

Dreaming big for the Disney+ Hotstar launch

How do you create a launch event that lives up to the House of Mouse's magical benchmark? For virtual production studio [Original Syndicate](#), the answer was to create an immersive experience using a little wizardry of their own.

In this case study you will find out how Original Syndicate used the disguise xR workflow to put on its virtual 'Disney+ Hotstar Grandfest' variety show that celebrated the launch of the Disney+ Hotstar streaming service in Indonesia.



At a glance

As Disney launched their new streaming service across the world, their response to competition from established international streaming giants was to bring their massive library of entertainment properties together in a single service.

In India and Indonesia, Disney were able to take advantage of Hotstar, an existing streaming operator that they had acquired during their purchase of 21st Century Fox in 2019.

For the Grandfest variety show, the challenge was simple - to put on a grand launch event worthy of the Disney brand. But with the world gripped by the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for remote working, the logistics of this was much more complex. And so Disney contracted Original Syndicate, looking to take advantage of their expertise in virtual event production.



At a glance

Who is Original Syndicate?

Based in New York City, Los Angeles and Sydney, Original Syndicate are well-experienced in the ever-developing world of virtual production, using it to help clients host everything from high-end meetings and webinar events to virtual events utilising full extended reality (xR) stage environments.

This experience in particular made them prime candidates to collaborate with Disney and Hotstar for the hour-long special that Disney were looking to use to show off their new service, which launched in September 2020 in the area.



The challenge

Original Syndicate's brief was to produce a live, one-hour variety-style show that featured pre-recorded segments, unique performances from leading regional musical talent, and host interviews with actors, directors and producers. Above all else, the quality of the programming had to live up to the high standards audiences expect from Disney productions.

There was also the challenge of remote collaboration. "While our virtual world had to be built with the functionality of a traditional IRL event to enable the spontaneity of our live talent, production had to be pragmatic and translatable across countries and cultures," said Steve Richards, Principal at Original Syndicate.

Big ambitions, short timeline

This would prove to be no small feat, especially given that once concepts had been fully approved, Original Syndicate had only 15 days to deliver the creative, technological and production requirements needed for this high-profile event.



The solution

Blending green screen with real-time rendering

In order to meet both Disney's benchmark for quality and the tight turnaround time, the production needed a balanced deployment of traditional broadcast technologies, like green screen, lighting, sound and MCR configurations, together with the advanced real-time rendering, VFX and hyper-real 3D environment design enabled by real-time rendering engines and powerful disguise media servers.

The aim was to build an adaptable, pragmatic set that had the functionality of an event filmed in a traditional studio but had the engaging elements of immersive graphics. This would be the only way that Original Syndicate could present a show with the elaborate set design and production values audiences expected whilst operating in their 15-day window.



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“Overcoming the challenge of limited time was achieved by incredible teamwork. From Disney’s internal teams and their committed network of providers, to the robust and seamless contributions of our partners, like disguise and Notch.”

Rob Crawford, Original Syndicate ETD and Managing Director



Results

The virtual set was given virtual lighting rigs that could be live-controlled from a standard lighting console. Though a performer would be filmed in front of a plain green screen background, the video would be rendered in such a way that they would be atmospherically and believably lit.

Two virtual cameras allowed movements to be completely plotted and virtualised within the disguise workflow, and the designers added towering curved video walls behind performers that allowed the inclusion of clips from Disney+ Hotstar's library to be shown during the show without any distortion.

The magic of Augmented Reality

As a final touch, the live show featured triggerable augmented reality (AR) effects that created a depth of field around performers and further cemented the in-studio feel of the live show. During a show-stopping performance of 'Into the Unknown' from Disney's Frozen 2, Indonesian singer Rossa was shown amidst erupting icebergs and heavy in-studio snowfall, before being lifted into the air upon an icy plinth.



Results

Perhaps most impressive of all, was the international involvement throughout the production. In reality, Rossa and the other performers and hosts were shot in front of a green screen in Jakarta, Indonesia with camera signals being sent to a master control room in Sydney, Australia.

There, the virtual studio's camera moves and virtual lighting were controlled live using a traditional console. Low latency return feeds were then sent back to Jakarta, allowing performers to see themselves and better understand how they engaged with the environment that was erupting around them.

“From our understanding what we did was a world first,” said Steve Richards, Principal at Original Syndicate. “The technology to do all of it existed, but up to that point no-one had actually delivered **a live, international and non-English speaking, remote talent, immersive green screen event.** I'm not sure many have done it since, not with all four of those challenges at once.”



Success

100,000 viewers
via Facebook Live

+6,500 comments
pouring in during the live
show

+900,000 subscriptions
in first month

+ 2.5 million
subscriptions to date

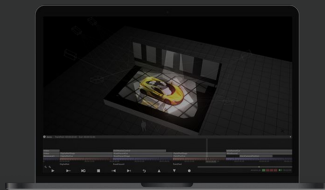
Disney+ Hotstar had the magical launch they had hoped for. “Our client said ‘let’s do something’ and 15 days later we delivered a one-hour variety special, involving the cream of Indonesia’s musical and film talent, in a unique and highly engaging way, under challenging circumstances,” said Steve Richards.

Managing all this across language barriers, oceans and sets imagined up out of the blue, Original Syndicate saw Disney’s benchmark, and responded by setting one of their own.



disguise equipment used

Designer software
r17.4



Release 17.4 unlocks RenderStream support to enable truly engine-agnostic real-time content, all managed from the disguise timeline.

[Find out more.](#)

gx 2c



Built to enable the latest in xR workflows, the gx 2c media server powered the xR environments hosted on the studio's LED stage.

[Find out more.](#)



In partnership with:

Disney

Project Lead: Christina Han

Line Producer, Indonesia: Elisa Setiadi

Assistant Producer: Deborah Tan

Assistant Producer: Yvonne Lim

Production Liaison: Peter Puchner

Jakarta Studio Producer: Natasha Christie

Content Creation: Chandra May

Original Syndicate

OGS Principal: Ben Roth

OGS Principal: Steve Richards

Executive Producer/ Creative Director: Rob Crawford

Lead Technical Integrator: Josh Moffat

Lead Sequence Programmer: Zachary Burton

Internet Architect/ Comms: Paul Barrett

Video Editing: Nathan Barnier

DOP: Madeleine Hall

GrandMA Operator: Paul Collison

Content Operator: Aaron Marshall

Audio: Craig Borg



Get in touch!

Curious to know more about us? Want to master our production toolkit? Need support on your project? Our team will be happy to speak to you, whatever your query:

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training.disguise.one

Find out more about

disguise:

info@disguise.one

+44 20 7234 9840

