ASBU BroadcastPro Television Awards 2016 honours MENA achievers

**BEST SHORT PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR**
Emirati Martyrs

**BEST LONG PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR**
Abu Dhabi Super Tunnel

**RADIO TRENDSETTER OF THE YEAR**
Arabian Radio Network

**APP OF THE YEAR**
Appy Kids

**OUTSTANDING KIDS’ BROADCAST INITIATIVE**
Majid Entertainment

**INNOVATION IN MENA SPORT**
Dawri Plus, Intigral

**BEST STUDIO OF THE YEAR**
Studio 5, Al Jazeera Media Network

**2016 MENA SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR**
INC System Integrations

**MENA BROADCAST TRENDSETTER OF 2016**
beIN Media Group

**BROADCASTPRO PROJECT AWARD 2016**
Sky News Arabia

**MENA IP INSTALLATION OF 2016**
Dubai Media Inc

**BEST DIGITAL INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR**
Fatafeat ICCA Online Academy

**OUTSTANDING OTT PLAYER OF 2016**
Starz Play

**TECH ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR**
Dave Mace, Sky News Arabia

**EXCELLENCE IN PROJECT EXECUTION**
Ali Elhusseini, Al Jazeera Media Network

**TECHNOLOGY INTELLIGENCE FOR TV, FILM AND RADIO**
BRINGING YOU CLOSER TO YOUR VIEWERS

With a consistent growth platform of over 200 channels, Yahlive has exclusive partnerships targeting the Middle East, Farsi, Afghan, Balkan and Arabian Maghreb communities across MENA, South West Asia and Europe, providing viewers with the most wanted channels in SD, HD and Ultra HD.

Connect with your community, connect with Yahlive.

Yahlive, satellite broadcasting for communities.

yahlive.com  yahlivecorporate  yahlive
Every year, when they hand out the last trophy of the evening and call the winners to the stage for a group photograph at the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards, I feel a huge boulder roll off my chest as we complete one more edition of the event successfully. We hosted the sixth ASBU BroadcastPro Summit and Awards last month, and I feel truly humbled by the manner in which the entire MENA broadcast fraternity congregates for this event, not just as attendees but as active participants.

The weeks leading up to the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit and Awards are, no doubt, challenging but we have got this far successfully due to the support of industry specialists and leaders, who have helped us further our endeavour to create a vibrant broadcast community in this region. Whether it’s helping to put together the agenda, spreading the word about the conference, helping secure panellists, participating as a speaker or even providing us with a couple of raffle prizes, we are touched by the support we have received from both regional and international C-level executives are joining us for the Awards. We struggled to seat everyone, because the event is getting bigger and better and more than 400 people joining us as we complete one more edition of the event successfully. We hosted the sixth ASBU BroadcastPro Summit and Awards last month, and I feel truly humbled by the manner in which the entire MENA broadcast fraternity congregates for this event, not just as attendees but as active participants.

In return, I can proudly say that we have steadfastly kept our promise to never run vendor presentations and demos from sponsors, except for the odd occasion when we have made certain that the information they share will genuinely add value to the industry.

I’m equally delighted to announce that this year we beat all past records, with more than 300 professionals attending the conference and more than 400 people joining us for the Awards. We struggled to seat everyone, because the event is getting bigger and better and more than 400 people joining us.

Welcome
Cinema Zoom Lens XK6x20 makes its dramatic debut.

CABRIO XK

4K Optical Performance
Combining the cutting edge of our unmatched optical performance, Fujifilm has achieved the high optical excellence demanded for 4K camera work. From skin textures to that indefinable sense of atmosphere, every quality expected from a cine lens is beautifully depicted by the lens in stunning images.

Focal Length 20mm-120mm
Covering the wide range of angles of view required for imaging production, this single lens gets the job done without the necessity for lens changes, enhancing shooting efficiency on location.

T3.5 Speed across the Entire Zoom Range
With a constant and stable T-number from wide angle to telephoto, this lens not only eases operation, but also depicts sharp imaging across the entire zoom range. Most importantly you can capture 4K imaging in a wider variety of locations and scenes.
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EK 6042 – TWO CHANNEL CAMERA RECEIVER

Our new EK 6042 two-channel slot-in receiver can connect to virtually every Sennheiser wireless system – be it analog or digital (including G3, 2000 series, 3000/5000 series and digital 9000). With the built-in web server, setup is easily managed using any browser including imports and exports of the entire configuration.

The EK 6042 is SuperSlot™-compatible and works seamlessly with your existing equipment. Same goes for ARRI, Panasonic and Sony. And, yes, the EK 6042 works stand-alone as well. When we say, “One receiver fits all”, we mean it.

www.sennheiser.com
BeIN introduces MENA's first Twitter Amplify experience

BeIN Sports has partnered with Twitter to showcase video highlights from the Champions League on the social media platform, as part of a programme called Twitter Amplify.

The best Champions League near-live video highlights from beIN Sports will be available as part of the first Amplify experience in the MENA region. Twitter Amplify is a Twitter partnership programme where media partners and brands team up to deliver premium content to fans. The partnership allows fans in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to view the best highlights of the UCL matches directly and instantly from their Twitter feeds. These video highlights are showcased from the @beINSPORTS_MENA account, and can be shared to a wider qualified audience in the form of ‘Promoted Tweets’, in collaboration with Unilever as the sponsor. The clips are associated with a pre-roll advertisement by Unilever.

According to Olivier Dufour, Group Director of Digital at beIN Media Group, this partnership has a two-pronged approach.

“Amplify enables us to monetise and sponsor videos on Twitter. It is also seen as a referral channel and can drive numbers to go back to our main platform. This way, it complements our traditional offering. For advertisers, this offering provides a more programmatic approach as they can reach out to the relevant viewers in a more focussed way,” he said.

Giving an overview of Twitter Amplify, Kinda Ibrahim, Director of Media Partnerships, Twitter MENA said: “Twitter Amplify basically brings premium content and allows brands to be associated with it. The content can be anything from sports such as match highlights, match analysis and so on. This can also be extended to high-profile live events such as awards and entertainment shows.”

The duration of the published content is up to a maximum of 10 minutes but more often it’s shorter footages of one- to three-minutes duration that are pushed on this programme.

Ibrahim said the idea of associating an advertiser on social media is not unique but Amplify enables broadcasters to reach an even larger audience.

Advanced Media hosts drone workshop

Dubai-based distributor Advanced Media hosted an event early last month to celebrate DJI’s 10th anniversary, which also marked the second anniversary of DJI Events & Training. The event, held at GEMS First Point School, The Villa, saw the introduction of the new DJI Mavic Pro drone.

The event was supported by Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) and SANAD Academy represented by Mansour Al Bloushi and Mohammad Aziz. The latest Mavic Pro drone, a small yet powerful device from DJI, was introduced by Pejman Ghorbani, Senior Product Manager at Advanced Media, along with the new more releases from the manufacturer.

More than 115 participants attended the workshop and learnt about the various uses of drones and the latest aerial shooting rules and regulations introduced by DCAA.

Kaveh Farnam, CEO of Advanced Media, commented: “We hosted this workshop in association with Dubai Civil Aviation Authority to ensure the right message goes across to filmmakers and photographers who use drones. The turnout was great, which shows the popularity of unmanned aerial vehicles or UAVs.”
Dubai’s TECOM Group has embarked on a massive TV and film talent development initiative by aggressively promoting its new in5 platform to people aspiring to work within this industry. This initiative is gaining traction under the leadership of Majed Al Suwaidi, who recently took over as the new Managing Director of Dubai Media City, Dubai Studio City and Dubai Production City.

As part of developing the in5 integrated innovation platform, TECOM is investing in refurbishing an existing facility in Production City so as to provide studios and other facilities at heavily subsidised rates.

“Content creation, in general, whether it is published content, visual content or radio requires the right kind of platform, to grow. Our focus is not just on film or TV but content creation in general and that includes digital content. Our aim is to create a well-rounded ecosystem for entrepreneurs and start-ups to be incubated and nurtured to their next phase of growth. We aim to put together all the pillars that will help support and create this talent so they can evolve to become the next producer, filmmaker, technical specialist, script writer and so on.

“Talent development is very critical and this is why we are investing a lot of time and effort with people in this area,” Al Suwaidi commented.

As part of these efforts, TECOM has also initiated a number of mentorship programmes, led by international professionals with the most recent one being held in October by William Steven Shaw from the American Society of Cinematographers.

“Basically, to create quality content, you need to have good infrastructure,” explained Al Suwaidi.

“If we are to try and create good talent, we have to support it on the ground with good studios and support staff. We have wonderful individuals who have the talent but require their work to be polished. This platform will play a major role in providing this kind of support on the ground. We are creating a beautiful environment with studios, co-working spaces, editing suites, sound rooms and all the services required to create quality content,” confirmed Al Suwaidi, adding that if the studios that are being built don’t suit one’s requirements, others within the emirate will be recommended.

BSS to distribute Calrec’s Brio

Calrec Audio has formed a new partnership with Broadcast and Studio Solutions (BSS) to be its exclusive distributor for Brio in the UAE, Bahrain and Oman.

BSS will represent Brio, together with Calrec’s companion Br.IO solution, exclusively across all three territories. BSS will also deliver local support and after-sales service to Brio customers through its network of regional offices spanning the Middle East. Since Brio’s launch at the 2016 NAB Show in April, Calrec has sold the console to customers in the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and Asia. Calrec Audio’s all-new Br.IO, launched at IBC2016, provides an easy and affordable way to expand Brio’s I/O.
Vinten Hexagon

Track System
powered by Tecnopoint

Vinten, a world leader in robotic camera support systems, is proud to unveil the Hexagon System. The system brings together two leaders in production equipment by fully integrating the Vinten Control System (VRC) with Tecnopoint, the original equipment manufacturer of dolly systems, for an advanced new robotic dolly system on tracks.

Robotic camera dolly and track with innovative design

► Fast set-up and easy assembly
► Versatile enough for high-end news studio
► Fully integrated with Vinten Control System to enable eye-catching camera moves on-air
► Lowest profile track design combined with the highest quality stability and on-movement
► Optional curved track or straight track

More information
tracks.vinten.com
Sony to build OB vans for QMC

Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) has announced a partnership with Sony Professional Solutions MEA to deliver two fully equipped 3G outside broadcasting (OB) vans for the network. The deployment scheduled for delivery by August 2017, is part of Qatar Media Corporation’s continued mission to redefine the quality of the content produced and delivered in the region.

Sony’s OB vans will complement Qatar Media Corporation’s present portfolio of three OB vans. The new additions, equipped with Sony HDC series cameras and 3G switcher will enable QMC to seamlessly broadcast footage from any shoot location.

With a ruggedised 4X4 chassis and compact footprint, the vans can be deployed quickly in restricted spaces and offer efficient outdoor terrain mobility.

Sony Professional Solutions declares winners of videography competition

Sony Professional Solutions, supported by Dubai Studio City (DSC) and CABSAT, announced the winners of the first nationwide happiness-themed videography competition. The competition, launched at CABSAT early this year, received close to 250 five-minute video submissions from both the professional and student community to visually capture what ‘happiness’ means to them.

Iranian filmmaker Amir Ghorbani Nia was chosen as the grand-prize winner in the Professional category for his short film Hunger, and was awarded a Sony PXW-FS5 camera. In the Student category, Diyab Basheer from Manipal University Dubai received the Sony Alpha 7S II for his movie Bliss. Filmmakers Majid Sarhaddi and Mark Stanley received special mentions in the Professional category.

Sennheiser highlights business communications solutions at InfoComm MEA 2016

Audio specialist Sennheiser is participating in InfoComm MEA, which will take place in Dubai from December 6 to 8, 2016. The company intends to focus on its range of audio solutions for meeting and conference purposes, and for the first time globally, will demonstrate its new wireless gooseneck microphone for its SpeechLine Digital Wireless system.

“This system was created to be the first to meet the demand for a wireless microphone dedicated purely to speech. It offers easy installation and operation, a high level of reliability and future-proof technology to deliver supreme speech clarity,” said Ryan Burr, Technical Sales Manager at Sennheiser Middle East.

Another highlight at the show will be the set of live demonstrations of Sennheiser’s latest TeamConnect system.

“We will run three live demonstrations of this system by conferencing with our colleagues in Germany via Skype for Business. As they switch between table and ceiling mics, attendees will get to witness first-hand the features and benefits of each option,” explained Burr.

Yahlive adds 16 exclusive channels to Maghreb bouquet

Yahlive has added 16 exclusive channels to its Maghreb bouquet. The announcement sees the company triple its offerings in the region since last year, to 65 free-to-air channels, of which 57 are Algerian channels, targeting the Arabian Maghreb, 36 of which are exclusively available through Yahlive.

In addition to Algerian channels, Yahlive offers a line-up of popular TV entertainment and a variety of local channels including, Echourouk News, El Heddafi TV, Ennahar TV and more. Viewers can also access premium international channels including France 24, BBC Arabic, Abu Dhabi TV, Abu Dhabi Drama, Abu Dhabi Sports 1 & 2, National Geographic Abu Dhabi and Fashion 4K.

Yahlive also partnered with Adriatic Tours S.L., owners of Alpha One RTV Network, to add Face TV to its European channel bouquet. The top-viewed Bosnian channel, which was previously only available via pay-TV, is now exclusively available free-to-air from Yahlive.
Starz Play secures funding

Starz Play has secured new multi-million-dollar funding from existing investors SEQ Capital Partners and new investors Delta Partners Capital. The latter is an emerging market-centric advisory and investment platform for the telecoms, media and digital space.

Commenting on this development, Maaz Sheikh, CEO of Starz Play, said: “Strategic partnerships with leading studios, major telecom groups and device manufacturers have proven our long-term business model. We now enjoy a six-figure subscriber base of customers in MENA who enjoy the affordable, on-demand experience our service provides. We’ve also made subscribing to Starz Play easier and even better value than ever by introducing mobile phone bills as a payment option and creating attractive offers through telecom service providers.”

“This funding demonstrates the continued confidence our current investors have in Starz Play. These new funds will enable us to further enhance our content and technology offering.”

Montage, a Dubai-based production company, recently installed the SNS EVO storage system to help store its media assets safely and speed up its productions.

With increasing demand for high-quality production and to overcome the company’s challenges such as network bandwidth and load balancing, Montage was in need of a centralised storage system. The idea was to speed up the editing process and to make the workflow more efficient by having one big storage and back-up system to be used for archiving and accessing all the edited, composited, graded and animated files including audio files without losing the previous edits by a specific producer.

Another requirement was a flexible system with the advantage of accessing and working on the project in EVO before the final approvals, allowing for any assigned team member to access the files. One of the post-production requirements was a system, which would seamlessly work with real-time video streams. MediaCast, the authorised distributor for SNS in the UAE and Middle East, installed the EVO system at Montage.

Icflix ties with Zain Bahrain, VIVA Kuwait

Icflix has partnered with Zain Bahrain and VIVA Kuwait to offer content for a fixed monthly fee that will also include a one-month free trial or a weekly plan and daily plan option. Zain Bahrain customers will be able to enjoy the benefits of the simple one-click registration process.

“This partnership will give Zain Bahrain customers a value-for-money entertainment experience,” said Icflix Founder and CEO, Carlos Tibi.

“We will ensure the customers receive the best of Icflix content with ease and uncompromising quality, whether it’s at home or on the go on their smartphones or tablets.”

VIVA Kuwait customers will be able to enjoy original Icflix productions, from Arabia’s first teen female superhero animated series, Dunia, to the latest popular Jazwood TV series.
DIFF to feature 156 films from 55 countries

The 13th edition of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) unveiled its full line-up of 156 films from 55 countries alongside a diverse industry programme for filmmakers and executives at the Dubai Film Market (DFM), with a strong competition and a slate of special presentations, red carpet galas and community events.

The festival, which runs from December 7-14, spans feature, non-fiction and short films, and includes 57 world premieres and international premieres, 73 MENA premieres, 12 Middle East premieres and 9 GCC premieres. The films, in more than 44 languages, populate DIFF’s Arab and Emirati competitions and its out-of-competition segments are dedicated to kids, the Arab world, virtual reality and cinema from around the globe. With 18 galas and 16 special presentations announced, Q&As and special appearances from a stellar line-up of industry talent and the spotlight firmly on Oscar hopefuls as well as promising Arab talent, the stage is set for another sparkling eight-day celebration of the very best in cinema.

Continuing to provide a platform for talent from the region, once again this year, a high calibre of contemporary Arab films will compete in the Muhr Competition. This year, DIFF’s Opening Night Gala on Wednesday, 7 December presents the international premiere of John Madden’s tense and topical political thriller Miss Sloane. DIFF’s Closing Night Gala will feature Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.

IndiaCast announces auditions for local TV show

IndiaCast has announced its plans to launch a new local TV series called Checkmate, which revolves around aspiring university students competing through a series of challenging business-related tasks to win a paid internship with a leading corporate organisation in Dubai.

This 14-episode television show will be hosted by radio presenters Sid and Malvika from Breakfast Show of City 101.6 FM and is slated to go on air in February 2017. Auditions for the show will be held at Manipal University, Academic City on 23rd and 24th November from 10am onwards.

Speaking about the show, Sachin Gokhale, Senior VP and Cluster Business Head – Middle East, Africa and APAC, said: “We realised that there aren’t many TV channels which create content actively involving students and testing their calibre for the corporate world. This show is aimed specifically at our young audiences who are currently in a very important phase of their lives as they evolve from being students to responsible professionals. The show aims to find the smartest young talent and offering them a great launch pad to be able to start their career with one of the most reputed local employers.”

MBC renews contract with NBCUniversal

MBC Group hosted an event for its strategic partners focusing on MBC2, its free-to-air movie channel that offers new and exclusive Hollywood productions as well as world cinema. The event was attended by major advertisers, executives from some of the world’s best-known film and television production companies, as well as directors from MBC Group and the broadcaster’s media representation company Choueiri Group.

Ali Jaber, MBC Group TV Director said: “Today MBC2 is celebrating its phenomenal success with its partners, led by our viewers and advertisers, a channel that has seen major growth over the years. Since its launch 13 years ago, MBC2 has shown over 6,000 films to our audience of more than 100 million viewers in the Arab world. Meanwhile, on MBC2’s official Facebook page, 17 million users have ‘Liked’ us – a token of love and trust – while MBC2’s Twitter account features around five million followers.”
Rohde & Schwarz hosts Technology Day in Doha

Following the success of the first technology day in Dubai in October, Rohde & Schwarz hosted its second technology day in Doha last month. The event was attended by more than 40 broadcast and satellite professionals.

David Smith, Chief Technologist Broadcast & Media at Rohde and Schwarz, conducted the four sessions, titled ‘Scene to Screen’, covering the commercial opportunities and technical issues arising from the deployment of IP-based studios, file-based workflows and software-based encoding and multiplexing systems.

In addition, attendees gained an understanding of the application of modern codecs and transmission systems and how this affects the design and deployment of studio, contribution, distribution and monitoring systems.

The attendees had the opportunity to view in action a complete 4K transmission chain with HDR capabilities. A Venice 4K server with headends (both terrestrial and satellite) played out file-based 4K content to give the attendees a hands-on experience of the workflow.

“HDR is the key concept we are trying to show here, but it is not deliverable as yet in broadcast. No set-top boxes can play HDR content as of now. Although streaming and online services such as Netflix, Amazon and Google are already playing out content in HDR, broadcasters need to catch up. The colour details are crisper and sharper in HDR, and it gives a more immersive experience to the viewer,” said Steve Leaver, Sales Manager at Rohde & Schwarz DVS.

Salim AlNomani, PART (Public Authority for Radio and TV, Sultanate of Oman) Advisor and Engineering Chair of Committee for the DVB-T2 Project, Oman, said he attended the event for a better insight into 4K transmission.

“We are hoping to be the first Middle East broadcaster to broadcast in 4K and that’s what brings us here. Our project for digital DVB-T2 transmission covers around 70 stations in Oman. It’s a multi-million dollar project and will take two years to complete. We have already started with the design and next year, we will be installing some of the transmitters in phases. Our studios are UHD-ready, and by the end of the DVB-T2 project, we plan to have six UHD studios,” he said.

Dr Abdullah Alaraimi, Director of Frequency Planning Project Department, PART, added that he was interested in the segment on compression standards.

“We are planning to establish HEVC compression at our facility. Our channels are already broadcasting in HD and we now plan to set up Ultra HD. We are also considering setting up HDR in our studios, to support UHD.”

Zulqarnain Malik, Product Development Engineer at Es’hailsat, attended at the event to have a better understanding of the manufacturer’s playout servers.

“We are already in conversation with manufacturers to see what will be the most suitable option for cost-effective servers that meet our present and future demands. We are building a new teleport, one of the largest in Qatar spread across 50,000sqm, which will have room for more than 50 antennas. Once the teleport is established, we will be looking to offer services such as contribution, distribution and playout. David Smith’s sessions have been very educative and I quite enjoyed them.

“The new teleport will be serving our customers better. Presently, our teleport is co-located with Al Jazeera Media Network because Al Jazeera and beIN Sports are our two major customers. beIN is adding more channels so they will be in need of more capacity, which will be served by our second satellite launching in Q3 2017.”

Feras Arafah, Principal Teleport Contribution & Distribution Specialist at Al Jazeera Media Network, added: “It’s interesting to learn about new technologies, not just about the manufacturer’s products. I was particularly interested in the transmission technologies and the prospects for transmitting UHD over different platforms from DTH to OTT.”
Let’s Talk Business

The ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Summit brought together more than 300 attendees, who gathered at Habtoor Grand, Dubai Marina for a day of debate on the business of broadcast in the MENA region.

Representatives from several broadcasters in the UAE, GCC, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia as well as a number of manufacturers attended the summit. The event provided the perfect networking platform for industry specialists to congregate. Manufacturers from Europe...
and the UK were present along with systems integrators, CEOs, OTT operators, broadcast engineers, post-production experts, editors and audio specialists from the regional industry.

As every year, BroadcastPro ME put together an engaging agenda for attendees. The panel discussions covered four main topics: production, OTT, tech and business strategies. Each panel addressed the most pertinent questions related to TV in the MENA. The summit discussed at length how the MENA broadcast industry is gearing up to face the constantly changing broadcast landscape.

The impact of new media trends and changing user behaviour were discussed, as were new business paradigms in the wake of shrinking budgets.

Eutelsat Communications presented the results of a recent study it undertook about TV reception trends in the MENA. The research paper was presented for the first time at the event before its global release.

We thank our title sponsor Selevision, gold sponsor SAM, knowledge partner and OTT panel sponsor Irdeto, welcome sponsor Eutelsat, welcome sponsor Fox Networks Group, associate sponsor Pebble Beach Systems, and category sponsors Arabsat, LAWO and Yahlive for their support.

SAM, in keeping with the spirit of TV, played 60-second TVCs to showcase its offerings for the market.

The panels were interspersed with raffles, where we gave away a host of prizes including iPhone 7s from U-TO Solutions, iPad Minis from Axon and National Geographic bags from Advanced Media. We thank Sennheiser for its continuous support and providing us with headphones for raffle prizes.

Details of the panel discussions and the Eutelsat paper are in the following pages.
The ASBU BroadcastPro Summit 2016 began with a panel on production. This discussion addressed the opportunities and limitations of TV production in the Middle East. The panel was moderated by Badih Fattouh, CEO of Creative Ventures, and had a mix of panellists from both traditional and new media, including Tarek Amin, CEO of Digital at Adline Media Network; Karim Sarkis, CEO of Sync Media; Lina Matta, Senior Channel Manager at MBC Group; Wael Attili, Co-Founder & VP Content of Kharabeesh; and Shereen El Meligi, Senior Manager, Content at O3 Productions.

Badih Fattouh introduced the panellists and headed straight into the discussion to ask them about the challenges they encounter in the wake of changing user habits, and having to keep up with evolving digital trends and shrinking advertising budgets.

The biggest challenge, according to Karim Sarkis, is the mindset. Several broadcasters are stuck in an unhealthy ecosystem because of a lack of sustainable business models and inconsistent revenues.

“Digital is interesting and it looks promising, but it needs a different mindset and different players, and a new approach. It’s a tough transition for people stuck in the old ways of doing business. Brands are increasingly using digital to spread their message. So for them also the definition of content is changing, and that is bringing producers into more and more conversations with brands, which is also a positive thing,” said Sarkis.

Wael Attili of Kharabeesh, a Jordan-based MCN managing several channels on YouTube and other social media, responded by saying that the true value of digital content lies in its data.

“People are realising the immense potential of data, which will only grow in the future. Digital platforms are growing in reach and numbers, and the trend will continue in the years to come.”

Fattouh then asked the panellists if there is a pronounced move to new media and whether traditional players are switching to digital in the coming year. Is the market hungry for more digital content, he queried.

The panellists agreed that there is a palpable shift in advertising revenues, with more money gravitating towards online platforms. Sarkis pointed out that broadcasters’ ad revenues have been dipping for the past three to four years.

“There is very little experimentation going on, because broadcasters don’t have the money to take those risks right now. There is pressure to maintain a certain level of viewership, but overall, the projection has been quite bleak for production.”

Lina Matta of MBC noted that from the channel’s perspective, budgets are a huge constraint.
“YouTube is about personalities; it is not about formats. Data shows that YouTube personalities are popular throughout the region, irrespective of their country of birth, if they strike a chord with the viewers”

Wael Attili, Co-Founder & VP Content of Kharabeesh

“Space for experimenting is very narrow when it comes to running a business. We are relying on the big formats such as Arab Idol, The Voice Kids, Top Chef and so on. If we have the budget, we go after these formats that are sure to bring in money. There is more room for experimentation on the scripted content side, as viewers are now exposed to HBO and Netflix, and that’s what we should replicate in the region. We want something different to attract the viewers’ attention,” explained Matta.

“Viewers are also looking for life beyond the screen. Whether it’s games based on those shows or more webisodes for the second screen, I want that spirit to continue beyond the primary screen. It has to be an immersive experience on every level.”

Everyone agreed that OTT platforms have more room for experimentation because they don’t have a legacy of ratings to maintain. Matta added that while formats work across the pan Arab audience, drama is a more niche offering.

“The stories need to be organic and relatable,” El Meligi from O3 pointed out. Cultural nuances are the highlight of regional drama, which is defined by where it is produced. Kuwaiti drama and Syrian drama, for instance, have certain traits that are easily recognisable, and such programmes may not work on a pan Arab level.

Attili said that digital has the ability to transcend regional prejudices.

“YouTube is about personalities; it is not about formats. Data shows that YouTube personalities are popular throughout the region, irrespective of their country of birth, if they strike a chord with the viewers. A Kuwaiti YouTube star has a massive following in Saudi Arabia, and similarly, a Syrian vlogger is one of the most popular personalities in Saudi Arabia,” Attili explained.

Tarek Amin said that the money is definitely shifting towards digital, although slowly. He also stressed the importance of digital influencers and their ability to drive markets.

“The viewer is in control. More content is being produced specifically for online. A lot of content on TV today was born online, and one sees a reverse movement from online to TV, which is the ultimate goal of many digital stars,” he said.

Attili added that social media influencers have a lot of power, but more often than not, they need to be steered in the right direction, as they don’t have formal training.

Social media influencers should not be “polluted” by traditional players, El Meligi pointed out: “It’s time we shaped up and started producing content that the viewers want. We need to break the 13-episode mould and create something edgy and different to woo audiences.”

Matta and Amin seconded that, saying that broadcasters need to harness the power of digital.

“Quality is contextual. The tension between what a broadcaster is willing to pay and what a producer would like to spend has always existed. The two sides meet at a point of economic reality, and that will define quality and format on digital platforms”

Karim Sarkis, CEO, Sync Media
Matta made a very interesting point: producers today are in a very good position, as they can think beyond MBC, LBC and the big names and create content for other platforms such as Amazon, Netflix and so on.

According to Sarkis, broadcasters need to rethink the linear method of distribution and aggregate viewership to bring in advertising. They need to disassociate from their method of distribution and own content that can be delivered to wherever audiences want to consume it.

“Digital should be seen as an opportunity in this region. Unlike in the US, where broadcasters are worried that digital offerings will cannibalise their market share, MENA broadcasters are mostly not profitable and should see digital avenues to reach new audiences with targeted programming and use them to make money,” Sarkis explained.

Amin said that the digital revolution has had an impact on all industries, not just media and entertainment, and TV should use it as an opportunity to monetise content. Traditional players such as Endemol have a full-fledged digital team; such companies have woken up to the digital revolution and are turning the threat into an opportunity.

The panel agreed that big players should invest now in building a 360-degree experience for viewers and work hand-in-hand with digital players. It’s not for the future – they need to act right now.

El Meligi added that programming should be based on the needs of the viewer, who is both intelligent and well-informed. This is more so now, as control has shifted into the viewer’s hands, he said.

Fattouh asked Attili if online was suited to short-form content only, and how content creators navigated the war of sorts between platforms.

“The viewer is in control. More content is being produced specifically for online. A lot of content on TV today was born online, and one sees a reverse movement from online to TV, which is the ultimate goal of many digital stars”

Tarek Amin, CEO of Digital at Adline Media Network

The panellists were unanimous in their take on the power of new media and the need for traditional media to adapt to the change. A change in mindset is the key to move forward.

“People in this region don’t have their own local platform. The big international platforms are completely controlled by their policies, algorithms and business models, which don’t necessarily work in favour of the creator. Influencers should know how to position and promote themselves on each platform,” Attili stated.

According to Attili, the digital sphere is highly competitive and cannot afford unprofitable productions. There is a push to improve quality on digital platforms, as they are being considered more seriously by brands. This phenomenon will be advantageous in the long run for digital content.

Amin reiterated that the value of content lies in its ability to be monetised. It should be backed by data and analytics to bring more value to the table, he added.

Sarkis said: “Quality is contextual. The tension between what a broadcaster is willing to pay and what a producer would like to spend has always existed, regardless of the platform. The two sides meet at a point of economic reality, and that will define quality and format on digital platforms.”

The panelists were unanimous in their take on the power of new media and the need for traditional media to adapt to the change. A change in mindset is the key to move forward.
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The second panel of the day discussed how OTT services have revolutionised the broadcast industry. Sponsored by Irdeto, this panel discussion was moderated by Christophe Firth, Principal, A.T. Kearney. The panel featured Maaz Sheikh, CEO, Starz Play Arabia; Olivier Dufour, Group Director of Digital at beIN Media Group; Nader Sobhan, Head of Middle East & North Africa, iflix; Fares Akkad, Head of Distribution and Digital Business Development, MBC Group; and Richard Frankland, VP Sales EMEA, Irdeto.

Christophe Firth opened the discussion by asking the panellists if the prevalence of OTT in the broadcast space is worthy of being termed a revolution.

Fares Akkad of MBC Group thought not, saying that although OTT is growing, especially in the on-demand space, it is not as dramatic as a lot of people think. “We view OTT as a continuation of the 360-degree experience we try to put around our content. There is coexistence of both and one will never take over the other. Live shows, news and sports will continue to be viewed on linear TV in real time, while several other shows give the viewer the flexibility to view them anywhere, anytime,” he commented.

Maaz Sheikh of Starz Play said he sees an evolution of platforms based on age demographics and countries. Offering a personalised TV viewing experience is an attractive proposition, especially for the youth. According to Sheikh, the challenge with OTT services is to deliver their offerings on the big screen through Chromecast, Apple TV, Samsung devices and so on. Having a robust platform to deliver an unhindered experience is a revolution in its own right.

“In terms of age demographics in the 18-24 years’ bracket and 24-34 years’ bracket, there is an evolution, especially in this region, with many factors working in favour of VOD. You have 70% of the population under 30 years; you won’t find that anywhere else in the world,” said Sheikh, adding that device penetration is another factor contributing to this evolution.

He added that the biggest OTT operator, which has been very strong in the region for the last 10 years, is YouTube. Going by per capita consumption of YouTube in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, there is definitely a revolution. On a per capita basis, Saudi Arabia is number one in the world in YouTube video consumption.

Nader Sobhan of iflix, a subscription VOD platform based in Kuala Lumpur, which plans to set up base in the Middle East, said it is more about leapfrogging the platform than cord-cutting. “It’s more about us providing the viewers with what they want than people cutting the cord. We will find more content to gravitate to different platforms and the pie is getting bigger,” said Sobhan.

Firth then moved the panel’s attention to the monetisation aspect of OTT. Richard Frankland of Irdeto said monetisation is
difficult because viewers have been conditioned to receive OTT services for free.

“Only 10% of pay-TV revenues will come from OTT. We are increasing the media pie but shrinking the revenue pie, because consumers expect not to pay for over-the-top services.”

According to Sheikh, however, the shrinking of the revenue pie is a relative concept – people are willing to pay for premium content.

“Making premium and pay TV affordable is a challenge in this market, but it is also an opportunity. In emerging markets, the growth is going to come from premium content at an affordable price point. I don’t see the pie shrinking.”

Akkad said user behaviour and consumption habits are changing, which may be part of the evolution of viewing habits. He steered the discussion towards the role of social media and how it propels larger shows forward. He emphasised that big broadcasters will dominate the content space, while OTT and social media will offer the best of both worlds by engaging viewers in conversations beyond the prime-time shows.

Olivier Dufour of beIN Sports pointed out that his company has indirectly monetised OTT. “You can differentiate your OTT service by offering good quality content and a great user experience. If you have these, people will pay. We offer highlights in beIN Connect, shorten the 90-minute games and offer them as a standalone service as well as packaged with our linear TV offering.”

On the best ways to reach the audience, Sobhan gave the example of iFlix’s expansion in Asia and reiterated the importance of devising smart ways to distribute content. Sheikh agreed that intelligent distribution is the key to giving value to the customer.

“Partnering with telcos is a great way to move forward in new territories. As for network optimisation and service delivery, CDNs are very strong and we work with Level 3 and Akamai, but in certain territories, we offload directly to the ISP as well,” Sheikh said.

The three pillars of a successful OTT service, according to Sheikh, are partnerships with telcos, means of service delivery and method of payment. Sobhan agreed, but added that each market is different and there is no definitive formula for success. While iFlix has partnered with multiple telcos in some markets, such as Malaysia, the service has tied up with just one telco in the Philippines and has no telco partnerships in Thailand.

“**There is no easy formula to talk to the whole MENA region. We have the big shows but need to be able to create local experience**”

Fares Akkad, Head of Distribution and Digital Business Development, MBC Group

The OTT panel noted digital video services were not monetised to their full potential and there was a need for innovative growth strategies.
Dufour noted that trust is the key to building a strong brand. “Local electronic payment methods are not enough; we are actively expanding payment methods to penetrate different markets.”

Frankland noted that OTT services need to be more innovative with their distribution strategy to expand their reach. “Cable providers are offering Netflix through set-top boxes in many territories, and they control the gateways to those consumers through their platforms.”

Firth asked the panelists about ways to navigate a diverse market such as the MENA region, which is by no means a uniform territory and is quite complex. Akkad said MBC has been offering content that works across the lowest common denominator, which has worked in its favour. “There is no easy formula to talk to the whole MENA region. We have the big shows but need to be able to create local experience, which we have been doing successfully. The advertising in each territory is different too. OTT gives you flexibility in being more targeted in offering ads,” he commented.

Firth, at this stage, drew the panelists’ attention to the menace of piracy. Alongside mainstream media and OTT, pirated content is also a part of the pie. Pirate users often pay for illegal subscriptions, so the actual spend on TV services is higher than it seems at first.

He set the ball rolling by saying: “The common enemy for all is piracy. The battle against piracy in traditional pay TV is far from won, and now, the OTT world opens up new fronts and the threat becomes global. Are we prepared to face this?”

Frankland said everybody is competing for eyeballs in the region. “Services like MBC and beIN are actually competing against very sophisticated pirates, who have established OTT services with very advanced user interfaces and are competing for the same dollars.”

To prove this point, Irdeto held a quiz at the end of this session and only a handful of people from among 300 attendees were able to identify legal services from pirated ones. Israel Esteban from beIN Media Group won a VR unit for correctly identifying the legal services.

Sobhan further added that the best way to fight piracy is to provide a better experience and an affordable price point. Providing a download function also makes a streaming service a valuable proposition for the user to watch in offline mode. iFlix is offering this feature in several territories.

The panelists agreed that piracy should be countered with carrots, not sticks. Frankland noted that securing media assets using technology also works, and that the proliferation of services such as watermarking, especially for 4K content, is a move in the right direction.

Sheikh said that delivering content on time is extremely important to be able to win eyeballs. A lack of awareness of pirated content is another aspect that makes it difficult to tackle the issue.

The panelists concluded that collapsing release windows of new films and shows is very important to discourage piracy, as is offering localised, tailor-made content in an appealing and convenient way.

“Making premium and pay TV affordable is a challenge in this market, but it is also an opportunity. In emerging markets, the growth is going to come from premium content at an affordable price point. I don’t see the pie shrinking”

Maaz Sheikh, CEO, Starz Play
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EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGY

The CTOs discussed ways to embrace the changes in broadcast technology and how to use them as a vehicle to move forward and give viewers quality content.
with more complex production workflows, Van Dam said that very soon, remote production will take over and trucks will become compact, based on Cisco switches, but will never go out of fashion.

Commenting on Al Jazeera’s 20-year journey, Abuagla said that Al Jazeera has evolved in the past two decades, moving away from big and bulky equipment to a more compact IT infrastructure. Along with transformation in the equipment, the skill set of the team has also matured over the years, with more software-centric processes in place.

Ian Cockett added that broadcast is moving away from proprietary hardware and adding more software-only solutions to run workflows.

“Everyone was using the same vendors and the same technology for SDI distribution on video servers 15 years ago. This is changing, now we have internet companies, telcos as service providers that want to go into data centres, because they can’t afford the same business model based on the same tech they have been using in the past,” he said.

Sveb then asked the panel if a pure IP environment is doable. While many broadcasters are considering hybrid systems, a move to pure IP seems like a distant reality. What are the key drivers of pushing IP? Is 4K a key driver?

Van Dam noted that it is early days for the OB segment to move to IP, but growing remote productions will be a step in the right direction.

Cockett added that big IP installations involve a lot of cost. “You cannot buy cheap switches, you need to have enterprise grade switches whose costs are quite prohibitive, which in turn adds to the cost of the shift to IP.”

Sveb then asked if 4K is possible without IP, and how beIN is handling its 4K channels.

Esteban commented that the major challenges in 4K deployment that make it an expensive proposition in the region are the high cost of bandwidth and security issues. While all broadcasters have a clear mandate to deploy 4K, the time frame is not yet clear.

Cockett added that 4K is mainly driven by display manufacturers, but setting up an infrastructure to deliver it is not easy. Van Dam noted that production is already happening in 4K, especially sports and special events, which have clear commercial goals to fulfil.

Kerrin said that just like the move to HD, 4K will happen gradually. “The way forward is to create smaller 4K islands and then...
slowly graduate to the next level, to mitigate the costs involved.”

Van Dam also directed the panel’s attention to the fact that the MENA region is not homogeneous in terms of development. In many territories in the MENA, people still use 4:3 TVs.

“We need to look at 4K, but who are we serving? Are the viewers ready? Many territories are not yet ready for deployment. But we are gearing up for it because as a government entity we are driven by service rather than achieving commercial goals.”

Abuagla added that 4K is not a priority for Al Jazeera, for several reasons.

“Display manufacturers have to make cheaper units, the cost of distribution of 4K content has to be meaningful and, thirdly, being in the business of news it is more important for us to get the message across to the user than to see how good it looks. We don’t see a big business case for 4K just yet. Maybe on the documentary side, but now 4K is not needed for news,” he said.

Sven then asked the CTOs to shed light on their cloud strategies.

Abuagla said Al Jazeera is moving quite aggressively on the cloud front.

“The way forward is to create smaller 4K islands and then slowly graduate to the next level, to mitigate the costs involved”

Frank Kerrin, Director of Technology Support and Projects, Broadcast Engineering, OSN

“We built the Al Jazeera Media Cloud with the idea of connecting all of our major hubs globally in a cloud mesh, to enable anyone sitting in a remote office to access resources from these hubs. We are also working on a combination of private and public clouds to host media services,” he explained.

He added that Al Jazeera is looking at running its OTT services from the cloud and is in talks with big cloud players such as Amazon and Microsoft to build an infrastructure.

“We are looking at creating interactive tools for journalists in the field to fast-track the production cycle and get the story out to the viewer as quickly as possible,” Abuagla said.

Sven asked Kerrin about OSN’s OTT strategy and how cloud features. He said that cloud could be a great enabler for OTT services.

“Although the cloud is expensive to use, the upside is you only pay for what you use, which makes it an attractive tool to deal with spikes in OTT consumption. If we suddenly have a lot of content that needs to be played out on multiple devices, cloud computing comes in handy. We are presently looking for public cloud to store our backup, which will open up opportunities to augment our services manifold. We also plan to run all of our OTT from the cloud,” he pointed out.

Cockett concluded the discussion by saying that in the fast-changing broadcast scenario, it is no longer a surprise to see a big public broadcaster playing out from a PC or a tier-one service provider moving its business to the data centre.

“Today, public cloud utilisation is for DR and to maintain low-cost business continuity. We will see more of that. Also, more users of live playout will do other versions for mobile and streaming. A few years down the line one may still find SDI, but one part of the business is moving very quickly into a software-only setup,” he summed up.
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2016 EUTELSAT TV OBSERVATORY

Claudia Vaccarone, Head of Market Research & Customer Experience, at Eutelsat unveiled the results of a new survey on TV reception modes and trends across the MENA for the first time at the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Summit before its global release.

Satellite is the preferred digital infrastructure across the Middle East and North Africa

Overall, satellite in the MENA region remains the backbone of digital TV infrastructure, reaching 56.1 million homes. This represents more than 90% of the 61.1 million TV homes from Morocco to the Gulf states. The 2016 Eutelsat TV Observatory claims that three out of four of the 3.4 million homes in 14 Arab countries that have adopted satellite over the last three years have preferred the 7/8° West neighbourhood that hosts Eutelsat and Nilesat satellites.

Satellite is the primary source of TV content delivery, reaching 91% of TV homes (56.1 million) in the MENA

Eutelsat 7/8° West neighbourhood

The study claims that Eutelsat’s 7/8° West neighbourhood reaches 52.3 million homes in 14 Arab countries, up 2.6 million since 2014. At equal perimeter, there is 7% growth in the six Arab countries surveyed in both 2014 and 2016 that represent 76% of TV homes in the region. The pull of 7/8° West is driven by a strong channel line-up of 1,264 Arabic and international channels and the diversity and exclusivity of free-to-air content (44% of channels are exclusive to this position).

7.5 million
TV users intend to purchase ULTRA HD/4K TV sets
HDTV: One in three TV homes equipped
HD is gaining traction, with the number of HD-equipped homes crossing a threshold of 20 million, up from 14.4 million and now accounting for 34% of TV homes in the region. This percentage is even higher within the 7/8 West audience (46%), Eutelsat claims. 50% of interviewed panellists were aware of Ultra HD. GfK data reveals that 1.2 million Ultra HD TV sets were sold by the end of 2015.

KEY FIGURE

24 million
24 million TV homes now HD-equipped

KEY FIGURE

1,128
The MENA region receives 1,128 SD channels and 149 HD channels

Eutelsat’s TV Observatory is an extensive multi-national analysis of TV reception modes and trends carried out in 51 audiovisual markets in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Working with TNS and IPSOS, new analysis in 14 Arab-speaking MENA markets was carried out in March-April 2016 via face-to-face interviews with over 10,000 consumers in six markets (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE) accounting for 76% of TV homes in the region, complemented by secondary research data. The study excludes hotels, public administration buildings, hospitality structures and other countries included in the 7/8 West footprint such as Mauritania, Sudan and Ethiopia.

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The final panel discussion of the day was the CEO panel with Sam Barnett, CEO of MBC Group; Sanjay Raina, GM of Fox International Channels, Middle East; Emad Morcos, Chief Content Officer at OSN; and Dr Raed Khusheim, CEO of Selevision.

Moderated by Karim Sarkis, the panel touched on a number of talking points, such as the shift of linear TV from free-to-air to pay, big broadcasters’ content strategy and the role of new digital platforms. Sarkis began by asking the panellists about their outlook for 2017.

Emad Morcos of OSN said that 2017 will represent the next step after the Orbit-Showtime merger in 2009 and the creation of OSN. This is the next milestone in business for OSN and the focus in the coming years will be the network’s OTT proposition and 4K products, he said.

“We are excited about the initiatives that we will be rolling out in the coming months; needless to say, the outlook is very positive,” he commented.

Sarkis then asked Sanjay Raina of Fox International Channels about Fox’s recent move from free-to-air to pay and how it is benefitting the company.

According to Raina, the shift was a necessity because the network did not see much value in the free-to-air portfolio. He added that there is unsated demand for content across platforms, delivery modes and geographies.

“The consumer wants good content; whether it comes from free-to-air or pay TV, it doesn’t matter to the end user. We will keep generating great content and introducing more brands, as we believe this region has immense untapped monetising opportunities,” he said.

Regarding Selevision’s strategy in 2017, Dr Raed said the company will continue to collaborate with content providers to create value-added products for the MENA consumer.

Sam Barnett’s view was quite positive too. He responded to negative forecasts by saying that while the industry has suffered because of the dipping oil price, there are several reasons to be upbeat about the future.

“Even in mature markets, people are taking a positive view on the future. In emerging markets like the Middle East, that should be even more positive. We have been very aggressive on TV. I think one of the things that’s going to happen is that with the satellite configuration changing in the MENA to 26 degrees East and at 7 degrees, we expect to see a new advertising market bubble up. Now we have popular channels in the Gulf, we have our own channels in Egypt and the spot beam in North Africa; we are geared up to exploit that growth,” he said.

Sarkis asked the panelists if the shift to pay TV is the way forward and whether Fox’s move to pay is only the tip of the iceberg, with many more channels following suit. Will spot beams revitalise the FTA market?

Raina repeated that in his view, the industry is not segregated in terms of pay or FTA. These are just means of delivering content to the end user, he pointed out.

“Indonesia and Taiwan are examples of how ad revenues can result in thriving robust markets. We look at generating value irrespective of the means of delivery, be it free-to-air or...
pay. We had our reasons to move to the pay environment. Having said that, if the market changes and there are better opportunities in FTA, we can go back to the old model.”

Raina pointed out that Fox still has one FTA channel, Nat Geo Abu Dhabi, which runs on advertising and not through a licensing fee. The decision was to move entertainment away from FTA.

Morcos, however, had a different view of the two business models.

“The consumer clearly knows the difference between free-to-air and pay TV, especially when it comes to premium content and specialty channels. As a pay TV operator, our services entail much more than delivering linear channels. We also offer value-added services such as catch-up, on demand and TV everywhere to give the viewer a 360-degree experience,” he said.

Barnett interjected to say that as a free-to-air operator, even MBC offers over-the-top value-added services such as catch-up, in addition to premium content from the best studios.

“With 1,200 FTA channels in a region with more than 75 million TV households, only 5 million pay for TV,” he said.

“Sports is a challenge to monetise on FTA and so we just encrypted the HD version of Saudi League on gobox”

Sam Barnett, CEO, MBC Group

Morcos listed the additional services pay TV offers.

“We have several offerings to differentiate our content, our pay-per-view proposition being one. We offer bundled services as box sets to give the viewer choice of the way they want to watch content. The value of premium content lies in its release window, by the time content reaches the free-to-air window, it is already quite old,” he noted.

Dr Raed further supported Morcos, saying that the long window leads to piracy as well.

“Regardless of the competition, piracy is a common enemy. Even FTA suffers because of piracy. Pay TV operators have their own set-top boxes, it’s just inconvenient to the user to have several set-top boxes.”

Raina disagreed with Dr Raed, saying piracy can’t be blamed for a stagnant market.

“Piracy is a worldwide phenomenon, and despite that the markets are growing. Take the example of India, with 140 million DTH households. Piracy of Indian DTH boxes is unabated, yet the business is growing. Malaysia has widespread piracy too, but the business there is growing. We need to be more innovative in our offerings to woo the consumer. Where are the skinny packages? Do we understand our customer? OTT has immense potential, are we doing enough to harness that?”

Sarkis asked Morcos if OSN had plans to rethink its business model in terms of redesigning its packages to address lower price points given the increased competition from beIN.

“A year ago, we introduced packages to address different markets in the region with different GDPs. As our business evolves, we are speaking to partners to create skinny bundles and work out lower prices. While content is important, how we package and sell it is the key,” Morcos said.

Sarkis asked Barnett about MBC’s strategy going forward with its set-top boxes. He said that advertising in a market with 250 million potential users is a huge opportunity for growth.

“The general outlook of the panel for TV in 2017 was quite positive. MBC has had a pay channel since
2008. For the HD channels, the studios demanded that we encrypt the channels. We have Shahid, which is a free OTT product and Shahid Plus, which follows a subscription model. Sports is a challenge to monetise on FTA and so we just encrypted the HD version of Saudi League on gobox,” noted Barnett.

Sarkis asked the panellists about the outlook for beIN and Gobox? According to Morcos, the introduction of more pay platforms in the market is a good sign, as it helps a behavioural change of consumers towards pay TV in general, making them more accepting of the phenomenon. Raina agreed that more providers will lead to a robust and healthy pay TV industry.

“We derive most of our revenue from pay. I feel the region holds immense potential for the five million pay industry to treble or quadruple in the coming years”

Sanjay Raina, GM, Fox International Channels

proposition. Dr Raed said that future set-top boxes need to be HEVC-compliant, and that standardisation is a must for the industry to thrive.

“The objective is to attract more eyeballs. There is room for better quality channels, as only 20% of the MENA channels are digital.”

Barnett said that the control of the set top box is a defence mechanism for platform owners, as dominant operators could become gatekeepers with the power to block access to a market. He further added that the industry needs to be regulated to protect operators, which is not likely to happen as it involves political and infrastructural changes.

In the last segment of the discussion, Sarkis asked the panel about digital advertising.

“It is said that the total spend on digital advertising by 2020 will be 50% of the total share. How quickly do you see this shift in allocation of resources? It is also said that 70% of this spend goes to Google and Facebook. How will this impact the industry?”

Barnett maintained his stand: regardless of the new trends, there is enough room for TV advertising to grow in emerging markets. He added that digital revenues are growing very fast but that has not led to a shift in or decline of revenues on mainstream TV channels.

On OSN’s digital strategy, Morcos said user behaviour is changing, with more traction towards OTT products now than ever before. Sarkis asked if operators feel an urgency to accelerate premium products on OTT platforms. Raina felt they do, saying that OTT is a reality, and channels and content owners need to focus on that with tailor-made products.

As far as the changes in the coming year, Dr Raed pointed out that linear TV advertising and digital advertising should leverage the digital advantage. He also emphasised that live TV advertising will be bigger.

The general consensus was that, regardless of the strategies, digital will be more important for both content owners and channels in 2017, and that companies will focus on further developing digital products.
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STARRY NIGHT
The MENA broadcast industry converged at Habtoor Grand on the evening of November 15, 2016, for the sixth annual ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards.

This year, we marked yet another milestone in MENA broadcast as we rewarded excellence in this region. The sixth annual ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards brought together more than 400 industry professionals for the gala evening.

The awards recognised broadcast specialists from the MENA in both traditional and new media. We had 18 awards in creative and technical categories, including two satellite awards. Our title sponsor Selevision also gave away four trophies to key industry players as a recognition of their ongoing support for MENA broadcast.

We introduced several new categories this time around, keeping in mind the new wave of digital content and the ever evolving broadcast technology. Best apps, radio projects, digital initiatives, kids’ entertainment and IP installations were some of the new categories, in addition to the conventional ones such as Studio of the Year, SI of the Year, Innovative Project Award and MENA Broadcast Trendsetter.

We received a large number of entries this year, with more than 100 nominations in various categories.

The jury

Our judges this year were (in alphabetical order):
- Hasan Sayed Hasan, Managing Director, Master Media
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- Paul Baboudjian, Film Producer at Tharwa Production FZ LLE
- Tony Ruthnam, Freelance Editor/Post-Production Consultant
- Clayton Vallabhan, Editor, SatellitePro ME
- Vibhuti Arora, Deputy Editor, BroadcastPro ME
- Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director, CPI Media Group.
BroadcastPro Middle East magazine honoured the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) for spearheading the growth of the MENA broadcast industry, for encouraging the use of standards amongst broadcasters and continuously aiming to encourage collaboration between public and private broadcasters. Mr. Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General of ASBU, received the award.

BroadcastPro Middle East magazine presented a memento to Dr. Raed Khusheim, CEO of Selevision in honour of his contribution and commitment to the broadcast community. This tribute also honours Dr. Raed for supporting our endeavours through the magazine as well as the Summit and Awards to create a platform for the MENA broadcast fraternity to exchange information, share their experiences and celebrate their achievements.
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Selevision conducted a short ceremony at the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards gala to acknowledge four key individuals and entities that have contributed to the growth of Arabic content in the MENA TV industry.

**SELEVISON AWARD**

**Talal Awamleh, Arab Telemedia Group**

Talal Awamleh of Arab Telemedia Group received the Selevision Award for elevating historical TV shows with premium 4K content and subtitling Arabic content for a global audience on iTunes.

**SELEVISON AWARD**

**Ahmad AlShugairi**

Ahmad AlShugairi of Aram TV received the Selevision Award for his show *Qumra*, which is the first interactive programme of its kind on any Arabic TV channel. The Award acknowledges the pivotal role that *Qumra* played in spreading awareness among Arab youth and shedding light on myriad topics relevant to this audience.
Sadma
Sadma was the highest rated show during Ramadan 2016. The show used shock therapy to examine human interest issues and enlighten Arab audiences about several pressing issues in Arab society. It was the first show of its kind to capture audiences’ reactions and re-enact scenarios while promoting important Arab social values to the Arab audience. Tariq Al Ibrahim, Channel Manager of MBC1 and MBC Drama received the award on behalf of Fadi Ismail of O3 Productions.

Safa Aburizik, Beelink Productions
Safa Aburizik, Director General of Beelink Productions received the award for the superior production of Ramadan 2016 TV drama, Grand Hotel, which wowed Arab audiences with its spectacular scenery and breathtaking costumes, perfectly capturing the magic and elegance of the period.
PRO AWARDS

Broadcast Awards

BEST SHORT PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR

Emirati Martyrs, Abu Dhabi Media

This Abu Dhabi Media Company production was a moving account of the lives of Emirati martyrs. The short film impressed with its high production value and good sound design. Overall, a very well executed project that stood out for presenting an emotional story. Juma AlHouti (r), Deputy Executive Director of TV & Head of Al Emarat Channel – TV at Abu Dhabi Media Company receives the award from Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General of ASBU.

BEST LONG PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR

Abu Dhabi Super Tunnel, Fox Networks Group

A Fox Networks Group Middle East production, this film documents beautifully some of the lesser known facts involved in the building of a modern construction wonder like the Abu Dhabi Super Tunnel. Marlain Daniel (l), Director of Content and Partnerships, and Alex Chami, Executive Producer of National Geographic Abu Dhabi receive the award from Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General of ASBU.
The Ultimate 4K Toolbox
FS4: Offering Unparalleled Workflow Flexibility

FS4 is a four channel 2K/HD/SD or single channel 4K/ UltraHD frame synchronizer and up, down, cross-converter. This flagship frame sync and converter delivers incredible versatility and connectivity in a sleek 1RU frame for comprehensive 4K/UltraHD and 2K/HD/SD conversion needs. With a wide range of connection options for both video and audio, FS4 can do the work of four separate devices in 2K/HD/SD or combine all processors and channels together for reliable 4K/UltraHD productivity.

Single Channel Mode
Bulletproof reliability. Incredible conversion power.
FS4 offers incredible connectivity for 4K/ UltraHD workflows with support for Quad 1.5G, Dual 3G, Quad 3G over 3G-SDI and 12Gb/6Gb over optional 12G SFP+ support. Up, down, cross-convert to your heart’s content from SD all the way through to 4K. Audio is no slouch either with an incredible 272 x 208 matrix of audio capabilities including MADI, AES and embedded audio channels.

Four Channel Mode
Multi-channel density in a 1RU Chassis. Space, energy and power possibilities preserved.
In four channel mode FS4 provides incredibly powerful multi-channel conversion with up to four channels of simultaneous processing for 2K/HD and SD signals. Powerful processing allows Region of Interest (ROI) scaling, color correction, processing amplifier controls, motion adaptive deinterlacing and much more.

12G/6G HD-BNC and Fiber SFP+ Options
Expand your bandwidth.
FS4’s SFP+ options include both 12G/6G-SDI HD-BNC and Fiber I/O options, as well as the choice of 3G-SDI Fiber SFP and CWDM multiple wavelength CWDM SFPs, allowing advanced multiplexing of signals over a single fiber connection.
Choose what you need for great SDI flexibility and fiber cable runs of up to 10 kilometers, all connected directly to the FS4 without the need for separate fiber to SDI conversion.
Dubai Media Inc.

Dubai Media Inc. unveiled a fully revamped IP-based radio facility for its two channels broadcasting from Dubai. The new station is a fully integrated, network-based IP radio facility. The project involved a completely new studio set-up that fulfilled a number of objectives for the broadcaster and gave it additional capability and scalability. Hasan Sayed Hasan (second from left), Managing Director at Master Media presents the award to the DMI team.

Fatafeat ICCA Online Academy

Fatafeat ICCA Online Academy from Discovery Networks MENA has achieved something quite unique by offering the first TV and online based food course available on any screen in both Arabic and English, with both free and paid modules leading to prestigious accreditation in a flexible way. It has gone beyond the conventional method to try and make the business financially viable. The Discovery MENA team receives the award from Yahlive.
broadcast awards

radio trendsetter of the year

Arabian Radio Network

On the 1st of May 2016, ARN complemented the output from its existing terrestrial services with the launch of seven new digital-only radio brands to cater to a larger audience. This radio network has always stayed at the forefront of innovation to deliver great content and experience to its listeners. From left: Ali Korur, CEO of Eutelsat MENA presents the award to Steve Smith, COO of ARN.

app of the year

Appy Kids

Appy Kids Play School app was unanimously selected by the jury for providing a holistic learning experience to pre-schoolers in a fun and interactive way. The judges were impressed with the design and user friendly interface of the app, and also the fact that in addition to being a learning tool, it gives a way to monitor the child’s progress through a companion app. The companion app links to the Play School app and was developed for parents and teachers. Dinesh Lalvani, CEO of Appy Kids, and Claire Lalvani, CMO, receive the award from Sanjay Raina, GM & VP at FOX International Channels.
Broadcast Awards

OUTSTANDING KIDS’ BROADCAST INITIATIVE

Majid Entertainment

Majid Entertainment Channel launched last year and is one of the top three channels for children and young adults in the region. Its Facebook page has 2.1m followers while Instagram has 65,000 and Twitter 24,300. Its app has more than 700,000 downloads in seven months and four of its game apps have reached more than 500,000 downloads. Mohamed Yehya (r), GM at Majid Entertainment receives the award from Laith Alani (l), Regional Sales Manager at Arabsat.

INNOVATION IN MENA SPORT

Dawri Plus, Intigral

Intigral’s Dawri Plus enables users to be part of a 360-degree engagement with football through social login and participation around the match events. It facilitates the communication of fan communities with each other, all on the same screen as live stream and overlay statistics. The Intigral team receives the award from Klaus-Joerg Jasper (centre), Sales Director – Middle East, LAWO.
PRO AWARDS

BEST STUDIO OF THE YEAR

Studio 5, Al Jazeera Media Network

The newly built Studio 5 for Al Jazeera Arabic is a beautiful studio that includes an open newsroom and presently accommodates 290 journalists. It has been designed as a template to be used across the whole of the facility and to enable a coherent design across the whole network. This will enable ease of operations and maintenance for personnel who work cross–site. Ibrahim Al Akkad (left) from SAM presents the award to the Al Jazeera team.

INC SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR

INC System Integrations

INC has delivered a number of projects across the GCC including Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar. The SI has successfully executed projects that are not only technically superlative but also showcase high-quality integrated systems displaying top-notch project management methodology, logistics and solid financial resources. Sherif Shaker from SAM presents the award to Adeeab Abed, GM- Broadcast at INC System Integrations.
beIN Media Group

beIN Media Group has been making headlines since the launch of its entertainment portfolio last year for creating a robust offering with world-class content. On the tech side, it broadcast Euro 2016 in 4K. It also further consolidated its position in the sports rights space by exclusively acquiring the rights to several important events. It completely changed the dynamics in the market for pay TV. Faisal Al-Raisi (r), Manager of Digital Projects at beIN Media Group receives the award from Khaled Jamal, Sales Director MENA, Irdeto.

Sky News Arabia

SNA won this award for two projects. It has designed and implemented the world’s first, fully automated live Arabic subtitling solution on an OTT platform. The second project, an IP contribution network involved significant product enhancements to enable the transmission of broadcast-quality video over both private networks and public internet resulting in significant cost savings. Ian Cockett (centre), CTO of Pebble Beach Systems, presents the award to the SNA team.
OUTSTANDING OTT PLAYER OF 2016

Starz Play

Starz Play arrived in the region just 18 months ago and has since grown its subscriber base by a phenomenal 2,700%. Today, the company has strategic partnerships with major telco providers in the region. It provides a premium viewing experience with full HD and 4K content at a very attractive price point and gives the user the option to choose from a variety of safe payment options. Richard Frankland (extreme left), VP Sales EMEA, Irdeto hands over the award to the Starz Play team.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

UAE Football - Pro League Committee

UAE Football - Pro League Committee was given a special recognition award for working against several odds to redefine football broadcasting in the UAE. We salute its commitment to high-quality sports broadcasting in the country. Ammar Hina, Sr. Broadcast Services Manager at PLC with the award.
PRO AWARDS

Editor’s Choice Awards

EXCELLENCE IN PROJECT EXECUTION
Ali Elhusseini, Al Jazeera Media Network
In every organisation, there are people who have ideas and there are those who make those ideas happen. It’s not enough to have a great idea, there is always an unsung hero who needs to turn it into reality and Ali Elhusseini of Al Jazeera Media has a proven track record of doing just that. Pictured is Ali Elhusseini, Head of Operations at AJMN with the award.

TECH ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR
Dave Mace, Sky News Arabia
It’s not easy to persuade vendors to adapt their product to meet the needs of the business always with an eye on cost especially when it is challenging or emerging technology but Dave Mace has successfully delivered multiple award-winning projects. He turned a vision into reality by executing the broadcaster’s IP contribution network at a fraction of the estimated cost. Pictured is Dave Mace with the award.
Intelsat

With the launch of its satellites in January and August, the first two satellites of the EpicNG platform, Intelsat has proven that it is delivering globally on the high throughput promise it made four years ago, with broadband, wireless and mobility customers already reporting higher performance and unprecedented efficiency gains on the EpicNG platform. Shahrokh Khanzadeh-Amiri, Director of Sales, MENA, Intelsat pictured with the award.

du

du has combined satellite and new media technology to broadcast media seamlessly to its customers’ end users. The telco has brought satellite services into the future to deliver end-to-end content delivery while finding new ways to accelerate growth in the broadcast and media market. Abou Mustafa, VP of datamen and Enterprise Managed services of du with the award.
When it matters
Where it matters!

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WHEN it matters WHERE it matters!
Much has been said and written about the broadcast industry’s transition to IP – but are we as whole-hearted about it as we should be?

IP: THE WAY FORWARD


Do you have any idea what that number is? I’ll tell you. It’s the number of addresses that IPv6 will support. IPv4, its predecessor, supports a mere 4.3 billion addresses – which isn’t even enough for one for everyone in the world.

You’re probably asking now: what point is he trying to make? Simply, it’s hard to overstate the importance of IP in the world today – and perhaps more importantly, in the world tomorrow. IP is huge and unstoppable. It is, with all those addresses available, the glue that can enable everything and everyone in the world to be connected with everything and everyone else.

Versatility, performance, flexibility

Think, for a moment, of everything IP allows us to do in our everyday lives. Its versatility, its performance, its flexibility are astonishing. It has been one of the most transformative technologies of the past century, and has enabled innovation on a scale previously unimaginable. It’s pretty much the case that we have yet to find anything IP can’t enable us to do when it comes
“It’s hard to overstate the importance of IP in the world today – and perhaps more importantly, in the world tomorrow. IP is huge and unstoppable. It is, with all those addresses available, the glue that can enable everything and everyone in the world to be connected with everything and everyone else”

Simen K Frostad, Chairman, Bridge Technologies

...to making content, information and entertainment available to as many people as possible.

That’s why it’s so important that we don’t try and make IP into something different – or, probably worse, ignore it altogether. It’s a hugely successful technology, and one that can deliver enormous benefits to our industry if we accept that it can enable us to do virtually anything we want to do today – and tomorrow.

I was surprised by a survey I saw the other day, commissioned by a major broadcast supplier, that indicated that around 13% of broadcasters don’t plan to migrate to IP until 2017, and an astonishing 15.5% have no plans for migration to IP at all. That survey tells me that not everyone in our industry yet understands what IP is all about, or its potential. To me, that’s somewhat worrying.

Of course, it’s only human to regret the passing of something that has been central to our lives for many years, and has allowed even more. As an industry, we need to ensure we’re positioned to take advantage of what IP is and will be, and not get deflected into trying to create some custom variant of it. Ideally, we shouldn’t be thinking “this is how it should work”; we should embrace “this is how it does work”.

Opportunity to innovate

There’s no doubt that we should be embracing, as we look to the future of our industry, what IP brings in terms of the opportunity to innovate. IP brings the opportunity to design whatever we want, design however we want to do it. We can design systems any way we like. IP can significantly reduce complexity in the production process. IP can enable an abstract type of redundancy that is just not possible with any other technology. And look at how the IT-ification of our industry is driving commoditisation of the building blocks we rely on, delivering higher performance and lower prices...
“As an industry, we need to ensure we’re positioned to take advantage of what IP is and not get deflected into trying to create some custom variant of it”

Simen K Frostad, Chairman, Bridge Technologies

will hold for IP? What’s really exciting to think about are the IP innovations we haven’t even seen yet – innovations that will open up even more possibilities and even more new ways of doing things, and enable us to achieve things that today we can scarcely imagine.

IP brings myriad benefits. But the benefits of IP aren’t just about tomorrow. They’re about today.

That’s why we must encourage our industry to migrate to a ‘pure’ IP environment as rapidly as possible. Of course, there needs to be a period of transition – but at the end of that transition period, we need to have embraced IP as it is implemented throughout the entire world if we’re to feel its full benefit.

Just think of all those IPv6 addresses just waiting to be used.

Simen K Frostad is Chairman of Bridge Technologies.

on almost a weekly basis. That trend is guaranteed to continue.

The broadcast industry is fundamentally interconnected. To get our content created and distributed, we need infrastructure. IP brings performance and flexibility enabling us to connect anything with anything, from the most esoteric devices to the humble server. No single technology we’ve had before has allowed us to do that, which is why the transformation to an IP-centric world is a far greater revolution in our industry than the transition from monochrome to colour, or the transition from analogue to digital.

It’s the most significant thing to happen to our industry since the invention of broadcast itself.

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PRO GUEST

Originally conceived as strategic military tools, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) have become useful for scientific data collection and agricultural applications, as well as a recreational hobby. More recently, news agencies have begun to embrace UAVs, more commonly known as drones, for aerial newsgathering. In early October, drone footage became an integral part of the coverage of many media outlets to show the destruction caused by Hurricane Matthew.

For example, in the United States, the Federal Aviation Administration no doubt helped the potential use of drones by broadcasters in August, when it enacted new rules loosening regulations for drones that weigh less than 55 pounds (approximately 24kg). There are still regulations – visual line of sight between the drone and its pilot is required, plus the drone may fly no higher than 400 feet (approximately 121m) above ground level and can fly only during local daylight hours. However, the new rules are far less burdensome, and some restrictions (such as flying at night or over people) can even be waived by the FAA. Plus, there is no need for an advanced flight plan or pilot’s licence for operators.

While there are plenty of restrictions, drones offer broadcasters an enticing option for live coverage of sports, weather events, natural disasters and hazardous areas of interest. Drones literally deliver a new angle on the Big Story. Yes, there are equipment and training costs, but a drone has a significantly smaller price tag than a news helicopter. That’s not to say drones will suddenly replace news industry’s helicopters – but they do offer aerial coverage options for stations that cannot afford a chopper.

Of course, for any drone to be an effective option for aerial ENG, it needs to be able to transmit footage back to the broadcaster in real time. Some recreational drones record HD footage to an on-board media card while transmitting a low-res version of the footage to a mobile device for live monitoring. That’s fine for a hobbyist, but broadcasters need a system that provides live and reliable HD transmission.

Generally, there are two approaches to producing drone-based live video transmissions. The first features on-board hardware systems integrated into the drone itself, for an all-in-one solution. An on-board solution can be more expensive because of the customised hardware, and it locks the station into using that particular drone.

The second approach connects external hardware to the drone’s remote control. While not as neat and tidy as the integrated approach, some solutions require as little as one HDMI connection to enable transmission. The use of external hardware provides the same video transmission capabilities, but users are not locked in to a particular drone. Plus, once the transmission is complete, the external hardware can be used for other assignments using other video cameras.

In 2015, video transmission companies began announcing aerial ENG solutions tailored for the drone market, often in cooperation with drone manufacturers. Broadcasters have a choice of methods for drone footage transmission, including cellular, Wi-Fi, Ethernet, microwave and satellite. Video-over-IP technology has become a popular choice for early adopters, because it allows broadcasters to transmit live HD video with minimal latency and easily insert drones into existing workflows.

With readily available technology and the loosening of FAA restrictions, many industry experts believe drones will quickly become an essential part of the newsgathering process, not just a technological novelty.

Eric Chang is Vice President of Marketing at TVU Networks. TVU Networks has been working with DJI to develop its Aerial Newsgathering Pack, which can deliver full HD videos from a drone to any broadcast facility, with less than one second of latency.

“Live news with drones

“For any drone to be an effective option for aerial ENG, it needs to be able to transmit footage back to the broadcaster in real time. Some recreational drones record HD footage to an on-board media card while transmitting a low-res version”
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