Yousef Al-Obaidly on acquiring broadcast rights, attracting viewers to pay TV and conquering the MENA TV market
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PXW-Z150
BeIN Media Group has remained a quiet player for a long time. Over the years, it has quietly amassed a large number of premium sports rights, the English Premier League being one of the most significant, and raked in the subscribers. Its most recent move into the entertainment space has been a lot more aggressive. Furthermore, the men on the top have rarely made a public statement. I am so delighted to announce that beIN chose to break its silence by accepting to do an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME.

Yousef Al Obaidly, Deputy CEO of beIN Media Group, has not shied away from the questions we have asked. In fact, he has been candid in this interview, sharing beIN’s strategy for the year and beyond, its business model, some impressive numbers and the next steps for the network.

And would such an interview be complete without getting OSN’s side of the story? We have heard from Dave Butorac, CEO of OSN, on several occasions – but again, in this issue he outlines OSN’s USP and what will differentiate his offering from that of others in the pay TV space. I enjoyed doing both interviews, because at this juncture, the arrival of a second titan into the MENA pay TV space is likely to rewrite some of the patterns we are accustomed to seeing around FTA channels as well as pay TV packages. To bring these interviews to our readers in such a special month, when the whole of the Arab TV world comes down to Dubai for CABSAT, is indeed a coup.

Speaking of CABSAT, we are equally delighted to announce that for the second year in a row, CABSAT has appointed us their official media partner. We have aimed to do justice to that title by bringing you exclusive news, interviews and features from across MENA.

See you at the show!

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director
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New products at the show

THE POWER OF RATINGS
Why audience measurement is critical to MENA TV
Times Now deploys Amagi for Middle East ad insertion

Times Now, a 24-hour English news channel based in India, has deployed Amagi’s STORM, a cloud-based ad insertion solution, to monetise the channel in the Middle East. With a growing viewer base in the Middle East, Times Now wanted a solution for delivering targeted advertisements in the region, with total control over the process.

“When expanding into new regions, it’s important for us to be able to deliver content in which our viewers and advertisers find value. Amagi’s STORM platform takes CAPEX out of the equation, providing us with a flexible, scalable and reliable ad insertion platform that increases our revenue,” said Naveen Chandra, head of international business at Times Now.

Previously, the channel operated a single feed originating from India for the entire Asia region. The traditional approach of using DTMF or SCTE-35 cue tone-based content insertion triggers at operator headends has well-known limitations, including an increased likelihood of missed cue tones, workflow changes and dependency on the local operator to insert content.

“STORM utilises Amagi’s patented content watermarking technology for triggering ad replacement, delivering superior and frame-accurate splicing compared with traditional triggers such as DTMF and SCTE-35 cue, without changing existing workflows,” said K.A. Srinivasan, Co-founder of Amagi.

“This approach, combined with no CAPEX and low OPEX, was a win-win situation for Times Now, enabling them to successfully monetise content in the Middle East.”

Ooredoo readies for 4K service

Qatar telco Ooredoo has launched Ooredoo TV, a replacement for the IPTV service Mozaic TV. The new service combines apps, on-demand and live television in one box, claiming to be the first commercial ultra HD/4K service in the region.

With one set-top box delivered by fibre-to-the-home and using Wi-Fi for multiscreen options, the company says the service has no upfront charges, no equipment costs and no ongoing contracts.

Hongkong firm expands to Dubai

Hong Kong-based Ideal Group will extend its footprint outside of Asia Pacific with a new office in Dubai. The Dubai office, which is due to open in Q2 of 2016 in Dubai Media City will offer support for the Middle East, East and North African regions.

“Dubai is a natural progression from our existing regional coverage of APAC. It will not only enable us to service existing customers, but also increase our presence in new verticals,” said Guillaume Mauffrey, Chief Operating Officer of Ideal Group.

Plura fortifies MEA presence with office

Plura Broadcast Inc, a global manufacturer of digital broadcast and video production solutions, has announced the formation of Plura MEA. The new branch is a core part of the company’s growth strategy across international regions, bringing the company closer to its customers and dealers in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ray Kalo, President and CEO of Plura Broadcast, has been appointed Managing Director of Plura MEA. The company will announce a second executive appointment soon.

JOB TRACK

SAM has appointed Naresh Subherwal as Managing Director, Middle East, effective immediately. Based in SAM’s new Dubai office, Subherwal will assume responsibility for sales and business development across the Middle East region.

He brings 25 years of experience to SAM, including several years with Snell, where he most recently held the position of President, Asia Pacific & Middle East. Prior to his last role with Snell, Subherwal held the post of Vice President, Business Development at AmberFin Ltd.

Subherwal also worked as Global Sales Director at Snell and Chairman for Applied Media Group.

Subherwal holds a degree in Pure and Applied Physics from Queen’s University Belfast.

News Flash: Andy Palmer exits MBC Group; Avid to restructure and refinance for greater efficiency
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The beautifully designed software control panel works like a traditional M/E style switcher, so it’s easy to learn. You can switch cameras, change transitions and adjust key settings on the fly. Load graphics and even key them over live video, mix audio, and control cameras, all from your Mac or PC laptop! For larger productions you can even add a broadcast grade ATEM hardware control panel!

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U-TO’s BroadView manages Quest Arabiya

Image Nation’s recently launched TV channel, Quest Arabiya, is using U-TO’s channel management software BroadView. The channel uses the complete BroadView platform to manage content rights, programming, traffic and ad sales.

The system is deployed at Image Nation’s IT centre, which is managed by Injazat, Abu Dhabi. BroadView has a playout interface with Ericsson at the twofour54 playout hub in Abu Dhabi, and supports automatic generation of dynamic secondary events, with native support for Arabic.

Commenting on the deployment, Quest Arabiya’s General Manager, Carl von Doussa, said: “The channel management system sits at the heart of our operation, and as such, it was important to identify not just a mature, proven and reliable platform, but also to find a vendor with whom we could build a long-term relationship to support our business from launch and into the future.

“The implementation of the software was efficient and the stability of the system allows us to focus on content.”

U-TO Solutions has exclusively partnered with BroadView Software to distribute its solutions in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, including the Indian subcontinent.

“We couldn’t be more pleased that Image Nation has selected BroadView for operations excellence. BroadView’s technology will further strengthen a centralised management ability while preserving the creative independence that Quest Arabiya needs to leverage the power of localisation in broadcasting,” said Sumit Suri, Managing Director, U-TO Solutions.

beIN ties with Discovery, may buy Miramax

beIN has partnered with Discovery Communications to bring six channels in total to its platform. Of these, five will be carried exclusively on beIN. Four of these channels are brand new entrants to the region including Discovery Kids HD, Dlife HD, DMAX HD and DTX HD while the fifth, Fatafeat, which has, thus far, been broadcast free-to-air and in SD, will now be carried exclusively on beIN in HD.

Animal Planet HD is the sixth channel in the line-up but this remains a non-exclusive arrangement. Fatafeat, DTX HD and Animal Planet HD will launch on the beIN platform on April 1 while Discovery Kids HD, Dlife HD and DMAX HD will be launched later in the year. The deal was inked by Yousef Al-Obaidly, Deputy CEO of beIN Media Group and JB Perrette, President of Discovery Networks International in Qatar last month.

On another note, there is word that beIN is looking to buy Californian film studio Miramax.

“We are optimistic. I think you might hear something on this in the short-term,” Yousef Al-Obaidly, Deputy CEO of beIN Media Group is reported to have told Reuters.

Privately-held Miramax, which owns the rights to several Hollywood films including Bridget Jones’ Diary and The English Patient, has been exploring a potential sale since last year.

An investor group bought the company from Disney in 2010 for $660 million.
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AK-UC3000

CABSAT, 8-10 March 2016, Zabeel Hall, Stand No. ZA10-2
Rental firm invests in region’s first Canon 4K lenses

Abu Dhabi-based rental house Media Mania has placed the first order for 4K lenses from Canon in the region. It has opted for two units of the Canon UHD Digisuper 90 (UJ90x9B), a fully featured broadcast 2/3” 4K field lens with 90x zoom, 9-810mm focal length and image stabilisation.

The rental house procured the 4K lenses in January 2016 through Canon’s official distributor GloCom.

Commenting on the deal, Roland Daou of Media Mania, said: “We understand the requirements of our customers and make substantial effort to meet those requirements. Canon and GloCom ensured we received 24/7 support for this order. “We will be using the lenses in our OB trucks primarily for sports productions.”

The high-quality field zoom lens is fully compatible with 2/3” 4K cameras and broadcast environments where HDTV is currently in use. It is easy to use the UHD-UHD Digisuper in a virtual system and its size and weight are comparable to a 2/3” HD lens despite its 4K resolution.

“This is certainly a landmark for the region and demonstrates the reality of 4K, which will slowly but surely build momentum over the years to come. GloCom and Canon are proud to be part of such a milestone. GloCom will look to build on this introduction of 4K lenses in the region,” said Kashif Waheed, Sales Executive at GloCom.

Extreme sports series begins filming

Quest Arabiya is launching a new adventure-travel show, Nabd Al Moghamara, which is being shot in locations across the region from the Maghreb to the Levant.

Hussein Gazzazz, a 30-year-old Saudi Egyptian skydiving enthusiast, will be joined by 29-year-old Lebanese rock climber Ghida Arnaout as they co-host the nine-episode series, scheduled to air for the first time on March 13, 2016.

Nabd Al Moghamara, Arabic for “Pulse of Adventure”, will follow Hussein and Ghida as they experience the most daring pursuits the region has to offer. Production has already started on episodes that will include deep water solo climbing in Oman, white water rafting in Morocco, snow-paragliding in Lebanon and dune-bashing in the UAE.

BSA partners with Anywave

UAE-based Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA) has signed a partnership deal with US-headquartered Anywave Communication Technologies to sell the American company’s TV transmitters in Libya, Syria and the UAE.

Muhammad Irfan Gondal, CEO of Broadcast Systems Arabia, commented that the partnership will cater to the high demand of terrestrial TV transmitters in the region.

“We are very glad to represent Anywave Technologies in the region. Anywave is an established name in digital TV technologies including direct digital RF, adaptive digital pre-correction and echo cancellation and we are very happy to add these products to our extensive broadcast portfolio,” he said.

OSN partners with Gulf Film, expands Discovery portfolio

OSN has signed a six-year exclusive partnership through 2021 for premium film content with Gulf Film, a distributor of major studio productions and independent movies.

Marking a regional first, the partnership is underlined by OSN’s acquisition of the entire transaction window, building exclusivity for the first time across all platforms, including over-the-top (OTT) content access.

OSN has also expanded its portfolio of Discovery channels with the addition of Discovery Family HD and IDX HD, which will be available exclusively on its platform from March 31.

Vitec Videocom has appointed Pavan Mulanni as Strategic Sales Manager for the Middle East. Mulanni replaces Ahmad Nana, who previously held this role. Mulanni has a wealth of experience in the broadcast and video production market. He joins Vitec from MediaCast FZ LLC, where he worked as a Channel Sales Manager. Prior to Mediaccast, he was the Field Marketing Manager for Avid. Mulanni will be responsible for developing relationships across Vitec’s key accounts in the Middle East while promoting all Vitec Videocom brands.

Irfan Gondal, CEO, BSA.
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The ABOX42 OPX Cloud TV & Middleware Services offers a unique collection of SaaS services for the installation, deployment and operation of the STB deployment in the field, to upgrade the functionality of the deployed services over time.
New TV channel launches in Iran
The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has launched its second HD TV channel, Tehran TV Channel. Press TV, Iran’s 24/7 television network broadcasting in English was the first HD channel to have launched in the country.

Ehsan Kaveh, Director of Tehran TV Channel, said the channel aims to have active participation from the youth of the country. The core of the channel is built on HD equipment from Samim Co.

Media Links EMEA expands team
Media Links EMEA has announced the expansion of its UK team with the addition of Alex Cozens as Technical Support Manager. Cozens, who previously worked for Media Links Australia, will now act as Media Links’ in-house technician, with particular responsibility for supporting partners and customers across the EMEA region.

Google Play Movies launches in sub-Saharan Africa
A month after Netflix arrived in Africa, Google has launched its movie streaming service, Google Play Movies across sub-Saharan and South Africa, allowing users to either buy or rent digital titles on-demand.

Google Play Movies is now available in Angola, Benin, Botswana, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Matta, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

On the service, viewers can rent or download movies from a range of thousands available. Several Hollywood blockbusters are among the films available although TV shows are not yet part of the service in Africa.

Job Track
ZOO Digital has appointed Syed Ahmed to focus on international business development. He will oversee the Middle East, South Asia and Asia Pacific. ZOO Digital offers cloud-based services in subtitling, dubbing, captioning and digital distribution to enable Hollywood studios to reach international audiences.

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www.utahscientific.com
Ipsos launched a pan MENA research study to help understand market potential, willingness to pay, brand preferences and barriers and drivers to adoption of premium content services. The study, which was completed in early January 2016, was designed to represent internet users aged 15 and over across these markets. It represented around 42 million adults and interviewed 5,116 internet users across the UAE, KSA, Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar and Morocco.

The research uncovered a number of insights. Some notable findings of the Ipsos study include:

1. MENA consumers clearly want premium content. Across the six markets covered in the study, all – with the exception of Lebanon – rated watching movies as their favourite content-related pastime, with an average of 66% of MENA internet users surveyed enjoying watching movies, compared to 56% who enjoy listening to music and 40% who enjoy reading books.

2. Furthermore, MENA internet users are already looking up movies online. Around two in three (65%) have accessed movies online over the past 12 months, compared to 47% who have accessed music videos and 45% who have accessed TV shows.

3. Arab consumers are also willing to pay for content. 54% are paying for content in physical form, such as CDs, DVDs, cinema tickets or books. Equally, an average of 54% of Arab internet users across our six markets have paid for content online over the past 12 months, particularly driven by smartphone platforms, as consumers are increasingly used to paying for mobile apps and games. The à la carte model, such as that of iTunes and the Google Play Store is well established, with consumers carrying out transactions over the past 12 months in the form of ‘pay to own’ content. 45% of consumers have paid to download a movie, video game, mobile game, mobile app or music track.

4. While the à la carte model is the most common form of paying for content today, consumers in the study expressed a preference for a monthly subscription, based on an ‘all you can eat’ model across all markets. On average, 34% expressed this preference, compared to 18% who preferred pay to own.

5. With respect to premium online video services, the market is open in consumer minds; no specialist premium brand owns this space today. When asked to spontaneously list online platforms for streaming movies or TV shows in MENA, YouTube comes first to mind for around 40% of Arab internet users, followed by iTunes and Google Play, both with 5%. Netflix received 3% top of mind awareness, and a further 35% were unable to think of a brand that offers these services in the region.

6. As MENA internet users consider their subscription plans to premium content services over the next 12 months, 30% on average consider they would take up a free trial, while just over half of those (around 22%) consider they would actually subscribe.

7. Unsurprisingly, the biggest barriers to taking out a subscription were perceived cost and availability of free content elsewhere, including on YouTube and Facebook. In Lebanon and Morocco, the speed of internet connection was also cited as an important barrier to adoption.

8. When it comes to paying for content, sports was number one in the GCC markets covered (30%). Hollywood releases (21%) and international TV series (17%) were also popular. Arabic movies or TV series were important for 10% of users on average.

9. Finally, the study examined current usage and attitudes towards ad-blocking software. This is important, as premium content can be delivered in exchange for advertising as well as for payment. The study found that MENA consumers are willing to trade advertising for compelling content. On average, 56% of consumers have heard of ad-blocking software and around one in five have used it.

A further third think they will use it during 2016. The good news for publishers is that 70% of the MENA internet users interviewed would turn off ad blocking if their favourite sites or apps blocked content as a result.
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Broadcast Solutions delivers 31-camera OB van to Al Kass

Qatari broadcaster Al Kass TV recently received a 31-camera OB van from German OB specialist Broadcast Solutions. The live production vehicle, named OB-10, is the biggest addition to Al Kass’ OB van fleet and will serve in major live events for the Al Kass sports channel, as well as for other TV stations when Al Kass acts as broadcast service provider. The OB van was designed, built and integrated at the Broadcast Solutions headquarters in Germany.

Al Kass can draw on 31 cameras, nine EVS XT-3 servers with 12 channels each, 68 monitors and 240 multi-viewer screens for up to 29 operators working in the OB van. Central to the audio setup is a 48-fader Lawo mc²56 audio mixer fitted with local I/Os and 384 DSP channels, allowing OB-10 to handle the most demanding productions. Its connectivity includes 86 AES in/outputs and two DALLIS modular stageboxes. The stageboxes provide 48 mic inputs and 16 line outputs each, plus Riedel Artist intercom interfaces.

Samer Younes, Technical Advisor at Al Kass, commented: “We were looking for companies that met our demands for high-quality and specialised OB vans and who worked as a full-service provider. Broadcast Solutions helped us to reach our design goals for this OB van, which is the biggest one in the Middle East.”

Three Lawo V__pro8 eight-channel video processing units provide the video tools necessary to support a variety of different video formats. Being a flexible matrix system, its 8x8 video matrix and 384x384 audio matrix allow switching of any signal to any other. The V__pro8’s Dolby E encoding/decoding option provides up to four en-/decoders for fully compatible en-/decoding of professional quality multichannel audio, complete with Dolby E metadata handling.
Sharjah TV trades in Panasonic cameras

Sharjah TV will be trading in its existing Panasonic AJ-HPX2100 for 12 new Panasonic AJ-PX5000 cameras. This is the first time Panasonic has arranged such a trade-in deal for ENG cameras in the region.

The new cameras come with a five-year extended warranty. Panasonic will also invite an engineer from Panasonic Japan to undertake operation training with for all cameramen in Sharjah TV.

Etisalat renews user interface

Etisalat has launched its new eLife user interface (UI), designed to create a personalised experience as well as to improve content discovery across its eLife TV channels and on-demand services.

The new eLife UI will tailor programming to customer interests, allowing eLife TV viewers to enjoy seamless content discovery. It will also leverage real-time data to simplify navigation, search and content selection to enrich TV viewing experience.

The eLife UI is automatically rolled out to Etisalat’s latest eLife TV box.

Physique TV inks deal with Prime Entertainment Group

Content provider Prime Entertainment Group has signed a carriage deal with Physique TV to take its fitness series in the MENA region.

As part of the deal, Physique TV receives a total of 11 hours of fitness programming in English and Arabic for 23 MENA countries.

“There is a growing demand for wellness content in the market and we are very proud to be one of the major providers of this genre,” said David Freydt, MD of Prime Entertainment Group.

SES strengthens broadcast presence with RR Media acquisition

Satellite service provider SES will be acquiring broadcast and media service firm RR Media. SES intends to merge the operations of RR Media with its platform services group to create a larger global media solution provider.

SES will pay all-cash for the acquisition.

The acquisition remains subject to regulatory approvals and the approval of the shareholders of RR Media. The transaction is expected to close in Q2 or Q3 2016.

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Dubai Channels Network’s (DCN) general entertainment channel Dubai One recently embarked on a brand-new concept for regional television: an Arab fashion reality show. *Fashion Star* is the first attempt by the state broadcaster to produce and regionalise a reality show. It has previously broadcast international shows, but in their original format.

DCN was looking for a creative and refreshing idea, “not the usual singing shows that are over crowding the TV scene in the region”, says Mai Elkhalifa, Business Development and Programmes Production Senior Manager, Dubai One Channel at Dubai Channels Network.

“Dubai is ready for a show like this. We didn’t just want a pretty show where you come, win a big prize and then just go home. With *Fashion Star*, we wanted to exploit the commercial side of the fashion business. Right from the first episode, the show teaches the contestants to keep a keen focus on their commercial goals alongside creativity and design,” she says.

The 10-episode series features 12 budding designers, who are encouraged to think and create out-of-the-box ideas. Each episode has a challenge thrown open to the participants, with surprise, drama elements to add entertainment value for viewers.

Elkhalifa points out that the show’s set has been designed with the latest in LED technology and provides the runway experience with a thematic fusion of choreographed catwalks, lights and music.

“We chose the show’s participating designers very carefully. They are not amateurs. The show is for more established fashion designers, and we see the show as a vehicle to push them from good to great. We have an esteemed panel of mentors headed by international designer Reem Acra,” comments Elkhalifa.

Acra is joined on the show by international model and face of Lancôme Hana Ben Abdelslem and Creative Director of Al Oustora Ramzi Tabiat, both of whom are assigned a team of designers. Tunisian actress and model Leila Ben Khalifa, made her debut as a presenter on the show.

“The contestants were hand-picked for the first season. We didn’t go through an advertised casting process, and scouted the market for who would be eligible, interested and benefit the most. There are contestants from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, Bahrain, Tunis, Egypt representing the entire Arab region.”

With more than 300 people involved on a daily basis, *Fashion Star* is a huge production for DCN.

“It’s a competition, yet we have to maintain a certain standard of production to keep up the viewers’ interest. We are housing 12 designers for two and a half months, which involves a massive array of work such as the logistics behind catering; the clothes you see on the runway are clothes you can take off the peg and wear now. There are sewers and pattern cutters, and there is a lot of infrastructure involved, because each designer is expected to churn out a collection of three exclusive looks in just two days. There is a team of make-up artists, models and the choreographers from France, who have worked on the catwalks.”

The biggest hook of the show comes in episode 10, where viewers get the opportunity to buy the winning collection straight off the screen through namshi.com.

“This is a twist that makes the show stand out from the crowd, and there is a lot of social media engagement for the show to add to the viewing experience.”

The show was fully filmed and completed before starting to air last month. The format requires work to be done in advance, with clothes produced en masse for the collection.
Nepalese film wraps up shoot in Dubai

Dubai played host to the cast and crew of Nepalese film *Bijeta (The Winner)*. Mahesh Shrestha, the Sydney-based producer of the film said that the idea was to give the film a very modern and opulent look, which is why they chose to shoot in Dubai. The film was also shot partly in Australia and Nepal. The film crew shot in Dubai for a week before moving back to Kathmandu, where the film is now being edited. It will be released in the middle of April this year.

The crew brought most of the equipment from Kathmandu and hired some cranes and jimmies locally. The main camera was the RED Epic, along with a couple of GOPros. All technicians, cameramen and actors were flown in from Nepal.

“This is the first ever Nepali film to be shot in Dubai. I started by arranging the necessary permission from Dubai Film and TV Commission. It took me close to a month to arrange everything. One of the requirements of DFTC was for us to partner with a local production house. We worked with Feel Productions, which organised the equipment and technical support for us,” Shrestha said.
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beIN THERE, DONE THAT!

beIN Media Group has been quietly acquiring MENA sports broadcast rights over the years. Last November, it took an ambitious step by announcing its entry into the entertainment space. In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Yousef Al-Obaidly, Deputy CEO of beIN, reveals for the first time the pay TV network’s MENA plans, its strategy and its business model.
What is beIN’s long-term vision?

beIN’s vision is to be the region’s leading pay-TV platform that provides entertainment for the whole family. We want to be at the forefront of technology that enables customers to enjoy the great programming that we have in 1080P full HD with digital Dolby sound. We want to be the brand that is viewed as a one-stop premium entertainment destination.

A lot is said about beIN not being financially viable. Can you clarify the situation?

It is true that pay TV is a very capital-intensive industry. However, all over the world, in markets similar to where we operate, those companies that have focused on customers and persisted with high-quality exclusive content, while selling them at fair prices, have emerged as winners. We have seen various business models in the pay TV industry in the MENA as well. There are companies operating at the ultra-expensive end of the market and there are IPTV and OTT players operating on the other end of the value chain. beIN is positioning itself in the middle, where we feel the majority of the customers want to be.

We have a viable business plan and operation based on affordable price positioning. We feel that this will create enough traction with a very large segment of the population. Our focus is on revenue and subscriber growth. We have been and will continue to achieve it through constant focus on our programming, providing a great customer experience and undertaking aggressive marketing. Our business model is extremely viable and there are many successful examples of companies that have pursued similar strategies in other markets and have been successful, so I have no doubt that we will be as well. I don’t agree with the notion that our business model is not financially viable. On the contrary, I have immense confidence that for the MENA, this is the best business model. In my opinion, the winning formula is simple, i.e. best and exclusive content coupled with great technology and customer experience, aggressively marketed at the right price point.

What is the reason for your success in this market?

The reason beIN is so successful in the MENA region is because we are customer-focused. One of the main customer pain points in the region was that major football rights
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were spread over many pay-TV platforms. Slowly and steadily, we have consolidated all meaningful football rights into a single platform. Besides football, we have many other premium sports content, from tennis, athletics, rugby, basketball and so on. So if you are a sports fan, you just need one brand and one set-top box.

Consolidation of all premium sports programming within beIN has brought us very close to the predominantly young population of this region. Over the years, we have tried to serve even niche segments of the customer base we have. For instance, today we broadcast in English, French and Spanish, besides Arabic. English is relevant to a niche segment in only six to seven of the markets that we operate in, French is only relevant in five countries, and Spanish only in two or three. But if we want to position ourselves as the best sports broadcaster in the region, we have to serve these niche customers well. This requires investment and a customer-centric mind-set. Over the years, we have made these investments, and as a result, today we have a dominant position in this space.

On the other side, the rights owners want to align their brands with beIN because they have confidence in our ability to do justice to their brands from a marketing perspective as well as provide them with region-wide exposure. beIN is the only pay-TV brand that has a very meaningful presence in North Africa as well. So when rights owners look at beIN, they know that they are looking at the most compelling partner from within this region.

We feel we now have a comfortable position in sports. Our focus is now more on acquiring meaningful factual, kids, movies and series content. You will continue to get news of beIN’s expansion in this space throughout 2016 and beyond.

““There are companies operating at the ultra-expensive end of the market and there are IPTV and OTT players operating on the other end of the value chain. beIN is positioning itself in the middle, where we feel the majority of the customers want to be”

Yousef Al-Obaidly, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, beIN Media Group

Can you share some solid figures on your subscribers
and other statistics that convey your success in this market?

beIN is the largest pay-TV platform with regards to subscribers and revenues. For popular matches, our viewership touches around 80 million. We are the only pay-TV platform that truly operates in 24 markets in this region. We have almost 60 high-quality TV channels and we are planning to have around 100 before the end of 2016.

Why did beIN change its strategy from just sports to entering the entertainment space?

We regularly conduct customer research to identify growth opportunities. In one such exercise, we observed that our subscribers had high interest in movies (84%), series (61%) and documentaries (55%). Furthermore, the female segment also showed a high appetite for kids’ programming (88%) and lifestyle programming (71%). Our subscribers indicated that they would be more inclined to subscribing to entertainment content offered by beIN, as it would be safe for family viewing and in line with local customs and culture. Based on this insight, we embarked on the journey of establishing our entertainment bouquet. If you take a look at what we have acquired so far, it is in line with our strategy of developing an entertainment portfolio that focuses on the need of the complete family. We now have one of the best kids’ entertainment portfolios, great factual content and Hollywood movies that are safe for family viewing.

Do you think you will be able to migrate subscribers from existing pay-TV networks to your platform?

I think the pay-TV pie is big enough for multiple players. We have a different product compared to our competitors. Our unique selling proposition is our strength in the sports arena, coupled with great entertainment content being provided at a very reasonable price point.

We do not need to concentrate on any competitor, as everyone is unique and has their own strengths and weaknesses. For us, the prime focus is to attract the people who have not yet experimented with pay TV due to a high barrier to subscribe, i.e. high prices. So I am more focused on converting those who still have not subscribed to pay TV to experience beIN.

Pay-TV penetration in our region is below 20%, which compares extremely unfavourably with pay-TV penetration in Europe and the US. In the MENA, we are not at a stage where we can focus on smaller segments of other pay-TV subscribers yet. Another issue that I am more focused on is piracy. Pay-TV platforms lose millions of customers in this region to piracy. This is why we want to keep our price point at $10 for a basic package, so that people are incentivised to subscribe to pay TV.

By providing choice to customers, I am sure customers in the region will choose the best product that suits their needs. As a business, it is our job to understand our prospects well and provide them with the best product.

Can you elaborate on your business model?

Our business model is similar to that of any other pay-TV platform in the world. The majority of our revenue comes from subscription, followed by advertising, digital media and sub-licensing of rights. The success of our business model depends on how successful the subscription side of our business is. To make sure that we meet our targets, we actively collaborate with IPTV players in this region. However, our primary focus is direct-to-home (DTH). Within the DTH segment, we have two packages that are our mainstays, i.e.

Yousef Al-Obaidly

Yousef Al-Obaidly was born and brought up in Qatar. He went to the US and completed his higher education at Seattle University, with a final degree in Telecommunications Engineering. He joined Al Jazeera Sports in 2003 as MCR Team Leader and then stayed on as the network embarked on a phenomenal journey of growth through the years. He grew with the company and gradually took responsibility for external productions and, later, media rights negotiations. In 2012, he led the expansion of the company into international markets. He was tasked with assessing the network’s expansion and market entry strategy in other geographies. After a detailed analysis, the decision was taken to enter markets like France, the Americas and Asia Pacific. In 2014, Yousef Al-Obaidly was appointed President of International Operations while maintaining his role as Deputy CEO of the Group, after the establishment of beIN.
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another area of focus for us is how to control our churn. While we see a big number of subscribers coming in for mega events like Euro, World Cup, Classico, etc, it is critical for us that they stay on and keep enjoying our service. We have various initiatives in place to reduce our churn.

From a strategic perspective, we are extremely aggressive in acquiring valuable sports and entertainment content. We have made heavy investments in technology. We have one of the best studios and production facilities in the world. This investment has raised the standard of production and presentation in the region.

As I mentioned earlier, we believe that prospects in this region can be converted into customers if you offer them a great product at a reasonable price. In a nutshell, this is what we are striving to achieve.

We hear you have several deals in the pipeline for entertainment? Yes, we are in various stages of negotiation with different players. We have just signed a deal with a leading brand from the UK, which we will be announcing soon. On the other hand, we continue to strengthen our movies proposition, so expect to hear more news in this space. We are also focused on identifying great brands that are not available in this region so that we can collaborate with them and bring them to the MENA region.

How many channels do you expect to have by the end of this year? Give us an idea of the targets you are hoping to achieve this year in terms of deals, channels and subscribers. We started 2016 with 41 channels, and this includes 22 sports channels, while the rest are in the entertainment and news space. In April, we will have close to 60 channels. I think that by the end of 2016, we will have around 100 high-quality channels with unique content that appeals to diverse segments of the population. We also want to be a comprehensive product offering that fulfills the needs of the whole family. I feel that we will be able to do that very well within the August-September time frame.

In terms of subscribers, 2016 is a very important year for us. In summer, we have Euro 2016, which has been a good driver for subscriber growth. We have already started selling our Euro package and it is selling very well. In 2016, we expect over 20% growth.

Do you think FTA networks will continue to be the most commercially successful channels in the region? While some of the FTA channels in the MENA are of high quality, the majority of them do not offer unique content. This is why you see that the advertising dollars are concentrated on a handful of channels. But in the recent past, we have seen that the advertising market has stagnated.
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This could be a challenge for the FTA channels, who are solely dependent on advertising revenue. If the advertising revenue does not rise, then with the high production costs, it will be difficult for some of the FTA channels to acquire or produce high-quality content. This, in turn, could impact their viewership.

**What kind of figures are you investing in the entertainment genre?**

Enough to get the best content for our subscribers without breaking our back!

OSN has long-term exclusivity with major Hollywood studios. beIN has secured some independent deals, but how do you intend to provide subscribers with access to comparable premium movies to compete with OSN?

Well, while the top five to six Hollywood studios produce around 80 to 100 movies every year, many hugely successful movies come from independent studios. Just to contextualise this, this year *Brooklyn* is being tipped to win the Oscar in many categories. This movie was with beIN, as it came from the independent studios. Moreover, subscribers in the MENA are more concerned with variety than recency. As long as you can switch on the TV and find a good movie to watch, do you really care if it was produced in 2016 or 2014?

In the long run, we are sure that all of the leading Hollywood studios will be interested in talking to beIN, as we have a much larger subscriber base and better service quality.

**How important is the production of original Arabic content to the beIN platform?**

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available in FTA. In the case of beIN, we are trying to create differentiation by offering something that is not already available. If we were to enter this space, we will have to find concepts that are unique.

**Will you be going head to head with your competition in every bidding round for rights? Is it better to collaborate?**

Well, as an organisation, beIN is used to bidding and negotiating for rights all over the world with various major rights holders. In that respect, we are the most experienced organisation in MENA, so bidding does not bother us at all. It is part of doing business in this industry. We are very confident of what we have achieved and the potential of the business to grow organically.

**What do you think you need to add to your packages to tempt existing mid- and high-tier pay subscribers to switch to beIN?**

Most of the subscribers of the other pay TV platforms are already our subscribers, as they have no other avenue to watch premium sports anywhere else. So they are now experiencing the richness of our product. In due course, they can decide if they want to maintain multiple subscriptions or not.

I do not see any glaring gaps in our product today. It’s just different from our competition. Our product will continue to evolve in the years to come.

**It can be argued that your recent Discovery deal doesn’t give beIN tangible benefits beyond name recognition, as their main channels are still with OSN. Is this the first step towards securing exclusivity with Discovery?**

I don’t agree that this deal is primarily to secure a badge for beIN. Fatafeat, which is part of our deal, has been established as one of the most successful and unique channels in this region over the years, with a cult-like following. The fact that we have moved this channel from FTA to beIN is a great success. We also have Animal Planet, one of the leading Discovery channels on beIN. In addition, well-known Discovery programmes like *The Deadliest Catch* will now be on beIN as part of some of the new channels that we have launched. So this is much more than just a trophy deal.

You have already done deals with two FTA channels. Do you intend beIN to replace FTA as the most popular premium television option?

Bringing recognised brands to our platform is a priority for us. This helps us communicate the value of our packages effectively, as people are already familiar with the content. However, this is not the only tool in our arsenal.

**The world is going through tough economic conditions, with significant impact on Gulf oil and gas revenue. beIN is reportedly exploring selling its French operation to Vivendi. Do you expect regional pressures to affect your ability to expand?**

The expansion of every business in the world is linked to performance, and meeting targets and KPIs. We are no different. As far as we can continue to meet our revenue targets, we will be able to expand.

**What percentage of your subscribers do you anticipate will be digital-only subscribers?**

Currently, less than 1% of our subscribers are digital-only subscribers. With the high prevalence of smartphones and improving broadband infrastructure, we expect growth in this segment. We constantly strive to strengthen our digital proposition, and entertainment programming is no different.
belN'S TECH STRATEGY

Alongside belN Media Group’s commercial strategy to enter the entertainment space, its technical infrastructure and workflows also needed to be prepped to accommodate its expansion into additional content genres. The network, therefore, needed to move away from a temporary and manual playout system focused solely on sports delivery, to a state-of-the-art production and playout centre catering to all content genres, explains Israel Esteban, Executive Director of Technology at belN Media Group.

“The majority of the workflows in the previous system required a lot of manual intervention and did not support the expected growth of the network,” he elaborates.

“The technologies previously used were not flexible and restricted the agility of the business to grow. At the core of the new infrastructure is a file-based production and broadcasting platform, using the latest broadcasting standards, for bringing programmes of all genres to our viewers around the world. Specially designed for the production and delivery of all content, live sports productions, movies and entertainment, this integrated system architecture is based on concepts that offer rapid production processes, extremely high accessibility and collaborative working.”

The system is fully redundant with no single point of failure, he points out.

“For live operations, each channel can be operated by its own dedicated operator, whilst for non-live transmissions, administrator clients with enhanced user rights can take control of multiple channels for more efficient operation.”

“Additionally, the system architecture will enable belN to share our ever-expanding content offering...
to our viewers on multiple platforms of their choice.

The project delivered three major broadcast components – a Traffic & Scheduling system, Transmission Automation and a Media Asset Management (MAM) system.

“This investment in file-based technologies significantly enhances our ability to share the same content on multiple platforms to our viewers without the overhead of traditional technologies and workflows,” says Esteban.

Whilst the studios were very well appointed, Esteban explains that an overhaul was required almost everywhere else. “The result of huge rapid expansion has meant incumbent solutions have been pushed beyond their original specifications and have been in use for longer than originally intended.”

The new workflow ensured that predefined processes were put in place, and automation was key. This facilitates the handling of data and enables easy access to content, as well as processing and distribution, via a web-based application at the network’s Doha facility.

In order to be able to produce live content at unparalleled speeds, and to manage the required throughput for its entertainment channels, beIN has equipped its production and operations staff with the necessary tools to access incoming content, as well as all near-line and archived content already in the system.

“This enables browser-based management of all files and metadata, not only on-site through internal networks, but also for external users with a protected web client,” explains Esteban.

“Also integrated in this process is our broadcast management software. This application makes it possible for an operator to centrally manage the complete programme scheduling, contracts and rights management, as well as advertising and promo campaign planning. In addition to the programme planner deciding which content should be broadcast on which channel at what time, the same lists are used to prepare multiple material requests, which are sent via a SOAP interface in XML format to our MAM, which then triggers the ingest process of the desired material.

“This content then undergoes an automated QC process, with additional manual checks where required, before finally being released for TX,” he adds.

All channels are full HD quality with Dolby Digital+ capability. An underlying infrastructure has also been installed to support Ultra HD/4K.

To support the migration to the new system, beIN undertook a legacy archive project by digitising approximately 22,000 hours of specially selected content from its back catalogue, which was on videotape – predominately HDCam.

“It was important that our production teams had instant access to the required material in...
file format to take full advantage of the new workflows from day one. The older tape archive is still accessible and can be ingested upon request,” says Esteban.

A key element of this project was training, which continues to be a key focus of the Group. “In addition to the transformation of the technologies, this project was fundamentally about the transformation of skills and processes. The way beIN now acquires, manages and prepares content for playout, distribution and consumption has changed beyond recognition, and it was essential we invested heavily in training and addressed the required skills and resource levels to support this new workflow.”

This system first went live last summer with some of beIN’s sports channels. This was followed by the entertainment platform launch on November 1. The new systems have been designed to allow easy future upgrades and the addition of more channels. “With sophisticated software controls, the content and scheduling of all channels will be optimised and the exchange of content between the channels will be transparent and allow for ease of operation, thereby saving time and money, and simplifying the distribution to multiple platforms in multiple regions,” explains Esteban.

This implementation took 18 months from the scoping and tendering phase to delivery, but enables greater flexibility and has been designed to accommodate significant expansion of content to multiple platforms and devices.

“A primary objective of the project was to implement an automated file-based system whilst structurally and technically ruling out all single points of failure. To this end, the technology concept is a fully redundant system that offers the highest service standards and guarantees maximum availability,” explains Esteban.

“To support this, we implemented a global monitoring and health management system, which enables the monitoring and control of our AV and IT systems and associated workflows from across the campus from a single workstation.”

While the first phase of this project delivered capacity for 40 playout channels from beIN’s facility in Doha, the second phase, which has already commenced, will increase this capacity to cater to the network’s future needs. [300]
CASE STUDY
Dubai Channels Network has unveiled a fully revamped IP-based radio facility for its two channels broadcasting from Dubai. The state-of-the-art facility was handed over to the state broadcaster in December 2015. Vibhuti Arora brings you the details.

Dubai Channels Network (DCN), part of Dubai Media Inc., has revamped its radio channels – Dubai Radio (93.9MHz) and Noor Dubai Radio (93.0MHz) – to a fully integrated, network-based IP radio facility. The project involved a complete new studio set-up that fulfilled a number of objectives for the broadcaster and gave it additional capability and scalability.

Saleh Lootah, Head of TV & Radio Engineering at DCN, says the revamp was carried out as part of the broadcaster’s larger objective to renew and modernise its entire infrastructure. The existing radio facilities at DCN were quite old and comprised a mix of analogue and AES equipment, and connections which had been built in stages and weren’t integrated. Some of the old equipment had been discontinued by manufacturers and lacked service support and spare parts.

“It was a necessity to upgrade as the old system relied on intensive engineering support for both technical and operational matters. We had the option to have a regular FM upgrade or choose IP and we opted for the latter because of the flexibility it offers. Groundwork on the project began in 2014. Phase 1 of the project was delivered to us a couple of months ago and we are now working on the second phase, which involves integration with digital platforms and social media,” he explains.

The project
DCN required an integrated system where studios could be switched between radio stations and were ready to carry out OB injects. The idea was to reduce engineering intervention to a minimum and enable operational staff to route from external sources including SDI TV feeds. In addition, the production facilities were to be upgraded and integrated into the system and a separate news studio was to be included adjacent to the radio newsroom. Additional objectives were to enhance the stand-by audio arrangements in case of equipment or studio failures, add the base for a future expansion and provide a more comprehensive fault alarm system. Livewire AoIP seemed like the most suitable way to provide a robust and cost-effective solution.

Apart from Livewire equipment, the new set-up boasts equipment from Telos Alliance companies including Telos, Omnia, Axia and 25 Seven.

Christopher Hall, Senior Sound Engineer, Technology – TV and Radio at DCN, gives an overview of the studio project that involved building a complete new studio set-up.

“The key was to build a scalable system that offered us enhanced capabilities. There are four on-air studios available in two pairs for the two channels. These are equipped with Axia Fusion consoles,” explains Hall.

The news studio boasts similar audio consoles and the production facilities have been upgraded to include Pro-
Datavideo features a line of affordable and top quality PTZ cameras. These cameras are joystick operated from a central position and are mountable on any flat surface, walls and ceilings. They are able to do a 300 degree turn and offer up to 30x zoom levels.

PTC-120 is a lightweight and small PTZ camera. Its small outlook might throw you off guard if you see the picture that this camera produces. With a daisy chainable VISCA control protocol and the ultraportable RMC-190 control center, this camera is suited for lightweight situations like church broadcasts or smaller scale conferences. RMC-190 can store up to 255 presets, and is able to address 7 cameras.

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Tools 12 with Avid HD Omni and Artist and are interfaced into the Livewire system via Livewire nodes. External feeds from sources such as TV and radio OBs are available on the Livewire system. TV feeds are taken via Axia SDI nodes and radio OB’s via Telos Z/IP codecs. The associated video from SDI feeds and satellite receivers is distributed to studios by an RF system.

Axia Fusion replaced the existing analogue/AES on-air consoles. Axia iQ replaced the edit room audio consoles. Avid Artist Control and Mix replaced the existing production consoles. Telos Z/IP codecs replaced the previous ISDN contribution system for OB links.

Any individual studio can go on-air to any service as a self-operation arrangement. Alternatively, the studios can be paired to provide a control room studio arrangement. The studio director or on-air talent can switch arrangements without engineering intervention and intelligent software monitoring and control of what is in progress minimises errors.

The radio receiver feeds and corridor display screens as well as the internal studio display screens automatically follow the selected radio channel. The individual headphone feeds are also automatically switched dependent on studio routing connections selected. This is all possible via the PathfinderPro router control system, which also generates the alarm SMSs and alarm signals in some engineering areas in radio and TV.

The telephone system was upgraded so phone lines could come into the facility to a single interface point. These are connected to

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Telos VX engines and the audio (including backfeeds) is available directly on the Livewire network. The operational interfaces for the phone system are implemented via a touchscreen system running Broadcast Bionics software. An Adder Infinity KVM system is installed to keep PCs and workstations out of live areas and to increase operational flexibility. Additionally, the edit rooms are equipped with Axia iQ consoles which interface into the Livewire network.

Glocom Dubai carried out the overall systems integration for this project. AVC Group, the regional distributors for Telos were involved in pre-planning and installation and configuration of the systems right from the start. AVC’s Director of Engineering, Igor Zukina provided on-site support during the course of the project. MediaCast provided with the latest version of Avid Pro tools and Lund Halsey provided the furniture.

Afzal Lakdawala, Head of Technology Planning and Projects at DCN, says that as with any revamp in a live environment, it was critical for the team to carry out the upgrades while the channels were on-air, without interrupting broadcast.

“Effectively it was a complete new build, right from civil works to the network and even the desks and acoustics have been renewed, along with the equipment. In the previous set-up, studios were dedicated to transmission channels and incoming connections such as radio OBs and TV SDI feeds were required to be routed or patched up manually by the engineering staff, which involved a lot of effort and time. Now the radio OB provision has also been improved greatly, thanks to the Telos Z/IP codecs that are easier to set-up and use on-site compared to the previous OB links. As for the studio, the operational staff can route the feeds as necessary and the system generates the associated mixed minus feeds automatically.

“The key was to build a scalable system that offered us enhanced capabilities. There are four on-air studios available in two pairs for the two channels”

Christopher Hall, Senior Sound Engineer, Technology - TV and Radio, DCN
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“Glensound HD voice systems that allow reporters in the field to provide higher quality reports using a 3G phone system, have also been added,” says Lakdawala.

The new system is fully integrated and has many built-in redundancy features, many of which are automatically implemented when required, and the appropriate indication signals forwarded to the engineering staff as well as being displayed on monitors in engineering areas. Operationally the efficiency has improved as well,” adds Lakdawala.

Commenting on the revamped workflow at the facility, Omar Alzoubi, Senior Manager, Engineering Systems at DCN, says that a more intuitive system allows the radio team to concentrate fully on the programme requirements.

The system is very flexible, and the studios operation and its related control and data can be swapped between the radio channels.

The main components of the system are from Telos Alliance Company. Livewire is completely AES67-compliant and future proof and hence is open for more equipment choices to enable equipment from a variety of manufacturers to exchange audio streams.

Axia provided audio consoles for the main on-air studios. The common telephone system for the entire facility is based on Telos VX and Broadcast Bionics Software.

“For times when more complex shows are on-air and require a director and production staff, then the workflow is seamless, with the various requirements being operationally linked to be integrated and easily accessible. The communication is much improved via the integrated Axia Intercom system. A single operator can now control and monitor two radio channels simultaneously. All necessary sources can be routed by

“It was a necessity to upgrade as the old system relied on intensive engineering support for both technical and operational matters. We had the option to have a regular FM upgrade or choose IP and we opted for the latter because of the flexibility it offers”

Saleh Lootah, Head of TV & Radio Engineering, DCN
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Ali Baig, Senior Manager – Solutions & Operations at GloCom, gives an overview of GloCom’s role and how the company helped the end user achieve its vision.

“GloCom provided end-to-end systems integration to DCN, right from preparing system documents, drawings, solution description and engineering management, as well as project management. We also provided network architecture for the AoIP Livewire Network. This included project management and coordination with various suppliers on design, procurement and implementation of the system.

“We worked on four main on-air areas for Noor Dubai and Dubai FM. There are three recording studios which can also be used as on-air studios, two production rooms and one production studio for music or drama, which can be connected to the on-air studios.

“DCN decided to go with GloCom after a thorough technical and commercial evaluation process. The new system provides immense flexibility to the customer by making all audio sources available at any place, any time throughout the networked facility. By having overall Pathfinder routing control system on the audio over IP network, every workflow action has been simplified by the press of a button. It spans splitting the on-air studios and joining the on-air studios, emergency care of in Phase 1. However, the automation system still needs to be upgraded, which will be done in Phase 2, now underway. In Phase 1 the automation workstations were integrated in to Livewire using Axia AES Nodes for on-air workstations and Audio Science Livewire cards for other workstations. It was intentionally arranged that the automation would be upgraded in a follow-on phase, in order to allow smoother and stable migration to a complete new system.

Some data migration was involved in Phase 1, but Hall says the majority of this requirement will come when the automation system is upgraded. For the first phase, it was primarily production material that was migrated across. Old and new production and edit areas were operated in parallel while all the existing material was backed up to external storage media. Only relevant material was transferred to the new network storage arrangement.

“This had the advantage of being able to have a spring clean of recorded material, which will still be available for future transfer across the remainder of previous material,” concludes Hall.

“**In the previous set-up, studios were dedicated to transmission channels and incoming connections** such as radio OBs and TV SDI feeds were required to be routed or patched up manually by the engineering staff, which involved a lot of effort and time. Now the radio OB provision has also been improved greatly, thanks to the Telos Z/IP codecs”

Afzal Lakdawala, Head of Technology Planning and Projects, DCN
“The new system provides immense flexibility to the customer by making all audio sources available at any place, any time throughout the networked facility”

Ali Baig, Senior Manager – Solutions & Operations, GloCom

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Achieving the Perfect Colour

Egyptian film *Before the Summer Crowds*, which premiered at DIFF 2015, was graded on DaVinci Resolve 12 in Lizard VFX Shop, a Cairo-based post-production studio. BroadcastPro ME speaks to the Founder of Lizard, Karim Mira, about his experience colour grading the film.

Egyptian director Mohamed Khan’s latest feature, *Before the Summer Crowds*, takes a look at contemporary life in Egypt’s metropolitan cities. A light-hearted romantic drama, the film has a very modern image and feel. *Before the Summer Crowds* was part of the Muhr line-up and premiered at Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) 2015, where its entertaining storyline struck a chord with Arab as well as international audiences. This was not the first time one of Khan’s films had been hosted at DIFF; his previous film, *Factory Girl*, was presented at DIFF 2013 and went on to be shown at other film festivals around the world.

Shot mainly on a beach resort on the coast near Alexandria, the plot of *Before the Summer Crowds* could take place anywhere in the world, yet it is distinctly Egyptian. Using an ARRI Alexa, the director has captured the scenic beauty of the beaches of Alexandria and kept the frames bright and sunny to portray the brighter things in life. Shooting for the film began in 2014 and the film was ready for post by October 2015, just in time for DIFF in December. The 94-minute film was shot in 1:85 DCP.

To continue in the same vein and maintain the director’s vision of the film, Cairo post-production house Lizard VFX Shop ensured that the grading of the film was carried out accordingly. The brief given by the film’s director was to keep the continuity in the film, explains Karim Mira, Founder of Lizard VFX Shop.

“The grading shouldn’t disturb the viewer; it had to remain simple to serve the story and its location, which was mainly the beach. So we chose a colour scheme that was soft and natural, to go with the overall rhythm of the film. The mood of the film is relaxed yet uplifting.”

According to Mira, the film is a light satire on relationships without any dark patches, a rather straightforward film, yet keeping it simple was tricky since, at times, simple and uncomplicated features turn out to be more complex. It’s challenging to portray simple expressions on screen, he notes.

Colour grading played a key role in this film because it was used to show the variations in time and seasons in the post-production stage.

“The director’s brief said that the grade should be almost unnoticeable, which was a challenge. While watching the film, the viewer wouldn’t notice the changing colours of the moving images. The colour grading had to be very subtle and look natural. If the film is drama and romance, and the rhythm is slow and subtle, then the grading should represent the same look and feel,” he explains.

Mira and the film’s Editor Dina Farouk used the Blackmagic DaVinci Resolve 12, which he has been using for most of his TVCs.

“DaVinci Resolve has powerful tools for grading in general, especially if you are working on films. It comes in very handy when you are handling multiple formats, and needless to say, it saves a lot of time at the editing desk because of its comprehensive toolkit. The software has all the features
to export your final delivery to DCP easily, and the colour management tools are perfect for colour space conversions.”

It took the editors at Lizard two weeks to grade the film, but before the project began, the post-production house bought a DCI-compliant grading projector. This being Lizard’s very first film project, the post production facility needed a bit of tweaking to help with film projects. A consulting company from London helped Lizard upgrade its post facilities to handle film projects.

“We were previously colour grading only TVCs, and upgrading our facility to handle films was a natural progression for us but it didn’t come without its set of challenges. I am glad our very first film project was such a prestigious film. At the start of the project, I was very anxious because it was our first film project and a very prestigious one at that. When I met director Mohamed Khan, I found him a very inspiring and modest person, which gave me confidence to work on the film. He communicated to me what he wanted in the film.

“During the sessions, DOP Victor Credi and I exchanged ideas to create the best look for the film that reflected the director’s vision, which we were able to achieve.
in the final product,” says Mira. “Before the Summer Crowds was shot in one location and most of the scenes are outdoors. The post-production team, therefore, had to deal with a lot of natural light.

“We had to ensure that the sunlight and sand colours matched the time of day depicted in the film,” he says.

The story of the film progresses over four months, which had to be shown as well. The film begins in spring and moves into summer towards the end.

“We had to consider these factors and show the summer heat and brighter days at the colour grading stage.”

The team had three main set-ups for colours. There was one for the scenes on the beach in the morning, another one for the night scenes, and one for the scenes set at the beginning of the summer season to depict the changing seasons and time.

According to Mira, colour grading a film is a completely different ballgame from colouring a TVC, both on the technical as well as the creative side.

“In terms of duration, of course, it is very different and quite challenging, but also the idea of showing feelings and applying this to colours. The colour grade in a film has to enhance the feelings and the mood of the film. The two should complement each other and take the story forward. The film’s colours engage the viewer in a seamless way. The colours in a film have to move in parallel with the story and the location.

“You want the viewer to have a certain feeling at a certain moment and emphasise this with tools such as colour grading and sound. They are powerful tools that definitely serve the film and convey the feelings to the viewer,” he concludes.”

Karim Mira, Founder, Lizard VFX Shop

“The grading shouldn’t disturb the viewer; it had to remain simple to serve the story and its location, which was mainly the beach. So we chose a colour scheme that was soft and natural”
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What does the arrival of Netflix signal for the TV industry and viewers in the region?

Early this year, streaming service Netflix was made available in 130 new territories around the world, including the UAE and the MENA countries. BroadcastPro ME asks industry experts what this means for the region.

The legal and official arrival of Netflix is a positive step for the industry and consumers. We hope Netflix continues to take serious steps to restrict the availability of its US service through VPNs in the MENA region, as it contravenes the legal rights of licence holders like STARZ Play Arabia in the region. The Netflix service here does not have content depth or breadth that consumers are looking for in this region. Given that it's a global service, the content is not specifically curated for the MENA region.

We know that consumers in the MENA region value recency of movies and want to see series at the same time as they are aired in the US. STARZ Play Arabia has exclusive long-term partnerships with major Hollywood studios such as Disney, Sony, Warner, Paramount and MGM. For example, February sees major new blockbusters like Gravity, Captain America: Winter Soldier and Maleficent only on STARZ Play Arabia, and not on Netflix.

Similarly, critically acclaimed and hit new series like Showtime's Billions and Starz' original series Black Sails are available exclusively on STARZ Play Arabia. In addition to our original STARZ productions, our service also makes Showtime and CBS series available the same time as the US in the region. All our content is subtitled and curated for the audience in the MENA region.

We continue to strengthen our offering by adding new movies and recent series to the platform. We are also extending our reach to consumers by making it available on various platforms in the region and across multiple screens – from mobile phones to the Etisalat set-top box at home. We are the only digital service available as part of Etisalat’s eLife On Demand service and are available on Ooredoo’s Mosaic TV service in Qatar as well.

Kaswara Al-Khatib, CEO & Chairman, UT TUR N

The arrival of Netflix to the Middle East is great, as it will propel viewers to the paid subscription model rather than the freemium. I also think that with the arrival of another OTT service, this will reinforce the power of digital video consumption in the region, similar to players such as UT TUR N and STARZ Play. Even though the market enjoys Western content, the challenge that Netflix will face is their ability to create and aggregate hyper-localised content that the viewers in MENA demand.

Maaz Sheikh, CEO, STARZ Play Arabia
The arrival of Netflix will:

- Raise awareness of the entire SVOD sector with consumers, to the benefit of all OTT players. This will lead to subscriber growth across the board.
- Increase demand and value of Arabic and international content OTT rights from SVOD services as well as FTA and pay-tv broadcasters, to the benefit of producers and rights holders.
- Raise the bar for Arabic drama production when Netflix commissions its first series, to the benefit of viewers and producers.
- Lead one or more Netflix-commissioned Arabic drama series to reach a global audience.
- Increase demand for Arabic content and original Arabic productions from all SVOD players as they attempt to differentiate through content.
- Possibly lead OSN and MBC to be more aggressive in marketing their OTT offerings. If there is a lesson to learn from the rise of Netflix in the US, it is that broadcasters allowed it to become too dominant through their inaction and by providing it with all their content.

Karim Sarkis, CEO, Sync Media

Netflix has brought attention to the SVOD space – amongst both professionals and consumers. This is a good thing for the industry, and in fact, in most markets where Netflix is not the first entrant, their entrance has given a boost to OTT SVOD generally.

In the short to medium terms, a new entrant of Netflix's size has to get the other local services interested. It's true that presently, Netflix has some time to work through its content rights such that they are available in the region, and so local players are at an advantage. They'll have to work hard to capture enough market share to lock Netflix out, so to speak.

In the long term, once the rights have worked their way through and Netflix can offer the full suite of content, it will have been in the region two to three years at a minimum. That's a long time in this space, and it's hard to know how the market will pan out. Could the local players have succeeded in market share? It's a good question.

If other regions are indicative of Netflix's overall content strategy, it seems unlikely that they will have a large local content library. So I think the real players will be the local players providing Western content.

Samer Abdin, CEO, Istikana

Netflix is the latest and highest-profile VOD player to join an increasingly cluttered space in the MENA region, which already comprised icflix and MBC’s Shahid among others.

Although nearly non-existent three years ago, this sector is now nascent, experiencing revenues and subscriber growth of 30%+ per annum, if not more. Netflix alone will boost regional VOD subscriber numbers significantly, as it already controls a sizeable audience here, who previously accessed the service via virtual private networks (VPNs).

Despite the continued migration of ad dollars to digital channels, regional broadcast television has remained resilient, maintaining 60%+ share of advertising revenues.

However, the coming years will see further fragmentation of audiences as online video providers and VOD players eat away at both viewers and ad dollars. We expect to see the television industry transform significantly in the coming years as a direct result of this trend.

Dimitri Metaxas, MD – MENA, Omnicom Media Group
The rugged and portable LIVE+ GoBox enables SNA's mobile journalists to broadcast live from virtually anywhere or record HD video for later broadcast.
Using a new generation of mobile IP transmitters, Sky News Arabia’s field reporters now capture and stream live, broadcast-quality video from any location on earth. Dave Mace, Head of Projects and Future Technology for Sky News Arabia, shares more details with BroadcastPro ME.

An IP video revolution is sweeping the world of remote electronic newsgathering (ENG) and satellite newsgathering (SNG). With competition heating up among news organisations around the world, the ability to deliver live, broadcast-quality video of a breaking story – when and where it happens – has become paramount to the success of any 24-hour news operation.

Abu Dhabi-based broadcaster Sky News Arabia, which has a forward-thinking technology team and extensive reach across Europe, Africa and the Middle East with an ever-increasing network of OTT and IPTV distributors across the globe, says that adopting IP video transmission solutions right from its launch in 2012 has helped empower its journalists to break stories as they happen, even from the most remote locations in the world.

“Long ago, ENG/SNG technicians had limited choices for getting a video feed out of a remote site: satellite or microwave,” explains Dave Mace, Head of Projects and Future Technology for Sky News Arabia.

“As time went on and technology progressed, however, the video quality from these systems were not able to meet our standards. Any degradation in bandwidth or satellite coverage and we were unable to sustain a consistent picture,” he explains.

After evaluating a number of vendors late last year, SNA chose Dejero to expand its IP transmission capabilities.

“The Dejero technology met our requirements in several key ways, the most significant being its outstanding picture quality and reliability,” explains Mace.

“Dejero transmitters offer intelligent bonding capabilities that enable them to manage and bond a range of wireless connections, including 3G/4G/LTE, Wi-Fi, Ethernet and even microwave and satellite. This means we’re able to deliver optimal picture quality with low latency over multiple IP networks, even in areas with extremely limited bandwidth.”

To begin, SNA deployed two LIVE+ mobile transmitters.
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into the field to see how they performed and how engineers and reporters took to them.

“The teams instantly loved them, so we began rolling out more units to fixed bureaus in Jeddah and Kuwait City. After the initial success with these previous-generation units, we’ve now added several new-generation LIVE+ GoBox transmitters by Dejero. Specifically designed for newsgathering teams and video content contributors on the move, the rugged and portable LIVE+ GoBox enables our mobile journalists to broadcast live from virtually anywhere or record HD video for later broadcast.

“Reporters can grab a LIVE+ GoBox and head to the scene to capture and transmit live reports, or record up to 40 hours of HD video, and field camera operators can also use the system for DTL positioning and for sending rushes from the field. The LIVE+ GoBox is extremely easy to set up and use, with one-button start-up, automatic input and format detection, and a simple, intuitive interface with confidence monitoring. The built-in intelligence continuously adapts the systems to network conditions for top video quality.”

To further extend its field newsgathering capabilities, SNA has also deployed several camera kits outfitted with a Mac laptop and an iPhone running Dejero’s mobile contribution software LIVE+ NewsBook and LIVE+ Mobile App.

“In concert with a BGAN terminal or one of our SNG flyaway kits, LIVE+ NewsBook turns the Mac into a highly versatile go-anywhere video uplink solution for transmitting live HD or SD video feeds, as well as recorded and edited files, back to the broadcast facility in Abu Dhabi. Also, we’ve issued iPhones running the LIVE+ Mobile App to every SNA reporter and field engineer, as well as many other employees – giving about 40 personnel the ability to use their iPhones’ built-in cameras and cellular and Wi-Fi connections to instantly transmit live video,” explains Mace.

He adds that the NewsBook and Mobile App software applications perfectly illustrate the reach of IP video transmission technology.

“In effect, we’ve created a news force of at least 100 people who can cover stories as they break, at any time and from anywhere the staff members happen to be. For big stories, they can use their phones to go live until the SNG vehicles and additional reporters arrive.”

Although there are still other solutions in the SNA environment, Mace explains that more than 40% of the network’s field newsgathering is now accomplished with Dejero transmitters. Two recent high-profile stories covered with the GoBox transmitters were the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference (Cop21) and the November terrorist attacks in Paris.

“The terrorist attack, in particular, was a rapidly evolving story that required our reporters to be extremely nimble and reach areas that even our smaller trucks equipped with flyaways couldn’t access. With the GoBox transmitters, we were able to broadcast critical information live, as it happened,” he explains.

Mace calls SNA’s IP newsgathering capabilities “a point of pride”.

“They illustrate the organisation’s commitment to serving a new generation of Arab viewers who expect to receive up-to-the-minute news on a variety of platforms and media outlets. With Dejero, we can go live from virtually anywhere with consistent and reliable HD picture quality that’s comparable to traditional SNG equipment, and the software installations have enabled us to drastically expand our reach. These solutions have significantly improved our news operation’s ability to deliver primary and supplemental live video feeds at excellent cost, efficiency and ease of use.”

Dave Mace, Head of Projects and Future Technology, Sky News Arabia

“While satellite and microwave technologies may give an operator control over the connection and can offer signal capacity required for high-bit-rate video, they are usually expensive to acquire, staff and maintain, and it’s not always practical to deploy an ENG or SNG truck – especially if the news is breaking in a highly remote and rugged location lacking in accessibility and satellite or network coverage”
Do you think Netflix’s entry into the region will have an impact on the MENA TV business?

Netflix is a fantastic brand and has great positioning, particularly in the United States. I think there is a lack of understanding in the eyes of the consumer about what subscription VOD services like Netflix, Go and others in the marketplace here offer. What they don’t offer is access to the premium, first-run content that we as a broadcaster deliver. These services serve as a good supplement to what you can watch on a premium platform like OSN.

Of course, in the OTT space, we expect to see some consolidation. There are a lot of OTT players in the market now, and they will struggle to survive. This is where organisations like ours that have relationships with key content providers will continue to thrive. We are already seeing a rapid acceleration on the take-up of Go and welcome competition, because when there is competition, the consumer is able to look at various products and identify which services aggregate the best content.

The battle will always be won by those that can aggregate the strongest content. Netflix is a strong player and well-funded in the US, and they continue to invest in regional productions, but even today their landmark productions like House of Cards are available only on OSN, because we have exclusive distribution deals on our linear service.

How do you view beIN’s entry into the entertainment space?

BeIN is not securing first-run premium content. If you look at the movies that are run on beIN, they are not trying to be in the premium space that OSN is in, because they don’t have access to that content or they are in the second tier in the large part, after FTA. So if their business model is that they want to run second-tier content and charge lower rates for it,
then that’s the positioning they have chosen for themselves.

Our positioning has always been to provide first-run content. Just as the consumer may choose between driving a BMW and a lesser brand, they have to make similar choices in television, between watching premium content or second-run content.

What happens when those contracts are up for renewal?
It’s always a competitive landscape. OSN has very strong and longstanding relationships with the studios, and as we recently announced, we have just renewed our NBCUniversal relationship for a significantly long period. We have extended our Discovery relationship and all of the premium Discovery channels are exclusively available on OSN. There will be more announcements in the coming weeks that reinforce the long-term relationships between OSN and the content owners.

We have retained the relationships with those key studios and independent distributors, as is evidenced by the deals that we are announcing and have announced.

But you do not have premium football rights?
That’s right. We do not have premium football rights, but we do have other exclusive premium sports rights. We have access to all the cricket through our partnership with the ICC, all the golf and all WWE.

What I won’t do is pay irrational sums of money for football rights, and that’s what happens in this market. The return that is being generated to obtain football rights that are being acquired by the Qatari Sovereign for broadcasters is not commercially viable. They are paying exponential amounts of money for rights that never provide an ROI, and we are not prepared to do that.

I would love to have the premium football rights on our screens. When we did the landmark deal with Abu Dhabi Media to bring their sports channels to our platform — despite ADM being very competitive with us when it comes to running their sports channel — they have recognised that the consumer benefits from having all those services on one platform and the investment that OSN has made in creating what is unequivocally the most premium platform in the region. It’s the same model across the world.

I don’t mind competition, but we just won’t pay silly money for rights, even if it means that the football rights are outside of our purview.

Two premium pay TV operators — both have the muscle and money to go and bid for content. Will this lead to rising content costs?
It’s always a delicate model, but pay TV works effectively in the way we manage the cost of content and increase the success of our business. We have very committed shareholders and now, we are in a position where we are running a profitable and successful business. In order to run a rational, economic model, we will always make certain that our costs don’t accelerate beyond our ability to grow the business. We want to carefully manage the business; we don’t want to make it so expensive that we cannot manage it.

Is the market large enough to support two pay-TV operators?
What we are seeing in every market and what we saw here prior to 2009 is the need for consolidation. The
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consumer has a very simple choice. If they want to watch football they may want beIN, but if they want premium entertainment they will subscribe to OSN.

These models have all happily co-existed for many years and will continue to do so. I wouldn’t comment on the other entertainment services, because the rights that we have secured and the longevity of those rights means we have entertainment services that are not available elsewhere. But if people prefer second-tier services that were available previously on FTA and are now being packaged into a paid model, then that’s the model that works for them. If they do want a premium model with first-run content, the consumer has one clear choice.

**“Pay TV is on the road map now. Five years ago, it wasn’t and we are very proud of the fact that we are the largest broadcaster in the region and we love the fact that people are talking about us. It means people are taking us seriously”**

Dave Butorac, CEO, OSN

When pay-TV operators reduce their prices considerably, will this affect the FTA players?

The FTA market and pay market co-exist because the former is driven by ads and we are driven by subscriptions. We are not, in that respect, in competition with one another. Yes, the ad market is idiosyncratic and there is a large volume of free television, which is unusual, but that’s because they distribute on satellite, which is also quite unusual globally. That also means we can’t market our network on the basis of 150 channels. We have to market it on the premium nature of the channels, because the consumer already has over 800 channels. So it is not a volume play. The FTA market and pay will happily co-exist.

We have to, however, also get real about advertising. The numbers thrown about as ad dollars in TV here are fictitious. The reality is that there is massive discounting on rates cards, and because there is no accurate reliable ratings system, the advertiser has no surety on where their ad dollars are being spent and therefore they are reluctant to spend it.

What this market needs across the board is accurate daily ratings that truly reflect TV audiences here and that will give the advertiser the comfort of knowledge in accuracy in numbers. That’s why I am a keen supporter, along with Rotana and other industry players, in the creation of the Saudi ratings system, which will become available later this year. Once we have that and the industry has a reliable currency, then you will see the advertising revenues increase in the region; but whilst you have this skewed model and vested interests in the advertising markets, who wish to stay as it is because perhaps it is not reflective of the audience, then the ad spend will remain low.

But that is an issue for free TV, because for pay TV our advertising revenue is minimal. As an industry leader, we believe that we must have an industry in this region that bears scrutiny to international standards.

**Will production of Arabic content by the competition dampen the success of OSN Yahala?**

We are very proud of OSN Yahala and have just launched OSN Yahala Cinema HD on Feb 1. It has been a huge success in terms of the movie content that we are offering – premium HD, first-run Arabic movies. The more our industry is able to invest to grow, the stronger our industry becomes, so I welcome more entrants to that area.

We are not the biggest commissioner or licensee of Arabic language drama in this region, but what we aim to do is have a position of premium, so the consumer knows that premium content will always be available on OSN Yahala because it is the number one or two channel in key marketplaces like the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Arabic drama and Arabic content is vastly important. We’re an Arabic market, and if there are more players investing in the creation of Arabic content, all that does is force the quality of the content up.

**Would you be open to an acquisition?**

Both our shareholders have previously stated they would like to take the company into the equity markets at some point, but we have no current plans for that at this moment. We are driving the business to grow its strengths. We have two very committed shareholders who are in no rush to get away, and they are very excited about the prospects for what is now a very successful business. So we will always look for the best ways to maximise the structure of the business – but that’s not a negative.

It’s a positive, and ultimately the great accolade that we do take is the fact that so many people are interested in us because of the position we have created. Pay TV is on the road map now. Five years ago it wasn’t, and we are very proud of the fact that we are the largest broadcaster in the region, and we love the fact that people are talking about us. It means people are taking us seriously.
Snapshot

- **Client:** OSN, Dubai
- **Objective:** To build a state-of-the-art operational area to support OSN's business growth and broadcast operations efficiently for the next three to five years
- **Key solution providers:** TSL, 3Sixty Consult
- **Vendors:** Harmonic, Ericsson, Grass Valley, Axon, EVS, Vizrt, Calrec, SAM, Christie, Skyline Communications, Lund & Halsey and Elemental

The newly designed network operations centre (NOC) at OSN.
OSN recently upgraded its broadcast facilities with a brand new network operations centre at its Dubai headquarters. Vijaya Cherian goes on-site to find out how the new facility will improve the network’s operational efficiencies.
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OSN App

One of the most recent additions to the OSN service is OSN App, a companion application developed and designed by Accedo and built on its flexible, cloud-based AppGrid solution. This app is designed to be the next step in OSN’s digital evolution.

“Searching for content you want when you’ve got a huge library to navigate can take some time. This intuitive new application enables viewers to have instant access to search and filter OSN’s vast selection of movies, TV shows and box-sets in both English and Arabic in the VOD library, OSN Store and the programme schedule,” explains Billinge.

The app offers remote control of the STB. User engagement is further increased by the app’s social media sharing features and the ability to link content with microsites and third-party services such as IMDB.com.

Accedo’s AppGrid also provides OSN complete autonomy over its applications. While iPads are presently supported, the iPhone and Android devices will also be supported this year.

AppGrid allows OSN to configure assets (such as images, skins and logos) itself and manage elements such as promotions, menu layout, themes and application-level metadata without needing outside support. This gives OSN’s editorial and marketing teams the autonomy and flexibility to promote and target content effectively to each of the diverse markets within MENA at a far more granular level.

This app has also been developed with the new technologies OSN intends to roll out in the near future in mind.

“We have a next-generation STB platform in development that will allow for new customer experiences and even closer interaction between the STB and OSN App. This companion app will be the platform that enables that to happen,” confirms Billinge.

control and monitor the entire OSN platform, currently made up of 150 linear DTH satellite channels as well as its OTT services.

The MCR is responsible for all live signal contribution serving its sports and general entertainment (GE) channels. OSN has full-time dedicated facility lines from major switching hubs like BT Tower that provide its atmospheric free signal access to support its live productions.

“We have used this opportunity to streamline workflows by combining the sports and GE areas with a central supervisory console,” explains Tom Jones, Director of Broadcast Operations at OSN.

“The implementation required us to undergo various intermediate migration phases, all of which needed to be done without on-air impact. We were faced with monitoring a significant number of services in the new area and opted for an IP transport stream system based on Ericsson RX9500 modular IRDs and Miranda KIP multiviewers. This also opens up additional possibilities for the future, such as compliance recording, stream analysis, etc.”

Frank Kerrin, Director Of Technology Support and Projects, Broadcast Engineering at OSN adds: “We also included a centralised alarm, monitoring and control system from Dataminer for our 20 live streaming services, which will be expanded across our entire broadcast infrastructure over the coming months. The end result is a more efficient and more effective monitoring and control area that allows us to operate with lower costs while increasing our KPIs. The solution is scalable, allowing us to further grow into the future.”

The second area that saw a major revamp was the Central Apparatus Room. This brought all streaming services in-house to enhance OSNs expanding digital / OTT platforms, as well as the recent upgrade to its sports workflow based around Imagine AMP servers.

The new CAR has over 50% more rack capacity. The first significant technology deployment in the expanded CAR is the latest Electra-X2 encoding from Harmonic, onto which OSN has moved all of its HD services to further enhance its customer experience. All of this required careful planning and execution in order to achieve the desired result without on-air impact.

One of the key aspects here was a comprehensive review of power distribution to allow true A/B power distribution across all areas, plus a replacement of the existing CAR A/C, which had grown organically over the years as required and could no longer support the needs of the area. Besides adding fully redundant CCUs, OSN has employed cold-aisle containment to leverage the best efficiency from the new units and lower its carbon footprint. This has led to a more efficient use of the HVAC system and lower energy requirements.

In the new Edit area, the team relocated the AHUs and FCUs as far from the operational areas as possible to reduce the ambient noise in that environment. Here, the team has continued to build upon the Adobe Creative Cloud workflow introduced at the beginning of 2014. Again, all sports and GE editing requirements have been centralised here.

To put things in perspective, the OSN platform has grown on both satellite DTH as well as OTT over the years. This expansion has also seen broadcast chains at the facility become more complex. Traditional multipoint visual monitoring is still used, but more was needed to ensure that all parts of the broadcast chain operate as expected. This also included signal integrity for satellite and OTT streams.

“This is where Dataminer comes in,” explains Jones, pointing out that the Dataminer solution is a big step for the network.

“This solution monitors all of our off-air signals and all the incoming third-party services we have from
“We introduced a secure media workflow that allowed us to capitalise on studios providing content pre-US transmission … This was obviously essential for us to support the ‘same time as US’ air time strategy that OSN has adopted”

Mark Billinge, CTO, OSN

Os has employed cold-aisle containment in the CAR to leverage the best efficiency from the new units.

additional transponders coming to the NOC, we had to find a better solution, so we took this opportunity to migrate all of our off-air NOC monitoring to an IP-based solution. This again brought us savings in real estate, power and cost.”

All of OSN’s DVB services (SD and HD) were on the Harmonic Electra 8K encoding platform.

“We took the opportunity to migrate our HD services to the next generation Harmonic X2 encoding platform, which is optimised for HD and gives significant bandwidth savings,” chips in Jones.

One key element of this project was to migrate the Pehla bouquet, OSN’s recent acquisition, from Jordan Media City to Dubai. This meant making a change to the DVB headend.

With the migration of the Pehla turnaround services to Dubai, we took the opportunity to fully upgrade our HD compression to the next generation Harmonic Electra X2 encoding and Prostream 9000 multiplexing,” explains Billinge.

This project, which began in early 2015, is scheduled for completion in March 2016. Different phases have been delivered at different times. For instance, the new NOC was ready in September 2015 while the post-production unit wasn’t ready until December 2015.

“The implementation started at the beginning of 2015 and is currently ongoing. Despite delays in the delivery of parts of the project, we hit all of our critical milestones on time. Some examples are the in-sourcing of OSN Cricket playout, in-sourcing of the Pehla channel turnaround (over 40 services), the studio move and the revamp in time for the Rugby World Cup, and the launch of our latest mux on Eutelsat 8WB, which will be capable of 4K transmissions later this year,” Billinge points out.

As with all such upgrades, there were challenges.

“One of the major aims of the project was to give us greater movement between the multiple destinations, which led to the content being in the right place at the right time. This neither compromised server capacities nor user requirements yet effectively freed up manual resources for more creative activities. Via exploitation of our CMS, we were able to provide workflow reports to non-technical staff, which meant they were up to date on the status of their media, regardless of platform destination. This enabled issues that were holding up workflows to be identified and addressed such that downstream bottlenecks were avoided.”

This project has offered the opportunity to phase out legacy solutions and inefficiencies and upgrade existing solutions. For instance, the off-air monitoring of OSN’s own DTH services was extremely cumbersome, and space and power hungry, elaborates Billinge.

“With the prospect of three

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resilience in the systems that underpin the broadcast operation. Therefore, we took the opportunity to completely overhaul the power distribution within our CAR and the AC. Although the existing systems have supported us for many years, they were not designed as well as they could have been in some cases, so we were keen to put that right," explains Billinge.

“This was especially true for the power distribution within CAR. We now have a robust system and configuration as possible within the constraints of the building design. The AC is also a major area of improvement. What we had previously had reached its limit, given our growth and also the challenges posed by greater packing density of kit within the bays. The solution we have chosen is fully resilient, and the cold aisle containment for efficient cooling has been a great choice.”

The broadcaster has almost completed this project, but the tech team is working on other parallel projects, such as its project with Samsung to develop its next-generation 4K UHD STB platform. OSN has had capacity on a new transponder since early this year, some of it reserved for its 4K/UHD services.

“We continue to grow with the new channel launches and more HD channels added to the platform. We are also currently developing our next-generation 4K UHD STB platform. For us, as a premium provider, it is a natural progression, and if you look at the Samsung screen models this year, they are all 4K screens. We are developing a new platform with them,” adds Billinge.
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Indian production house Rajshri Entertainment plans to set up a subsidiary in the UAE to repurpose content in Arabic for YouTube. BroadcastPro ME caught up with the head of the company’s digital division, Rajjat Barjatya and Ossama Yusuf of Diwan Videos, the MCN for the company, to find out more.

At the helm of the digital division is Rajjat A Barjatya, MD & CEO, Rajshri Entertainment Private Limited. Barjatya says that having established a firm base in India and having a significant presence amongst the domestic and diaspora Indian audience, the company is now planning to expand its footprint in territories outside of India in order to tap a local audience.

“We experimented by repurposing content in Arabic for YouTube. We found that the MENA audience is highly engaged with content in Arabic. Therefore, we decided to create a subsidiary in the UAE to repurpose our content library to offer content in Arabic to viewers across the MENA,” says Barjatya.

Mumbai-headquartered Rajshri Entertainment Private Limited, the digital arm of the 68-year-old Rajshri Group, will be exhibiting at CABSAT this year. With a rich legacy of production and distribution of films, TV shows, music, e-news, lifestyle and kids’ content, the company has been among the top film production houses in India. Rajshri entered the digital domain in 2006, when there was no digital content in India. The company has been growing its assets ever since.

Over the past 10 years, the company has evolved into one of the largest multi-platform networks for digital content in Asia and manages a robust digital content library with more than 20,000 hours of content. With close to 50 owned and operated channels on YouTube, Rajshri Entertainment comes to the UAE with a plan to repurpose its content library to offer content in Arabic to viewers across the MENA.

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WHAT'S COOKING IN DUBAI!
“We see huge potential in the Middle East for content that is made in India. Indian and Arabic cultures are very similar and our ties go back centuries”

Rajjat A Barjatya, MD & CEO, Rajshri Entertainment Private Limited

Our food content for a Japanese audience. That encouraged us to look at more local markets. We see huge potential in the Middle East for content that is made in India. Indian and Arabic cultures are very similar and our ties go back centuries.

Bollywood is also very popular here, so I see a huge opportunity for our content offerings here,” he says.

Rajshri Entertainment produces 120-150 minutes of content in-house every day for digital platforms, mainly in English, Hindi and Marathi predominantly for an Indian audience, domestic as well as diaspora.

“Digital is the future of entertainment and as Rajshri, we span the entire gamut of entertainment. We are one of India’s most successful entertainment companies since 1947. We have built a huge library of digital content, across genres and languages, including Indian films and short-form content like music videos, food shows, kids’ shows, yoga/wellness shows, Bollywood news and gossip shows. We distribute this content extensively across 100+ digital video platforms worldwide. We have over 6.5 billion views on YouTube alone,” Barjatya says.

The digital content production house plans to start with cookery shows, which will be dubbed into Arabic and distributed across YouTube and other digital and TV platforms in the MENA region.

“We are launching an Arabic-language food channel on YouTube for Indian food. It’s called Ainmutbakh Al Hind [Recipes from India]. Multichannel network Diwan Videos will manage the channel for us. Making Arabic versions of popular Indian songs owned by Rajshri with local artists is the next step. We are also dubbing and localising other content we own. Eventually, we want to produce local language content with local talent for audiences and are setting up operations in the region for this purpose,” says Barjatya.

There are three phases in the growth of the digital business, notes Barjatya.

“The first one is to create content for a market we understand, then repurpose existing content in new languages for new markets and finally, produce local content in the new territory with local talent.”

The next phase will be to localise content, set up a base in the UAE and produce local content with local talent for the local market.

“After food and lifestyle, we will move on to kids’ content, kids’ stories, folk tales from India, which will be dubbed in Arabic at a later stage and hosted on YouTube because we see a definitive demand for this kind of content in the region. Arabic versions of popular Indian songs performed by local artists is another area in which we see tremendous potential.”

Rajshri Entertainment is looking to set up a subsidiary in the UAE in the next six months.

According to Diwan CEO Ossama Yusuf, the partnership has been brewing for the past year, since MIPTV in Cannes.

“We will provide them with full YouTube channel management covering content uploading, channel optimisation, audience engagement and audience growth and content protection,” he says.

Also included will be social media consultation to help promote content discoverability and drive traffic to YouTube.

“Monetisation will be an important aspect of this. The more views we can secure, the more revenue we will generate from YouTube. We will also approach brands for potential sponsorship for the channel,” explains Yusuf.

“We saw huge potential in repurposing Indian content for Arab viewers when I met Rajshri last year at MIPTV. It took some time to finalise the agreement and develop Arabic localised content. For Diwan, this will be the second project with localised Indian content after Zee Alwan channel. We are keen on reinforcing the fact that MENA is a great market for Indian and Turkish content. So building a success story with Rajshri will help Diwan scale this line up.”

Diwan Videos generated 600m views in January alone, making it the 33rd most viewed MCN globally. The MCN now plans to do collaborative production between Rajshri and Basmaty, a cooking platform producing original Arabic cooking content. Yusuf says the idea is to create a global cooking platform as a joint venture project involving Diwan, Rajshri and Basmaty.
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There needs to be greater awareness that cybercrime has evolved in recent years. In essence, the attack surface is now much bigger, making platform security paramount, says Andrew Wajs.

The multi-device, connected world that we are living in today has spurred broadcasters and pay-TV operators to develop a much stronger online connection to the consumer. The pay media industry is not alone in this – banks, retail stores, consumer electronics and even automotive companies are all in a battle to capture the online consumer and nurture that one-to-one relationship.

We know now that this means much more than just having a good website. It means encouraging more interaction online over every imaginable device, engaging the consumer and giving more opportunity to manage accounts and payments online. With more and more devices and even appliances around the home becoming internet-enabled and the connected car becoming a reality, the future is at our doorstep.

These changes have put increasing pressure on companies to validate that customers are who they say they are, while at the same time protecting their own infrastructure and private customer data. It’s clear to us that the connected life of consumers presents major security challenges, some of which are not being appropriately addressed.

There needs to be greater awareness that cybercrime has evolved in recent years. In essence, the attack surface is now much bigger, making platform security paramount. Any device with an operating system connected to the internet can be compromised, providing a backdoor for cybercrime. Gartner forecasts a 30-fold increase in Internet of Things (IoT) capability in such devices, growing to 26bn units by 2020.

Access points and threats
Let’s take a well-known spectre in the pay media industry, content piracy, as an example of one such vulnerability. Content piracy in itself is one of the major challenges faced by the pay-TV industry, but it also brings with it much further reaching threats for the consumer.

A recent study on illegal football streams by the BBC found that the millions of fans that access these streams are putting themselves at risk of malicious software being installed on their systems, due to the ads hosted on these sites.

In the new IoT world, a consumer’s system being breached in this way opens up a whole world of possibilities for the intruders. All of your devices, the secure payments you make and potentially even your car could be under threat!

The emergence of the dark net and its anonymity is another challenge. The so-called deep web comprises websites that cannot be found using conventional search engines, which typically function...
The trend of consumers exposing more of their personal information and lives to connected devices shows no sign of abating in the future. By offering the technology to protect this data, any company across the spectrum can deepen existing relationships with customers while protecting personal data. Such steps will certainly serve to define broadcaster and pay-TV operators looking to provide a full service to customers and those who are happy to exist only as providers of entertainment. 

Taking the operator-customer relationship further
The security solution used in any connected device – be it an STB, a car or a refrigerator – must be able to be locked down, and to monitor traffic and device behaviour. It must be able to isolate home security elements from other internet components, ensuring that weaknesses are quickly identified and addressed. A proper set of security services and technology should provide expertise to help understand where vulnerabilities fall in the overall IoT framework – and if an attack does happen, to identify, investigate and provide support in any prosecutions.

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The latest firmware update for the new GY-LS300 camcorder delivers a Prime Zoom feature, Cinema 4K and 2K recording, and a JVC Log mode to rival the look of film.

Compact, convenient and ultra high definition, JVC’s GY-LS300 camcorder is equipped with a 4K Super 35 CMOS sensor and uniquely accommodates a wide range of cinema and photographic lenses and adapters. The new Prime Zoom feature, added in the latest free firmware update, uses the camera’s innovative Variable Scan Mapping technology to allow zoom capabilities when using prime lenses. There are Cinema 4K and 2K recording modes, as well as standard 4K Ultra HD and full HD (H.264 4:2:2 50Mbps), all recorded to readily-available memory cards for fast shoot-to-edit workflow. Featuring a new JVC Log mode, the GY-LS300 delivers wide latitude and high dynamic range to rival the look of film, with the Super 35mm CMOS sensor providing higher contrast ratio and detailed highlights and shadows. There’s also the ability to trigger recordings via HDMI/SDI and JVC LUT support via the Atomos Shogun and Assassin external recorders. And with excellent network connectivity, FTP file transfer and live streaming capabilities too, the GY-LS300 really is a powerful performer.

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Saudi Broadcasting Corporation is working with French digitisation specialist Vectracom on a large archival project to make its assets more accessible in the future. *BroadcastPro ME* brings you details of how the project is shaping up.

Saudi Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) recently brought on board Vectracom, a French specialist in converting legacy video recording formats, to undertake a two-pronged archival project. The two-year contract aims to have another 100,000 tapes of SBC’s audio and visual archive digitised while also enhancing the metadata for 250,000 of its clips, with an average duration of 20 minutes. The metadata enhancement was commissioned last year and is a first attempt on the part of the broadcaster to make its assets more easily accessible should they be required in the future. Vectracom, which has worked on some of SBC’s previous archival projects, is managing this in conjunction with the main contractor, Saudi-based systems integrator First Gulf Company (FGC).

SBC’s digitisation and archival plan has been running for several years and has been undertaken in phases to make the Herculean task more manageable. The broadcaster has assets in varying formats, including hundreds of thousands of hours of programmes on 16mm films and other tapes that it has been digitising over the years.

This new project will see Vectracom treat 100,000 Betacam tapes, including analogue and IMX cassettes. The French specialist has deployed a set of robots controlled and complemented by software it has created and adapted for the preparation, segmentation, digitisation, quality control and monitoring of operations for the preservation of this content.

As part of the workflow, SBC provides batches of cassettes to the FGC / Vectracom team. A barcode label is added to each cartridge as soon as it enters the operations area. The team treats 300 clips with an average duration of 10 minutes every day, following the procedure of preparation, digitisation, quality control and validation before final acceptance by SBC’s representatives.

The content is then transferred into the broadcaster’s digital archive, also recently enhanced by FGC’s teams as part of this project. The archive solution now has a storage capacity of 800TB, managed by FGC’s content management system (CMS). The second part of this project entails metadata enhancement. It includes collecting and cleaning the metadata and adding information when required, especially for high-value media assets.

“The first step in any metadata improvement campaign is to recover the existing information and make an inventory,” says Laurent Gignoux, President of Vectracom.

“This is what was initially delivered as Vectracom recovered the contents from nine of SBC’s internal databases and existing MAM platform. These sets have been consolidated by our engineers into a single database that currently serves as support to the metadata enhancement project. A set of information on index cards has also been scanned and taken to consolidate the database.

“The second step is to check that the information coming from these varying sources is similar and not contradictory. The data analysis is still done here by our engineers as they prepare the basis for the next step, which is to verify the content and manually improve the existing description.
the third stage, 15 of our archivists will verify and sort retrieved information for each content and improve it as required.”

The average duration of each of the clips in this project is 20 minutes, and the average time spent by an archivist on each clip is 14 minutes. Details of metadata vary for each clip.

“While it is not possible to index 20 minutes of content in 14 minutes, operators for this project are not expected to start from scratch, as all SBC clips do not require the same quantity of information. Indexing with keywords also facilitates the job,” clarifies Gignoux.

“In addition, special displays have been designed for the project, which enables the operators to make their choices more quickly and enter only valid data.”

The indexing is done on workstations that can read the content from the digital archive. “Navigation through these digital contents is easy and fast. Operators can instantly move from one point of a clip to another, and all the metadata that is already available for the sounds or videos are shown simultaneously,” Gignoux explains.

SBC will soon have more than 800,000 media assets in its digital archive — 70% are sound recordings, while 30% are video assets. The metadata enrichment project is also being performed in phases by the team. This first phase, an ignition operation, includes 250,000 audio-visual elements.

“Our teams manage the project in detail, on-site at SBC’s premises. They have prepared and brought special equipment to achieve this. We have recruited local operational teams, trained them to use the equipment and tools, and we supervise them for both the digitisation as well as the metadata enhancement sub-project. They ensure proper operation of all the equipment and compliance with industrial processes that have been developed and are implemented by procedures that must be followed to ensure the level of quality required by SBC. They guarantee the quality of files and information that are delivered, as they are responsible for the validation,” says Gignoux.

Vectracom, which has almost 50 people at its headquarters in France, also has a base in Morocco and many of its archive specialists hail from the Arab world.

“The project supervisor for this task, for instance, hails from Morocco, where he was the technical manager of a news TV station. We also usually hire archivists or people with a degree in historical studies from Saudi Arabia and train them further to help with the metadata additions.”

Vectracom has been involved in SBC’s digitisation and archival projects since 2009. From 2009 to 2010, the French company digitised the oldest items at SBC, which was then known as the Ministry of Culture and Information (MOCI). Specialists were sent to the broadcaster’s headquarters in Riyadh with equipment to scan 60,000 hours of programmes. This was managed with the help of operators the French company recruited and trained in the Saudi capital.

Back then, in 18 months, 7,600 films, 32,000 two-inch reels, 41,000 one-inch B reels and 1,600 one-inch C reels were baked, cleaned and digitised to preserve their content in the highest quality available.

Saudi Arabia’s broadcaster has been one of the most forward-thinking, state-backed entities in the Arab world, and recognised early on that it had several thousand hours of media assets that could be lost if it did not take early action to preserve its cultural heritage.

Suboptimal storage conditions have already led to the disappearance of reading equipment. The hot weather conditions and humidity in Saudi Arabia have contributed heavily to the deterioration of magnetic tapes and cassettes, as well as film (movies).

“There are several factors that are making it increasingly difficult to digitise or retrieve media tapes. For one, magnetic recordings are ageing and require treatments that are more complex and expensive. Magnetic systems are also mostly hydrophilic. This means the humidity accelerates their deterioration through the rapid creation of more moisture and fungi, thereby destroying the records even more rapidly. Along with this media degradation, there is the fact that the playback devices for these tapes are ageing and going obsolete. All of this is making the process of digitisation increasingly cumbersome, and
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therefore more expensive by the day,” explains Gignoux.
SBC was forward-thinking in taking action a decade ago to preserve and enhance its archives. Since then, large chunks of AV material have been systematically digitised, although there is still a vast chunk of tape left to be treated. However, it is getting there.

Initially, SBC focused on digitisation but once sufficient progress was made there, the broadcaster added a parallel challenge – indexing that content.

“The need to index was not a priority previously, and it was difficult then to estimate the volume and scope of work until digitisation of a large chunk of AV content was completed,” says Gignoux.

Once that was done, Vectracom looked into SBC’s multiple databases, which describe the content of the archives in varying detail.

“Some assets have more descriptions, while others have less. It was difficult to assess how much effort the indexing and metadata enhancement would require until we had looked at the databases,” Gignoux explains.

At present, alongside the digitisation of its remaining Betacam cassettes, SBC is also improving the indexing of its digital archives. Of course, this digital archive is constantly being fed with daily production from SBC. Both tasks now run in parallel, although indexing is gradually taking priority.

Gignoux points out, however, that indexing old material is difficult, as it requires people who have knowledge of events that took place decades ago.

“SBC realised that the descriptive information on audiovisual content which hadn’t been entered into a database/MAM so far can only be fetched by SBC staff or by archivists, who have knowledge of the events that were reported by the media several decades ago. This is actually a characteristic of the indexation process. Captured information has more value at the time of content creation. It becomes less relevant and more expensive with time.”

Gignoux warns that procrastinating digitisation not only makes the process more prohibitive – the task may become impossible to perform.

“The equipment required for these tasks has become obsolete and the technicians who can operate them are not immortal. One day, digitisation will become so expensive that you will only be able to utilise it for very valuable content. And a few years after, even if your content is invaluable, we will have no options to preserve it,” cautions Gignoux.

Naim Saidi, CEO of FGC adds: “SBC has completed digitising a significant portion of its analogue assets and we are very proud to have helped bring this project to fruition along with Vectracom.”

Laurent Gignoux, President, Vectracom

“Our teams manage the project in detail, on-site at SBC’s premises. They have prepared and brought special equipment to achieve this. We have recruited local operational teams, trained them to use the equipment and tools, and we supervise them for both the digitisation as well as the metadata enhancement sub-project”
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YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
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MIPTV, the world’s biggest TV and digital content market, is back this year (April 4-7) with an even bigger offering and two brand new features. MIPTV and the International Emmy Kids Awards are both aimed at further raising the profile of the event, says organiser Reed MIDEM.

One of the big and continuing trends across the world has been the increasing orientation towards drama, which is the number one genre globally. “60% of production worldwide is heading towards drama,” points out Ted Baracos, Director of Market Development at Reed MIDEM. Baracos adds that watching films in theatres seems to be dipping by comparison, especially in Japan and the US.

This increasing demand and the corresponding surge in the production of high-quality drama across several territories has led the organiser to launch MIPDrama Screenings this year. This is a pre-MIPTV drama showcase that will be held on Sunday, April 3, 2016, just ahead of MIPTV. Some 250 leading acquisition executives from around the world have been invited to attend the event, which is dedicated to the global scripted entertainment market and features exclusive previews of the hottest new dramas being launched at MIPTV. An opening conference session will present the State of the Drama Industry, highlighting breakout drama successes from major territories over the past six months and providing an overview of the most successful imports in major territories.

MIPDrama will then host screenings of curated fresh content, with a major focus on European screenings (UK, France, Germany, Nordics, etc) as well as other major drama-producing territories. Networking events throughout the day will allow buyers to meet with distributors and producers whose programmes are on show.

Another big win for MIPTV is that the International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences has moved its International Emmy Kids Awards from New York to Cannes from this year. This will take place on April 5.
and will close the Kids@MIPTV track and include the MIPTV Future of Kids TV Summit. Interestingly, this section will witness major participation from Middle East entities such as Majid Entertainment in Abu Dhabi and partner twofour54, as well as Al Jazeera Children’s Channel.

Majid Entertainment, which has a 40-year history successfully publishing children’s comics in the Arab world, launched a channel last year to bring some of its popular print characters to screen. The company, which has a library of more than 400 popular characters, is producing a number of episodic programmes.

“Each of our shows centre around one character,” explains Mohamed Yehya, Chairman of Majid Entertainment.

“We have characters for different age groups. Since our launch last September, we have produced around 200 hours of content for six different characters for six different shows. Within the first four months, we have already become the second or third most viewed children’s channel regionally.”

Yehya adds that this year, Majid Entertainment is also collaborating with MIPTV.

“MIPTV serves as a great platform to gather producers and buyers, and find out more about what is happening in the market, discover new talent and create more brand awareness on the international arena. This is why we are participating. We are also one of the main partners of the Emmy Kids Awards as well as the summit, where we will announce our strategy for 2016 and showcase some of our productions. This will give us a chance to meet the producers there as well,” he says, adding that Majid is working on some co-productions with some international studios.

Besides the usual players from the UAE and other countries, MIPTV will also see a large contingent from Jordan.

“Arab Telemedia Group from Jordan will have a big presence at MIPTV this year,” confirms Bassil Hajjar, the Arab world representative for all of the MIP events.

“We are expecting around 30 people from Jordan, while MBC also has a stand and will have around 25 people there.”

This year, Dominique Delport, President of Vivendi Content and Global Managing Director for Havas Media Group; Richard Dickson, Mattel’s President and COO; and bestselling author Harlan Coben will be keynote speakers at MIPTV 2016.

Each of them will explore from their own perspective how today’s talent-led ecosystem is increasingly powered by communities of fans. This means the traditional content value chain is transforming dramatically, with broadcasters, platforms and creators having to connect to enthusiastic audiences – millennials, Gen Z and beyond – through attractive, innovative, sticky content.

Another well-known feature in its seventh year is the pitch competition that is part of MIPFormats, the only specialist conference for the international formats community, taking place April 2-3, ahead of the MIPTV global entertainment content market. Producers and creators from around the world will pitch their ideas for new and original, non-scripted entertainment formats to the industry’s most experienced format professionals.

Also running on these dates is MIPDoc, which has a stellar line-up of speakers and sessions across two days, including a keynote from Morgan Spurlock, the international premiere screening of National Geographic’s The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, and a tailor-made workshop programme designed for producers. As part of a stimulating line-up of conferences on documentary and factual content, award-winning writer, director and producer Morgan Spurlock (Super Size Me) will deliver a keynote speech at MIPDoc.

A big trend at MIPTV now is the number of content buyers for OTT and VOD platforms.

“The OTT space is the fastest growing in the number of content buyers. People are acquiring a lot of content for OTT and VOD platforms. Now we have well over a thousand buyers just for the OTT and VOD platforms,” explains Baracos.

“There is a paradigm shift, not
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Focus on UHD at MIPTV

MIPTV always has a special focus on broadcast, and this year will see special attention centred on UHD and 4K. Baracos says that with new technologies, it’s always a “chicken-and-egg situation, with no one knowing whether the content will come first or the infrastructure to deliver it”.

“We’ve taken a position of leadership on this front. As we represent the biggest market for TV content in the world, we want to help stimulate interest in 4K technologies. At the last few events, we have been taking examples from around the world of interesting new content being made in 4K and we are seeing a lot of telenovelas and Latin American soap operas being done in 4K. So we intend to showcase some of this,” he adds.

A good line-up of Ultra HD (UHD) programming and executive panel sessions has also been scheduled across the three days for new broadcast technology. Dedicated panels will feature drama, music, sports and factual, as well as discussion from broadcasters already on air.

Speakers will focus on the fast-growing demand for UHD programming. A growing number of broadcasters are either transmitting in UHD or have launch plans in advanced stages of development. The UK’s Sky will introduce a number of UHD channels later this year, while some Japanese and South Korean UHD services have been on air for some time.

Some of the world’s leading OTT suppliers are also embracing UHD, including Netflix and Amazon Studios, who have both increased their commitment to UHD and high-quality variation High Dynamic Range (HDR). The world’s leading content producers are also stepping up. For example, Sony Pictures TV’s Bill Baggeelaar (SVP/Technology) will address the challenge of producing extremely high-quality UHD episodic drama and meeting budgets and delivery dates. Sony’s 4K/UHD output includes Better Call Saul, The Blacklist and Mad Dogs. Sony is producing Mad Dogs for Amazon, its first episodic drama to be produced in HDR.

Most UHD enthusiasts say that HDR creates a wow factor for viewers. Baggeelaar will explain how UHD’s production (and post-production) processes have matured over the past year, and how workflow has improved to enable a fast turnaround for a weekly series while maintaining the very highest production quality.

MIPTV will enjoy high-profile UHD participation from the BBC, Japan’s NHK and Sky PerfectTV, Sky Italia, InFront Sports, Atlantic Productions, the Smithsonian Channel, London’s Royal Opera House, Saint Thomas Productions, Paramax, Orange TV, UHD-1, DJazz, Pearl TV, TravelXP and others.

Almost all producers will be showing ultra high-definition programming made with HDR technology.

“Is it better to have 80% of viewers for one programme or have 30% that watch every single episode of a series, which they can do very easily through an OTT platform. Those are the kinds of discussions that we see at MIPTV, as OTT seems to be where a lot of the young eyeballs are going now”

Ted Baracos, Director of Market Development, Reed MIDEM
Qatar National Day on December 18 called for special broadcast skills and, in particular, RF solutions to cover the event live. BroadcastPro ME brings you an exclusive report on how RF specialist Sobatech worked with DTC to make this coverage spectacular, as per the mandate of Qatar’s State National Day Celebrations Organising Committee.

Qatar National Day (QND) is celebrated throughout the country every 18 December as a spectacular national commemoration of the day in 1878 when Sheikh Jassem bin Mohamed bin Thani succeeded his father as the ruler of Qatar and unified the country, thus establishing Qatar’s independence. It is a public holiday, full of traditional food festivals, a centrepiece parade, multiple air shows and entertainment throughout the day and night, culminating in a beautiful fireworks display. Hundreds of thousands turn out each year to share their pride and loyalty to their homeland.

The State National Day Celebrations Organising Committee (SNDCOC) was the host broadcaster for the televised coverage of the celebration, and produced the live programme centred on Doha, which was aired by all Qatar national broadcasters. The content was also free to access for all GCC broadcasters, including Al Jazeera, Qatar TV, Al Rayyan Satellite Channel, Al Kass (who provided the OB van) and numerous other broadcasters in the region.

With the occasion calling for big action, a comprehensive and challenging RF set-up was required to cover the main celebrations at Doha’s West Bay. The SNDCOC called again on Sobatech Group, a Spanish production services, technical consultancy and RF systems provider, to realise their ambitions.

“This is the second consecutive year that we were awarded the contract for technical direction of the live broadcast,” says Xavier Soler, Sobatech Managing Director and Television Production Technical Director and Consultant for SNDCOC.

“SNDCOC’s plans for the celebration and broadcast this year were quite extensive. The challenge for us was to successfully execute the large number of proposals that came down from the production department. They really wanted ‘amazing’ shots for their live feed, which required the largest RF deployment we’ve ever done, including 15 members of our own specialised, highly experienced staff.

“For an event like this with a large amount of RF links in the middle of a busy city like Doha, all frequencies, the antenna type and location, the filters, as well as the power used in the transmitters, are really important.”

For the QND project, Sobatech Group used Domo Tactical Communications (DTC) Ltd (formally Cobham TCS), RF transmit and receive technology from its own inventory, and Domo kit hired from UK-based Broadcast RF.

The range included Domo’s SOLO ENG, SOLO4 and SOLO7 HD Nano transmitters, as well as SOLO7 NanoVue HD and PRORXB receivers. Sobatech also deployed its own Domo PRORXD, which formed the heart of a ten-channel, 8/4-way reception network that combined DVB-T and Domo ultra-mobile video link (UMVL) modulation.

The RF setup comprised one network of eight 12 dBi antennas, extended via an optical fibre system designed by SBNlab, a Sobatech solution, which covered the 10...
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square kilometres of the paved Corniche Road area serving as the focal point of the parade and celebrations.

A separate network of four 12 dBi antennas, also extended via an SBNLab-designed fibre optical system, covered 50 cubic kilometres of sea and airspace in the Corniche Road area.

A single ASI relay system with a Domo SOLO7 Nano HD transmitter and 10dB amplifier delivering a total output of 27dBm was installed eight kilometres from the central TV compound to focus on the airspace, with reception working at UMVL modulation to enhance its performance for high-speed operation, and two 12 dBi antennas, a 12dBi antenna and two Omni 4.5dBi antennas linked to one UMVL-enabled PRORXB four-way receiver.

A total of eight eight-way receivers were deployed – six for the Corniche Road network and two that combined road, sea and air. A second network was established with two PRORXB four-way diversity receivers and the PRORXD diversity receiver provided by Sobatech Group.

For ground-based transmitters, a Domo SOLO ENG transmitter with 3dBi S-Band flexi-antenna was mounted on each of two Segway-mounted Steadicams. One handheld camera was fitted with a SOLO4 and 3dBI S-Band flexi-antenna, and a studio configuration camera six kilometres from the TV compound was equipped with another SOLO ENG, this time with a 27dBm SOLO ENG Transmitter and 9dBi sector antenna.

UK-based RF specialist VideoSys provided the telemetry system, providing full colour control to a camera six kilometres from the TV compound, as well as for the Steadicam and a variety of handheld cameras.

Six PoV cameras were deployed for aerial work, in this case with telemetry systems designed by Bradley Engineering.

“Using NanoVue HD, we were able to check the RF systems for the aircraft and the parachutists before their flights and found that the RF system worked perfectly, which meant that we were able to take HD feeds straight into production”

Xavier Soler, MD of Sobatech, and Television Production Technical Director and Consultant of SNDCOC

Using NanoVue HD, we were able to check the RF systems for the aircraft and the parachutists before their flights and found that the RF system worked perfectly, which meant that we were able to take HD feeds straight into production”

Xavier Soler, MD of Sobatech, and Television Production Technical Director and Consultant of SNDCOC
that were further customised by SBNlab. Two parachutists from the Qatar National Parachute Team, who participated in a sky-diving performance that included airborne feats described as “one excitement after another”, were supplied with SOLO7 Nano HD transmitter-equipped PoV cameras, one with a 3dBi blade antenna and the other with a 2dBi linear antenna.

“The shots we obtained were spectacular and, importantly, uninterrupted, which provided highly appealing options for the television production,” explains Soler.

“But our next aerial aerobatics challenge was much higher and much faster.”

Another PoV camera with a SOLO7 Nano HD transmitter was mounted in the cockpit of an advanced Pilatus PC-21 aircraft for coverage of the aerobatic display team’s performance over the bay. This was the first time a live camera and video link had been installed inside an aircraft for Qatar National Day. In previous years, the shots from aircraft were pre-recorded.

Typically, when RF equipment is installed far from a television compound, such as in an aircraft, a technical team just has to rig it up and hope for the best, as there is no practical way to test it properly. For the high-speed aircraft shots, however, Sobatech needed more certainty and decided to use Domo’s new NanoVue HD receiver and display device.

“We were careful to do complete field testing on the technology before the event, particularly for use with the aircraft to ensure that the transmit and receive system could compensate for high speeds and potential issues with the Doppler effect,” says Soler.

“Using NanoVue HD, we were able to check the RF systems for the aircraft and the parachutists before their flights and found that the RF system worked perfectly, which meant that we were able to take HD feeds straight into production. I believe this equipment is mandatory for such productions,” the team claims.

The coverage of the day included shots never before achievable for Qatar National Day.

“The challenge for us was to successfully execute the large number of proposals that came down from the production department. They really wanted ‘amazing’ shots for their live feed, which required the largest RF deployment we’ve ever done”

Xavier Soler, MD of Sobatech, and Television Production Technical Director and Consultant of SNDCOC
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The AVX system includes the Lavalier Pro Set as well as the handheld with both the cardioid and omnidirectional mic heads.
I recently had the opportunity to test out Sennheiser’s latest AVX digital wireless system, and I jumped at the chance, as it has been on my kit radar since it was announced at NAB last April. I was, however, not looking at it for wireless microphone use but as a ‘camera hop’ for sending audio from my sound bag to a camera.

Let’s look into what you get in the kit.

I received all the items available for the AVX system, which includes the Lavalier Pro Set as well as the handheld with both the cardioid and omni-directional mic heads. The Lavalier Pro set comprises the AVX plug-in receiver, belt pack transmitter and the MKE-2 microphone, which is smaller and higher quality compared to the ME-2, which comes with the standard Lavalier set. A hot-shoe adaptor and XLR to 3.5mm jack cable for the receiver is included for use on a digital SLR / mirrorless camera system.

As a long-time user of Sennheiser equipment, I was expecting the solid build quality and well thought-out designs that I’ve come to enjoy over the years. The AVX system lived up to all expectations. Both the transmitter and the receiver have a metal body, with solid-feeling plastic used for the antennas and batteries. The batteries are removable and connect solidly to the main units with a reassuring click.

One of the most striking things about the AVX system is the tiny size of the receiver (EKP-AVX), only a little larger than a right-angled XLR connector and not much heavier! This is a huge advantage if you are trying to reduce the clutter that seems to build up on cameras these days. Being able to plug directly into the XLR input means no cable is needed, and if you are using the hot-shoe option, even with the supplied XLR to 3.5mm cable, the unit is lighter and smaller than, for example, a Sennheiser G series receiver. Being able to rotate the receiver 320 degrees around its XLR connector is a major advantage, offering greater flexibility when connecting to cameras and other kit.

The bodypack transmitter (SK-AVX) also comes in a new design with a short, solid antenna, rather than the ‘whip’ style that you find on other systems. This is due to the AVX using a digital transmission system rather than analogue. The metal belt clip on the rear of the unit is solid, has a stiff grip and should hold on to whatever it’s clipped to. The input uses the same locking 3.5mm socket found on Sennheiser G series or similar Sony wireless systems. This is great news for anyone changing to the AVX, as you don’t have to discard any cables or microphones.

If you are familiar with setting up wireless systems, you will have come across small displays with apparently never-ending options. The AVX system is different: there is no menu, none at all. The receiver has no LCD display, just four LEDs and three buttons. I was disappointed that there is no

Dubai-based sound recordist Simon Charles, from Carbide Sound, takes the Sennheiser AVX digital wireless system for a field test and shares his experience exclusively with BroadcastPro ME

“A SOUND DEFINITION

If you are familiar with setting up wireless systems, you will have come across small displays with apparently never-ending options. The AVX system is different: there is no menu, none at all. The receiver has no LCD display, just four LEDs and three buttons”

Simon Charles, sound recordist
backlight, as it is rather difficult to see in anything other than bright light.

Unlike almost all other wireless systems, there are no frequencies to set. To connect the devices together, you just have to pair them; this is a very easy process. Once paired, the units connect to each other automatically when turned on and remember the pairing until the process is repeated. This is very convenient and works flawlessly. Something to note is that, for now, only one receiver can be paired per transmitter – for multi-camera set-ups require multiple systems. I hope this will change with a future firmware update.

Although it’s not something I generally use in my type of work, I did check out the handheld transmitter (SKM AVX-S). I was impressed with the build quality; it was solid in the hand, had a reassuring weight to it and felt very comfortable to hold. The version I had, the SKM AVX-S, included a mute switch under the LCD screen. This is certainly the one I recommend; the power switch is small and it takes a few seconds for paired devices to connect. With this option, you can leave the devices on but mute the audio. The SKM handheld comes with the cardioid head as standard, which is great for the majority of uses. Also available is an omni-directional head. To change the heads, you just have to unscrew one and screw on the other. This is easily done and the connection is very solid.

I have been using Sennheiser microphones for years and recently purchased ultra-miniature MKE-1 Lavalier microphones for my WisyCom radios. The MKE-2 is slightly larger than the MKE-1, but not much, and is still easy to hide under clothes or using the supplied tie-clip. The quality of the audio it produces is excellent, with low self-noise and a rich, natural tone that I rather liked. It’s certainly a major step up from the standard ME-2 microphone included with the Lavalier kit.

I decided to use the system while working on the Drones 4 Good competition in Dubai Internet City early this year. I felt that this would be a good challenge for the system, as there would be high-speed Wi-Fi and other digital signals in a very confined area. The AVX works on 1.9GHz, close to the 2.4GHz that most Wi-Fi and other communication devices use. I thought this might cause issues, but I was wrong – there were no problems at all! This may have something to do with the AVX continually monitoring its operating frequency to make sure it’s using the cleanest channel available.

I had no dropouts, interference or connection issues at all, over the three days. I was using the system as a ‘camera hop’ between my sound bag and the camera, in this case a Sony EX1. I had the receiver plugged into the camera’s XLR socket and set the input control to MIC-48v. This turns the receiver on and off with the camera.

“One of the most striking things about the AVX system is the tiny size of the receiver (EKP-AVX), only a little larger than a right-angled XLR connector and not much heavier! This is a huge advantage if you are trying to reduce the clutter”

Simon Charles, sound recordist, Carbide Sound
a great way to save battery life.

Removable battery packs, lasting over 10 hours for the transmitter and around five hours for the receiver, power the system. The batteries have a micro-USB connector for charging and, very conveniently, powering the units. Having a spare battery is always recommended, but a constant power supply is definitely an advantage.

It worried me that there was no user control over the input level of the transmitter. It automatically determines if you have a line or mic input by the way the input jack is wired. This is similar to the G Series, but at least that gives you level control. The AVX uses a kind of advanced auto level control system, but I heard very little variance in levels. Once I had a level set on the camera though, I was very happy with it. It limits the level if you suddenly get a loud sound, but comes back to normal very quickly. The receiver does have an output attenuation control with levels at 0dB, -10dB, -20dB and -30dB, indicated by the LEDs. It outputs at mic level so that it can detect the 48v phantom power to turn on and off with the camera.

In general, I was extremely impressed with the AVX system. The design and build quality is excellent, and the use of advanced digital transmission and audio processing makes it very attractive. It's certainly aimed more towards the lone cameraman rather than professional sound recordists, but I'm sure the AVX will be part of my kit in the near future.

**PRO**

Simon Charles is a location sound recordist based in Dubai. He works on a variety of projects including commercials, feature films, corporate productions and events.

**Sennheiser AVX**

**Pros**
- Exceptional build quality for price point
- Easy to set up and use
- Small plug-in receiver extremely convenient
- Decent battery life with powering via micro USB
- Receiver powers up and turns off with the camera
- Sound quality excellent

**Cons**
- No backlight on LCD screen
- No control over transmitter input level
- Can only link one receiver per transmitter

**My wish list for future firmware or hardware updates:**
- To be able to connect multiple receivers per transmitter; this would allow me to have a single feed going to multiple sources
- To be able to have more control over the input level of the transmitter. The AVX system is designed more as plug and play, but a little more control would be nice
Kirill Kripak’s short film Captain Detective won the Dubai leg of the 48-Hour Film Project in 2015. The filmmaker speaks exclusively to BroadcastPro ME about his winning entry and some of his other projects.

Filmmaker Kirill Kripak’s film Captain Detective was the winning entry in the 48 Hour Film Project that was held in Dubai. The film now goes up against films from around the world at Filmapalooza 2016 for a chance to secure the grand prize and an opportunity to screen at the Cannes Film Festival, Court Métrage.

Kripak attributes his win to rock-solid performances by the leads and keeping the film dynamic and visually interesting – the fundamentals of a good film. You get your basics right and you know you have struck a chord with your audiences, he says.

Captain Detective is a coming of age story about a protégé’s journey from being a new recruit to becoming his own person. Kripak and his team shot the film in eight different locations all over Dubai over the competition weekend.

The film was shot on the Sony PXW-FS5 in different locations, backgrounds and light conditions.

In fact, the competition served as the perfect backdrop for Kripak to test a prototype of the FS5.

In the 48 Hour Film Project, participating teams are given a character, a prop and a line of dialogue that must appear in their film. All creativity – writing, shooting, editing and adding a musical soundtrack – took place in the 48-hour window beginning Friday at 7pm and ending Sunday at 7pm from November 12 to 14, 2015. The following week, the completed films were screened to an audience.

“I wasn’t planning on doing the 48HFP, but when I learnt that Advanced Media had received a prototype of the FS5, I thought this might be a good opportunity to test the new camera. The dates also worked and I went on to take part. If the competition wasn’t on, I would have still taken the camera and shot with it. I wanted to test this camera because I was planning to use it for my work,” says Kripak.

After a bit of convincing, Advanced Media lent the
camera to use for the competition.

“We opted for a wildcard genre and got ‘coming of age’. Based on the guidelines and genre, we wrote the script.”

In fact, Kripak’s original genre was fantasy, which he changed because he had done fantasy before, in the 2014 edition of 48HFP.

“Last year, we couldn’t submit our film in the 48HFP competition because we missed the deadline due to a technical glitch. This time around, we had multiple backups for getting the film submitted on time, but even then ran into unbelievable traffic issues. The three backups left my house about two hours apart, and all of them arrived on-site within 10 minutes. But we made it on time,” he says.

Kripak sent the film he made for the 48HFP last year to the Phoenix Film Festival and Indifest, where it was recognised for best cinematography, special effects, location and direction.

Kripak’s go-to camera for the last three years has been the Sony FS700 with an external 4K recorder. He was not particularly impressed by the FS7 though, he says.

“The FS5 comes with built-in 4K capabilities, which got me interested in the camera. Having used it on the project, I would say the FS5 is a versatile, run-and-gun ENG kind of a camera, but has enough to be used as a cinema camera. It has a better grip, an LCD screen which you can see in daylight and XLR inputs, which are all great features,” comments Kripak.

He plans to replace his FS700 with the new FS5.

Kripak’s day job involves making marketing and ad films, but his passion for feature films has had him undertake some personal projects. He runs his own company, Scope Media Experts, in Dubai Marina and has been making films for the last 15 years.

He is presently working on a rather ambitious project that involves a series of films. The first of the series is PROJECT: Destiny, a sci-fi film universe comprising three feature films that span about 250 years. It follows a generational ship that leaves Earth in search of a new home for humanity.

“I came up with the concept one summer while on holiday. I immediately pitched it to my wife, who liked it, and called one of my writing partners, Nidal, who immediately agreed, thought it was a great idea. I wrote up the overall structure that same night. About six months later, I told another of my writer friends, Dennis, about it, and he was also instantly on board to help,” says Kripak.

The second in the series is PROJECT: Columbus, about a remote space repair/rescue craft sent to investigate a distant outpost which has mysteriously gone dark, to restore communication. They land and discover strange clues which lead them to question if completing their mission will lead to the death, or salvation, of all mankind.

“PROJECT: Columbus came about when Nidal read my plot draft for Destiny and really liked one part of it. He expanded on...
the idea, and over time, it grew from a few scenes to a proper short, and now to a feature film.”

The final film in the sci-fi series is PROJECT: Horizon, a prologue that sets up the Columbus feature.

“And as PROJECT: Horizon was the most viable to actually produce, we went ahead and created it, hoping that there would be interest in seeing more.”

PROJECT: Horizon was shot in the desert mountains between Sharjah and Fujairah, primarily on a Sony FS-700 with an Odyssey 7Q+ in 4K RAW. Some moving gimbal shots were shot on a Sony A7s outputting 4K Pro-Res to an Atomos Shogun, mounted on a DJI Ronin-M. The aerials were done with a DJI Inspire 1 in 4K.

The script for this project was written in early 2015, when Kripak decided to do a film for My Rode Reel, a global film competition. The first version of My Rode Reel is done, but there is an extended director’s cut that he hopes to work on soon.

“It was a small idea that I had been thinking about for a while, but didn’t have a plan to do until then. PROJECT: Destiny is about three years old, it is still in the plot structure phase, but the key elements were thought up long ago. PROJECT: Columbus is about two years old, and we have completed a rough draft for it.

“The hardest thing about this project was learning and then producing the special effects, all within a two-week span. My team typically does not do 3D work, but we had a requirement and had to work within a deadline so we stayed up for 20 hours at a time, watching tutorial after tutorial online and just working away with what we learnt. “For the render times, I not only had to use my wife’s laptop and my old server, but also bought another iMac so that multiple machines could be exporting at the same time. This is because we worked in 4K throughout,” adds Kripak.

Kripak says that the project could work well as a television series also but for now, he is pitching it as a film.

“The FS5 comes with built-in 4K capabilities, which got me interested in the camera. Having used it on the project, I would say the FS5 is a versatile, run-and-gun ENG kind of a camera, but has enough to be used as a cinema camera”

Kirill Kripak, filmmaker

On the sets of Kripak’s Project: Horizon.
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Ericsson has transformed the playout centre at twofour54, which the technology company acquired last year. BroadcastPro ME speaks to Ericsson’s Houssam Al Khaled to find out how the company plans to leverage the media hub, which goes live this month.

Last year, Ericsson acquired twofour54’s playout centre in Abu Dhabi to serve broadcast clients across the Middle East and beyond. The hub provides playout services for seven television channels and acts as the local base to leverage Ericsson’s portfolio of services in content management, over-the-top (OTT), content discovery, metadata, creative and access services.

According to Houssam Al Khaled, Head of Media Management & Playout (Middle East), Broadcast and Media Services at Ericsson, the playout centre was acquired with the idea of establishing a world-class media management and playout hub in the Middle East to support its burgeoning client base. The technology company has since been involved in
a complete transformation of the playout centre. Ericsson’s Business Line Broadcast and Media Services designed and managed the transformation project.

“The project began last February and took us a year to complete. A complete technology refresh was achieved over six months without disrupting any of the seven channels being broadcast from this facility for five international clients. We plan to go live this month,” says Khaled.

When Ericsson acquired the site, the playout and graphics were in place, supported by a legacy technology stack. Ericsson has since transformed the site, which now offers clients an end-to-end playout and media management solution, including monitoring, compliance, graphics, media preparation, file transfer, QC, disaster recovery and archive.

As part of the transformation project, Ericsson established a full-scale MAM, which allows early client access to content via transparent workflows and onward OTT / VOD syndication. This integrated MAM platform is specifically designed and can be configured to allow Ericsson to work with multiple formats.

“One of the key benefits of our solution is flexibility and scalability. We are currently broadcasting seven channels from our facilities with the immediate capability to scale up to 32 channels.”

Houssam Al Khaled, Head of Media Management & Playout (Middle East), Broadcast and Media Services, Ericsson

is an international team of skilled broadcast and media professionals who have worked with and are trusted by some of the world’s leading broadcasters,” claims Khaled.

Khaled says that the project did not require any data migration. However, migrating the existing workflows to a new environment posed a challenge.

The challenge was twofold – to integrate the incumbent legacy scheduling systems with the chosen solution and to work with those channels that did not even possess such an application or the experience to manage one. A further challenge was to standardise the existing content and metadata in use and to migrate it accurately to the new platform without any service impact or duplication.

The workflow in the refurbished media hub will have an exhaustive and flexible reporting platform that enables clients to resolve issues earlier, thereby removing common operational risks. In the near future, Ericsson will also connect all of its global hubs to enable the sharing of resources (both people and technology), access to faster service provision, genuine follow-the-sun support and disaster recovery.

Ericsson has a significant heritage in the global TV and media market and launched the video compression technologies driving the worldwide digitisation of TV and enabling new viewing experiences such as HDTV, TV Anywhere and UHDTV.

The company works with some of the world’s best-known broadcasters, platforms and content producers, including the BBC, Channel 4, BT Sport, NBCUniversal, DreamWorks, Liberty Global, NPO, Canal+, NOS, Bonnier Group, Sky, HBO, TV5 Monde and France 24.

The BBC and Ericsson signed a seven-year playout services contract last June, covering the technology and operations that allow broadcasters to deliver programmes to audiences through network, linear television channels. The contract also includes playout and media management for the BBC’s commercially funded international news channel, BBC World News, which is available in more than 200 countries.

“Every day, people on all continents watch television programmes prepared, managed and broadcast by more than 2,500 Ericsson staff based in Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific and the US,” says Khaled, adding that Ericsson’s portfolio of services spans the entire media value chain, comprising creative services, access services, content discovery, media management, content publishing (playout and hosted OTT), and Piero.

“The playout and media management facility in Abu
Dhabi operates a vendor agnostic, scalable platform that is part of a global network of hubs.

“We provide efficient operations, leveraging a network of expertise around the world and fast service set-up, thanks to standardised workflows,” adds Khaled.

Ericsson plans to grow its presence in the Middle East steadily, and Khaled sees the establishment of this hub as the first major milestone. The hub provides Ericsson with a base to leverage its portfolio of broadcast and media services across the region.

“The Middle East hub is an important part of our ongoing growth strategy and will become part of Ericsson’s globally networked broadcast and media hubs,” he says.

Image Nation’s Quest Arabiya recently joined the growing portfolio of TV channels managed by Ericsson from the twofour54 hub.

“Our portfolio of managed services enables our clients to make significant operational and capital savings by assuming responsibility for technical platforms, while speeding time-to-market and minimising business continuity risks. Our vision is to create an agile, innovative and flexible technology infrastructure with world-class operating models. We enable our customers to deliver their content to every audience, and ensure that content is discovered and optimised,” Khaled concludes.
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Doha-based broadcaster Al Rayyan TV recently had a state-of-the-art 18-camera OB van delivered by Italian systems integrator Aret. The 1080i/720p HD OB van features the latest Grass Valley LDX 86 Premiere cameras and LDX 86 HS high-speed cameras with twin Triax-Fibre CCUs. It also boasts two wireless cameras and two super slow-motion cameras.

The main vehicle, 14m long with double expansion sides, comes with a support truck with a 70kVA diesel generator, an audio OB van and a DSNG van. It boasts a fully integrated seamless workflow with multi-format cameras and other sound and video equipment integrated into a flexible and redundant signal path. The camera format in the van is 1080i/720p switchable, but the workflow and equipment are based on the 1080p format.

This OB van will cater to the increased programming demand of the broadcaster, which has introduced a second channel to air live events. Al Rayyan will be using the new van to cover high-profile live programmes such as Qatar National Day celebrations, camel racing events and hunting and equestrian sporting events in and around Doha.

Mubarak Alawammi, General Manager of Al Rayyan TV, says that the channel’s remit is to deliver high-quality cultural and sporting programmes using the latest technologies.

“Launched in May 2012, Al Rayyan Satellite Television is a subsidiary of Al Rayyan Media and Marketing Company. We aim to deliver a variety of content and media relating to the identity and culture of Qatar.

We will continue to invest in new technology in order to fulfil the channel’s aim of delivering high-quality content that is up to date with current technology.”

The broadcaster awarded the multi-million dollar contract to Italian OB specialist Aret at the beginning of 2015, following a tendering process. The OB van was ready to be shipped at the end of 2015.

“With 40 years of experience in OB vans and more than 450 OB vans delivered throughout the world, Aret seemed like a good choice for us, as it offered us a complete solution right from coach building to systems integration and training. Many of their vans have been deployed in the Middle East, which gave us the assurance that the company will be able to meet our specifications,” comments Alawammi.

Aret handled the complete end-to-end service for the van, starting with consultancy, structural design, electrical engineering and air conditioning, and systems design, right through to coach building, systems integration, commissioning, training and after-sales support. The end user, therefore, has a single point of contact for any requirements.

Umberto Asti, VP International Sales at Aret, comments that Aret’s end-to-end approach and the company’s extensive Middle East experience helped the broadcaster zero in on Aret.

“Our end-to-end approach is a great time-saver. In Aret, we keep the original drawings and the hardware inventory of every single component installed in the OB vans, along with the complete end-to-end service for the van, starting with consultancy, structural design, electrical engineering and air conditioning, and systems design, right through to coach building, systems integration, commissioning, training and after-sales support. The end user, therefore, has a single point of contact for any requirements. We will continue to invest in new technology in order to fulfil the channel’s aim of delivering high-quality content that is up to date with current technology.”

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“Our end-to-end approach is a great time-saver. In Aret, we keep the original drawings and the hardware inventory of every single component installed in the OB vans, along
with the basic configuration inventory of equipment. While designing our vans, redundancy and emergency mode are top priorities. Because we also design the van’s mechanics, hydraulics as well as air conditioning, we can assist the customer in case of a fault or failure, offering a one-stop shop for any after-sales requirements.”

The trailer tractor, the grip truck and the small vans are all from Mercedes and comply with destination country specifications. The trailer chassis is designed to offer robustness and flexibility; its expandable sides and large side openings give full access to the rear of the racks and cable ducts. The coach is made from fiberglass, aluminum and stainless steel, in order to give flexibility and to avoid corrosion.

All hydraulic parts (expansion sides, jacks and movable floors) can be operated automatically and manually.

The van takes into account the high temperature during the summer months and comes with a patented frame bar structure with foam. These are embedded in the walls of the van to allow working in temperatures as high as 90°C. The foam walls take care of thermal insulation as well as acoustics.

Special care was given to soundproofing all the production areas, especially the sound room, which has been covered with different layers of soundproofing material inserted in the walls, in the floor and in the ceiling and then covered with a layer of sound-absorbent fabric.

To further improve thermal insulation, additional layers have been placed under the floor, while special gaskets and controlled positive air pressure throughout the OB van minimise sand pollution.

The air conditioning in the van is capable of 200,000 BTU/h and uses the Aret semi-customised equipment room. The van is also equipped with 16 custom motorised XY 500-metre triax/fibre cable drum system. Wireless links from Cobham, 500mW, H.264, are integrated with the LDX cameras and give up to eight-way true diversity, complete with camera control and with telemetry receiver.

The cameras are equipped with Canon lenses, including long lenses such as 100x and 86x, and GVG super expanders and fibre conversion boxes. The van boasts two networked Grass Valley K2 Dynos servers, one of them with extreme replay 6x capability for the slow motion section. The vision mixer in the van is the Grass Valley Karrera K-Frame 3ME.

A Calrec Artemis Beam with 48 faders is capable of 340 DSPs. The fully redundant audio mixer provides 464 mono equivalent input patches and 432 mono equivalent outputs. The audio system features a Dolby E encoding/decoding and surround system in production and sound areas with Dynaudio AIR6 loud speakers.

Grass Valley has also provided the video matrix (180x216), and everything in the van is managed by AXON Cerebrum supervision and management system with dedicated panels.

This system is fully redundant and controls router crosspoints, video mixer tallies, IMD and UMD labelling, SNMP traps, and configurations of complex workflows and control devices, via an intuitive, user-friendly graphical interface.

The van also features a Riedel Artist digital wireless intercom system, a Riface Motorola radio system and a Mediornet interface to support the transit of signals to and from the OB van.

“We provided the commissioning and training for the OB last month, and now the van is ready to use,” says Asti.

“Aret seemed like a good choice for us, as it offered us a complete solution right from coach building to systems integration and training. Many of their vans have been deployed in the Middle East, which gave us the assurance that the company will be able to meet our specifications”

Mubarak Alawammi, General Manager of Al Rayyan TV
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These are interesting times for the video industry in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The consumer market is ripe for an increase in distribution of HD TV channels and multiscreen video. However, falling oil prices and inconsistent growth in advertising revenue are challenging for the broadcast industry.

On the one hand, while technologies have matured for adoption to drive new content distribution, broadcasters and pay TV operators are still struggling to structure viable business models to realise faster ROI. As a melting pot with a diverse expat population, MENA offers opportunities for international and local content producers to offer popular content. However, the market is highly fragmented and requires a deep-rooted understanding of the local ecosystem of content and technology partners.

With its dedicated focus in 2016 on electronic media technology, products and solutions, and content (through the new co-located Content Marketplace event), it is the fulcrum for new conversations, new initiatives and new technologies for the region that can help key stakeholders make informed decisions for profitable business growth.

In our exclusively commissioned State of The Industry Reports, through our knowledge partner Frost & Sullivan, findings show that nearly 60% of MENA TV households have HDTV, and more than half have HD satellite TV receivers. 85% of TV households in the GCC alone have HDTVs and HD receivers. However, less than a quarter of channels available in the region are transmitted in HD.

The difference between luxury and premium is blurring in the way consumers perceive and purchase products. The growing HD footprint in the region is a positive sign for broadcasters to take their transmission to the next level. In order to maintain their competitive edge, they will need to respond to expectations of a high-quality user experience.

2016-2018 will see large-scale disruption in the media industry, breaking traditional boundaries of businesses as well as pricing. There will be more choice for pay TV subscriptions, and competition will intensify as international companies jostle with regional players for air time.

CABSAT will continue to evolve in 2017 in all aspects of broadcasting, satellite and content. The Content Marketplace will be developed further. Expect new film competitions and hackathons.

As an expanded satellite event which will be an incubator for innovation in satellite communications, technologies and business solutions for MENA, SATEXPO will attract all regional industry professionals in the satellite sector to actively formulate, sculpt and define future growth strategies for satellite in all commercial markets, government and military, broadcast and content delivery, mobile communications, maritime, aviation and space industry.

A cyber security think tank for the MENA region will be launched, supported by a security media summit and exhibitor clinic.

Delivered as the Future Film Capsule zone in CABSAT 2017, leading augmented and virtual reality (VR) equipment and software companies will be showcased to support the plans of studios and filmmakers to realise faster ROI. As a melting pot with a diverse expat population, MENA offers opportunities for international and local content producers to offer popular content. However, the market is highly fragmented and requires a deep-rooted understanding of the local ecosystem of content and technology partners.

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— Mark Hilton
Vice President, Broadcast Infrastructure
**Vimond Connect to debut at CABSAT**

Norway-based Vimond Media Solutions AS is showing several new products at CABSAT, including the Vimond Connect, which will be unveiled for the first time at the show.

Vimond Connect provides a new way for viewers to socialise while watching on-demand video content. Viewers can comment on the content as they watch, but the comments are anchored to the exact moment in the video when they were posted, allowing the comments to be seen at the same point by VOD viewers watching later. This enables a spoiler-free conversation around television content between viewers watching at different times, with a spontaneous social experience. Also showcased is Highlights 1.7 and Control Centre.

**Stand Z3-102**

**Verimatrix builds security**

San Diego headquartered Verimatrix specialises in securing and enhancing revenue for multi-network, multiscreen digital TV services around the globe.

Verimatrix offers revenue security solutions for pay-TV operators worldwide. At CABSAT, the company is showcasing VCAS Ultra, VideoMark, the Verspective Intelligence Centre and MultiRights OTT solutions.

The Verspective Intelligence Centre will be making its Middle East debut at CABSAT. The cloud-based security platform provides a globally interconnected resource for optimising VCAS configuration, performance and threat resilience. Verspective acts as the foundation for data collection services.

**Stand ZE3-41 and 43**

**Bridge the gap with QoE and QoS**

Bridge Technologies’ total QoE with QoS approach encompasses the idea of full visual status from anywhere, producing hard, empirical QoE data without the false positives.

Thumbnail and metadata extraction and content alarming, historical and real-time understanding and alarming for multicast streams and OTT, concurrently, provide the foundations for completely objective video and audio monitoring.

Another way of exploring monitoring data through time will change the way faults and outages can be analysed and understood, SLAs verified, and regulatory obligations validated. New virtualised probes will allow users to pick and mix the most effective combination.

**Stand CD34 & CD35**

**LCA to light up CABSAT**

UK-based lights distributor LCA (Lights Camera Action) is showing some of the latest innovations in the film and broadcast industry.

LCA represents a number of brands across the globe and will be showing a selection of lights from manufacturers including Cineo Lighting with their fixtures that use remote Phosphor technology including the HS2, Maverick, Matchbox and Matchstix; LiteGear with their lightweight LiteRibbon, LiteMat range and the new MapLite; and K5600 Lighting, who have created the Alpha and Joker.

**Stand ZA3-30**

**Panasonic goes ultra HD 4K**

This year at CABSAT, Panasonic Marketing Middle East and Africa is highlighting its professional broadcast products and solutions portfolio, ranging from 4K solutions to the VARICAM LT.

The AK-UC3000 is a handy HD studio camera with 4K technology offering superior sensitivity and greater resolution. Equipped with a one-inch MOS sensor, this multipurpose camera is suitable for weather and traffic reporting and image magnifications.

P2 Cast is a cloud-based news production system that leverages the network features of Panasonic’s P2 HD camcorders with AVC-Ultra Recording – for instance, the AJ-PX380. P2 Cast integrates the network capability of this unit, so content uploaded to the cloud is immediately available for reviewing and editing.

The industry’s first professional 4K integrated PTZ (pan–tilt–zoom) camera, AW-UE70 will demonstrate IP remote control, video streaming, SDI output and Genlock. The camera is equipped with PoE+ (Power over Ethernet).

**Stand ZA2-10**
Ikegami launches UHK-430 4K/HD

Ikegami has chosen CABSAT 2016 as the launch venue for its new UHK-430 4K/HD portable camera system. First in Ikegami's next-generation Unicam XE series, the UHK-430 employs three newly-developed 4K-native 2/3-inch CMOS sensors which provide full 3840 x 2160 ultra-high definition resolution plus the depth of field required for studio and outdoor production. The camera is equipped with a B4 bayonet mount compatible with 2/3-inch HD lenses. An optional SE-U430 expander accommodates large studio or OB lenses. Additional features include 12G and IP CCU outputs and a new Ikegami processor, which allows 40 gigabit/s uncompressed baseband video transmission.

Stand B1-40

Trimaran enhances GeoRacing

French computer graphics studio Trimaran is demonstrating the latest enhancements to its GeoRacing GPS tracking and virtual visualisation system. With this solution, broadcasters can track and visualise outdoor sporting events in real time, to improve the TV viewing experience. Leveraging GPS data, GeoRacing produces advanced statistics on virtual timing, ghost visualisation, speed information, distances, heading, ranking and more. It can be used by broadcasters for live events and replay.

Stand ZD3-30

WinMedia unveils Radiovision

WinMedia is demonstrating a wide range of new tools, including multi voice-track capabilities that help broadcasters streamline multi-zone operations, and WinMedia Radiovision. Where Visual Radio is a combination of automatic camera switching, video playlist following the radio playlist with graphic overlays in real time, Radiovision pushes the limits of media convergence by enabling DJs to directly control video playlists, using the WinMedia intuitive on-air interface, without a need for separate workflows.

Stand TBCBR2

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Advanced Media highlights cameras
The Advanced Media stand at CABSAT is featuring more than 100 products. This year, a part of the stand will be dedicated to Sony Middle East to display new cameras, monitors, mixers, audio accessories and so on.
Kaveh Farnam, CEO of Advanced Media, said: “We hope this partnership with Sony Middle East attracts more visitors to our stand and makes us able to answer all the questions and inquiries. Moreover, RED Digital Cinema will be another interesting corner to show the manufacturer’s newest cameras, including RED Weapon Dragon, Raven and the Scarlet-W. Other top brands in our stands are DJI Drones and stabilisers, Atomos, Zeiss, Angenieux, Cartoni, Manfrotto, SWIT, Metabones, Floatcam, Teradek and Freefly.” Some of the products that will be exhibited for the first time in the Middle East include the Sony PXW-FS5, DJI Osmo among others.

Broadcast Solutions launches BlackJack
At CABSAT, Broadcast Solutions will launch BlackJack 4K replay server from slomo.tv for the MENA market.
BlackJack 4K is the first 4K 50p server in a single enclosure. 16 channels 3G can optionally be recorded, and up to three operators can edit four channels (slomo and highlights) with independent crossfade outputs. It may also work as an eight-channel 4K 50p slow-motion machine, the first 4K replay server.

Lawo takes control
At CABSAT, Lawo is showcasing its solutions for IP video core infrastructure, video processing and routing tools, audio-to-IP interfaces, and digital audio mixing consoles and audio routers.
Also being showcased are Lawo’s VSM control system, presently used in the most complex production scenarios around the world. With its VSM System (Virtual Studio Manager), Lawo will demonstrate flexible IP-based broadcast control and monitoring. This allows management of all TV and radio production equipment within a single system.

Dalet evolves Galaxy
Dalet Digital Media Systems is showcasing evolutions of the Dalet Galaxy Media Asset Management (MAM) platform as well as new radio solution capabilities.
Dalet Galaxy is the enterprise MAM platform that facilitates collaboration and business visibility for news, sports, production, programming and archiving workflows. New advancements include work order tracking; media packaging; native subtitling support; tighter social media integration including direct publishing to YouTube, Facebook and Twitter; and enhanced collaboration tools.

BW Broadcast debuts V2 transmitters
UK manufacturer BW Broadcast is exhibiting at this year’s CABSAT for the first time since 2010.
It will coincide with the launch of the company’s new range of audio utility devices – Encore. It also includes audio processors, limiters, re-broadcast receivers, RDS encoders, audio back-up devices and modulation monitors.
CABSAT will see a product demo of V2 FM transmitters making their Middle East debut.

EditShare shares storage
EditShare showcases the XStream range of high-performance shared storage systems featuring integration with Flow media asset management and Ark archiving solutions.
Also on display will be AirFlow, the private cloud platform that enables remote collaborative media workflows and content sharing globally while using on-premise storage.
The idea of a “global facility” is becoming a reality and with EditShare AirFlow, creative teams can co-operate and share media without limits.
FOR-A brings video switchers to CABSAT

FOR-A is showcasing its line-up of video switchers at CABSAT. FOR-A’s HVS-2000, HVS-110 and HVS-390HS units will be highlighted at the show.

Launched last year, many HVS-2000 are already installed in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Palestine and Yemen. The switcher supports SD, HD, 3G and 4K applications, up to 48 inputs/18 outputs or 40 inputs/22 outputs, and features exclusive functions that allow operators to enhance power and creativity in video switching. Another video switcher to be shown by FOR-A is the HVS-110 portable video switcher. The unit offers a wide range of functions, including mixed HD/SD input, frame synchronisation, multi-viewer capability, re-sizing engine, 2.5D wipe effects and DVE and keyer with chroma key. The compact, feature-packed HVS-110 is a popular choice.

ABS Network focuses on production

ABS Network is exhibiting its content production and delivery services, reinforced with the very latest in broadcasting skill and technology, at CABSAT.

The company will detail its production process from filming with full HD to post-production and distribution, and also unveil its SNG vans, purpose-built from scratch and ready for on-site operations.

HD streaming from remote locations

The Quicklink Midi Backpack is being displayed at CABSAT. The portable unit is known for its robust form factor.

In addition to using satellite links, it also offers the standard terrestrial connectivity options (ADSL, Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, LTE). The software automatically transmits at the optimum video bitrate based on the detected connection speed. The Quicklink unit allows all streamed media to be geo-tagged to confirm the authenticity of the source location.

The Quicklink Midi Backpack has enabled broadcasters to rapidly and efficiently encode high-definition videos in H.265 over the Inmarsat BGAN HDR. The encoder is then transmitted on high-speed Ka-band services.

Imagine Communications spotlights IP

Imagine Communications is showcasing market-ready solutions that demonstrate the operational, productivity and commercial benefits of moving to software-defined architectures during CABSAT.

Presentations include virtualised and cloud playout automation, multiplatform distribution and integrated advertising management. Imagine Communications will also be showing comprehensive technology to meet the demands of ultra-high definition (UHD) production.

CABSAT 2016 is the first major international exhibition since Imagine Communications announced the expansion of its strategic relationship with Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE). The collaboration leverages HPE’s data centre systems integration capabilities.

RT Software unveils 4K UHD graphics

RT Software presents tOG-Vista, among other solutions. It’s a multi-camera 4K stitch solution that creates a panoramic live view of a sporting event and allows operators to select HD areas of interest for transmission.

The solution is suitable for capturing off-the-ball incidents on tier-one productions, or as a tool that will keep output quality high and costs down at smaller, lower profile events.
London-based PAG Ltd is exhibiting at CABSAT with Alphatron Broadcast Systems FZ LLC, the official distributor for PAG products in the Middle East.

Visitors to the PAG stand will be able to see the new PAG L90 slim battery, an ultra-lightweight and low-profile battery, designed to power small cameras when used on multi-copter aerial platforms or gimbals. The PAG L90 Slim claims to have the highest energy density of any 90Wh V-Mount Li-Ion battery brought to market. Also on show will be the established PAGlink system of intelligent linking batteries, chargers and accessories, available in V-Mount and Gold Mount formats.

**Stand ZL2-35**

Bluebell Opticom displays Caddie

On display at CABSAT 2016 is Bluebell Opticom’s Caddie-LB 4K, a pair of throw-down boxes that connects the latest 4K cameras to camera control units (CCU) over long distances using fibre.

The Caddie-LB 4K saves rigging time and reduces complexity for remote camera crews working from an OB truck or a live-event venue such as a concert hall, and allows the crews to position the camera farther from the CCU and remote panel. Specifically designed for OBs and deployable applications, the Caddie-LB 4K provides a single-cable link between cameras and ENG/GO units. Its features include four 3G/HD/SD-SDI video paths from the camera’s on-air audio, intercom and control data. The units offer the operator a range of signals for camera control and synchronisation, including programme video, audio, communications, data and genlock. All signals are multiplexed onto two fibres to ensure easy and quick system rigging. The position of the camera is limited only by the availability of power and the length of the fibre cable within a given infrastructure.

**Stand ZL2-22**

AJA Video Systems is showcasing RovoCam, the company’s first compact block camera for industrial, corporate, security, ProAV and broadcast applications.

UltraHD and HD imagery is captured with superior Sony optics with built-in 12x optical and up to 20x zoom with Sony Super Resolution Zoom. What sets RovoCam apart from other cameras in its category is an integrated HDBaseT interface supporting uncompressed video, power, stereo audio and RS-232 control over a single CAT 5e/6 cable running at lengths of up to 100m. Delivering this much functionality and power with single cable connectivity dramatically simplifies installation, camera setup and footprint requirements. RovoCam is built around Sony’s 4K FCB-ER8300 functional camera block, featuring back illuminated CMOS sensor technology and Sony image processing for excellent performance. Reliable, practical and compactly encased in rugged and durable aluminium, RovoCam’s small and light form factor allows simple mounting in a wide range of scenarios. RovoRx-HDMI, the companion receiver unit, offers integration for RovoCam with an HDMI output, and all video/audio signals and control.

**Stand C1-30**

**NexGuard tracks content pirates at CABSAT**

The NexGuard product portfolio shown at CABSAT includes:

E-screeners is a solution designed for physical discs or electronic screeners ensures that original content is protected from the production stage.

The demonstration will feature an e-Screener solution that streams pre-release content to a mobile device and a laptop. Pay TV set-top boxes (STBs) are already deployed in 20 million devices worldwide, the on-device watermarking solution is compatible with VOD and live services delivered via satellite, cable or IPTV. The demonstration will feature a pay-TV STB with NexGuard watermark insertion as well as live watermark detection. Pre-release UHD content with HDR is developed for studios looking to offer lifelike images to consumers, the solution integrates with all the current standards to ensure that the highest value content can be fully secured. The demonstration will feature a camcording of a watermarked clip on an HDR TV, showing how the watermark can be retrieved to find the source of illegal redistribution, even under a camcorder attack.

**Stand CD-24**

**AJA** brings the **RovoCam**
Thomson Video Networks is behind every screen

Thomson Video Networks highlights ‘Its Behind Every Screen’ approach, combining on-premises and cloud-based resources to create an all-encompassing video infrastructure for ingest/playout, branding, ad insertion, encoding/transcoding and packaging technologies.

This approach enables media companies to deliver broadcast-grade, future-proof multiscreen delivery solutions that can offer superior picture quality at the highest density and lowest bandwidth.

The company will showcase its VIBE CP6000 contribution codec, which features an eight HD channels per 1-RU chassis and a modular implementation of MPEG-4 contribution codecs.

Stand ZG2-40

Selevision focuses on content

Selevision returns to CABSAT for the third consecutive year with its technology and service offerings for the MENA region.

With its on-demand services launched across the MENA, Selevision is ready to go ahead with its bouquet of premium SEEVII pay-TV channels that will be made available globally.

The company has secured agreements with global content owners, developers and distributors, and leading regional media operators such as major Hollywood studios and a broad selection of the best content from Bollywood and the Middle East. Its B2B offerings span the range of hybrid broadband broadcast TV (HbbTV), content delivery systems, targeted advertising and monitoring platforms, set-top boxes and electronic programme guides.

At the show this year, Selevision is focusing on entertainment and content.

Stand E2-10

English Club TV returns to CABSAT

English Club TV Ltd, a part of English Club TV Group, is presenting new approaches of monetisation and distribution of educational content at CABSAT.

The English Club TV Group is a group of production, edutainment and distribution companies that operates worldwide.

Andrew Semchenko, CEO of English Club TV Ltd, said: “MENA is one of our target markets, which has its own special requirements. Learning English is of great importance in this region, but the educational systems in most MENA countries are not based on the effective approach to mastering the foreign language; this is particularly because they put the emphasis on rote learning. We try to create truly innovative products that will be of interest to our customers and help them learn English more effectively.”

CABSAT will include the presentation of the educational channel English Club TV and some of its programmes. All visitors will be able to see the most popular programmes of English Club TV Ltd, as well as some new educational content. It is working with e-Vision, Sawa Media and My-HD.

Stand Z4-40

Appear TV displays modular solutions

Appear TV is demonstrating the latest modules for CATV, IPTV and DTH broadcast for its modular XC series platform at CABSAT.

On display is the company’s high-channel density, multi-format SD/HD and multiscreen universal transcoder and dense multiscreen/OTT encoder modules, adaptive bit rate (ABR) packager software and DVB-S2X demodulation and modulation solutions.

These are all part of Appear TV’s modular concept, which gives users a choice of modules and software to create a video processing solution tailored to their needs. Any signal input from any carrier can be captured and adapted to any other signal output, with highly dense and powerful video processing in any format and to any device.

Stand ZH3-40

Viper fights the pirates

Friend MTS is ramping up the fight against video piracy with the launch of Viper at CABSAT 2016.

It is claimed to be the first technology-led anti-piracy solution specifically designed to tackle the growing threat from illegal IPTV set-top boxes.

Viper uses Friend MTS proprietary technology to monitor these boxes, identify the source of each illegal channel feed and effectively shut it down. The service can identify these illegal broadcast streams, which are hidden behind a paywall and not usually detectable by normal anti-piracy searching methods.

Stand CD-36

RFE Broadcast debuts at CABSAT

New Italian company RFE Broadcast is exhibiting at CABSAT for the first time.

The company designs and produces FM and TV broadcast products, providing turnkey solutions right from antennas to transmitters and accessories. The company also offers technical and consultation services. The highlight of the RFE stand at CABSAT will be its latest FM transmitters, which include both compact and modular versions as well as audio over IP link.

Stand ZG2-12
Canon launches video camera with ISO 4 million

Canon Middle East is launching the new ME20F-SH multi-purpose video camera at CABSAT.

The ME20F-SH is a professional multi-purpose video camera capable of capturing full colour images in extremely low-light environments. Boasting an ISO of 4 million (+75dB) the camera can capture colour footage in almost complete darkness (0.0005 lux), plus additional support for infrared (IR) filming.

Supporting image capture in situations where it previously would not have been possible, the ME20F-SH is suitable for use within specialist applications such as TV productions of night-time wildlife, deep sea/cave exploration, astronomy and surveillance. The ability to install the camera in a semi-permanent location, with remote control operability also means that for documentary and natural history filmmakers, long term projects and events can be captured with minimum staffing.

Canon is also showcasing 4K lenses, sensors and reference displays to demonstrate the company’s glass-to-glass 4K workflow.

Stand D1-20

Aspera to showcase SaaS solutions

At CABSAT 2016, Aspera, an IBM company, is showcasing its complete portfolio of high-speed file transfer software and automation solutions for the broadcast and media industries, including the new SaaS platform, Aspera Files.

Built on Aspera’s FASP transport technology, Aspera Files enables any organisation, small or large, to establish a branded web-based presence for the fast, easy and secure exchange and delivery of any size file-based media or data between end users across separate organisations, combining multiple storage platforms.

Aspera software is powered by the FASP protocol to deliver the fastest, most predictable file transfer, share and sync experience across on-premises, cloud and hybrid infrastructure.

At CABSAT, Aspera is also showcasing multiple breakthrough capabilities and advanced features powered by the next generation of its patented FASP transport technology. These allow media enterprises of all sizes to meet variable data movement demands in real time directly to cloud and on-premise storage. This includes the new FASPStream transport technology, which expands Aspera’s FASP transport technology for live and near-live data streaming.

Stand ZJ2-20

VIDELIO showcases partners’ solutions

VIDELIO-Media is introducing three strategic partners’ solutions at CABSAT this year.

VIDELIO-Media and PGI offer expertise in broadcast, IT and cyber security to help broadcasters and Media Groups protect their operations and business facilities.

Softvallee Teamium

Production enables collaborative environments, optimising production process and staff productivity and management tools.

VEDELIO’s partnership with SGT offers VEDA Media Asset Management.

Stand ZD3-31

NMK Electronics introduces ENCO

Dubai-based NMK Electronics Enterprises is exhibiting at CABSAT for the eleventh consecutive year.

A range of ENCO products and solutions is exhibited at the NMK stand for the first time this CABSAT. NMK Electronics started distributing ENCO in the Middle East last year.

ENCO’s flagship product DAD is a complete audio playout automation and control system for radio and television. Its feature set enables broadcasters to ensure reliable, accurate delivery of all audio content on time.

Stand ZG2-50

TVU Networks goes over IP

TVU Networks has partnered with Broadcast & Studio Solutions (BSS), an official TVU Networks reseller, to demonstrate TVU’s news gathering solutions.

TVU Networks will showcase how broadcasters, web streaming, producers, sport organisations, law enforcement and public safety agencies rely on TVU solutions including TVU One, TVU’s newest compact mobile newsgathering transmitter, to capture and share live HD video of breaking news and major events around the world.

Other TVU solutions featured at stand will include: TVU Grid, TVU MLink, TVU Anywhere, TVUMe and the TVU Booking Service.

Stand C1-30

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Aviwest brings mobile news gathering

AVIWEST is demonstrating the latest enhancements to its Digital Mobile News Gathering (DMNG) system. Its advanced live video contribution platform enables broadcasters to capture and broadcast live HD or SD video over multiple networks, including bonded 3G/4G cellular wireless, Wi-Fi, Ethernet and satellite.

At CABSAT, AVIWEST will also showcase new grid view and statistics capabilities for the DMNG Manager. AVIWEST’s DMNG Manager is a server application that enables broadcasters and video professionals to monitor and manage an entire fleet of DMNG equipment.

Stand ZC3-31

Broadpeak showcases solutions for OTT

Broadpeak brings off-net solutions for content providers and operators to CABSAT.

Broadpeak’s solutions enable content providers to optimise OTT video delivery through various options such as Broadpeak’s Bks 350 Origin Packager, which improves multiscreen video delivery on managed or open internet networks through on-the-fly packaging and unique cache management capabilities.

Stand ZF3-35

UBMS showcases top broadcast brands

The United Broadcast and Media Solutions (UBMS) stand at CABSAT is highlighting a variety of premier brands such as ARRI, Sony, Tiffen Steadicam, Ikegami, DJI, Grass Valley, Clyde Broadcast, Zeiss and BlackMagic design, just to name a few.

ARRI’s compact, lightweight and self-contained ALEXA Mini will be one of the highlights of the UBMS stand, in addition to other ARRI cameras that will be available to experience. Clyde Broadcast will have its Synergy Silver radio station set up, in essence a totally integrated digital radio studio, with a fully featured digital broadcast mixer and integrated suite of software tools. This product is suitable for live assist or automated broadcast and production. The products in the synergy range are extremely feature-rich yet easy to use.

Stand B1-10

LIVEHD unveils new identity

Last year, LIVEHD officially moved from being an entity under the management of Abu Dhabi Media and is now operating as a commercial subsidiary.

This strategic move will enable LIVEHD to serve a wider range of clients.

Ali Buali, CEO of LIVEHD, said that the company will use the CABSAT platform to announce its range of services and offerings. “In 2008, we pioneered in introducing HD broadcast to the region. I still remember our first football coverage and how we changed content capturing in the region to international levels, and I am confident that this spirit of excellence will enable us to offer our clients the highest standards with our new set of services.”

Stand ZD2-30

MediaCast showcases new releases

MediaCast is presenting the all-new Avid Venue S6 L live mixing desk at its CABSAT stand. Rob Allen, FOH engineer of Massive Attack, will be on hand for product demos.

NewTek IP NDI will be unveiled at this year’s show. This technology makes devices available as video sources or destinations over a LAN with NDI; you can send and receive real-time, frame-accurate video from cameras and devices in different locations, all on a standard network infrastructure.

Also for the first time at CABSAT will be the URSA Mini camera range, the micro cinema and production cameras, and Fusion Studio.

At the show, MediaCast will introduce Cedar Audio’s specialised products in audio restoration and speech enhancement.

Stand D1-30

ABOX42 offers software and hardware

The M40-Series SmartSTB is based on Broadcom’s latest ultra high-definition 10,000 DMIPS system-on-a-chip BCM7251S.

The M40 platform combines processing power and speed for decoding of HEVC up to 4K video with up to 60 frames per second and unbeatable UI performance.

On the software side, the M40 STB platform includes ABOX42 SmartSDK middleware and development environment. Due to ABOX42’s unique approach to software compatibility, M40 SmartSTBs can be integrated into existing operators’ environments since its software stack is compatible with all other current ABOX42 M-series STB platforms.

Stand ZG2-42
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The MENA TV advertising industry has just come through a very tough year. It’s tempting to think things can’t get much worse, but if we look at global trends, traditional TV advertising has far tougher times ahead.

In January 2016, NYU Stern Professor Scott Galloway asserted: “The advertising industrial complex is about to come to an end, and the downstream service providers are about to take their turn at the woodshed.”

He highlighted that Facebook and Google now control more than 50% of global mobile advertising, with revenues growing at 40% and 12%, respectively. By contrast, TV ad revenue is either flat or in decline, because it is getting easier to avoid – TV advertising is becoming “a tax that only poor people pay”. In such a hostile environment, audience measurement matters more than ever.

It is widely believed in the MENA industry that TV advertising spend is less than half of what it could be if people meters were successfully implemented in core markets.

People metering is the real-time monitoring of TV viewership in the home, as opposed to telephone surveys (CATI) or viewer diaries. The system dates back to the 1980s in Europe.

The UAE’s people meters project has faced resistance from industry incumbents since its launch in October 2012, but in November 2014, its auditors CESP stated that tView should “achieve the standards necessary for currency status by September 2015”. We await the results of the upcoming 2016 audit.

Since people meters are still not widely accepted as the ratings currency for UAE TV ad spend, I want to address some of the common concerns surrounding them.

Firstly, it is often commented that people meters findings are inconsistent with existing measures. I’m not familiar with the audit provisions in place for other systems, but tView is an independently audited system and publishes its audit results.

Another common misconception is that IPTV data from du or Etisalat could itself be used as a currency, so who needs people meters? IPTV systems do not measure individual viewers – they measure boxes. Audience size and demographic information, both essential for advertisers, therefore cannot be collected minute by minute. Also, the customer base of an IPTV network is not demographically representative of the country. A people meters panel is selected and audited statistically to mirror the population as a whole.

The most common objection is that the UAE TV advertising market is not significant enough to warrant its own advertising currency. According to Deloitte, the UAE domestic advertising market is only $25m pa, and most ad spend is devoted to the pan-Arab market (about $1.5bn), which is driven by Saudi viewership. However, if we compare the UAE advertising market with similar-sized international markets, it becomes evident that it is grossly undervalued by advertisers. It is estimated to be worth between $800m and $1.2bn.

The UAE’s people meters project is a beacon, providing a vital benchmark for the region. While they don’t shout about it, MENA ad agencies are already widely using tView. Other MENA people meters projects also learn directly from the project and rely on its successes. Conversely, if people meters can’t succeed in a technologically advanced economy like the UAE, they will likely founder elsewhere too.

On the face of it, this might suit the incumbent monopolies, but as I mentioned at the start, the television ad industry is facing an existential threat. Without transparent measurement tools, advertisers have every reason to shun television in favour of new media that are less vulnerable to allegations of nepotism or bias.
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