

IAMT MediaTech Forum – Visual Podcast

What Makes a MediaTech Innovation Truly IAMT Impact-Award Worthy?

00:00:00 – 00:01:15 **MATT STAGG**

[instrumental music] Hi, everyone, and welcome again to the IAMT podcast with me, Matt Stagg. Today, after an amazing and successful night at the Impact Awards, we're going to talk to some of the judges. We'll understand how the judging works, what the standouts were, and what you should be doing if you're a member and want to win one. You've got to enter, and we need people to engage. The vibe last night was amazing — if someone won an award, it wasn't just for them and their company; everybody enjoyed it. It was a great event. I'm going to introduce some of our judges, as well as the organiser of the awards. They'll introduce themselves — we've got Chi, Gary and Stan. Let's go with you, Chaitanya.

00:01:16 – 00:01:34 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

Thank you so much. Hi, I'm Chaitanya, vice president and chief technology officer at Whistling Woods, India's premier film and creative arts institute. I also do a lot of work in emerging media tech, especially workflow development. And, thanks to Stan, I've been around with IABM, judging the awards, for a while now.

00:01:36 – 00:01:54 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Good morning. I'm Gary Schneider, senior staff media systems engineer and lead systems architect at LinkedIn. I've been with the company for 11 years, and my focus is on core infrastructure for live production and video production.

00:01:55 – 00:01:59 **STAN MOOTE**

Great. And I'm Stan, CTO. There we go.

00:01:59 – 00:02:49 **MATT STAGG**

If you can introduce yourself with just one part of your name, like Rihanna, or J.Lo — Stan — because everyone does know Stan. On behalf of everyone, we have to give a big shout-out to Stan for organising the awards, setting everything up and presenting it, because he does it every year and nails it. Rather than going straight into the best or standout entries — we'll do that — it'd be nice to talk first about how you feel about the awards, and what they mean as an association and a community. So, Chaitanya, can you go first?

00:02:49 – 00:03:30 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

Sure. Awards are two things. One, they're validation of your work, and the hard work of everybody on the team. Second, it's even better when you're judged by a group of your peers. Third, it really gives you a boost to keep doing what you've been doing — especially not to settle for the status quo. The best way to think about industry growth is to understand that the status quo is a safe space where nothing grows, and awards galvanise people into getting out of it.

00:03:30 – 00:03:36 **MATT STAGG**

Perfect. And Gary, your opinions on this?

00:03:36 – 00:04:06 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Yeah, I like what you were saying. Getting out of your comfort zone — instead of just reworking certain technology, actually trying to push the industry in a direction — and then this kind of feedback gives validation to the vendors who are trying to develop tech: are they on the right path? I think these awards do a really good service in that area.

00:04:07 – 00:04:09 **MATT STAGG**

Stan, what do you think?

00:04:09 – 00:04:45 **STAN MOOTE**

Well, I look at it from a couple of points of view. Back when I was designing product and we'd enter awards and win, that really was the whole team — it brought the team together, and that's a real important aspect. The people who won awards last night will go back to their teams, because ultimately they can't all come to NAB, and they'll celebrate. And, as you said, it takes people out of just putting a fresh can of paint on an old product.

00:04:45 – 00:05:35 **MATT STAGG**

I absolutely love that. I've been lucky enough to be involved in teams, and it's just, 'Well done, guys.' You understand the ups and downs there must have been on some of these projects, and to go, 'We did it,' makes a massive difference. This is a prestigious award, but any award is good. So — and we won't dwell on it, or go through everyone's — I have to ask: what was your standout when you were judging? Was there one company, person or project where you went, 'Wow, I've not seen that before'?

00:05:36 – 00:05:40 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

I'd definitely say it was the Sony PXW-Z300.

00:05:40 – 00:05:41 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah, well —

00:05:41 – 00:06:04 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

For multiple reasons. One of the bigger challenges coming up in AI is content provenance and authenticity. Before governments move in and clamp down, it's great that the industry has moved forward to make sure it's not a problem. So while the C2PA standards are coming, and there's AI for content authenticity —

00:06:04 – 00:06:15 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

— it's important that Sony had the first product quickly out, following the C2PA guidelines at the firmware level in the camera, which is what the Sony PXW-Z300 does.

00:06:15 – 00:06:38 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

So it not only pre-empts any potential government crackdown, it also shows the world that the industry is serious about content provenance — in addition to being exceptionally cool tech. It's the perfect combination of everything, so that was definitely the most standout product for me.

00:06:38 – 00:06:48 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah, I'm with you. It was great, and it's great to address something that hasn't come up yet, but you know —

00:06:48 – 00:06:49 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

— and we know it's going to come.

00:06:49 – 00:06:52 **MATT STAGG**

Of course. Gary, what do you think?

00:06:52 – 00:07:18 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Yeah, I was really impressed by that product as well, for a lot of the same reasons. But since that's been called out, I'll maybe say Cues. What they're doing with that product — the accessibility piece, which I think is really important — was one that stood out for me as well.

00:07:18 – 00:07:22 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah, huge kudos to those guys.

00:07:23 – 00:07:41 **MATT STAGG**

They nailed it with that. Now, Stan — you've been around these awards, they're yours, we all say they're Stan's awards, even though they're the IAMT's — what's your view?

00:07:41 – 00:08:20 **STAN MOOTE**

Well, I heard before, when we look at some of them — excuse me — the shortlist. Clearly, people who are shortlisted are finalists; they've basically won the award as well. The shortlist committee doesn't make the final decision — that's why we have the judges. I will say, though, the G&L System House system was great. Specifically, it's about accessibility — it allowed people to sign in different ways using AI.

00:08:21 – 00:08:45 **STAN MOOTE**

In talking with them, they took clips of people signing and put it together. One of the judges who looked at it said, 'It's a little jerky, but it works well.' In the US market, they were using avatars, so they've tailored it back and forth. Accessibility like that is really cool to be able to automate as much as you can.

00:08:45 – 00:09:56 **MATT STAGG**

I gave that award out, and I was really pleased, because accessibility is big on my agenda when I'm talking with broadcasters, clubs and leagues. For me, it was a no-brainer that we should be doing something like that with the industry. This is where you get the intention: you have a problem, and you solve a problem. Quite often, tech comes in going, 'Here's something really cool' — for a problem you didn't have. They were solving a real problem, and it works. It's great for people, and it's going to change people's lives. It's very unusual to get something at that bar. The big thing I always think about when we go through awards: was there anything you were hoping to see, technically, that you didn't — and were a little disappointed not to see?

00:09:56 – 00:10:09 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

Not so much a particular technology, but I was hoping for a little more in the audio space, the sound space — maybe something around ambisonics, something around real-time immersive audio —

00:10:09 – 00:10:38 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

— because that's kind of the last frontier. We've got the visual sorted for immersive now. Ambisonics has been around for, I don't know, fifteen-plus years, but there doesn't seem to be too much development in it. On the show floor there are two or three very cool things around it, but I thought maybe something in sound would have been good.

00:10:38 – 00:11:09 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah. Just to go back to that point — I'm a bit of an audiophile, I absolutely love it. I first got the importance of it when we were talking about video and one of the audio guys said, 'You have to remember, your ears don't blink.' That really resonates when you put it like that. Gary, what did you feel was maybe missing — or not missing, but that you'd hoped to see and judge?

00:11:10 – 00:11:30 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

It's a difficult question. Honestly, nothing comes to mind. I was just excited to see the developments in the various areas — I didn't come out of it feeling, 'I wish I'd seen this.'

00:11:30 – 00:12:11 **MATT STAGG**

I thought there was quite a lot of improvement on technology that was already there, which is great to see. Last year it was, 'Here you go, we've got an AI,' and it's like, okay, an AI isn't a thing in itself. Now, to come in with an application that runs on that technology really resonates. We get one hype of technology, and the next year we get something really cool that uses it. Stan, was there anything for you?

00:12:12 – 00:12:29 **STAN MOOTE**

Well, I totally agree with you on the audio aspect. I quite often ping people and say, 'You've got some cool audio stuff, you should enter it into the awards,' and try to beef that up. It's the same with RF — we've had some RF awards over the years as the different formats have changed —

00:12:29 – 00:12:48 **STAN MOOTE**

— but that area's stabilised, so you don't expect to see it as much. I will say this about the awards, though: there was nothing with AI washing.

00:12:48 – 00:13:00 **MATT STAGG**

Yes, that's what I was trying to get at — that's what we had last year. Not in the awards necessarily, but the show floor was AI washing.

00:13:00 – 00:13:04 **STAN MOOTE**

A lot of it was. And we had that back decades ago with cloud washing.

00:13:04 – 00:13:05 **MATT STAGG**

Cloud wash, oh yeah.

00:13:06 – 00:13:11 **MATT STAGG**

Which word do I have to use? Because we've got to tell the printers it needs to be on the back of the stand.

00:13:11 – 00:13:16 **STAN MOOTE**

That's right. Every stand had to have a cloud in it.

00:13:16 – 00:13:17 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah.

00:13:18 – 00:13:52 **MATT STAGG**

Okay. There's one thing — we could talk all day about this. It was a great event, and it always is. But let's look forward to next year. I'll come to you last, Stan, because I'd like people to understand how and why to enter the awards, and what they should do. But what do you look for, Chaitanya — when you see something and go, 'Yeah, okay, they've done this right'?

00:13:52 – 00:14:20 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

Usually two or three things. When it comes to awards, it's about accuracy — it has to be really, really good, and it has to really work. A great idea — well, ideas are a dime a dozen; execution is what matters. So I want to see that accuracy. The other thing I want to see is innovation.

00:14:20 – 00:14:33 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

How have you thought about it differently? There's a line from Elon Musk I'll never forget. Someone asked him the difference between all the other electric cars and Tesla,

00:14:33 – 00:14:39 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

and he said, 'Everybody else is trying to make their car smart. I'm building a safe computer on wheels.'

00:14:39 – 00:14:44 **MATT STAGG**

Oh, wow. He's quite clever — and he just goes into space.

00:14:44 – 00:15:04 **CHAITANYA CHIKILAR**

It's a different approach — someone going to first principles and rebuilding a product from first principles, rather than modelling it on what's already there. So it's really those two things: accuracy, and the innovative thought that's gone into it.

00:15:04 – 00:15:05 **MATT STAGG**

And Gary, what were your thoughts?

00:15:07 – 00:15:24 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

I appreciate what you're saying, and how you're calling that out. What I look forward to when I get into judging mode is being surprised and wowed.

00:15:24 – 00:15:35 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

And where I get surprised and wowed is when somebody took an idea and took it in a bit of a different direction — thinking outside the box.

00:15:35 – 00:15:42 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

One thing I really liked about the awards this year is the word 'impact,' and how impact was put into this.

00:15:42 – 00:15:45 **MATT STAGG**

Made a massive difference. I totally agree.

00:15:45 – 00:15:59 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

That really got me excited when I started the whole judging process. I wanted to look for real impact to the industry from what these vendors are putting out.

00:15:59 – 00:16:30 **MATT STAGG**

So — I'll come to you now, Stan. I work at Neutral Wireless, and we enter many awards. If someone said, 'Right, we've seen the Impact Awards, we've seen the press, we've seen the photos of people and what it means to them — I want to put something into the awards next year,' what do they do as a member?

00:16:30 – 00:16:38 **STAN MOOTE**

That's a great question, Matt, and I get asked it often. I actually tossed up a few ideas on LinkedIn to encourage people.

00:16:38 – 00:16:56 **STAN MOOTE**

But really, when you've got 100-plus entries — 150-plus entries — you need to be succinct in what's going on. You really have to start with the problem, and then, 'Here's what we've done to deal with it.'

00:16:56 – 00:17:13 **STAN MOOTE**

That's the key thing: 'There's an industry problem, and here's how we dealt with it.' Or, 'This is a total shift in the way to do business.' That's fine too.

00:17:13 – 00:17:15 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah, yeah.

00:17:16 – 00:17:39 **STAN MOOTE**

You need to bring that up front and differentiate it. And if possible — some products may be just introduced here. Some of the awards we get have been embargoed, so we just shortlist the company name, because they don't want to announce it until we're at the show.

00:17:39 – 00:17:40 **MATT STAGG**

Yes, of course.

00:17:40 – 00:17:52 **STAN MOOTE**

So when you enter the awards, there's a little tick box if you want to embargo it. And I make it clear to all the judges — actually, the judges don't talk about any of the entries at all.

00:17:52 – 00:18:18 **MATT STAGG**

That's — I just want to pick up on that, because a lot of people won't know it, and it's unusual in awards: to be able to put forward an idea to get judged that you're not allowed to talk about. Having that pre-validation is fantastic, because people can celebrate it, and then celebrate the launch. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

00:18:18 – 00:18:29 **STAN MOOTE**

No, you added to it — that's a valid point. The other thing is, you want to explain where it fits in the workflow. If you don't explain where it fits in the workflow, it doesn't help.

00:18:30 – 00:18:50 **STAN MOOTE**

These judges are all industry people with expertise in their own fields, and they need to know where it fits in their workflow. And not every judge judges every shortlist category — I pick the ones they're experts in.

00:18:50 – 00:19:04 **STAN MOOTE**

And one other thing I want to make clear: videos are great. The little short videos —

00:19:04 – 00:19:05 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Short ones.

00:19:05 – 00:19:06 **STAN MOOTE**

Yeah, here's one —

00:19:06 – 00:19:12 **MATT STAGG**

Short videos. We are in media and entertainment — you'd expect someone to be able to do one, wouldn't you?

00:19:12 – 00:19:17 **STAN MOOTE**

A short video is good. Some of them were little demos of how it works.

00:19:18 – 00:19:25 **STAN MOOTE**

If you have a short video and add a little demo — say, 'This demo's five minutes' — that's fine, if you want to get to it.

00:19:25 – 00:19:30 **STAN MOOTE**

But I've had people just put in a 45-minute webinar.

00:19:30 – 00:19:32 **MATT STAGG**

Now, that's lazy.

00:19:32 – 00:19:34 **MATT STAGG**

I think that's lazy.

00:19:34 – 00:19:47 **STAN MOOTE**

And it is. It's like, 'The webinar will start in five minutes,' blah, blah. I don't want the judges to waste their time on that — it really doesn't add anything.

00:19:52 – 00:20:08 **STAN MOOTE**

Those are the key elements: you've got to be short and succinct. The other thing is the entry form itself. With older products — and as we've moved to software products — it's the same name,

00:20:08 – 00:20:19 **STAN MOOTE**

but you've substantially changed the version. So over the years we've adjusted the entry form to ask what's new within the last 12 months, or 6 months.

00:20:19 – 00:20:20 **MATT STAGG**

That is key.

00:20:20 – 00:20:31 **STAN MOOTE**

Take a simple thing like Photoshop. 'Oh, it's just Photoshop, it's never changed.' Well, come on — of course it's changed, right?

00:20:31 – 00:20:32 **MATT STAGG**

Yeah.

00:20:32 – 00:20:38 **MATT STAGG**

Exactly. You're talking brand names — some products are brands for your company.

00:20:38 – 00:20:46 **STAN MOOTE**

Right. So, for example, with Adobe Premiere one year, when they did the audio input to find the thing —

00:20:46 – 00:20:47 **MATT STAGG**

I love that one.

00:20:47 – 00:20:54 **STAN MOOTE**

It's a really cool thing. But if you just put 'Premiere' as an entry, you want to talk about the benefit —

00:20:54 – 00:21:03 **STAN MOOTE**

— that feature. That's really where it goes. And I've given all the judges clear outlines of how to go about it. Gary, do you want to —

00:21:03 – 00:21:24 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Yeah. You brought up the entry form, and you made a good point: what's the problem you're trying to solve? That should be the top level of the entry form — 'This is the problem we're trying to solve,' and then go into it. Some of the entries I saw had summaries and descriptions that were copy-paste —

00:21:24 – 00:21:44 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

— so, to help those putting the entries in, really explain to them what we're looking for in each of those little boxes. It's important they keep it short, because there are so many entries.

00:21:44 – 00:21:46 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

But clear instruction.

00:21:46 – 00:21:56 **MATT STAGG**

And I also think people don't realise — and I judge quite a few awards — that judges are doing it in their own time. It's not their day job.

00:21:56 – 00:22:16 **MATT STAGG**

So if you're lazy in an application — 'Oh, we want to enter this one, not really that interested, but we've got a bit of marcomms budget' — I think that's quite disrespectful. It's almost a shotgun approach: do all of them, and maybe one comes out.

00:22:16 – 00:22:19 **STAN MOOTE**

No, no. You don't copy and paste the marketing.

00:22:19 – 00:22:20 **MATT STAGG**

No.

00:22:20 – 00:22:33 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Yeah. The way I look at it, at the end of reviewing a particular application: more than five minutes, less than 20 minutes.

00:22:33 – 00:22:48 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

If it's less than five minutes, you've not really taken the effort to explain your product or service. If it's more than 20 minutes, you haven't understood what the point of judging an award is.

00:22:48 – 00:22:59 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

So if you can engage me for five minutes, and then keep me engaged for up to 20, now there's something in there.

00:22:59 – 00:23:14 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

Then you deep-dive and get into it. Again, it doesn't apply for everybody, but that's how it really works for me. And most people do take the effort to create something specifically for the awards.

00:23:14 – 00:23:16 **GARY SCHNEIDER**

So that's good.

00:23:16 – 00:23:49 **MATT STAGG**

That's a perfect point to end on. We'll keep talking about this, because it was a great event, and a real testament to the importance of IAMT in this industry. So we'll be back later on. I just want to say thank you so much, guys — to come in for an early one and talk with so much passion. I really appreciate it. We'll be back later on. Thank you for watching. [upbeat music]