Tech leaders discuss transformative technologies that will steer the regional broadcast industry forward in 2017
What New Year resolutions have you made this year? Have you decided to rid your company of all the legacy systems that are preventing progress? Have you decided it’s time to have a serious talk with your management about cloud and the myriad benefits of taking that huge step, or is this the year when you have resolved to find yourself an organisation that will allow you to shed traditional inhibitions and break new ground?

We had a few senior tech executives at a roundtable last month, where they discussed technologies that they thought would transform their business and their plans for 2017. Topics that came out of the discussion were the importance of the cloud, virtualisation, IP, data analytics, software-defined networks, 4K and the need for one user interface for hapless end users.

It was clear that all of them were in various stages of evaluating most of these technologies, especially cloud, but not many were actually in any stage of deployment.

Something the Microsoft representative said at the roundtable set off alarm bells in my head and I thought I would share it with you. If you haven’t been thinking about the cloud just yet, its huge business potential and the solutions it provides, he said, market conditions will eventually compel you to move into it.

It could be a seamless hybrid cloud, where you maintain your confidential assets in a private cloud while using other services from a public environment, but whatever it is, market conditions will force you to head the cloud way. If you’ve been shying away from the cloud, it’s not too late to start thinking about it. 2017 may well be the Year of the Cloud for broadcasters in the MENA.

I wish all of you a Happy New Year!

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director
Inside this issue

05 NEWS
YouTube Space to launch in Dubai Studio City, Dubai Film and TV Commission hosts first Digital Media Summit, Amazon Web Services opens Dubai office, BroadcastAsia 2017 to feature new drone and VR clusters, Turner announces 2017 line-up and more news from the region

16 TRANSFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR 2017
At our last roundtable, MENA tech experts discussed technologies that will transform their business in 2017

28 RED ALERT
Dubai Film uses RED cameras to capture Jetman in action

32 DMI STRENGTHENS COMMUNICATIONS
DMI’s latest SNG vehicle adds more efficiency to the broadcaster’s live productions

36 REVIEW - SONY FS7 II
Dubai-based DoP gives us the lowdown on Sony’s newest camera

44 GUEST COLUMN
Menno Koopmans speaks about the power of building voice capabilities into remote controls
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.

YouTube has partnered with Dubai Studio City to launch an incubator space that provides YouTube creators with the tools and guidance to innovate and experiment with content. The collaboration will help to launch YouTube Space, where the MENA region’s most talented YouTube content creators, from Dubai to Jeddah, Cairo and Casablanca, will have free access to high-end audio, visual and editing equipment, in addition to training programmes, workshops and courses.

There are already nine other YouTube Spaces in Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, New York City, Berlin, Sao Paulo, Mumbai, Toronto and Paris. Since the launch of the first space in 2012, more than 150,000 people around the world have attended 10,000 hours of workshops and 15,000 videos have been created.

Spreading at the launch event in Dubai, Lance Podell, Director and Global Head of YouTube Spaces, commented: “The MENA region has one of the world’s most vibrant YouTube communities. Talented creators are producing content for passionate audiences in a region that comes second in the world after the US in terms of watch time. This collaboration with Dubai Studio City will help us to support this incredible community of YouTube creators as well as continue to boost the growth of Arabic content on the web. We are happy to have our first Space in Dubai.”

Malek Al Malek, CEO of TECOM Business Parks, added: “TECOM Group’s partnership with YouTube reflects our commitment to create an ecosystem conducive to innovation that will ensure Dubai remains at the forefront of a competitive global media industry.”

The YouTube Space in Dubai is expected to launch in Q2 of 2017, and construction is scheduled to begin soon.

Ooredoo TV Launches Funbox in 4K

Ooredoo TV has launched a new 4K channel called Funbox. Available throughout the Middle East, Funbox is a 24×7 channel accessible through the Ooredoo TV service.

Funbox includes entertainment programmes such as La Bohème, a film opera captured in UHD and Sea Chef, a documentary series on Spain’s seafood flavours. The new channel will also offer documentaries on nature, wildlife and communities, music, sports, arts and culture.
Amazon Web Services (AWS) has announced the opening of an office in Dubai with the support of the Dubai Investment Development Agency (Dubai FDI), an agency of the Department of Economic Development (DEED), to accelerate the rapid adoption of cloud computing in the Middle East.

The office opened on January 1 and will support organisations of all sizes, from start-ups to government institutions and some of the Middle East’s historic and most established enterprises, as they make the transition to AWS Cloud.

The new office provides account managers, solutions architects, partner managers, professional services consultants, support staff and various other functions, for customers to directly engage with AWS in their local setting and in their language. It is further evidence of the growth of AWS around the world, according to the company.

“The opening of AWS MENA’s office in Dubai further underlines the positive growth environment of Dubai and our ability to attract inward investments. It will drive the adoption of cloud technologies as well as public and private sector innovation and competitiveness,” Fahad Al Gergawi, CEO of Dubai FDI added.

MBC is using AWS to run many of its digital services. In this context, Joe Igoe, MBC’s Group Director of Technical Operations, said: “We are building MBC to be the digital broadcaster of the future. We use AWS to help us speed up innovation and rapidly expand into a wider range of digital services. Our commitment is to continue providing our viewers with high-quality unique multimedia experiences, while having the flexibility to scale services efficiently to keep up with audience growth.”

Pearson launched its latest augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) educational technology in the Middle East. This includes content for Microsoft HoloLens, a brand new AR viewer, as well as content for VR including interactive 360° courses.

Microsoft claims its HoloLens is the world’s first untethered AR system. HoloLens is a device that allows users to interact with holograms within their own environment, creating enormous opportunity for enhanced experiences in the classroom. Pearson is Microsoft’s education sector launch partner for the HoloLens device and is currently running a series of trials at schools globally. The content created by Pearson for the device includes a ‘Build a Castle’ app.

Discovery Networks MENA has deployed the Avid MediaCentral Platform to streamline its production processes and facilitate better creative collaboration. Avid’s workflow tools and integrated platform are fully working at Discovery. The network’s editors use Avid Media Composer stations to cut programmes and trailers, with the addition of the Avid Artist | DNxIO video interface to accelerate high resolution workflows from capture to output. Avid NEXIS software-defined scalable storage provides virtual pools of storage for easy and simultaneous access to files. The Avid Global Services team designed and installed the new workflow. It also provided staff training and helped the Discovery team get ready to go live on the new system.

“As a whole, the Avid solutions have transformed the way we work, and each component has improved our production process at every stage of the workflow,” said Bassem Maher, Technical and IT Manager, Discovery Networks MENA.

G-TECHNOLOGY HAS YOU COVERED

Engineered to run fast, quiet and around the clock, and can tackle every workflow need.

No other storage line offers this much workflow freedom and efficiency.

Compatible with

Blackmagic Design
Apple
Aja
ATOMOS
Cfast

Ask us about G-Tech

AUTHORISED DISTRIBUTOR

MEDIASYS FZ-LLC
Tel: +971 4 4503795
www.mediasysdubai.com
Turner announces key highlights from 2017 line-up

Turner has announced significant programming highlights from its 2017 line-up across the different broadcast segments it caters to – including an expanded general entertainment portfolio to add to its children’s entertainment and news offering. The line-up was revealed at the company’s annual upfront event in Dubai.

Speaking at the Turner 2016 Upfront event, Tarek Mounir, Vice President and General Manager of Turner for Turkey, Middle East, North Africa, Greece & Cyprus, said: "Turner is continually striving to enhance its programming and entertainment offering region wide. Our key objective has always been to provide high-quality entertainment to audiences in the region, and our successful presence across the MENA as well as our upcoming slate is testament to that.”

Attending partners at the Turner 2016 Upfront event gave a sneak peak at the content slate for 2017 across its various platforms, including Turner’s linear channels, broadcast news and children’s entertainment. Details about syndicated shows for 2017 were disclosed at the event.

BroadcastAsia 2017 to debut drone and VR zones

BroadcastAsia’s relocation to Suntec Singapore will see the event housed on expanded purpose-built exhibition grounds spanning 20,000 sqm across three levels from 23-25 May, 2017. The ‘TV Everywhere Zone’ back for the third time, is expected to grow by 50% and act as a major focal point of BroadcastAsia 2017. Brand-new clusters for drones and virtual reality will also make their debut, rounding up the event’s immersive showcase of game-changing products for next-generation broadcasting and the latest end-to-end solutions needed to stay ahead of the curve. "New technologies are expanding the broadcasting ecosystem and bringing forth exciting new possibilities to create and consume content, especially within Asia. We are, therefore, thrilled to be launching these new clusters to allow attendees to get first-hand experience using these technologies,” said Calvin Koh, Assistant Project Director of BroadcastAsia 2017 from organiser Singapore Exhibition Services.

"Last year’s edition of BroadcastAsia saw more than 17,000 international trade attendees, so the relocation has come as a delight to many exhibitors and visitors as it will allow the event more space.” The Cinematography/Post/Production Technology Zone and ProfessionalAudio/Technology will also be back to showcase technologies for the audio ecosystem and a comprehensive range of production/post-production equipment and services. Industry names who have already confirmed participation at next year’s show include Accedo, Avid, Broadpeak, Harmonic, Brightcove, IBM Cloud, Miranda, Miteq, Nice People At Work, SAM, Skynight, Skyworth and Wplay.

BroadcastAsia 2017’s International Conference will bring together an expanded portfolio of broadcast experts and industry influencers to discuss evolving industry trends, debate the best business and commercial strategies, and showcase breakthrough technologies. Key trending themes will include OTT 2.0 and monetisation, optimising content and branding strategies, among other topics.

Twitter allows users to broadcast live video

Twitter users can now stream live video from within the iOS and Android app. The update came shortly after both Instagram and Facebook introduced their live video features. The feature is powered by Periscope, Twitter’s live video app, but doesn’t require users to download the Periscope app. This should be seen as a major strategy shift for the platform. Twitter estimates that it has over 313 million active users on its platform and hopes to compete with other social media giants such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

Icflix expands digital footprint with Orange Tunisie

Icflix is expanding its digital footprint in Tunisia with the announcement of a strategic partnership with Orange Tunisie, a subsidiary of the Orange Group. Icflix offers Orange Tunisie customers the ability to subscribe to the service and instantly watch a selection of Icflix-produced movies and TV shows available online alongside Hollywood and Bollywood content.

International film execs visit Abu Dhabi for showcase tour

Top US and UK film executives visited Abu Dhabi for a showcase tour of what the region has to offer the international production industry.

Hosted by Abu Dhabi Film Commission (ADFC), producers representing Hollywood giants Disney and Universal Studios, and the UK-based makers of the iconic James Bond films, EON Productions, won in the capital for the five-day tour. The delegation visited several locations in and around Abu Dhabi including Emirates Palace, the F1 track on Yas Island and The Louvre on Saadiyat Island. Commenting on the initiative, Jassim Al Nowais, Manager, Abu Dhabi Film Commission, said: “Abu Dhabi Film Commission, as part of MZA, has developed a combination of experience, infrastructure and incentives to attract studios and production houses from around the world. It was an honour to meet these esteemed film industry professionals, show them first-hand our incredible locations and discuss potential projects.”

Abu Dhabi has risen internationally as an emerging filming location following a number of high-profile films choosing to film in the capital in recent years. Some of the films to opt for Abu Dhabi as a backdrop include the third biggest film of all time, Star Wars: The Force Awakens; Brad Pitt’s War Machine; Fast and Furious 7; and a number of Bollywood films including Duhoom and Baaghi.

Avid hosts RED camera workshop

Dubai-based distributor Advanced Media Trading (AMT) showcased RED’s new 8KS35 sensor cameras – EPIC-W and WEAPON 8K – at AM Studio in Dubai last month. The new releases were demonstrated by RED’s product specialists from the UK, who introduced the attendees to the camera’s features and workflow.

The experts spoke about how 8K acquisition improves the production value of content. The attendees had the opportunity to learn how these cameras offer flexibility by being able to record RAW and ProRes versions of the same shot simultaneously to the same media.

Kaveh Faramaz, CEO of Advanced Media, said that the workshop attracted more than 45 industry professionals including filmmakers, camera specialists and post-production experts.

“This workshop gave an insight into the benefits of shooting and handling 8K footage. It was more of an interactive demo. We showcased the cameras at DPFF and well as visitors to the AMT stand at the Madinat Jumeirah Conference Centre were among the first in the region to interact with and learn about the new RED DRAGON,” he said. "AMT hosted a similar workshop with RED at DPFF last year to launch the RED WEAPON DRAGON 8K"
German broadcaster ZDF has begun a large-scale update of its broadcast studio locations, including Bremen, Cairo, Istanbul, New York, Saarbrücken and Warsaw, to an EditShare end-to-end media management workflow. The update will feature a tiered storage environment with integrated production asset management. Transitioning from a legacy tape-based set-up, each ZDF studio location will be equipped with an EditShare XStream HT 32TB shared storage platform and Ark 24-slot LTO tape library. The integrated storage platform and Ark 24-slot LTO tape library. The integrated Flow production asset management solution will provide end-to-end media management with tools to automate complex and/or repetitive workflows.

Ronald Richter, Senior Solutions Architect at BFE Studio and

Medien Systeme in Germany, the SI overseeing the multi-site installation as prime contractor, emphasised the importance of integrating with the existing Avid Newscutter and P2-based broadcast systems. “We did a proof of concept with ZDF staff, where they connected their Avid Newscutters to EditShare and put it through the usual workflow scenarios, using Flow to ingest P2 content and manage content archiving and restoration to and from Ark. Within three days, ZDF was able to confirm that EditShare was the right solution for their expansive operation.”

Turkish company promotes reality TV

Istanbul-based Sera Film Services is upping the game for non-scripted TV shows in the region by creating original reality show and game show formats. Drama has traditionally been the most popular genre in the Turkish market, leaving limited scope for others, according to Idil Belli, General Manager of Sera Film Services. “Unscripted shows are not so popular in the region, although international formats such as The Voice, The Idol and so on are successful in the region, but it is difficult to find time slots for local reality shows. Reality TV is yet to find a footing in the regional market,” she said. She added that 90% of TV shows in the region are scripted shows and only 10% of unscripted shows see the light of day on regional TV channels. “As there are fewer time slots for unscripted shows, we make sure they are the best in order to compete with drama, which is the most popular genre. We constantly strive to create better and more interesting formats to fill the gap.”

“Having said that, we have little competition from local players as most of the companies are focused on drama. Our show QUP has been quite successful on Turkish television and has also generated some interest from other regional broadcasters.” QUP is distributed by Turkish company Eccho Rights and is running on TRT1. The show was also presented at MIPFormats in Cannes last year. Sera Film Services has a few titles in the MENA, running on popular TV channels in the MBC bouquet as well. “These shows were originally created for the Turkish market and then exported to other territories. Some of them are dubbed, while others are adapted in the local language with local payers. The company is now focused on distribution of both linear and OTT content to territories outside Turkey. “We are also closely following other opportunities to grow, such as our presence on digital platforms. We are exploring their monetising potential. Digital is the way forward, it is a very strong medium and is growing rapidly,” Belli said.

Lebanese designer wins Season 1 of Project Runway ME

Lebanon’s Alaa Najd emerged victorious as the winner of the first season of Project Runway ME on MBC4 and MBC Masr 2. Over the course of 13 episodes, Najd won the hearts of the jury and viewers alike with his colourful and unique designs. Each designer showcased their final collections as part of the performances of singing stars Wael Kafoury, Samira Said and Mohamed Hamaki. The live studio audience included Arab celebrities and socialites, members of the press, fashion bloggers and social media influencers.
DIFF announces new initiatives and offers more platforms for national talent

The 13th edition of the Dubai International Film Festival saw a promising list of new initiatives and greater recognition for national filmmaking talent. DIFF took audiences on an immersive and boundary-pushing journey of storytelling with an all-new virtual reality (VR) line-up, titled DIFFerent REALITY, added to the Festival programme for the first time. Ten of the world’s most promising Arab filmmakers with $46,000 of funding and key partnership opportunities with leading international and regional film industry experts. DIFF also presented two Arab films to the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) in Los Angeles for Golden Globe Award consideration. The inaugural event on November 14th, 2016 saw Mohammed Diab, an Egyptian director and writer, present his technically powerful thriller Clash and Assaf Fouladkar, a Lebanese director and writer, present his daring and entertaining comedy Arab Love to the members of HFPA. DIFF’s Arab Nights programme captured the essence of the festival’s vision by providing an established platform for Arab and international filmmakers to connect to their heritage and tell stories that address controversial disputes in the Arab world with compassion and creativity. Known for bringing the best of regional cinema to the fore, the Arabian Nights 2016 line-up paid homage to the cultural vibrancy of the ever-changing Arab world. A rich selection of eclectic films from around the globe was exhibited in the popular category, including Lebanon, Italy, Germany and France. It showcased a stellar selection of insightful films from both the regional and the international platform.

Offering fresh perspectives, this year’s group of talented filmmakers confronted the pressing issues which today’s Arab world is facing, helping to unite cultures through compelling storytelling. This category provides a fundamental opportunity to share perspectives and experiences with audiences from all across the globe, supporting the growth of both regional cinemas and Arab talent. DIFF Artistic Director Masoud Al Ali added, “Arab Nights offers a powerful means of conveying social messages to audiences from every corner of the globe, a notion that DIFF believes in the key to successfully uniting cultures. This year’s stellar line-up of films address insightful, culturally enriching perspectives on the developing regional landscape shared through the medium of film.”

The dates for next year’s festival, DIFF’s 14th edition, have been confirmed as 6-13 December, 2017.

Amazon & Congo, Emirati director Hassan Kiyani’s Fleeing

Speaking about the new segment, DIFF Artistic Director Masoud Amralla Al Ali said: “VR marks an important step for the industry as it offers audiences a unique experience that for the most part, they can only get by stepping inside a movie theatre. The world’s leading filmmakers are racing to produce their films with this technology, evidently proving the importance of opening up new horizons for storytelling and visual narrative. Here at DIFF, we see the development of VR as an important opportunity to provide a unique platform for the local and regional film industry by teaming up with Abu Dhabi’s Image Nation and Dubai Film Market. A total fund of USD 68,000 was up for grabs for promising GCC-based filmmakers working on short film projects, as part of the Enjaaz support programme. It marked the fourth year in which the capital’s media and entertainment company Image Nation has partnered with Dubai Film Market (DFM), the industry platform and business counterpart of DIFF. The submissions were judged by a panel of experts from Image Nation and Enjaaz. The funds will provide the filmmakers with the resources they need to start or complete production and help them eventually present their films to worldwide audiences. This year, the Festival also saw the launch of the Arab Film Institute (AFI). The non-profit cultural association will provide a platform for the past, present and future of Arab films to be discussed and celebrated by those who contribute to the development of the industry. Designed to bring together the most promising Arab filmmakers under one roof, API will be a meeting point between the art, technique and commerce involved in a prosperous film industry through learning, advocacy and networking. API will also promote a healthy eco-system of distribution and promotion to bolster the ever-growing regional film network and will work across the globe with international organisations to provide opportunities for Arab film globally. API will launch its inaugural awards ceremony in March 2018, naming Best Film, Best Director, Best Producer, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Screenwriter, Best Director of Photography, Best Short Film, Best Student Film, Lifetime Achievement Award and more. On another note, the Dubai Film Connection (DFC), the co-production market of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF), awarded six talented Arab filmmakers with $50,000 of funding and key partnership opportunities with leading international and regional film industry experts. DFC also presented Amazon & Congo, Emirati director Hassan Kiyani’s Fleeing.

DIFF 2016 brought together an extensive array of national and international films and a host of workshops to provide learning opportunities to local filmmakers.
Vitec showcases products in Dubai

Vitec Videocom hosted a two-day expo in Dubai to showcase some of its latest product releases. The event, held in collaboration with distributor UBMS, showcased products from Anton/Bauer, Autocue, Autoscript, Litepanels, O’Connor, Sachtler and Vinten. Sales Manager, ME at Vitec, said the expo attracted broadcast engineers, cameramen and systems integrators.

Vitec’s product specialists were at hand to introduce the Vinten Hexagon Tracks and Vinten Vantage. They also introduced the latest in camera support, prompting and lighting technology.

“Robotic tracks are ideal in a virtual studio or against green screens. These are very accurate with their shots and don’t leave room for human error.”

Antoine Ayeh, Cameraman Supervisor at MBC, who was at the event, said the Hexagon Track System is a great fit for news studios.

“At the moment, we are using manual tracks. These tracks can be moved around the studio but they don’t do the job as well as the robotic ones. With the push of a button, you can get many different angles. The drawback of robotic tracks is that they are locked on the floor and there is no flexibility to move them around like the manual tracks. With this, you are locked with a certain background the whole time and Al Arabiya changes the background of its programmes a lot.”

“Robotic tracks are ideal in a virtual studio or against green screens. These are very accurate with their shots and don’t leave room for human error. So you can undertake panning, padding up the pedestal, zooming and tracking with no mistakes.”

“The best part is that you can provide tons and tons of settings with just one button. I would have liked to have the pedestal higher so it can be at eye level with the anchor. It should have a larger height range, I feel the higher and the lower it can go, the better it is. I would aim for a height of 180cm. Also, with the cameras and lenses so heavy nowadays, the dolly should be able to carry more weight.”

Khaled Okla of Quest Media said the new Vinten Vantage is excellent for smaller compact studios.

“The Vantage is camera- and-lens agnostic and seems suited to smaller, high-quality cameras and lenses, and provides stable on-air motion. It is flexible yet quite stable.”

“Robotic tracks can be managed with the Vinten control, which is an advantage. The system is easy to set up and dismantle, and will work well for outside broadcast as well. It is good for an augmented reality/virtual reality environment because of the stability it offers.”

Zaid Wattar of AV Solutions added: “In the new Vinten Hexagon Track system, I have noticed that the design is too modular due to which all the components, the cables and the mechanism parts can be seen. These are also exposed to dust. I would have preferred all those parts to be covered.

“I quite liked the LitePanels Astra 1x1 Soft Bi-Color LED lighting. It has a compact design and provides softly distributed light. This product is a great fit for small interviews where the light unit needs to be close to the presenter. It provides a natural light look, avoiding the LED bulbs’ dots impact.

“The Vinten Vantage robotic head is also a good addition to Vinten remote heads to handle compact cameras/camcorders, which are in great demand now. It can replace all-in-one P2 cameras and it gives more freedom to change the desired camera without changing the robotic head.”

The Dubai event introduced the robotic tracks and Vantage alongside other products.

From left: Pavan Mulani, Strategic Sales Manager, ME and Mark Osborn, Director of Business Development EMEA/Asia, Vitec Videocom.

Top to bottom: Antoine Ayeh of MBC, Zaid Wattar of AV Solutions and Khaled Okla of Quest Media.
We ended an action-packed 2016 with a fantastic roundtable that raised some pertinent questions with key tech leaders in the region on what technologies they consider transformational to their business. Vijaya Cherian sums up the discussion.

This roundtable, which was hosted in conjunction with Avid Middle East, brought together a number of high-profile decision-makers from both the traditional and OTT platforms to examine the transformative technologies that we are seeing in the industry; the impact of these technologies on businesses today and tomorrow; the changes in the economics of the media landscape; the impact of remote collaboration, remote workflows and centralised assets; the attractiveness of new hosted models; how to make the businesses more scalable and flexible; and finally, their predictions for the future.

Joining us for the roundtable were Giles Wright, CTO of TV.ae; Florian Volken, Chief Product Officer of Icflix; Richard Bentley, Network Lead Specialist – Media Operations, AJMN; Robert Sveb, Director of Global Technology Services at AJMN; Saleh Lootah, Head of TV & Radio Engineering, DMI; Suresh Kumar, Director of Technology, Sky News Arabia; Hamad Abdelrazaq, Head of Technology, LIVE HD; Afzal Lakdawala, Head of Technology Projects and Planning, DMI; Omar Alzoubi, Senior Manager – Engineering Systems, DMI; Peter Van Dam, Director of Technology of LIVE HD; Paul Thompson, Director of Strategic Solutions at Avid Technology and Goksel Topbas, Regional Cloud and Enterprise Solution Sales Director at Microsoft Gulf. Hicham Ismail, Solutions Architect at Avid Technology, moderated the discussion.

The discussion kicked off with Ismail asking the first question of the day: “Which technologies do you consider transformational to your business?”

This elicited a number of different responses from each of the attendees based on the nature of their businesses. Giles Wright of TV.ae, an Abu Dhabi based OTT service that has the backing of the state broadcaster, commented that payment systems are top priority for the OTT service. “Payment is always on the top of our mind. I am always on the lookout for new payment systems like NFC Google Wallet, Apple Pay etc., because while we do have a lot of free-to-air content, the Arabian Gulf League is behind the pay wall.”

Richard Bentley from Al Jazeera commented that as somebody who represents the journalists, the video editors, media managers, distribution technologies and so on, he would welcome “technologies that allow the end user to do all their jobs in one easy user interface”.

“They need to be able to do everything at the same time, whether it is script writing, editing videos, publishing to the web or sending out playout services, and a lot of the technology providers are now giving these light-weight end user solutions that, at the moment, for me are the main transformative technologies that we are seeing.”

Robert Sveb added that with Al Jazeera being in the live TV business, it is all about “speed, quality and reliability to get the news from the field to the screen”.

“What will transform this business is primarily the overall introduction of IP technology in live production; we are already IP based in post but live production is a challenge,” he commented.

Peter Van Dam said that he hoped the cloud and its related technologies “will give us a solid solution that is cheaper, more reliable, secure and takes away a lot of CAPEX”, adding that he hopes this will be achieved in the next two to three years. Hamad Abdelrazaq from LIVE painted out that his main concern in remote production, a concern that was echoed by the DMI team.

“We are looking at remote production very seriously because of the logistics involved in live production and going on-site with huge OB trucks, when the same can be achieved...”
has matured and there is more collaboration between vendors”.

Nick Barratt of MBU pointed out that for him, the biggest changes in transformation are “moving away from hardware and closer to software, and having it all in a more consolidated application that allows us to do everything and work more quickly.”

“We will then, no longer, be restricted as we were in the past. The opening up of connectivity to all of our customers and our actual users as well, and enabling that two-way conversation be they in-house staff or end users is invaluable to what we do.”

Sky News Arabia’s Suresh Kumar commented that for him, SDI to IP, HDR and 4K seem to be technologies leading the way. He also added that all organisations are considering infrastructural changes and workflow modifications, taking into consideration the way in which consumers are consuming content.

It all depends on the target audience and the type of content managed.

DMI’s Omar Alzoubi seconded this, adding that the moves to IP and 4K are significant.

“The next big move, in addition to IP and 4K, is improvements in the viewing experience and the quality of the picture. The aim is to deliver a picture to the viewers that is as close as possible to the natural world, not only by having more-pixels but also through High Frame Rate (HFR), Wide Colour Gamut and High Dynamic Range (HDR). This will help overcome the limitations from the current Standard Dynamic Range by increasing the range of colours, brightness and contrast. We are continuously evaluating new trends through demos and research to align our roadmap,” Alzoubi added.

Lakdawala said: “We are constantly monitoring the transformative technologies like SDI to IP migration, higher resolutions like 4K, HDR and beyond and cloud-based offerings for storage.”

Volker of Icflix commented that augmented reality and immersive experiences will hold more weight in the future.

“We want something where we have an immersive movie experience and this is what we hope to have although I don’t know how we will achieve this transition. There is one reason, however, why 4K will become more interesting. Now, if you want to have an immersive headset, your content is mostly in 2K and, therefore, pixelated. Even 4K just about gives you a good experience. It is 8K that will give you a good immersive vision and will become thereason to sell 8K to customers,” he pointed out.

He added that after VP9 and HEVC, the next new codec to with remote production. This would bring huge CAPEX savings. Technologies in this area would transform our business substantially.”

Saleh Lootah seconded that, also pointing out that he was closely evaluating technologies that enabled business continuity, “whether it is building a private cloud or being in a public cloud”.

“We are also looking at the ease of expansion that will be delivered with IP. This will be good for the broadcast environment,” he said, adding that DMI is moving slowly in this direction until they are convinced the “market

“Payment is always on the top of our mind. I am always on the lookout for new payment systems, the NFC Google Wallet, Apple Pay etc., because while we do have a lot of free-to-air content, the Arabian Gulf League is behind the pay wall”.

Giles Wright, CTO, TV ae
watch out for is the AV1, which will “be the proper way of giving this media to the end user.”

“AV1 is the next codec because it is interoperable and open, it is optimised for the web and is scalable to any modern device at any bandwidth. The quality of the compression is much better than the existing codecs and there are no licensing fees either,” he commented.

Goksel Topbas, Director for Cloud and Enterprise Business, Microsoft, who was part of Microsoft’s initial engineering team in the US, commented that cloud will indeed transform people’s businesses on various fronts.

“Cloud is a very short word, but what it carries behind it is massive in terms of capacity, innovation and the huge capabilities it can provide. It was not possible to have this before. We did virtualisation and we had applications, but we never had the ability until now to have hundreds of thousands of servers connected to each other with the massive ability to analyse data and come up with predictions about the future of your business that could help you make on-the-spot decisions. Cloud gives us huge capabilities to burst and pay as you go immediately removing the cost from CAPEX to OPEX. Now, we have private clouds and public clouds. “Microsoft works with more than 2000 partners in the region including government agencies across the GCC and they see the power of adopting the cloud. It is important that we move into the cloud because if you haven’t yet moved into it, market conditions, its potential and the solutions it provides will eventually compel you to move into it. It could be a seamless hybrid cloud, where you maintain your confidential assets in a private cloud while using other services from a public environment.”

Alnoubi commented here that “pay as you go does not work sometimes, as one may need 24/7 services in which case, one has to pay all the time and this does not guarantee a cost-effective solution.”

Summing up the discussion on transformative technologies, Avid’s Paul Thompson commented that “it’s clear that content volumes are only going to increase and production rates will continue to accelerate.”

“The number of platforms, channels and consumption methods continue to grow, and the consumers have ever more choice on how they consume that content. The question is how can businesses evolve to satisfy these demands with budgets that are not keeping pace with the content explosion and, at the same time, embrace new technologies.

“I would say the transformation aspect is how a combination of technology deployment models together with a variety of commercial deployment models such as OPEX, CAPEX and subscription can help the industry create more high-quality content and efficiently get it to consumers as easily and as quickly as possible.”

The discussion then moved to the cloud, with Jamal asking state broadcasters such as ADMC and DMI to comment on their cloud plans.

Van Dam responded by stating that at a previous roundtable a year-and-a-half ago, he had declared that the state broadcaster would never consider public cloud because of the legal restrictions. However, with a recent cloud initiative that ADMC undertook in conjunction with local telco operator du, Van Dam commented that a proof-of-concept they undertook in the public cloud kept in mind their security, technical and legal concerns, thereby making it easier for top management.

“CDNs will always be there, but setting up proxies as close as possible to the final provider instead of a pure CDN-based solution is much more interesting for both the customer as well as the provider”

Flavien Volken, CPO, Icliclix

““The economy of long tail does not exist in news unfortunately so for us, cloud solutions are not as useful to store content. What’s important is the speed within the production cycle. Acquire news, cook it and get it out”

Robert Sveb, Director of Global Technology Services, AJMN
Bentley responded that everything has one in one's environment and also, what technology is involved. “If you look at Al Jazeera’s workflows between Washington DC and the main offices in Doha, one of the challenges we face is that the US has a different frame rate and power usage and in transferring these assets back and forth, we have to transcode them. Then again, it is a case of being able to centralise those assets and have them viewable by all users, whether by programmers or the news teams. In the past, we have been shipping tapes, or doing baseband deliveries all over the world, or requests are made by email systems.”

Many of us still have huge legacies of tape archives with thousands of digitized tapes that are still being ingested into a central repository and this is a big challenge. And then, of course, there is the question of who can access that content and whether they have permissions and rights to use it. The ability to flag that metadata with the rights information, sensitivity and the ability to reuse it is really very important to us. More and more of our end users work remotely in the field or while travelling to work and so the ability to give them access to that content becomes more important. “In particular, the security policies and the access to the content can become more important. We need to ensure that in securing assets, we don’t hinder the production work. We need to look at those security threats more openly and honestly get the buy-in of the end users to understand that their actions in remote places could have a potential impact on security as well.”

“CDNs will always be there, but setting up proxies as close as possible to the end users is key,” he added. Volken seconded that, adding that they follow a similar formula with the ingest team, where the media from the hard drive or undertaking ingestion at the Iflix office. “After ingestion then, 27 odd servers do the encoding, as Iflix supports 26 different formats. Once it is done, we are storing them in different locations.”

He added that Ilix is now exploring another new model of using proxies instead of CDNs. “CDNs will always be there, but setting up proxies as close as possible to the final provider instead of a pure CDN based solution is much more interesting for both the media committee, the e-management and customer relationship team in Amman, Jordan and another team in Egypt doing a bit of tech, and most of the legacies still go there.”

Volken seconded that, adding that they follow a similar formula with the ingest team, where the media from the hard drive or undertaking ingestion at the Iflix office.

After ingestion then, 27 odd servers do the encoding, as Iflix supports 26 different formats. Once it is done, we are storing them in different locations.”

He added that Ilix is now exploring another new model of using proxies instead of CDNs. “CDNs will always be there, but setting up proxies as close as possible to the final provider instead of a pure CDN based solution is much more interesting for both the media committee, the e-management and customer relationship team in Amman, Jordan and another team in Egypt doing a bit of tech, and most of the legacies still go there.”

Sveb added that news production varies hugely from other content because of the longevity of drama series and films.

“I believe a cloud-based solution will enable us to do that moving forward,” commented Bentley.

Al Jazeera then stepped in on a whole different medium and drama series and films. Bentley clarified this further on a whole different medium and drama series and films.

Al Jazeera then stepped in on a whole different medium and drama series and films. Bentley clarified this further.

Volken seconded that, adding that they follow a similar formula with the ingest team, where the media from the hard drive or undertaking ingestion at the Iflix office. “After ingestion then, 27 odd servers do the encoding, as Iflix supports 26 different formats. Once it is done, we are storing them in different locations.”

He added that Ilix is now exploring another new model of using proxies instead of CDNs. “CDNs will always be there, but setting up proxies as close as possible to the final provider instead of a pure CDN based solution is much more interesting for both the media committee, the e-management and customer relationship team in Amman, Jordan and another team in Egypt doing a bit of tech, and most of the legacies still go there.”

Bentley clarified this further on a whole different medium and drama series and films.

Al Jazeera then stepped in on a whole different medium and drama series and films. Bentley clarified this further.
We are trying to implement a new technology for remote production. Technology, however, is not mature enough to have all the connectivity in one place and have all the cameras and the content delivery coming from somewhere else. My opinion is that technology has quite a long way to go, plus the telco operator needs to cooperate with us to move forward on remote productions.”

Van Dam added that they have some remote productions with four to five cameras but the connectivity and the cooperation need to be there. “It’s not enough for the infrastructure to be there. The various departments within the telco need to come together to make it possible,” he pointed out.

Suresh Kumar said at this point that the challenge is really with the last mile connectivity in most of these places. Everyone agreed that it all comes down to cost and connectivity.

Van Dam pointed out that if the push comes from other areas that are not typically broadcast, perhaps this will happen. He gave the example of a requirement for remote production at one of the palaces in the country. “There are some of the first venues for us where we can do remote production, because they won’t have the space for two or three OB tracks, and perhaps don’t want that sort of encroachment on their privacy. So I hope that the push will come from another angle, and then we can move on.”

Ismail questioned at this point whether the technology is ready today and whether sports venues are covered with 4K. Van Dam commented that a discussion on 4K is limited to some areas when 53% of the region still watches TV on a 4:3 tube. Kumar added to those figures, stating that a whopping 80% of the channels available in the MENA region are still on SD.

Van Dam added that they have some remote productions with four to five cameras but the connectivity and the cooperation need to be there. “It’s not enough for the infrastructure to be there. The various departments within the telco need to come together to make it possible,” he pointed out.

Alzuubi added at this juncture that DMI is testing and evaluating a few systems in order to achieve full remote production for general purposes using telco connectivity. “Our goal is also to use a codec with a latency as close as possible to zero. Furthermore, we are looking at smart solutions to utilise the bandwidth by dynamically allocating the high bandwidth for sources that are selected on air, while the rest are for viewing with very low bandwidth,” he said.

However, Abdelrazaq pointed out that this situation will not work for sports. This led Ismail to throw the floor open for a discussion on virtualisation and how the economics of the business work.

Barratt pointed out that the telco need to come together to move forward on remote productions.”

This led Ismail to throw the floor open for a discussion on virtualisation and how the economics of the business work.

Barratt pointed out that the telco need to come together to move forward on remote productions.”

A strong, independent company with the industry’s largest portfolio of automation products

• ASTRA Studio news production automation
• ASTRA Take 2 – studio automation with multi-camera ingest
• ASTRA MCR playout automation
• ASTRA MAM media asset management
Now I see the next stage, where previously 25 people used to come. Now, only around four come and the rest are working remotely.

“The amount of savings with new technologies and remote productions is coming, and it will improve for the people because the viewers will get more. If I see now, we do around four or five football games a day. In the evening, we have a sports show and all the editing is done on the field because there is no green field. This is the reason why a fibre network will give an advantage that the viewer will not see.”

Van Dam pointed out, adding that if he had a cloud solution with enough bandwidth and connectivity, he could centralise with everyone in geographically different locations.

“The same with editing. If you want a specific editor in Dubai, you don’t need to hire him from Abu Dhabi. He can just download it and work from his office.”

The discussion then turned to big data and what it meant to each of the attendees.

“Is anyone using analytics based on social media, YouTube programmes and OTT platforms?” Ismail queried.

Volken pointed out that Netflix uses big data in quite a minimal fashion to find out the behaviour of the person on the web site, and across the platform and what programmes he likes, so as to make more sophisticated recommendations. Lakdawala pointed out that the analytics on social and digital media have been far more accurate and have enabled the marketing and programming team to know which content generates more eyeballs so they can work around that content.”

Ismail pointed out that the usage of analytics can be enriched when you link shows to people’s favourite shopping activity, which is connected via ads.

“Then, we may have a more complete ecosystem of how to make use of analytics,” he pointed out.

Volken said that good analytics, you must have a good design that seamlessly takes people from one part of the web site to the other and enables them to make good recommendations. Lakdawala added that big data must go one step further to make recommendations that the viewer was not aware he would enjoy watching.

“For instance, I might not know I like Russian films. Taking this data which is not necessarily related, and trying to build a profile of you so we can make suggestions that may not be necessarily related, but in the end, I definitely hope to see a more accurate and has enabled the marketing and programming team to know which content generates more eyeballs so they can work around that content.”

“The analytics on social and digital media have been far more accurate and have enabled the marketing and programming team to know which content generates more eyeballs so they can work around that content.”

Aftab Lakdawala, Head of Technology Projects and Planning, DMI

Lakdawala pointed out that this “depends on budget… they may repeat good content if they can’t acquire more of the same.”

Barratt said there is great power in big data if used well, and these insights can be used for a VOD linear stream and curated content.

“To then be able to give people the options of how they pay for content and being able to look at the metadata or commercials have worked based on data and profits. You could get extremely specific information, but I see us getting to a point where they actually help you to commission content and then, regardless of whether it is 20,000 or 20 million people watching it, it doesn’t matter.”

“Ismail pointed out that the multi-device view of technology Projects Organisation has specific needs, including how quickly the business reacts to content, which is not necessarily related, and how the viewer was not aware he would enjoy watching.”

“In the UAE, around 50% may have IPTV connectivity but in other places, it is still dependent on satellite distribution”

Suresh Kumar, Director of Technology, Sky News Arabia

van Dam pointed out that the analytics on social and digital media have been far more accurate and have enabled the marketing and programming team to know which content generates more eyeballs so they can work around that content.”

The analytics on social and digital media have been far more accurate and have enabled the marketing and programming team to know which content generates more eyeballs so they can work around that content.”

The discussion then turned to big data and what it meant to each of the attendees.

In conclusion, while each organisation has specific needs, cloud and virtualisation are the surge of content online.

“It seems to indicate that when people are flooded with so much content from several sources, they prefer to come to linear services for professional, high-quality production,” he pointed out.

Bentley seconded this, adding that he definitely hopes to see a simpler interface for end users that gives them access to all services from one window.

Weight said his 2017 mantra is to go for dynamic ad stitching, where they can strip the ads from the linear content and add theirs for OTT streaming.

Kumar said he is looking at better bonding and coding technologies to improve journalism in the field.

In conclusion, while each organisation has specific needs, cloud and virtualisation are definitely coming. The need to apply big data to better analyse and profit users will enable media organisations to offer more pliable content to their viewers.”
In an exclusive interview with Vibhuti Arora, Dubai Film speaks about capturing the action in the Jetman series with RED cameras

Dubai Film, a production and rental house based in the emirate, has been producing 4K content for a number of years and is one of the first companies in the Middle East to shoot in 4K for YouTube. Specialising in extreme sports content, the production house uses its vast inventory of high-end cameras and lenses to capture live action, including aerial aerobatics, water sports and desert motoring stunts specifically in Dubai as its mandate is to promote the emirate as a great place for sport.

Dubai Film is associated with some of the most adrenaline-pumping extreme sports companies in the emirate while also facilitating the television commercial market with specialised car-to-car filming equipment and this is evident from its partnerships with Jetman Dubai (an online series that captures human flight with Yves Rossy, who flies using his jetpack), Inflight Dubai (the world's largest and tallest wind tunnel) and Skydive Dubai.

Joel Schaeffer, a cinematographer at Dubai Film, who has been filming the Jetman series for the production house since 2014, says the camera team’s mandate is to deliver everything in high quality.

That’s what we usually do, we use high-end equipment to shoot in high resolution, usually 4K and above. The Jetman project is one such example. The viewers can see the difference and appreciate the quality even more.

Schaeffer has been using a number of RED cameras to shoot the Jetman series over the years because his mandate was to shoot 4K and RED was one of the first companies to move in this direction. Dubai Film, therefore, is the owner of 10 RED cameras spread between different departments including their camera, aerial, underwater and drone departments. When a project requires the use of multiple cameras as in the case of this series to create the same look and feel, the team falls back on RED.

“We have used the RED EPIC DRAGON 6K extensively to shoot the Jetman series,” Schaeffer explains.

In the latest Jetman film titled Hello Jetman, Rossy and Vince Reffet (Rossy’s protégé, who has been a part of the Jetman series), wear their jetpacks and take to the sky with the Emirates A380. The stunning footage of the formations of the two pilots and the A380 over Palm Jumeirah and the Dubai skyline were captured on several RED cameras deployed strategically to ensure every small detail of the formations was captured meticulously.

According to Richard Forrest, a camera operator at Dubai Film, seven RED cameras were deployed to capture footage from various angles.

“We used two RED cameras inside the A380, one in the Corvette Jet, one on a helicopter inside a Showerjet, one inside the Jetman Drop Helm, and two on the ground. Our main footage for that project came from a camera mounted in a corvette jet provided by Aéro Vésion, France. We mounted our own RED EPIC DRAGON in the jet and another in a Showerjet F1, one inside the Jetman Drop Helm, and two on the ground. Our main footage for that project came from a camera mounted in a corvette jet provided by Aéro Vésion, France. We mounted our own RED EPIC DRAGON in the jet and another in a Showerjet F1. One inside the Jetman Drop Helm, and two on the ground.

For a project of this scale, we had to shoot it from as many different angles as possible. We had a couple of cameras inside the A380, as well as cameras in the helicopter. The two pilots also had helmet-mounted cameras.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

According to Richard Forrest, a camera operator at Dubai Film, seven RED cameras were deployed to capture footage from various angles.

“We used two RED cameras inside the A380, one in the Corvette Jet, one on a helicopter inside a Showerjet, one inside the Jetman Drop Helm, and two on the ground. Our main footage for that project came from a camera mounted in a corvette jet provided by Aero Vision, France. We mounted our own RED EPIC DRAGON in the jet and another in a Showerjet F1 mounted on a helicopter to capture aerial footage.

“For a project of this scale, we had to shoot it from as many different angles as possible. We had a couple of cameras inside the A380, as well as cameras in the helicopter. The two pilots also had helmet-mounted cameras.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.

“If you want a specific look for your project, you need to start with the right camera. The RED gives you a certain crisp look and feel with sharp details, which is ideal for extreme sports.”

The choice of camera is based on various factors according to the camera team, and one of this is the right look and feel. In the case of extreme sports, capturing every slight detail is important and the RED is good at this, explains Schaeffer.
released with sensors that no zoom lenses can cover,” Schaeffer states.

“RED’s WEAPON 6K was launched after the EPIC DRAGON 6K. Both have the same sensor, but their hardware is quite different. The WEAPON has fixed a lot of issues that were present with the EPIC DRAGON, black balance being one of them. Being able to shoot prons simultaneously helps save time in post production. When it comes to lens coverage, however, keeping the same sensor was frustrating,” explains Schaeffer.

Dubai Film was one of the first companies to have access to the newly introduced RED WEAPON with the HELIUM 8K S35 sensor. This camera claims to offer a better colour gamma as well as higher dynamic range, which is useful in capturing otherwise imperceptible details.

“The HELIUM sensor is definitely a step in the right direction. They have made the sensor size smaller, which helps us massively with lens coverage of our zoom lenses. Maintaining the RED’s small body size, coupled with 8K resolution, gives us a lot of options, given the fact that we put our cameras in a lot of gimbals for both aerial and ground filming.” Both Schaeffer and Forrest agree that they have had many opportunities to learn and improve their camera techniques in the course of filming. Jetman and other projects at Dubai Film. In terms of the quality of the shots, it was more about positioning the cameras in the right place to optimise performance. The choice of lens also goes a long way in delivering high quality.

Having used RED cameras for more than ten years, Schaeffer and Forrest have seen the journey of the brand and feel that the new wave of RED cameras has improved on several fronts over their predecessors, but also expressed some frustrations with the marketing style of the company.

Some of the new releases with ultra HD capabilities include the WEAPON 6K camera with the DRAGON sensor, the WEAPON 8K S35 and the EPIC-W 8K camera, both featuring the latest sensor technology HELIUM.

“The RED EPIC-W has a very similar sensor to the SCARLET SCARLET W and the RED RAVEN but comes with restricted frame rates. All of them have the same form factor and a similar body shape. They are small and light, which makes it easy to place them on a gimbal, MOV1, have it handhold, just have a camera and a lens and rig it on a car, and are a great fit for skydiving, snowboarding, skate boarding and so on,” says Schaeffer.

“While the new cameras offer a number of advantages, a big disadvantage with some has been the confusion created with the expanders and modules that are a standard in the film industry. A lot of money can be wasted if you chose the wrong accessories.

“None of our V-locks or RED Volt batteries were compatible with the new WEAPON when it was first released, because the V-lock expander was released at a later date to the camera. It meant we would have had to shell out another $10,000 to buy the new batteries if we wanted to use the camera at that time. We had recently invested in batteries and did not want to spend more on new ones. So we couldn’t use the new RED WEAPON 6K until the new V-lock expander was released. This put a hold on using the new RED WEAPON 6K on various projects,” says Forrest.

The duo hopes RED will standardise cameras and accessories in the future.

“These cameras have been a great asset to the company over the last few years and will continue to be in the future,” Schaeffer says. |
Dubai Media Incorporated recently procured a multi-channel SNG vehicle, the first-of-its-kind in the MENA region. BroadcastPro ME finds out how it adds efficiency to the broadcaster’s live coverage.

Over the years, DMI has added several high-profile events to its live coverage, as a host broadcaster. These range from general entertainment shows, such as fireworks displays on New Year’s Eve to local and international sporting events including the Dubai Tour, the Dubai World Cup and the President’s Cup, among others. With a growing repertoire of live events, the broadcaster’s equipment requirements have grown too, which was the reason for an additional SNG van.

The state broadcaster already owned a single-stream SNG vehicle, but had to rely on rental companies to fulfill its commitments to cater to more than one events taking place simultaneously.

The newly procured vehicle can cater to five streams simultaneously, which is a major advantage over the already existing single stream vehicle.

The vehicle boasts state-of-the-art, highest specification antennas, link devices and IRDs, according to Saleh Lootah, Head of TV and Radio Engineering at DMI.

Special to the technical design, besides the USV and sophisticated air-conditioning, is the capability to combine five signals to one uplink from one vehicle, thereby catering to five channels.

“The vehicle is designed for 3G/HD signals and feeds and equipped for MCPC [multiple channels per carrier]. It can be utilised as a link for five HD as well as SD channels,” says Lootah.

The vehicle is approximately 7m in length and 1.8m in height. It conforms to DMI and Gulf operational standards and is capable of functioning in high-temperature desert conditions.

The vehicle specifications and all the equipment integrated within were specified and designed by the DMI project team. Broadcast Solutions, a German company specialising in building OB vans, was contracted to integrate the vehicle to meet the broadcaster’s requirements.

Afzal Lakdawala, Head of Technology Projects and Planning, adds that the van was designed for very specific needs such as MCPC uplink, in case of emergency. In order to fulfil these functions, it had to adhere to certain specs laid out by DMI.

“As an MCPC – SNG, the vehicle can transmit five channels and is also capable of backhauling five key channels to Samacom in case there is a malfunction of an optical fibre communication backbone at the DMI headquarters,” says Lakdawala.

This addition to the fleet has added efficiency to the broadcaster’s live events coverage, by reducing dependency on rented vehicles. For big events such as the New Year’s Eve celebrations at Burj Khalifa, DMI deploys at least three SNG vehicles – one for main coverage and distribution, a second one as a back-up and a third vehicle for distributing multiple streams.

The vehicle has a Mercedes chassis and boasts a ProSat
SATEXPO
Expanding our Reach to New Horizons:
Military, Aviation, Commercial Enterprises and Aerospace.

Traditionally focusing on the broadcast industry, SATEXPO is expanding its solutions for all satellite-led communications, technologies and business exhibition for the MEASA region to cater to other major verticals such as Maritime, Telecommunications, Military, Aviation, Commercial Enterprises and Aerospace.

Global Satellite industry is estimated to be growing at 3% CAGR, and with different satellite industry segments posting growth, the satellite industry is now more affordable and accessible to a broad swath of public agencies, industries, and individuals.*

SATEXPO is the only platform in the MEASA region to:
- Showcase a new wave of satellite technologies
- Discover the hottest satellite market trends
- Access buyers from major industry verticals
- Develop professional relationships

BOOK YOUR SPACE TODAY
+971 4 308 6552
cabsat@dwtc.com
www.cabsat.com

“SATEXPO is the only platform in the MEASA region to:
Showcase a new wave of satellite technologies
Discover the hottest satellite market trends
Access buyers from major industry verticals
Develop professional relationships”

*SIA Industry Report 2016

After handing over the vehicle, Broadcast Solutions trained DMI engineers for a week. The vehicle was first made operational to cover Ramadan events this year. As of now, the SNG works on MPEG-4 or AVC 4:2:0 and 4:2:2 compression, depending upon the broadcast requirements, but this is soon going to change to HEVC standard. The MPEG-4 transmissions are transmitted as MCPC feeds combining several programme channels together.

“The Ericsson encoders deployed in the vehicle are HEVC-ready. We are waiting for a 4:2:2 HEVC licence from Ericsson in order to use that,” says Lootah.

HEVC will enable DMI to transmit 4K/ultra HD feeds efficiently. The broadcaster hopes to switch to HEVC or H.265 compression standard in the next few months.

“MCPC feeds combining several programme channels together.

* The vehicle is designed for 30/HD signals and feeds and equipped for MCPC [multiple channels per carrier], which means it can be utilised as a link for five HD as well as SD channels”

Saleh Lootah, Head of TV and Radio Engineering at DMI.

POWERING AND AUTOMATING YOUR GLOBAL CONTENT WORKFLOW

Wherever your content is: in the cloud, in your own facility or on the other side of the planet, Aspera software enables access, ingest, sharing, transformation, storage, synchronization, delivery and distribution at maximum speed without restrictions. With unique, patented FASP® transport technology at their core, high-speed data transfer and automation solutions from Aspera power the world’s most complex, global media workflows.

Explore the possibilities with Aspera at asperasoft.com

www.asperasoft.com

January 2017 | www.broadcastprome.com | 35
The FS7, I would argue, is the definitive camera in its class. It feels like it’s taken as much of a share of the ENG market as the EX1 and EX3 did back in their day, and the additional benefits of the large format sensor, high frame rates and cinema colour spaces make it a corporate workhorse. I shoot a huge amount of work now on Sony cameras, both the FS7 and the absolutely miraculous A7S Mark II (A7S II). So when Sony offered me a look at the new addition, the FS7 II, I immediately jumped at the chance.

Unlike the jumps in technology seen in other cameras, the FS7 II is essentially a tweaked version of the FS7. It is certainly not as big of a leap in tech as the A7S to A7S II, but there are still plenty of new features to warrant an updated release, especially in the hardware.

Like the FS7, this new camera has a Super 35 sensor, which records in both 1080P up to 180FPS and 4K up to 60FPS. It records to the same XQD cards and features the ever-adaptable Sony E-Mount.

The first selling point of the FS7 II over the existing camera is the implementation of in-camera BT2020 colour science. The option, also known as REC2020, is a UHD standard that can reproduce colours that cannot be shown with the older REC709 colour space. Obviously, the FS7 can still deliver footage for display in BT2020, but it requires post-processing. Plus, knowing Sony’s track record for optional firmware updates, I wouldn’t rule it out being offered in the FS7 down the road. But at least for now, for quick turnaround in BT2020 you would certainly feel the benefit of the FS7 II.

The ND technology in the FS7 II is something Sony has been promising since before the FS700,
Variable NDs. This is because, unlike the Vari-ND (which is essentially two polarised lenses), the LCD filter incurs no polarisation.

The strength of ND in the FS7 II also offers an additional step in filtration, going up to 1/128, over the 1/64 of the FS7.

In this region, ND is essential, and having the ability to control the filtration from behind the lens rather than swapping out traditional filters or using image polluting Vari-NDs is amazingly useful. It is great to see a large sensor camera with such an important ENG-style feature, because not all large sensor applications involve a full crew, and indeed, lots are single-operator jobs. Building on top of that usefulness, the ability to have stopless filtration could potentially save footage where exposure needs to be adjusted mid-shot.
An additional feature of the electronic ND is the Auto-ND function, which automatically steps the ND up or down to control your desired exposure. Like any other function, the speed and strength of these adjustments can be calibrated in dedicated user menus, and can be quite useful.

Most people will probably prefer to control the ND manually – I know, as I have a deep distrust for anything labelled ‘Auto’. But there are applications where the Auto ND might shine, such as gimbals.

The lens mount is the other big change to the FS7 II. Rather than the traditional twist and lock style of both the FS7 and most other cameras with an SLR lens compatible mount, the FS7 II employs a new design, closer to that of PL-mount cameras. It is still an E-mount, so all E-mount lenses (or adapters) will work fine, but the new mechanics involve a stationary lens and a rotating locking mechanism.

The logic behind the mount is great when dealing with cinema lenses, where traditionally you might use the PL mount. For example, when the camera is rigged with bars, a matte box and follow focus, you want the lenses to just slot in. It keeps everything snug and secure and keeps everyone’s head in a familiar space.

Here’s where that becomes a bit odd. If using E-mount lenses in a run-and-gun or single operator situation, I can see it getting a bit frustrating. It just isn’t as easy to change lenses with one hand as it is with the twist-and-release SLR system. I found myself having to put the camera down every time I changed the E-mount lenses.

But, having said that, I shot mostly between the included 18-110mm E-mount zoom (more on that later) and a Metabones adapter for using "In this region, ND is essential, and having the ability to control the filtration from behind the lens rather than swapping out traditional filters or using image polluting Vari-NDs is amazingly useful. It is great to see a large sensor camera with such an important ENG-style feature, because not all large sensor applications involve a full crew, and indeed, lots are single operator jobs”

Andrew Clemson, Cinematographer
Newtec Dialog allows you to adapt your infrastructure easily as your business changes.

**THAT’S FLEXIBILITY**

Newtec Dialog offers you a platform to build your business to the size you need it.

**THAT’S SCALABILITY**

Newtec Dialog enables the most optimal modulation and bandwidth allocation.

**THAT’S EFFICIENCY**

NEW RELEASE 1.3

**MOBILITY MEETS EFFICIENCY!**

NEW MDM5000

FIRST DVBS2X HIGH THROUGHPUT VSAT MODEM

VISIT US AT

SATELLITE 2017
MARCH 6 - 9
BOOTH 2001
WASHINGTON DC

Newtec Dialog allows you to adapt your infrastructure easily as your business changes.

**PROREVIEW**

EF glass. The Metabones negated the new locking mechanism, so it didn’t bother me that much. In this scenario, the positive lock system can only be a good thing, as any weight gets put on the adapter rather than the mount. Another small but neat new feature is the EVF bracket. The traditional rod mount of the FS7 has been replaced with a square-style rod, which prevents the slipping which could happen with the somewhat bulky EVF loupe. Other small changes include minor tweaks such as the audio door opening down rather than side to side, and the XQD cards ejecting further out from their slots to allow easier media swaps.

The 18-110 mm lens, available as a kit with the FS7 II or on its own, is an F4 constant aperture broadcast-style lens compatible with any E-mount S35 camera. It offers full manual control via the lens or through servo rockers on the lens itself and on the camera. The lens is not fast, being a maximum aperture of F4, but it is sharp, offers good range and can be controlled manually or by autofocus.

One thing that did bother me is that although the lens maintains focus throughout its range, it appears to lose focus and then reacquire it during zooms. I’m not certain if this is a focus by wire side effect or perhaps just a quirk of the prototype lens I was using, but it may put off certain users. Budget-conscious filmmakers might struggle to justify the additional $1,500 or so price tag, but for any UHD broadcast or multi-camera scenarios, that can be seen as money well spent. The Vari-ND alone is worth the bulk of that money, especially when you compare it to chunky third-party external modules, which retail north of $700 and offer neither the stability nor the neatness.

It will be interesting to see how long the original FS7 stays available for purchase. This camera feels less of a straightforward upgrade, and more of an alternative option to the previous camera. The sensor and recording options are the same, bar the addition of the BT2020 space, and a lot of people may not have an actual use for that option.

I think that ultimately, both the FS7 and FS7 II are fantastic cameras. The FS7 II is just better in terms of functionality, especially in certain scenarios. Plus, even if the FS7 is phased out, the image is fundamentally the same, so it will continue to have great value in the second-hand market, which is great for both buyers and sellers looking to move to the newer, better iteration.

Andrew Clemson is a Dubai-based cinematographer.

**Camera highlights**

**Pros:** (These pros and cons are based on the FS7 vs the FS7 III)

- BT2020 colour space
- Built-in Variable ND
- Stronger lens mount, which is good for heavier lenses
- Improved EVF mount and loupe

**Cons:**

- Higher price than FS7
- New lens mount not great for single operator use

**Wish list:**

- It would be great to see higher frame rates at 4K, or even a full-frame version of the FS7
As consumers, we are no strangers to the use of voice control and commands. For the last few years we’ve been using virtual assistants like Apple’s Siri or Microsoft’s Cortana to answer our questions, type up a text or search for directions. From the early days where success was fairly hit and miss because of accents, inflections or enunciation, today voice technology and processing has advanced to such a degree that our options are (almost) endless.

In fact, voice control has been around in some form for the past three decades, but only in the last few years has it gained wider acceptance and adoption, largely due to the advances in technology that have made it more effective. And looking at the home entertainment ecosystem, voice is making inroads here, too. Again, there’s Apple with its new set-top box that can be controlled using voice. Users can search for content and then control what they’re watching. For example, viewers can ask questions about the content, like who are the actors or what a character said. They can also use it to switch on subtitles or change settings.

The smart remote control
It’s not just Apple but a host of other manufacturers that are building voice capabilities into their remote controls, particularly as more look to use RF over IR in order to make remotes smarter. When voice is brought into the equation, there is a natural convergence of the remote and the user interface. In terms of the design, manufacturers need to focus on aspects like acoustic design, voice capture, the placement of the mic and the location of the button that activates the voice function.

The challenge device manufacturers face, however, is that viewers don’t necessarily know enough about the functionality to use it to its full potential. For example, one of the most used functions of voice control is to change the channel. Yes, voice does add value here, because how many of us can remember the numbers of our favourite channels? But voice is capable of so much more – from simple queries like searching for content using actors or names of shows, to using natural speech to have conversations with the television or set-top box, all with the aim of finding content or engaging with it.

While millennials, the so-called digital natives, may be quicker on the take-up of this technology and use its full capability more – from simple queries like searching for content using actors or names of shows, to using natural speech to have conversations with the television or set-top box, all with the aim of finding content or engaging with it.

When voice is brought into the equation, there is a natural convergence of the remote and the user interface. In terms of the design, manufacturers need to focus on aspects like acoustic design, voice capture, the placement of the mic and the location of the button that activates the voice function.

The challenge device manufacturers face, however, is that viewers don’t necessarily know enough about the functionality to use it to its full potential. For example, one of the most used functions of voice control is to change the channel. Yes, voice does add value here, because how many of us can remember the numbers of our favourite channels? But voice is capable of so much more – from simple queries like searching for content using actors or names of shows, to using natural speech to have conversations with the television or set-top box, all with the aim of finding content or engaging with it.

While millennials, the so-called digital natives, may be quicker on the take-up of this technology and use its full capability more – from simple queries like searching for content using actors or names of shows, to using natural speech to have conversations with the television or set-top box, all with the aim of finding content or engaging with it.

The present trend, despite the inclusion of more features and functionality, is to make the remote control as simple and easy to use as possible. This is achieved by aligning the remote functionality with the user interface on the television, set-top box or games console, and by design. Manufacturers pay special attention to the profile of the remote, the materials used and the positioning of the buttons.

Voice control

Menno Koopmans is Senior VP of Subscription Broadcasting at Universal Electronics.
Say hello to
2017
a Brand New Year!