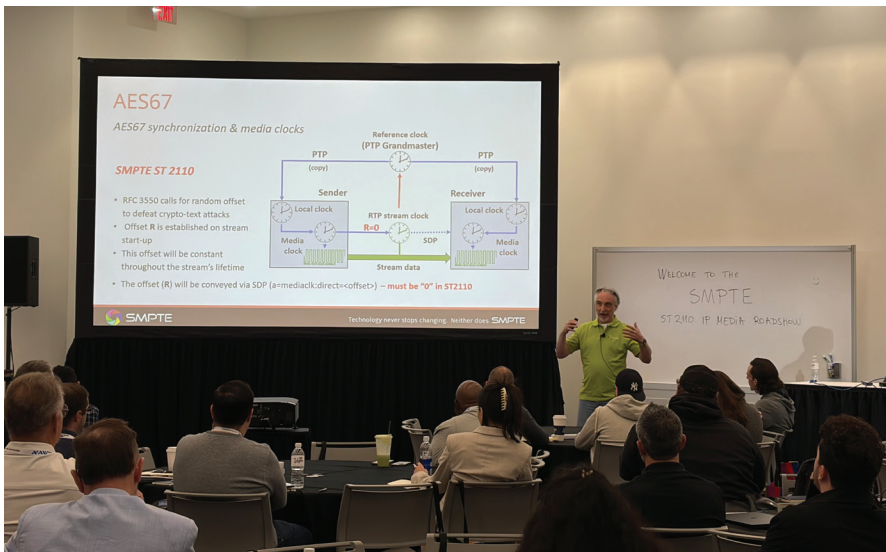
SMPTE was part of this collaborative spirit, and it was easy to discuss your mission when every major organization uses your Standards as an essential part of their infrastructure. When people ask me what SMPTE does, I always respond by saying, “Have you watched television? You’ve experienced SMPTE Standards.” Never has that statement been truer than it is today.

Everywhere I looked, I saw SMPTE Standards. SMPTE ST 2110 infrastructures, SMPTE ST 2059 time synchronization tutorials, SMPTE ST 2126 for media workflows, and so much more. Nearly all broadcast organizations use SMPTE Standards in some form, even if they are not familiar with SMPTE. When I introduced myself to these organizations, they were excited to meet me and learn more about SMPTE. Some wanted to become members, others wanted to know about the Standards Community, and others simply wanted to thank us.

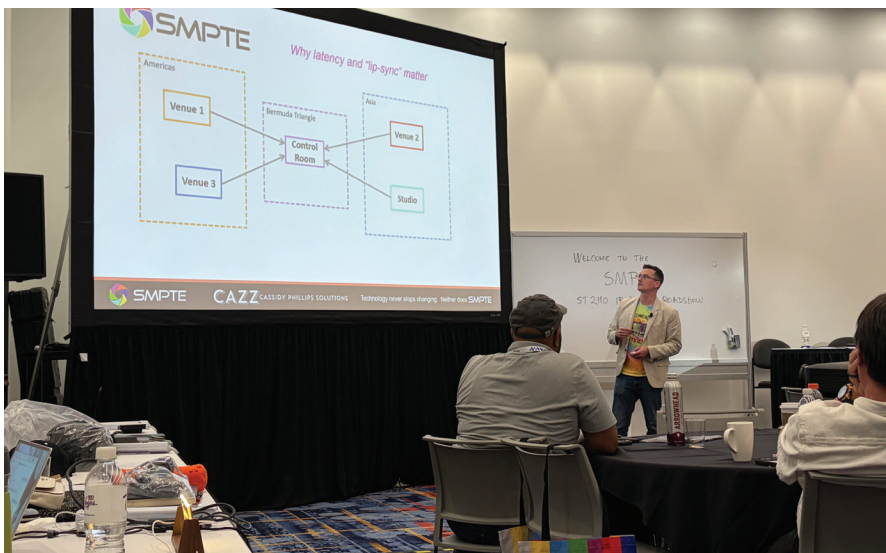
This same sentiment was brought to our booth, which was stationed right by the doors near North Hall. There, SMPTE members came to join, renew their memberships, or simply connect with fellow SMPTE enthusiasts. Curious attendees came to the booth to discuss who we were, what we do, and how they could be part of it. For my part, I was thrilled to speak with every one of them.



Chris Lapp presents the basics of ST 2110.



Andreas Hildebrand of Ravenna discusses audio processing.



Cassidy Phillips discusses bottlenecks in Module 5 of the Roadshow.

## SMPTE ST 2110 IP Media Roadshow

Tuesday, April 21, was the first-ever SMPTE ST 2110 IP Media Roadshow. SMPTE wanted this program to be perfect—engaging, educational, and leaving people wanting more. By the end of the day, the Roadshow had thoroughly impressed everyone who signed up and thrust SMPTE to the front of many industry leaders' minds.

The day was broken into six different modules, each focusing on different aspects of IP Media Infrastructure. The first module was, naturally, an introduction to SMPTE ST 2110. Instructor Chris Lapp, Senior Specialist Solutions Engineer at Cisco, presented these basics in a fun way and engaged the audience through insightful conversations. It was very casual but also very insightful, as Lapp broke down misconceptions and gave everyone a general overview of what the group would learn.

Module 2 featured two separate sessions, both of which focused on timekeeping in SMPTE ST 2110. Willem Vermost, Senior Media Technology Architect at the EBU, hosted the first session. Vermost, a very lively and entertaining speaker, discussed synchronized timekeeping with the Precision Time Protocol (PTP). The following session, hosted by Steve Kolta, the Broadcast Media Synchronization, Engineering, and Marketing Developer at Meinberg, was also on PTP. Making these complex topics seem simple, Kolta discussed PTP drift and cybersecurity best practices, using the Super Bowl as an example.

Module 3 was all about processing audio through SMPTE ST 2110, and RAVENNA/AoIP Technology Evangelist at LAW0—Andreas Hildebrand, led the group through it. He began with a general overview and quickly shifted into the technical deep dive folks were craving for. By the time the module was over, it was time for a lunch break, and SMPTE made sure

all attendees were very well fed with some of the best conference food I've ever eaten.

After a particularly good lunch, Arista Networks Systems Engineer Gerard Phillips was tasked with waking up the crowd as Module 4 got underway. While one might not think a discussion on network fabrics could wake people up, the content and Phillips got everyone's attention, even having everyone cheer so they could get the energy in the room flowing. That energy transferred to the Module 4 session, which featured Lapp returning to discuss the design fundamentals of SMPTE ST 2110 architectures.

Module 5, which touched on different bottlenecks of SMPTE ST 2110 systems, began with Solutions Architect Cassidy Phillips and continued with SVP of Customer Advisory Services Nestor Amaya. Both speakers made their sessions engaging, asking attendees many questions and drawing the right answers out of them using real-world examples in their slide decks.

The final module was interactive. Roadshow moderator Jesse Janosky, a 2110 engineer at JPM Technology Consulting, offered a one-on-one session in which attendees could design a sample RFP system. Attendees were supposed to do this exercise in the room, but we ran out of time. The attendees appreciated the compromise offered by Janosky and even said they wished the entire Roadshow had been longer, as SMPTE ST 2110 was an ocean of information that people wanted to dive into.

Throughout the Roadshow, attendees were excited to learn. This first iteration of the Roadshow was a massive success, with both attendees and speakers having good experiences engaging with each other. Everyone left the room that day with a new skill set and new enthusiasm for SMPTE ST 2110.



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### Wednesday, April 22

The final day of NAB was short and sweet. SMPTE partners and members visited our booth, exchanging gifts for some of our hats, mousepads, and bags. As the convention center emptied, I thought back to my first NAB in-person. I evangelized SMPTE's mission to many people and heard from dozens of organizations that use SMPTE Standards in their infrastructure and their daily workflows.

When working for an organization that's 110 years old, you can't help but wonder if you're still rele-

vant in the industry. Through the 2026 NAB Show, I was reminded that SMPTE is not just relevant, but vital. SMPTE is the table where engineers gather to find solutions to industry challenges. SMPTE members innovate daily and share their work with peers who are then inspired to join the effort. The 2026 NAB Show was a reminder that SMPTE, at its core, is a community dedicated to improving the media world.

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