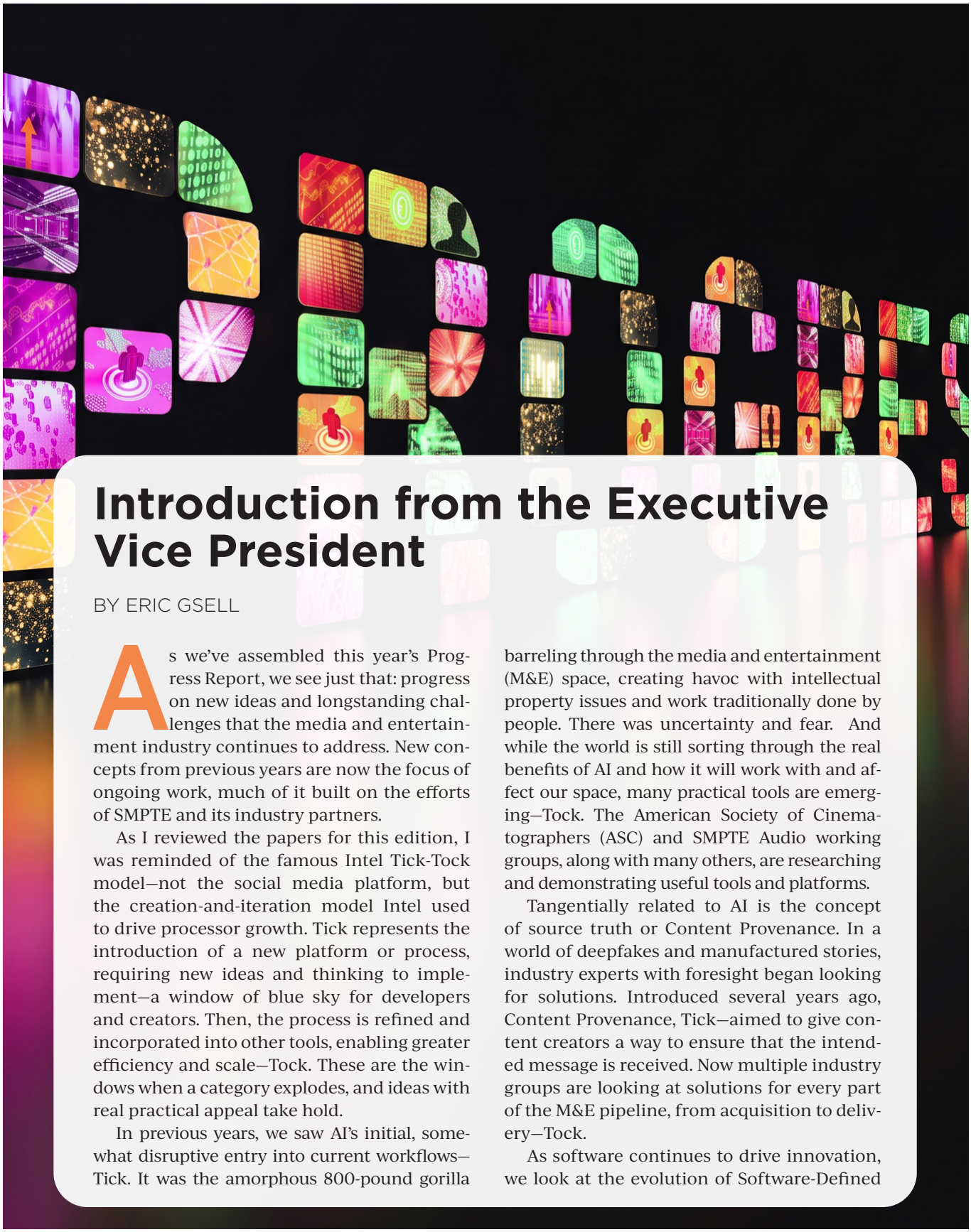

Introduction from the Executive Vice President

BY ERIC GSELL

As we've assembled this year's Progress Report, we see just that: progress on new ideas and longstanding challenges that the media and entertainment industry continues to address. New concepts from previous years are now the focus of ongoing work, much of it built on the efforts of SMPTE and its industry partners.

As I reviewed the papers for this edition, I was reminded of the famous Intel Tick-Tock model—not the social media platform, but the creation-and-iteration model Intel used to drive processor growth. Tick represents the introduction of a new platform or process, requiring new ideas and thinking to implement—a window of blue sky for developers and creators. Then, the process is refined and incorporated into other tools, enabling greater efficiency and scale—Tock. These are the windows when a category explodes, and ideas with real practical appeal take hold.

In previous years, we saw AI's initial, somewhat disruptive entry into current workflows—Tick. It was the amorphous 800-pound gorilla barreling through the media and entertainment (M&E) space, creating havoc with intellectual property issues and work traditionally done by people. There was uncertainty and fear. And while the world is still sorting through the real benefits of AI and how it will work with and affect our space, many practical tools are emerging—Tock. The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) and SMPTE Audio working groups, along with many others, are researching and demonstrating useful tools and platforms.

Tangentially related to AI is the concept of source truth or Content Provenance. In a world of deepfakes and manufactured stories, industry experts with foresight began looking for solutions. Introduced several years ago, Content Provenance, Tick—aimed to give content creators a way to ensure that the intended message is received. Now multiple industry groups are looking at solutions for every part of the M&E pipeline, from acquisition to delivery—Tock.

As software continues to drive innovation, we look at the evolution of Software-Defined

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Networking and ST 2110—Tick. Those standards are reaching maturity, and the surrounding platforms are more interoperable than before—Tock. Software-defined platforms are now being implemented in the Dynamic Media Facility (DMF)—Tick. Further abstraction of hardware and media continues as ST 2110 and MXL are used in those designs. DMF is a significant project led by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Advanced Media Workflow Association (AMWA) and will drive innovation in the coming years.

New ways to display images are constantly developing, and with them come challenges in color science to better understand how individual viewers perceive images across multiple display technologies. Color Matching Functions have been used to some degree since the beginning of motion-imaging—Tick. But the models continue to change and improve so display technologies with ever-narrower primaries can accommodate many different types of viewers—Tock. Directly related to perception and display is the accurate reproduction of human skin tones. For decades, skin tones on displays were calibrated to a single film slide—Tick. Now, more appropriate tools are available and being integrated into the media process—Tock.

How is our industry checking its boxes for growth and sustainability? Can we still predict growth in processing and storage needs using Moore's Law? Or have the current mechanisms of silicon manufacturing forced us to consider new means to quantify growth? With that growth comes the need for energy management and sustainability. Prior work in this space has been based on discovery and awareness—Tick. Now, metrics are being created, and groups are actually enacting change. The market remains very fragmented in direction and goals, but the idea of a greener M&E space is moving forward—Tock.

SMPTE continues to build connections across the industry, not just in standards but in education and community. Nowhere is that more prevalent than at the Annual Media Technology Summit, where every part of the SMPTE universe comes together. As we move into a new and exciting year for media workflows and development, you can be sure SMPTE will be there to help drive change. Will it be a Tick or a Tock this year? We'll have to wait and see.

About the Author



Eric Gsell is currently a staff engineer at Dolby Laboratories. A SMPTE Fellow, he has participated in Standards, and local Section management.

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