Al Jazeera Media Network promises greater storytelling with revamped documentary channel

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DOCUMENTARY REVIVED

Al Jazeera Media Network promises greater storytelling with revamped documentary channel
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Every now and then, when the topic of Virtual Reality (VR) has come up, most industry professionals have seemed sceptical about the technology and it has often been dismissed as just another fad. Judging, however, by what I saw at Cannes and NAB this year, and the number of big names involved in developing technologies around VR, it seems like the next big thing in the industry.

VR specifically seems to be making great progress in three areas, namely gaming, cinematic VR and 360° videos, which are mainly flat videos morphed into a sphere for playback.

Of course, with the likes of Google having developed the Google Cardboard for $17 to turn your smartphone into a VR headset, it’s going to make the technology more accessible to ordinary folk. Then there is the Samsung Gear VR; Facebook’s Oculus Rift; the HTC Vive, a high-end device with room-scale technology and the Sony PlayStation VR. With all of these technologies available to the public, VR seems to be edging forward boldly.

Within the realm of broadcast, we see this taking greater shape in the guise of augmented reality. We saw some really exciting work at the NCAM stand in this area at NAB and I personally think they have some really cool technologies. If augmented reality is of interest to you, this is one company you want to watch.

But it’s not just the manufacturers who are tinkering with VR. Media biggies like Discovery, the BBC, MSNBC and Sky also seem to have their fingers in the VR pie.

Another topic that received a lot of attention both at Cannes as well as NAB was High Dynamic Range (HDR). In fact, with more cameras supporting ultra HD and 4K and more DoPs shooting in this resolution, expect to hear more about HDR in the coming months.

BroadcastPro ME is also celebrating its sixth anniversary this month at XL Club, Habtoor Grand. Hope to see you there!
Ready for action?

Enter our short film competition* by 15th May, 2016 for your chance to win the latest cameras from Sony.

We are looking for video submissions which bring our theme “Happiness” to life!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENTER THE COMPETITION

* This competition is valid only to the residents of United Arab Emirates, Terms & Conditions apply
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Information
November 2016
Summit: 10am - 4pm / Awards: 7pm – 10pm
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ARN launches seven new digital brands

Arabian Radio Network launched seven new digital brands on May 1, 2016. These new brands are exclusive digital offerings and have been launched in addition to the existing apps of the network’s terrestrial channels.

The digital brands include Virgin Radio Beat for club music; Virgin Radio Chill, dedicated to lounge music; 92 Rock for rock music; 92 Smooth; Hit Classics for Malayalam music from the early 60s to 2000s; City 106.6 Dil Se offering Bollywood music from the 80s, 90s and the early 2000s; and City Dance with a collection of Bollywood dance numbers.

By the end of the year, three to four more channels are expected to be added to the network’s digital repertoire.

Speaking exclusively to BroadcastPro ME, Mahmoud Al Rasheed, General Manager of ARN, said: “There is a definite demand in the market for more music genres, and within our existing terrestrial offerings it’s not always possible to cater to the growing appetite of our listeners. Digital seemed like the best way forward to offer more to the listeners, and we decided to add new formats on the same terrestrial apps, as an extension of the existing brands.”

These are all-in-one apps and the digital playlists supplement the terrestrial offerings with broader content variety. Existing users can update the apps on their devices to access the new streams.

Steve Smith, COO of ARN, added: “By introducing these new brands, we are broadening our listeners' ecosystem. They have a wider choice to listen to what they like. These apps are non-interactive but you can purchase the music played on them through iTunes or Google Play. It’s not just about adding more content but also improving the quality of the playlist significantly. Marketing will be a key aspect of these new launches to leverage them commercially. These brands are being promoted on our FM channels to drive more listeners to use the digital platforms.”

ARN claims that although the terrestrial brands will stay at the forefront, these new platforms will be used to give advertisers more options to reach out to consumers. The digital platforms have been in the making for a couple of years and involve significant investment in terms of manpower, time and focus. These offerings are just the beginning of a new wave of radio with tools for targeted advertising.

News Flash: UTURN Entertainment expands to Dubai, hires new MD as well as Chief Content Officer.

BeIN wins MENA broadcast rights to Wimbledon

BeIN has secured a long-term deal to exclusively broadcast Wimbledon in the MENA region. With this deal, beIN now has rights to all four Grand Slam tournaments. BeIN already has long-term deals to broadcast the US Open, the Australian Open and Roland Garros. Besides these top four tennis events, beIN has also secured rights to various ATP and WTA tournaments.

BeIN has deployed the latest broadcast and production technologies for these tournaments in host countries and involved top tennis players, analysts and commentators in its programmes.

These events are broadcast on beIN in multiple languages including Arabic, English and French.

Commenting on this development, Yousef Al-Obaidly, Deputy CEO of beIN MEDIA Group said: “beIN intends to provide the best sports platform within the pay-TV industry, globally. BeIN will continue to pursue excellence in sports broadcast even as we expand our platform to appeal to the whole family.”

BeIN will further enrich the broadcast of various tennis events through beIN CONNECT. The broadcaster will also provide tennis fans up-to-date news, exclusive images and updates on beINsports.com and its social media platforms.
Majid TV to air Nat Geo Kids content exclusively

Majid Kids TV, part of Majid Entertainment, is airing Nat Geo Kids branded content exclusively. This adds an impressive library of nature, science and wildlife programmes to Majid TV’s informative shows featuring characters such as Majid and Kaslan.

The partnership also aims to provide original informative and real-life programmes that are relevant to children in the region and encourage families to view them together.

HE Mohamed Ebraheem Al Mahmood, Chairman and Managing Director of Abu Dhabi Media, said: “I’m truly excited to announce this partnership, as it’s a perfect fit. It will allow our audience to access globally renowned edutainment and relevant content on wildlife, animals, nature and technologies. We are also both very keen to help bring children and adults together to watch TV as families, and we believe that airing these types of programmes from 7-9pm will help to encourage this.”

Fox launches three new channels on MENA pay TV

Fox International Channels (FIC) is bringing more entertainment to the region with the launch of three new channels.

Fox Action

Movies, Fox Family Movies and FX, a channel with edgy male content, were launched on April 17 on Ooredoo and e-life.

These channels will be launching soon on My-HD as well.

Fox made a bold move in the market earlier this year by moving some of FIC’s FTA channels to beIN, a pay TV platform. This new announcement sees FIC spread its wings and partnerships further by making its channels available on a number of different pay platforms in the region.

The network’s aim is to reach out to as many segments of the market as possible by making its offerings available on those bouquets. These platforms address a segment of the market that has, thus far, not been serviced efficiently.

Sanjay Raina, General Manager and Vice-President of Fox Networks Group, commented: “These sharply defined TV brands fulfill a void that has been identified by our partner affiliates. They are backed by the high level of content-curation and credibility that Fox branded pay TV channels are known for.”

Raina also declared that such a move was in line with the network’s mission to serve as the torchbearer of pay-TV content distribution.

Children’s International Film Festival features 1,156 films

This year, the Children’s International Film Festival is taking place at VOX cinemas across the UAE and features 17 age-appropriate films. Over 1,156 shorts, features and documentaries from 66 countries in 55 languages have been submitted by international filmmakers, compared to 410 films submitted last year. The significant increases in submissions reflects a growth of 64%, 56 of these international films will be screened at the festival.

More than 160 local short films were produced in a span of five months by UAE students aged 12 to 17. 134 of them were submitted to CIFF2016, and 61 of them are being screened during the festival.

The three winning “Made in UAE” films by students from CIFF2016 will enter seven other Children’s Film Festivals in Paris, Seattle, Bologna, Valencia, Plasencia (Spain), Nairobi and Sydney. Additionally, 35 awards will be given out at the festival, up from 26 from last year.

Discovery Communications has named Dominic Baillie as Chief Technology Officer for Olympics & Sports leading up to the 2018 Olympic Games. The network will be responsible for carrying the 2018-2024 Olympic Games in Europe. Baillie was previously CTO at Sky News Arabia.

In this newly created role, he will be responsible for developing the Olympic Games and sports technology strategy – including the successful delivery of the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Games across all screens. Baillie will also play a leading role in the planned migration to IP, cloud for content management and distribution of the whole portfolio.

With over 15 years’ experience, Baillie has held a number of senior roles in the industry. He was previously CTO at Sky News Arabia.
NEW SHADES OF ENTERTAINMENT.

FOX Networks Group introduces three brand new home-grown channels for the MENA viewer showcasing edgy dramas, heart-warming family movies and iconic action blockbusters.

Watch them all. In full HD.
VSN appoints Javier Encinas as Sales Manager for Middle East

VSN Innovation & Media Solutions has appointed Javier Encinas as new Sales Manager for the Middle East. Encinas, a Telecommunications engineer with several years of experience in the Broadcast and Media & Entertainment sector, will report directly to the company’s Global Sales Director, Mario Diaz. Encinas has been part of the VSN team since the beginning of its International expansion as Solutions Architect at the Project Management Office (PMO), creating IT systems for clients around the world using the VSN technology to efficiently cater to their needs. He will work in close contact with Roberto Pascual, VSN’s EMEA Sales Director and Mario Diaz, Global Sales Director, to implement the company’s growth strategy and to respond to the needs of the industry with VSN’s suite of solutions in the Middle East.

Arab Telemedia Group brings Arabic drama to MIPTV

Jordan-based Arab Telemedia Group screened its in-house production, a historical drama series, at MIPTV for the first time. Titled *Malek Bin Al Rayb*, the series chronicles the life of a poet and knight from the Bani Tamim tribe who would steal from the rich to collect food for the poor. Commenting on the production house’s participation at MIPTV, Talal Awamleh, CEO and Producer at Arab Telemedia Group, said: “Our aim for this year is to expand the exposure of Arabic drama in the global market. We think *Malek Bin Al Rayb* has international appeal and audiences across the world will appreciate it. Cannes is a seasoned market and provides you with the right exposure, which is why we attend MIPTV every year.”

Arab Telemedia Group is launching a new platform that will showcase its content exclusively.

Icflix partners with Orange Jordan

Icflix is expanding its digital footprint in Jordan with the announcement of a new strategic partnership with Orange Jordan that will offer customers of both companies more added-value services and promotions. Partnering for the launch, Icflix will offer Orange Jordan customers signing up a free month of unlimited streaming for customers, giving them access to a wide variety of feature films, TV series, documentaries, kids cartoons and IcFLIX co-productions, including *Alf Leila we Leila, Borders of Heaven* and the original Icflix family entertainer, Dunia. The partnership will give Orange customers access to the largest library of Jazwood (Arabic) content available online.

YouTube launches 360° live streaming

YouTube has launched live streaming for 360-degree videos, with California’s Coachella music and arts festival the first thing to be broadcast in the format. The Google-owned company expanded its 360 video platform by allowing users with virtual reality headsets or standard web browsers to watch some performances from the festival last month. 360-degree videos have been supported by YouTube since March 2015. The video format is also supported by Facebook, with content filmed using 360-degree camera rigs.

YouTube is also launching spatial audio that allows you to listen along as you do in real life, said Neal Mohan, YouTube’s Chief Product Officer.
CNN revamps Abu Dhabi facility and upgrades kit

CNN has unveiled new broadcasting facilities at its redesigned Middle East hub in Abu Dhabi. The network has completely reconfigured its studio, home to flagship current affairs programme Connect the World with Becky Anderson. The facility now features the very latest HD broadcasting equipment and a re-imagined space that opens up a range of new possibilities for news, programming and community initiatives.

Becky Anderson, Managing Editor at CNN Abu Dhabi, said: "There are two parts to this project. We’ve integrated the latest HD cameras and equipment, touchscreens, lighting and a quite stunning LED wall into the main studio space, which creates a completely fresh look and feel on air. On top of that, we’ve reconfigured our rooftop space, giving us new scope for our show teams to get creative. The overall result is a versatile, hi-tech hub that is the perfect base for our Middle East operation."

The redesigned rooftop space will also play host to a new initiative that will bring CNN even closer to the Abu Dhabi community. The coming months will see the launch of The Rooftop Sessions @ CNN, which will bring together some of the UAE’s best creative minds, artists and thought leaders to perform, discuss and engage with the CNN family.

Rani Raad, President, CNNI Commercial, said: "This new investment in Abu Dhabi underlines CNN’s commitment to what has become a truly global hub for culture and business. This bureau is part of that story, and I’m immensely proud of our partnership with twofour54 and grateful to the many people in Abu Dhabi who have played a part in its success."

Maryam Al Mheiri, acting CEO of Media Zone Authority Abu Dhabi and twofour54, added: “We’re celebrating a partnership that's changing the face of media in the Middle East. Since CNN established its fourth broadcast hub here in Abu Dhabi, it has shared stories of our society and culture with the entire world. Abu Dhabi has been welcomed into living rooms globally.”

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4K demands a higher dimension of performance, and the expanded FUJINON 4K broadcast lens lineup meets the challenge. Extending the limits of “High Resolution”, “High Contrast” and “High Dynamic Range”, FUJINON’s cutting-edge optical technology presents the next standard in optical performance – image quality that exceeds the high expectations of imaging professionals.
Twitter and Sky News Arabia partner for panel discussions

Twitter and Sky News Arabia have signed a memorandum of understanding to launch an interactive panel discussion on Twitter. The initiative represents the social media platform’s first partnership with an Arab media organisation. A panel discussion programme featuring some of the top influencers on Twitter from different fields and industries will hold monthly discussions, each dedicated to a certain issue that is trending regionally or globally.

Nart Bouran, Head of Sky News Arabia, revealed the name of the programme on his official Twitter account @Nartbouran: “In partnership with Twitter, I am happy to announce the launch of the Nigash Tag programme, in a bid to cope with the rapid advancements of our audience’s interactive communication patterns, while using innovative methods of content development.”

Each panel discussion will run between 60 and 90 minutes. The participants, selected from among prominent Arab Twitter personalities, will tweet their input in the form of text or video, while a Sky News Arabia representative will moderate the whole discussion.

MBC to produce reality fashion programme

MBC Group is collaborating with Elie Saab for the production of the Arabic adaptation of Project Runway – the hit international reality programme and competition dedicated to all things fashion – with the regional version confirmed as Project Runway ME.

The Lebanese international creative couturier will also serve as the head of the judging panel of industry luminaries, where he will support and offer his expertise to participants.

OSN adds Comedy Central HD

OSN has signed an agreement with Viacom International Media Networks to add Comedy Central to its offering of entertainment channels. Comedy Central HD is the third brand for VIMN in the region, complementing MTV and Nickelodeon/NickJr.

Comedy Central HD will be available exclusively on OSN in the MENA. 100% of the content premiering in the region on Comedy Central HD, including animated programmes, will be subtitled in Arabic.

SMPTE completes 100 years

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. The SMPTE 2016 centennial also marks the addition of YouTube, Fotokem, Netflix and Bud Mayo to the list of The Next Century Fund donors. The fund, which has raised more than $1.7m in committed gifts towards a $4m goal, will support SMPTE’s efforts to advance its standards, membership and education initiatives into its second century.

Said Bacho takes on global role at SAM

Said Bacho has joined SAM as Chief Business Development and Marketing Officer. A well-connected and respected broadcast media industry executive, Bacho has focused his career on strengthening business in developed and emerging markets in EMEA, as well as delivering sustained profitable growth and developing new accounts and channel partners across live production, production, editing and finishing, playout and delivery, infrastructure and image processing environments.

“Said brings a wealth of industry knowledge and experience to SAM and will play a key role in continuing the transformation of our organisation,” said Tim Thorsteinson, CEO.

Based out of SAM’s headquarters in Newbury, Bacho will handle strategic accounts and alliances with partners and also build channel networks that cover geographies worldwide. On the marketing side, Bacho’s role encompasses channel and corporate marketing, PR, events, digital marketing and social media.

Prior to SAM, Bacho held senior roles at Grass Valley and Harris Broadcast (now Imagine Communications and GatesAir).
TV.AE chooses du and Akamai for OTT services

Du, together with its partner in the region, Akamai Technologies, has been chosen by TV.AE as its content delivery network (CDN) service provider for the Middle East. Working with du and Akamai, Advance Digital Media (Advance) is using adaptive media delivery and media analytics to deliver broadcast-quality video content on its TV.AE over-the-top (OTT) streaming service.

TV.AE provides curated entertainment for Arab audiences. The platform aims to provide original as well as curated content in an engaging multiscreen viewing experience with less buffering, less pixellation and maximum performance even during peak hours on desktops, as well as Android and iOS mobile devices across the MENA. Working with du, Advance selected Akamai’s adaptive media delivery solution to provide streaming services for TV.AE’s live and on-demand content at the highest quality that users are expecting. Advance will also leverage media analytics to get a deeper understanding of TV.AE’s audience engagement metrics, quality metrics and individual viewer experiences.

Bilal to have world premiere at Cannes

The UAE’s home production Bilal will have its world premiere at the 69th Cannes Film Festival, which will be held from May 11 to 22. Produced by Dubai-based animation and visual effects studio, Barajoun Entertainment, the film will open the animation day at Cannes. Produced with a budget of $30m, Bilal has been in the making for more than three years and is now ready for worldwide release.

PSS returns to the Middle East this month

The Professional Seminar Series (PSS) will be held in Riyadh, Doha and Dubai on May 15, 17 and 19, respectively. The key topics for discussion include “Enabling IP workflows for Broadcast” from TSL Products, “IP, the backbone of the Industry” by Axon, “Delivering new consumer experiences with Next Generation Codecs’ with Dolby and “Introduction to IP Video and PTP” by Tektronix.

Rotana inks $36m deal for Arabic content

Rotana Media Group has announced that it has signed deals to produce more than 50 new Arabic blockbusters in the next two years, at an estimated cost of $36m. Rotana said in a statement that it has signed strategic partnerships with major Arab filmmakers including Ahmad Al Sabki, Yousry Nasrallah and Tamer Habib. Rotana’s total investment in Arabic movies has reached $281 million.

Boomerang launches in Turkey

Turner has launched its Boomerang animation channel in Turkey, to coincide with the country’s National Children’s Day on April 23. The children’s channel is now available on the D-Smart satellite TV service and Tivibu IPTV platform, and offers HD broadcasts of shows including The Tom & Jerry Show, Scooby-Doo, Looney Tunes, Inspector Gadget, Mr Bean and Garfield.

"The timing of this launch is significant as we continue to invest in new, original content for Boomerang and further develop the brand as our second flagship kids’ channel across the region," said Patricia Hidalgo, SVP, Chief Content & Creative Officer, Kids, Turner EMEA & International Kids Strategy.

"Turkey is a big priority market for Turner and we feel confident that, with its strong portfolio of classic animation and loveable characters, Boomerang will offer a fun, light-hearted entertainment experience.”
Blackmagic URSA Mini, the lightweight Super 35 4.6K digital film camera with 15 stops of dynamic range!

Blackmagic URSA Mini is a handheld Super 35 digital film camera with an incredible 4.6K image sensor and a massive 15 stops of dynamic range! The super compact and lightweight design is perfectly balanced, making it comfortable enough for all day shooting. URSA Mini lets you shoot at up to 60fps, features a 5” foldout viewfinder, dual RAW and ProRes recorders, and more!

Incredible 4.6K Sensor
URSA Mini can capture images at a resolution and dynamic range that goes well beyond that of traditional motion picture film so you can shoot your own epic, cinematic masterpiece! You can capture images up to 4608 x 2592, which is larger than 4K DCI, with 15 stops of dynamic range so you get incredibly clean pictures with amazing detail in everything from the darkest shadows to the brightest highlights! URSA Mini can record 4.6K at up to 60fps, or 1080 HD at up to 120fps.

Lightweight and Portable
URSA Mini’s perfectly balanced is body made out of space aged magnesium alloys so it’s rugged, yet lightweight and comfortable enough to be used all day. You get a super bright 5 inch fold out 1080 HD display for on-set monitoring, professional connectors such as 12G-SDI, a high quality stereo microphone and a side grip with control buttons mounted on a standard rosette. The fold out monitor is also a touchscreen that can be used to change settings, display overlays for timecode, histograms, audio meters, focus peaking and more!

Completely Customizable
Blackmagic URSA Mini is completely customizable so you can create a rig that’s built specifically for your production! Add accessories like the Blackmagic URSA Viewfinder and Blackmagic URSA Mini Shoulder Kit, or choose from hundreds of third party accessories. URSA Mini has 9 standard ¼” threaded mounting points on the top and bottom of the camera so you can mount it directly to a tripod as well as add accessories such as rails, matte boxes and more.

Non-Stop Recording
You never have to stop recording because URSA Mini features two CFast 2.0 recorders! When one card is full, recording automatically continues onto the next. URSA Mini uses the latest, incredibly fast CFast 2.0 technology for recording speeds up to 350 MB/s. Wide dynamic range images are saved as 12-bit RAW files, which are perfect for high end grading and effects work, or as broadcast quality ProRes, for easy post production workflows with minimum storage requirements!

www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae
*SRP excludes duties, shipping and sales tax. Electronic Viewfinder, lens and accessories sold separately.

All models include DaVinci Resolve 12 Studio for editing and color correction.
The Scene Club introduces films and food in Dubai

At a recent event in Dubai, Emirati filmmaker Nayla Al Khaja introduced The Scene Club as a platform where members could come together to enjoy films and food. “The idea is to create a community of film lovers to partake of our selection of films as well as food,” she said.

The films that make it to The Scene Club are not hardcore art house films, nor are they purely commercial ventures, but belong to a genre in between the two, according to Al Khaja. “On the 12th of every month, The Scene Club will meet at a new location to watch a new short that hasn’t been showcased elsewhere. The members can network and discuss films over some food. In September, we plan to grow this further by introducing workshops where experts will hold masterclasses to train people in direction, camera handling and much more,” she said.

Since January this year, 225 people have joined The Scene Club.

In a major swoop on TV piracy, Alexandria Police raided two shops on Al Malek Hifni Street and confiscated more than 370 IP decoders, 500 LAN converters, 175 Wi-Fi LAN connectors, a personal computer and a memory stick with TV piracy software.

In addition, the police confiscated 370 illegal decoders from both shops, leading to the arrest of two people. The cases are likely to be referred to the economic courts.

One of the largest hauls of piracy equipment in Egypt, the Alexandria raid is the fifth in the country – and the first in the city – following the campaign launched by OSN to curb the menace of TV piracy that negatively impacts the country’s television and creative industry.

Al Jazeera English now available on Opera TV app

Al Jazeera English’s content is now available worldwide on Opera TV’s network of OTT partners, through a new app using Opera TV’s Snap technology. The Al Jazeera English TV Snap app will include a live broadcast stream, video clips of the latest news and full episodic content, with multi-tier category navigation for easy access. The app will join the Opera TV content portfolio for smart TVs, set-top boxes and Blu-ray disc players from pay TV operators and manufacturers including Sony, Samsung and TiVo. The channel broadcasts to 130 countries.

beIN, Studio 100 launch beJunior in MENA

European producer Studio 100 and beIN have launched beJunior, a new kids and family channel in the MENA region. Studio 100 supplies and schedules the co-branded channel, available exclusively to pay TV subscribers of the beIN Media Group from last month.

Studio 100 is responsible for the whole on-air set-up of beJunior, including on-air design. Based on the company’s Junior pay TV channel (available in Germany, Switzerland and Austria), the new MENA channel broadcasts programmes from Studio 100’s library of classic and contemporary series.
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An all-new central transmission area in Al Jazeera’s Doha headquarters is under construction to facilitate the playout operations for all channels under Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN). This is part of a larger upgrade, the Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project. One of the key upgrades in this project has been a revamp of the Al Jazeera Documentary channel, which has launched on April 1, 2016.
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### Snapshot

- **Objective:** To revamp Al Jazeera Documentary channel and bring it in line with the Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project
- **Location:** Doha, Qatar
- **Key vendors:** Avid, Pebble Beach, Oracle, Omneon, MediaGenix, Arvato, Grass Valley
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The Al Jazeera Documentary channel used conventional technology to broadcast, and outdated methods of production and distribution put severe editorial constraints on the production team. The quality of experience for the audience needed to be the best, according to Feras Al Suliti, Director of Al Jazeera Network Operations, who led the delivery of the project.

Al Suliti heads a division of 750 staff delivering output in Arabic and English across the globe, as well as bureaux and broadcast centres in Washington, DC and London. He also leads the operational change management programme for transformation, centralisation, restructuring and integration of network operations, to centralise all network operations for AJMN channels.

“Since the Al Jazeera Documentary channel was based on a legacy system which was operating at the end of its lifecycle, its output could have been a risk. We had the choice to accept these risks or take steps to replace the systems rather than spend time and money in maintaining them. With the support and direction of our Executive Director Mohamed Abuagla and Robert Sveb – Director Global Technology Services at Al Jazeera media Network, we decided to go for the latter option which was feasible,” says Al Suliti.

The central transmission is now fully HD capable, giving AJMN the ability to broadcast content in high definition, thereby enhancing viewer experience. In addition, viewers will notice a change in the look and feel of the channel as well as a completely new programming menu.

The documentary channel has been migrated to new editing, scheduling, media management, content delivery, playout and channel branding technologies. The channel is now managed remotely via Al Jazeera Global Media Cloud (AGMC) connectivity between Doha and London.

The AGMC fibre connectivity provides a highly efficient and reliable performance, says Al Suliti. The transmission and scheduling systems in London are remotely operated by staff in Doha; the transmission operators interface with playout equipment in London using workstations, as if the systems were located in a regular CAR in Doha.

“Although this is an interim solution ahead of the move onto AJWT systems, the equipment and workflows are in line with the future technology roll-out, giving the network the opportunity to prepare staff and learn more of the changes ahead. AGMC also gives us the ability to control technologies located in the various broadcast centres. This is a giant leap forward in operational capability for Al Jazeera, specifically in terms of playout control,” adds Al Suliti.

At this stage of the implementation, the documentary channel will continue to use the existing Contracts Acquisitions and Documentation (CAD) system for...
contract and rights management processes, and the Tape Library System (TLS) for tape management and archiving tasks. All of these will eventually be updated when the AJWT handover takes place.

In addition, preparations for moving to HD has been underway for some time now, says Al Suliti.

“With the upgrade, the playout and distribution can be carried out in native HD.”

Al Jazeera Documentary is based on the Avid Media Composer edit suites for programmes and Avid Creative Cloud for promos. MediaGenix What’s On provides the scheduling system. A key aspect of the revamp has been the media management system, which is based on solutions from Isilon, Arvato and Harmonic’s Carbon Coder between the Doha and London hubs.

The playout system comprises the Pebble Beach Marina for automated playout, Omneon playout servers, Vizrt Multichannel for automated channel branding, Grass Valley Imagestore 750 for source switching and Grass Valley iControl for broadcast chain management. The channel’s 1,600 hours of content need a robust archiving system. On average, the channel acquires 500 hours of content yearly, of which 135 hours are commissioned, and the remaining content is produced in-house. An Oracle DIVArchive has been deployed in London to manage the channel’s storage and can be accessed from the Doha headquarters.

The workflow

The material to be transmitted is prepared in HD in Doha and sent to the London VPMS (Video Production Management System) MAM system, where content is assigned to a MediaGenix generated MediaID. Doha scheduling staff log into the MediaGenix What’sOn system in London using their workstations in Doha.

From the VPMS, Pebble Beach Marina brings the content required for transmission and stores it on the Omneon servers for playout. Furthermore, the operators can manually push content to the transmission servers (from VPMS to Omneon) to ensure it is ready for its scheduled transmission.

Al Jazeera Documentary has implemented Viz Multichannel for HD at the London broadcast centre. Viz Multichannel offers an automated channel branding workflow for specific promo content. By referencing secondary events applied to the Marina playlist by What’sOn, Multichannel-generated promo end boards, coming up as graphic templates, have specific data inserted at the point of transmission, reducing the traffic flow between systems and streamlining production efficiencies.

Viz Multichannel is integrated with MediaGenix What's On for schedule management and the Pebble Beach Marina automation system for triggering playout. The Vizrt system reads information automatically from the schedule to dynamically populate the graphics with content, which are rendered in real time on the Viz Engine.

“Viz Multichannel was used to control the full range of branding elements, such as ‘Now/Next/Later’, channel bugs, info graphics, menu boards and social media tags, also to do multi-day promos which was previously not possible, and also now make last-minute changes since the branding elements are now generated in real time,” Al Suliti says.

The project uses much of the same technology planned for the...
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Centralised Transmission Control Room concept of Al Jazeera’s Workplace Transformation project, in order to gain valuable experience with the systems. Content is ingested onto the Isilon via Doha edit, with the Carbon Coder creating a low-res copy for editorial validation.

Final exported programmes pass through DMZ NAS, which security-checks media before it arrives on the broadcast systems, after which Carbon Coder creates AVC Intra 100 for transmission. Carbon Coder also performs a comparative QC to ensure there is no quality loss during the transcoding process.

The Media Manager reviews the QC reports generated by Carbon Coder. When it has passed QC, the operator uses Carbon Coder to push the content to London MAM (Arvato VPMS), where Baton performs an additional technical QC against pre-defined parameters on arrival.

The Media Manager in Doha then reviews the report generated by Baton remotely. If a clip fails QC in Baton, it will automatically be read as technically rejected in VPMS and the system will prevent it from being sent to Pebble Beach for transmission.

When the clip has passed QC in Baton, it can be assigned to a MediaGeniX ingest request in VPMS. The ingest request contains schedule-relevant metadata, including the media ID, which the scheduler will use to position it as an event on a transmission playlist.

For long-form programmes, the validation department reviews the content editorially and marks segmentation points in VPMS using the Production Client. The Production Client in VPMS then generates a ‘cut list’ containing the segmentation metadata, which is sent to MediaGeniX What’sOn to facilitate accurate scheduling.

The archivist in Doha manually sends the transmission-approved media to DIVA using VPMS. The transmission-ready content is thereafter kept on DIVA archives in London.

When the transmission playlist is ready in MediaGeniX, the scheduler publishes the file to a specific watchfolder. The Transmission Controller in Doha then accesses the Pebble Beach system in London remotely and downloads the schedule onto the Marina playlist. He checks the playlist for timing errors and content availability, and also makes sure the Arabic text for the Viz Multichannel templates is accurate for channel branding.

There is no need to manually push clips from the MAM (VPMS) to the transmission servers. For any missing media, Marina sends a request to the MAM and pulls the content onto the Omneon servers automatically. The media on the Omneon servers is managed automatically, with the Marina Delete processor deleting clips seven days after the last time they appear on the transmission schedule.

When satisfied that the playlist in Marina is fully prepared, Doha advises London that the playlist check has been completed and is clear for them to take control of the channel output.

“From a playout perspective, the system has been designed to be as resilient as possible,” comments Al Suliti.

“Essentially, rather than having two broadcast chains, we have two fully populated channels running in tandem. In the event of a breakdown on the main channel, the operator has the ability to fall over to the back-up channel via Grass Valley iControl, with no visual impact noticeable to the viewer at home.”

Pebble Beach Marina controls the downstream keyers on the IS-750 for Viz Multichannel graphics, as per the MediaGeniX schedule. Using GPI, Marina opens the keyers for the duration of the graphic events.

Ian Davies, Regional Manager at Vizrt’s Middle East headquarters, explains: “Al Jazeera made it very clear that they wanted this system to be set up in a similar way to what is planned for their Central TX facility in Doha, albeit on a smaller scale. The systems are very flexible, so this project gave all of us good experience in using the systems in this way before the larger roll-out takes place in Doha. Because the equipment was already owned by Al Jazeera, we avoided the lengthy procurement cycles, which helped us greatly with the tight timeframe on this project.”

The reconfiguration of the Vizrt equipment and commissioning of the system was handled by Vizrt’s teams in London and Dubai, in
Kit list

Production System:
- Avid Media Composer edit suites (programmes)
- Creative Cloud (promos)

Scheduling System:
- MediaGenix What’s On
- Media Management systems
- Workflow Storage (Doha edit production server)
- Corporate Isilon storage
- Carbon Coder (Doha)
- VPMS from Arvato (London)
- Baton for auto QC (London)

Playout System:
- Pebble Beach Marina (automation)
- Omneon playout servers
- Vizrt Multichannel for automated channel branding
- Miranda Imagestore 750 for source switching
- Miranda iControl for broadcast chain management

Archive System:
- DIVArchive (London)

close coordination with Al Jazeera’s local staff and their project management team in Doha.

The training
At the start of the project, MediaGeniX visited Doha to capture outstanding workflow requirements through a week of end user workshops. In addition, the scheduling staff undertook full training of the MediaGenix What’sOn system, followed by a week of on-site vendor support during system configuration.

The AJ staff in London was provided with training on the Pebble Beach Marina automation system, but the Doha staff achieved operational understanding of the system by referencing the in-house knowledge base acquired during the studio three project, which has the same playout infrastructure.

For Media Management (VPMS), Al Jazeera staff were trained by in-house super users who have established a deep understanding of the system from their experience working on other projects during the network-wide system upgrade.

The challenges
The biggest challenge was achieving the required connectivity between the two broadcast centres via AGMC, says Al Subiti.

In addition, establishing user groups and attaining the required logins for all users took longer than originally anticipated.

“The automated channel branding workflow required the configuration of hard-coded rules in the scheduling system. The configuration of the rules was not difficult, but the business requirements for each branding use case were difficult to nail down.

“Although frustrating at times, positives can be drawn from that particular experience as our teams understand the process ahead of the AJWT roll out. Eventually, AJD will be part of the final AJWT delivery,” he explains.

Going forward, the main challenge will be redefining the strategies and the deliverables of the network’s operating model, creating an international standard for AJMN operations.
MIPTV RAISES THE STAKES WITH INTERNATIONAL SHOWCASES

MIPTV saw international launches across all genres as factual, drama, kids and format programming used the Spring event to propel themselves into the international market.

With interest in high-end drama surging, international buyers and distributors voiced strong support for the inaugural MIPDrama Screenings.

Underlining the continued appetite for drama, a series of major production and distribution companies announced plans to ramp up drama production either by taking stakes in existing outfits or by launching new drama entities.

On April 4, STUDIOCANAL, already a major film producer, announced it was taking stakes in leading Spanish production company, Bambu Producciones, as well as London-based Urban Myth Films and Benedict Cumberbatch’s SunnyMarch TV. Hot on the heels of the STUDIOCANAL announcement, news broke that Germany’s Beta Film is teaming up with Atlantique Productions’ Creative Director Patrick Nebout to form a new Swedish-based drama production company Dramacorp.

Red Arrow Entertainment Group, another major European company, announced the launch of Mad Rabbit, a joint venture between Canadian Director, Writer and Showrunner Kari Skogland, and Red Arrow Entertainment.

France’s giant Vivendi (owner of CANAL+), announced the launch of STUDIO+, the first global premium series offer for mobile devices. The new company will produce exclusive premium drama series for smartphones, tablets and a dedicated App. Each series will be 10×10’ with an average budget of $1.13 million.

STUDIO+ President Manuel Alduy said the service will launch in September in France with 25 complete, original series, before opening in Europe, Russia and Latin America in partnership with major local telecoms. Early series include drama Amnesia starring Caroline Proust, action series Brutal and Urban Jungle and thrillers Kill Skills and Madame Hollywood. 60 more series are currently in development.

According to Dominique Delport, President of Vivendi Content (STUDIO+’s parent company), 60% of smartphone users watch short-form videos. He said that the directing talent for the new series came from advertising and music videos, two sectors that have experience of reaching STUDIO+’s target audience of the 15-35 year olds.

New MIPDrama Screenings

Launched this year, the inaugural MIPDrama Screenings gave international premieres to 12 drama series from around the world. Belgium’s Public Enemy won the MIP Markets Drama Advisory Board’s Coup de Coeur award.

Included in the 12 premieres was Medici: Masters of Florence, starring Oscar winner Dustin Hoffman and Richard Madden (Game of Thrones).

Internationally-respected Writer/Executive Producer Frank Spotnitz, whose credits include The X-Files, The Man in the High Castle, Strike Back and Hunted was in Cannes to support Medici: Masters of Florence as its Writer/Creator/Executive Producer.

He reacted with enthusiasm to the MIPDrama Screenings. “I think they were an excellent platform for ‘Medici’ and all the European dramas that screened there. We had the...”
undivided attention of 400 buyers who were able to watch extended excerpts and trailers for these shows – in a nice theatre, with proper sound and picture quality. When you are running around at a hectic TV market like MIPTV, a focused and quiet environment is extremely valuable, for both the filmmakers and the broadcasters. I hope the Screenings continue and expand in the future.”

According to Laurine Garaude, Director of Reed MIPEDM’s Television Division, the MIPDrama Screenings are destined for development.

“This is the first of what we expect to become a signature event at future MIPTVs,” she said.

“The success of the MIPDrama Screenings confirms the need for a curated, high-end drama showcase prior to MIPTV. They act as a business accelerator, help focus buyers’ attention on great international drama and confirm that incredible drama stories are originating from around the globe.

In addition, with 50 specialist journalists at the Screenings, media reporting on the selected series has been phenomenal.”

Frank Spotnitz also welcomed the internationalisation of high-end drama – a development that was once again clearly in evidence at MIPTV.

“I think the increasing acceptance of international drama worldwide and particularly in America, is great for the United States. For many years, we Americans made dramas that we sold to the rest of the world, but largely, we refused to buy anybody else’s.

“In the past few years, that has really changed and now, there is not only openness, but an eagerness from American broadcasters to buy drama from overseas. That’s a wonderful development because not only does European talent have the opportunity to compete on the same scale as American dramas, it means that their voices are going to be heard. We can begin to have a two-way conversation that we haven’t ever really had in television. So that’s good news for everyone.”

On the eve of MIPTV, record numbers attended MIPDoc and MIPFormats with 1,890 participants (+5%) gathering in the Hotel Martinez and Palais des Festivals. Buyers moved into overdrive by screening shows a massive 22,398 times.

Top of the list of docs that buyers watched was Fox’s The Story of God With Morgan Freeman.

The six-part series, produced by Revelations Entertainment and National Geographic received an exclusive MIPDoc screening.

Super Size Me Director Morgan Spurlock told his MIPDoc keynote audience that their production strategy has to include digital. He said that since 2000, he has created seven original online series that have been sold back to TV. He said that digital-savvy production companies are well placed to help networks develop their digital offering.
Appetite for formats still strong
Formats continue to grab plenty of attention. The inaugural ‘La Nuit des Formats’ (‘Formats Night’) in the Palais Grand Auditorium treated a packed house to three hours of format screenings.

MIPFormats keynote speakers Gary Carter (who picked up a Formats Gold Award for his career), ITV’s Maria Kyriacou and Newen’s Bibiane Godfroid reflected on how the competitive format market is encouraging major groups to invest heavily in content creativity.

Over on the Warner Bros. stand Warner Bros. International Television brought their smash unscripted comedy/variety format The Little Big Shots to the global market for the first time and immediately closed deals for Britain’s ITV to take a local version and Mediaset ordering a local-language version for Spain.

MIPDigital Fronts play to packed audience
Returning for a third year, the MIPDigital Fronts remains the primary global market for the distribution and acquisition of original online content and web series. Packed showcase screenings were the order of the day from participants that included Endemol Shine Beyond, FremantleMedia, Fullscreen, Machinima, Maker Studios, New Form Digital, Studio71, Vice and Webedia. And a host of star YouTubers present at MIPTV, with a collective following running into millions, underlined the growing power of online entertainment channels.

Brands were particularly in evidence at the MIPDigital Fronts as they seek to access the elusive millennial audience that is so attracted to online channels.

One sector that is tipped for rapid development within the digital world is eSports, the fast-growing live gaming tournaments. Media groups sat up and recognised eSports in 2014 when Amazon paid $970m for Twitch, the live streaming platform dedicated to all things related to video games. With some games reaching as many as 55 million registered viewers, advertisers and brands are looking to associate themselves with tournaments and major media companies such as Endemol Shine are already producing eSport content for videos, apps and live events. Research suggests that by 2017 frequent viewers of eSport content could total 145 million and associated revenues are expected to be running at just over $1bn by 2019.

On day three of MIPTV, news broke in Cannes that VICE Media is continuing its international expansion. VICE is teaming up with France’s Group CANAL+ in a deal that sees VICELAND, VICE’s new lifestyle and culture channel, being carried exclusively across all platforms by CANALSAT when the channel launches in France in the Autumn.

Kids@MIPTV adds Emmy Awards & Advisory Board
Reflecting the global importance of kids programming, MIPTV organiser Reed MIDEM unveiled a new Kids Buyers Advisory Board in Cannes to provide guidance on strategy and content development for future kids’ programming at MIPTV and MIPCOM.

And for the first time in their history, the International Emmy Kids Awards were held in Cannes making it the highlight of the Kids@MIPTV programme. The six winners were Ronja, The Robber’s Daughter (Animation Japan), My Life: I Am Leo (Factual UK), Best i Mest (Non-scripted Entertainment Norway), Bing (Preschool UK), Nowhere Boys Series 2 (Series Australia) and Rabarber (TV Movie/Mini-Series Netherlands).

Among a host of deals for kids’ shows, France’s Lagadère Active acquired French rights to the five seasons of animated series Oggy and the Cockroaches produced by Xilm Studio. Lagadère took the show for its children’s channels and its online catch-up service.

Meanwhile Moscow-based animation studio Wizart sold The Snow Queen 2 to Discovery Kids Latin America to air in Spanish across Latin America later this year.

Diverse deals abound
One of the hottest titles in the MIPTV exhibition halls was ITV’s eight-part historical drama Victoria, which premiered internationally
at the MIPDrama Screenings. Starring Jenna Coleman (Doctor Who), post-Screenings deals for Victoria included Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Israel, Canada and a host of African territories.

Another of the hot drama series at MIPTV was Capital, based on John Lanchester’s best-seller. FremantleMedia International closed deals on the drama in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Capital stars Toby Jones, Rachael Stirling and Gemma Jones.

Germany’s Beta Film acquired international rights to made-for-TV movie Terror, which allows viewers to choose their own ending. The German drama follows a hijacked plane that is shot down by a fighter pilot and the ensuing court case against the fighter pilot.

Audiences get to decide whether or not the pilot is guilty of murder. Streaming major Netflix took worldwide streaming rights (excluding UK and Ireland) to Marcella, ITV’s crime drama from distributor Cineflix.

**MIPTV Conference**

MIPTV’s extensive conference programme saw a plethora of senior industry executives and thought leaders share their vision of the future of entertainment.

RTL Group Co-CEO Guillaume de Posch acknowledged that video networks operated by the online giants Google, Yahoo! or Facebook posed a challenge to traditional broadcasters. He said that RTL’s response has been to invest heavily in digital studios.

Havas Media Group Global Managing Director Dominique Delport’s talked about viewer bingeing with 54% of the audience for the last season of House of Cards watching the whole season in less than six days. Delport insisted that free TV remains a phenomenal success with shows like The Great British Bake-Off reaching 196 countries.

Tackling the question of SVOD’s role in the entertainment market, Dominique Delport noted that pay-TV cable in the US is still a $100bn business, while SVOD is a $5bn business.

He told his audience that 60% of the 2.5bn global smartphone users watch short-form videos daily, hence the launch of STUDIO+, Vivendi’s new producer of premium short-form drama series (10×10 mins) for mobile devices.
Reed MIDEM’S content-rich programme with full 4K projection at this year’s MIPTV in Cannes included 12 conference sessions and a keynote speech by Bill Baggelaar, Senior VP Technology, Sony Pictures Entertainment. Bill Baggelaar discussed the challenge of producing high-quality Ultra HD episodic drama on time and on budget.

Speaking about production of weekly episodic dramas in Ultra HD HDR, Baggelaar said: “This is for the purpose of allowing us to tell stories more compellingly in creative ways. Technology not for technology’s sake, but to actually drive the stories that we want to tell, or perhaps tell stories that we haven’t been able to tell in the past,” he explained.

“With Sony’s ‘lens to living room’ strategy, we’re innovating both production, post production, distribution and equipment in your living room, allowing our customers to access our UHD content in many different ways, be they download, streaming, Ultra HD Blu-ray and soon broadband.”

He described HDR as “a key technology” moving forward for Sony and added: “Being able to create these episodic series in HDR is a milestone, but it’s not a singular even; it’s been a series of continual innovations that appear seamless to enable us to get to this point,” he advised.

Also part of the programme was MIPTV’s 4K World Premiere Screening of NHK’s new Asian Fantasy series, *Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit*. Delegates had the opportunity to watch the first episode of the series during the MIPTV Opening Party.

Atsushi Ochi, Senior Producer at NHK said: “It took three years of filming to adapt the original 12-volume *Moribito* novel to 22 episodes of drama for television. 4K technology helped to visualise the grand scale of the original story in a very colourful and vivid way.”

Other companies presenting extracts of new Ultra HD content during the conferences included Atlantic Productions, BBC, DJazz, Eutelsat, Globo TV, Insight TV, In Front Sports, NASA TV, Orange, Paramax, Pearl TV, Royal Opera House – Covent Garden, Saint Thomas Productions, SkyPerfect TV, Smithsonian Channel, SPI, Travel XP, United4All and UHD-1.

The official knowledge partner of the MIPTV 4K Ultra HD programme was Sony Corporation (Japan), which provided the 4K projector technology as well as the TV set demos for Ultra HD and HDR (High Dynamic Range).
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The creative virtues of anamorphic lenses have become even more important in the digital age, where cinematographers are seeking a distinctive look to enrich every project. The Angénieux anamorphic zoom lenses add a dimensional character to the image with the traditional 2x squeeze, with controlled background and an aesthetically dimensional foreground, yet minimizing breathing and distortion by adopting a modern optical design. Angénieux anamorphic lenses also bring what many refer to as a “creamy and organic look”. This specific cinematic look, color rendering, contrast and resolution that Angénieux zooms are known for, is ideal for the work with digital cameras.
On the sets of reality food show Foodshala.
SERVING UP LOCAL FLAVOURS

A Dubai production house has created a food reality show aimed at viewers from the Indian subcontinent. BroadcastPro ME goes behind the scenes to understand the concept and execution of the show, Foodshala.

A local-interest homegrown Indian TV show may be just the answer to prop up television ratings, more so if the show involves food. A Dubai-based production house has tapped into viewers’ growing appetite for locally relevant content by launching a food-based reality TV competition. It not only gives ordinary people a chance to be on TV but also showcases their talent for creating and presenting food. What’s more, the winning dish finds a place on celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor’s menu.

The show, Foodshala, claims to honour “home chefs”, which means anyone with a passion for cooking can test their culinary skills on the show. In its fifth season now, Foodshala went on air early last month on ZEE TV and &TV.

Gaurav Tandon, the man behind the Foodshala concept, says it’s the only Asian food reality TV show produced in the Middle East.

“Foodshala is a competition for home chefs to showcase their culinary skills and prove their worth by creating a dish that is worthy of a place in the menu of Chef Sanjeev Kapoor’s restaurant Signature by Sanjeev Kapoor,” he says.

It begins with auditions, where people invited to present a dish of their choice to a panel of judges. Once shortlisted, the selected candidates are given a ‘Golden Ticket’ to the next round. In this round, contestants are given a list of ingredients and instructions, which they use to create a three-course meal presented to the judges in round two. 12 contestants are chosen from this round to go to the next one. At every level contestants are eliminated, with three left to compete in the semi-finals. This is where they meet the first major twist in the show: a wild-card entry. The four contestants are paired and tag teams are formed, resulting in a team cook-off. The winning pair proceeds to the final, where they take on each other.

More than 500 participants from all over the region, including Oman and Bahrain, came to the auditions, out of which the first 33 contestants were chosen.

“During the shooting of the first season, we realised that due to the scale of production and the participation of people in huge numbers, it was impossible to execute this show with just a TV production team. This show needed a full-fledged events team to ensure a smooth flow. So from the second season onwards, we had two teams working on the show – a TV crew and an events crew,” says Tandon.
The TV crew focuses only on the content and shooting and is responsible for what goes on air. The events crew handles logistics and ensures contestants are well looked after and the selection process goes smoothly.

For a cookery show, creating a set to depict a kitchen environment is very important. This can sometimes be challenging and is often expensive to achieve, according to Tandon. The challenge is not only to provide contestants with all the equipment they use in the kitchen, but to ensure that they get all the necessary ingredients as well.

Foodshala was hosted and filmed in Melia Hotel in Dubai, the hospitality and venue partner for the show. The set was constructed at one of the clubs in the hotel, with the entire season shot at one stretch over a period of eight days.

“We worked over eight long days of 14 to 16 hours each. Each season has 13 episodes,” Tandon says.

Since the show is based on a competition, there is not much writing for the show. The only scripting or planning is for the tasks and twists introduced to make the contest more challenging for the participants, in turn making the show more intriguing for viewers.

“Everything that happens on the set becomes content for the show. Nothing is scripted or planned except for the format. The expressions on the contestants’ faces, their emotions and the overall atmosphere, that’s the essence of a cookery show,” says Tandon.

“Whether it was people laughing or crying, or some of the contestants going completely blank and forgetting their recipes, or for that matter people rejoicing in their opponents’ mistakes or burning their own food, all of this makes great content. These situations and people’s reaction to the same is what makes the reality shows interesting.”

However, it’s not that simple. Reality shows may provide content in its purest form, but these shows come with their own set of challenges, most of them unforeseen. For starters, keeping the participants calm may pose a challenge. Since they are not trained performers and most have no prior experience facing the camera, some are overwhelmed by the setting.

“There are bright 2KV lights on the set, with professional cameras everywhere. It’s no surprise then that some contestants feel pressured or nervous. To keep them calm and not lose focus of the competition, is a big challenge. It is incumbent on the production team to ensure the participants are comfortable. We encourage contestants to bring a few members of their family on the shoot for moral support. We also create a luxury family lounge on the set for the families to feel at home and relax. Having someone around makes things a lot better for the contestants,” Tandon notes.

“We realised that due to the scale of production and the participation of people in huge numbers, it was impossible to execute this show with just a TV production team. This show needed a full-fledged events team to ensure a smooth flow”

Gaurav Tandon, Producer, Foodshala
The TV crew focuses only on the content and shooting and is responsible for what goes on air. The events crew handles logistics and ensures contestants are well looked after and the selection process goes smoothly.

For a cookery show, creating a set to depict a kitchen environment is very important. This can sometimes be challenging and is often expensive to achieve, according to Tandon. The challenge is not only to provide contestants with all the equipment they use in the kitchen, but to ensure that they get all the necessary ingredients as well.

Foodshala was hosted and filmed in Melia Hotel in Dubai, the hospitality and venue partner for the show. The set was constructed at one of the clubs in the hotel, with the entire season shot at one stretch over a period of eight days.

"We worked over eight long days of 14 to 16 hours each. Each season has 13 episodes," Tandon says. Since the show is based on a competition, it is not scripted. Except for a broad storyboard about the various steps involved and the atmosphere, that's the essence of a cookery show," says Tandon.

"Whether it was people laughing or crying, or some of the contestants going completely blank and forgetting their recipes, or for that matter people rejoicing in their opponents' mistakes or burning their own food, all of this makes great content. These situations and people's reaction to the same is what makes the reality shows interesting."

However, it's not that simple. Reality shows may provide content in its purest form, but these shows come with their own set of challenges, most of them unforeseen. For starters, keeping the participants calm may pose a challenge. Since they are not trained performers and most have no prior experience facing the camera, some are overwhelmed by the setting.

"There are bright 2KV lights on the set, with professional cameras everywhere. It's no surprise then that some contestants feel pressured or nervous. To keep them calm and not lose focus of the competition, is a big challenge. It is incumbent on the production team to ensure the participants are comfortable. We encourage contestants to bring a few members of their family on the shoot for moral support. We also create a luxury family lounge on the set for the families to feel at home and relax. Having someone around makes things a lot better for the contestants," Tandon notes.

"We realised that due to the scale of production and the participation of people in huge numbers, it was impossible to execute this show with just a TV production team. This show needed a full-fledged events team to ensure a smooth flow."
Filming
The show was shot on the SONY PMW series in full HD in 1920 * 1080 format, with an eight-camera set-up. The production crew comprised eight cameramen, a DOP, a director, an assistant director, three producers, 11 interns, a sound engineer, an online switcher, light boys and make-up artists.

“On an average, we had around 35-40 people working on the show during the shoots,” says Tandon.

TV works on far more demanding schedules than film, because there is less turnaround time. The crew invariably worked against tight deadlines, as the show had to go on air at a certain time.

“It was a gruelling shoot schedule. We shot for eight days in a row and completed 11 episodes. The first two episodes were auditioned and shot in one day [audition day]. For the studio shoot, we had two different set-ups. One was the kitchen set, and there were two video diary rooms to record sound bites from the contestants. Call time for the crew would be 6am and roll time would be at 8:30pm. We aimed at shooting two episodes a day and shot almost 12 to 14 hours a day. The semi-finals and finals were shot on full-day schedules each day. The latter episodes had a lot of twists and turns and the shoot was more complicated.”

The show has been running on Indian channels for five years, which goes to show that it has gone down well with audiences. The format belongs to Dubai-based production house K Kompany, owned by a husband and wife pair and long-time radio RJs Gaurav Tandon and Kritika Rawat. The production house has produced several local shows for Asian TV channels.

As for the commercial aspect of Foodshala, Tandon says: “Every year we look at the ratings of TV channels and also their content calendar for the year and decide which channel we will go with. We buy airtime from the channels and provide them with the content for that particular slot. Our company organises sponsorship deals and advertising for the show.”

The show is not limited to Indian audiences or participation. This year, the show had sizable Pakistani participation, with participants from the Philippines, Nepal and Egypt as well. K Kompany now plans to launch the show in Arabic.

“We are working on launching the show in Arabic, hopefully by next year. So, if all goes well, we will keep the format the same and launch Foodshala Arabia. This will be done totally in Arabic keeping the Arabic viewership in mind,” Tandon says.
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4K IS NOT PERFECT YET

Although there have been one-off events produced in 4K, the technology is still far from ready to be adopted for mainstream broadcast. Tim Felstead discusses some of the challenges of 4K.

From a broadcaster perspective, 4K (or, strictly speaking, UHD in a television context) is still nascent, with early adopters pushing ahead to use it as a competitive advantage.

Recording in 4K and shooting at higher resolutions has been around in the movie business for a while now, as has single-camera 4K acquisition for TV. We’ve seen this progress to live TV production in 4K, largely driven by a combination of factors, namely increasing ease of production and the availability of products at reasonable prices.

As this economic cycle continues, the cost of the technology comes down and a 4K ecosystem begins to develop. It’s at this point that broadcasters decide that they can make that commitment to 4K as a way to differentiate themselves.

We’ve seen one-off events like the production of the first 4K version of El Clasico, the famous Barcelona FC and Real Madrid football match produced by Mediapro last year. However, the most recent and interesting phenomenon we’ve seen is increasing interest from companies wanting to actually broadcast in 4K, as opposed to only produce. Two major examples of this are BT Sport in the UK and Rogers Media in Canada, both now 4K broadcasting.

However, behind them is a huge ecosystem of companies looking at launching a supporting 4K service. There is some movement in this direction in the Middle East, with broadcasters exploring 4K for specific live event coverage.

UK broadcaster BT Sport is a perfect example of how 4K can open up opportunities for a relatively new market entrant. Not only did it buy sports rights for the football Premier League and rugby Premiership in the UK, it also decided to launch a 4K channel: BT Ultra HD. It also broadcast the Moto GP at Silverstone in 4K last year. The broadcaster also commissioned the first purpose-designed 4K truck in Europe, built by Timeline to service its new 4K channel.

Rogers Media in Canada has also recently announced a market-defining 4K and HDR broadcasting service with a focus on live sports broadcasting. These are still early adopters who view 4K as a competitive edge in their markets – and it’s no longer just other broadcasters that they’re competing against, but also OTT providers like Hulu, Apple TV, and Netflix, many of which have made 4K their default format. As a consequence, the supply chain is reasonably well developed. Normally it would take several years for this to happen.

There are still some challenges in terms of 4K production, when it comes to dealing with legacy HD signals and equipment investments...
“There are still some challenges in terms of 4K production when it comes to dealing with legacy HD signals and equipment investments that have already been made. As a broadcaster or media company, you can’t just forklift yourself up to a new standard and disregard all your existing equipment or media. It’s essential that any 4K production workflow takes away complexity but can still cope with all the variations of SD and HD inputs and outputs that customers still want access to. It’s critical that any 4K equipment makes this possible and is no more complicated for operators than the HD equipment they are used to.

The main advantage of 4K adoption compared to HD is that it’s a lot cleaner in terms of the standards and variations associated with it. You still have differences in frame rate in different parts of the world – this is down to the electrical standards – but everything is progressive and there’s just the one primary screen resolution: 3840x2160.

There are still complications with 4K. There are different methods in use for interfacing; for example, we have to use serial digital for uncompressed (3Gbx4), but there are two different methods of carrying this over copper cable (Mode A and Mode B). NAB this year saw this take a step forward, thanks to new interfaces including 12G serial and SMPTE 2047-1 for 4K over IP. However, equipment deployed should be able to manage all these variants without making operators’ lives more complicated. It’s important that equipment for 4K production be ready to work with legacy Mode A over four-cable equipment, for example, plus any of the other newer signal types coming on to the market.

Disk space consumption is also an issue, and while this has improved dramatically thanks to new codecs, there are still some severe limitations. Moving and copying 4K media massively increases consumption of network bandwidth. If you think about the production tendency over the last few years, there’s been a move towards a greater number of cameras and sources and higher and higher production values. It’s now a de facto expectation in live sports production that before the end of the first half of a game, a highlights package must be ready to be shown at half-time. This means recorded material needs to be moved to the editing system as soon
as possible. With 4K, it’s absolutely critical that servers, editing systems and network connectivity are able to cope with the significantly higher data requirements.

So what about HDR? The market’s not quite there yet on the display front, but HDR TV sets are being introduced and this will mean we will soon see a growth in, and an appetite for, watching content in HDR. While HDR is not without its issues at present, we are a firm believer in the benefits of HDR in combination with 4K, in terms of giving viewers the best possible experience.

There are currently two standards being proposed for HDR, and the BBC has also proposed an alternative that seeks a middle ground between these two potential standards. There’s no doubt that HDR will make ‘better pixels’ and contribute to a more immersive experience for the viewer.

But again, as with any move to a new technology, HDR brings its own set of issues. Until standard are clearly defined, there will be some problems for the delivery of content to the home. If the viewer has an HDR screen, the content needs to be rendered for that home screen so that it looks good enough to the viewer. But if the same set-top box is connected to a SDR screen, this then throws up potential problems, so there is still some work to be done.

It’s relatively easy to ensure transparency across our production equipment through which signals are being passed. If you’re manipulating signals, then more care is needed with colours, brightness levels and so on in an HDR context. What we don’t yet know as an industry is how difficult it will be to produce HDR simultaneously to SDR. This still requires work.

As 4K begins to percolate out from early adopters to the mainstream, the likes of Rogers and BT Sport will have to look further in their continuous drive for differentiation. 8K is being mooted in Japan already, but as for when we’ll begin to see this in earnest across the wider market – it’s anyone’s guess.
How has WWE grown in terms of production and reach?
The number of live events has been growing for us. We organise close to 350 to 400 live events annually, right from WrestleMania to NXT and everything in between. Not all of our shows are broadcast, but we also have our pay-per-view shows and our specials done on the network together with our pay-per-view TV partners. In all, we have 12 main events produced for TV or for audio visual distribution.

In terms of the number of shows, we have grown dramatically over the past few years. The quality of our shows has also been enhanced significantly by using new technology. We have been experimenting with 360 and virtual reality. We have also incorporated new production methods with new camera angles, such as corner buckles of the ring itself, and played around with drones.

Vince McMahon, our CEO, who created pay-per-view years ago with WrestleMania, actually innovated dramatically in the coverage of sports events. A lot of those camera angles and production values are still being used by us and WWE’s sports franchise NFL.

We have grown in terms of geography as well. We are now in so many different countries, hosting live events and broadcasting out of those countries.

Can you shed light on your digital strategy?
We have a number of production verticals. Our core programming involves five hours of television broadcast a week, 52 weeks a year. Monday Night RAW and SmackDown are principally broadcast by our TV partners such as OSN, Sky UK and Ten Sports in India.
Our pay-per-view specials go through the WWE Network, which was launched two years ago. We have been developing our digital offerings through a number of programmes. WWE Network is purely an OTT platform, launched as a premium subscription service for $9.99 per month, and is available all over the world except China. In the Middle East, it is available as OSN WWE Network, both as a standalone OTT service to be paid for by subscribers and to those who have the OSN platinum package.

We also distribute medium-to short-form content through YouTube or other advertising-supported models SVOD (subscription video on demand) and AVOD (advertising video on demand). WWE has the largest YouTube channel in the world, with 8bn views and 650m social followers on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. We are now in over 600m TV households, and globally accessible via OTT platforms directly as well as through partners.

“We are engaging viewers on social media and digital platforms through short-form content as well. This has seen a significant growth in just over a year. Last year we had 700,000 followers on social media from the region, which now stands at 3m and growing”

Gerrit Meier, President, World Wrestling Entertainment

Who is your target audience?
We like to appeal to a broad spectrum of audience belonging to different age groups and demographics. Our male to female split in terms of viewership is 65 to 35, which is achieved towards females for certain shows that are targeted at women, such as Total Divas. We cater to a core group of 8-13-year-olds; however, typically we tend to lose our audience in the teenage bracket because of interest in other sports. We also see the audience return after they turn 18.

Our shows are growing in popularity as family entertainment, with grandparents watching the shows with their grandchildren, families and couples with young children. One sees changing demographics of WWE viewers around the world. The fan base is growing through all of this.

Are these fights for real?
We are a sports entertainment company and we tell a story. Our shows follow a storyline akin to a soap opera. These are based on a script. Having said that, not all of the action on our shows is scripted, as the fights are real from an action perspective. Our superstars in the ring are real. They suffer injuries, which are real as well. Based on a broad storyline, we provide content that is engaging to the viewers.

How do you manage to retain international appeal?
Our shows revolve around the basic principle of good versus evil, which works throughout the world. Some of the most successful films of our...
time and the superheroes, be it *Avengers*, *Iron Man* or *Superman*, are based on the principle of good versus evil. We use that as a peg and create a compelling storyline around it to engage the audiences.

The creative aspect of our shows is very important, which means we start with a good script and gradually build the story with live action on it.

Another factor that contributes to regional appeal is to have local talent. But we only regionalise our matches to a certain extent; local content doesn’t have the same appeal as our international stars. Most of the fans across the world want to see the global superstars. Irrespective of the nationalities, our global superstars are popular throughout the world.

Where are the matches held? Where does most of the production take place?
We travel. We have live TV programmes for Mondays and Tuesdays, which are shot in different cities in the United States, in different arenas. We have five matches in a row every day of the week, but the matches on Monday and Tuesday are broadcast live, so they are produced with appropriate lighting and production facilities. Once a month, the Sunday show is a pay-per-view event, so we are on TV three days in a week. The cities that we shoot in are 100 miles from each other, so our trucks and crew can travel and make the jump to the next week’s venue in time.

A couple of times in a year, we take these production capabilities abroad. We will be shooting in London after the Dubai tour and then go on a European tour. We also have a production company that sources equipment for us internationally and we also work with our local TV partners globally.

What is your strategy for the Middle East? How important is this region to WWE?
The region has welcomed us with open arms and we have been growing steadily in popularity and reach. Our objective is to sustain that growth. We have signed a number of deals over the last few years, the most prominent of those being our deal with OSN as a broadcast partner and our network partner, where we work closely with OSN for our live events as well. We have also partnered with MBC to broadcast our content.

Besides these, our global partnership with Mattel gives us the opportunity to grow our fan base, which in turn leads to increased TV viewership and network subscriptions.

We are looking at the Middle East market from a consumer product perspective, which involves direct-to-retail offerings. The region works on a centralised mall retail structure, hence a retail offering seems like the best fit for the market.

Another way of engaging the local market is by bringing local talent to the region. We had try-outs a couple of years ago and selected talents from the region.
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language. We are engaging viewers on social media and digital platforms through short-form content as well. This has seen a significant growth in just over a year. Last year we had 700,000 followers on social media from the region, which now stands at 3m and growing. We have organised several shows in the region, in Abu Dhabi, Jeddah and Riyadh. We also plan to go to Qatar and other markets and have recurring regular shows there as part of the WWE Universe. Live events connect us directly with our fans.

Which are the most important Middle East markets for you? The UAE, KSA and Qatar, as well as Egypt, are the key markets. We see huge potential in North Africa. Turkey is another new market that has seen significant growth.

What are the main challenges for you? In addition to the general production challenges that involve lights, sound, cameras, to host shows at such a large scale is challenging. These are huge undertakings. There is music, video and lot of activities in that space, with hundreds and thousands of audience watching. Managing a live show and keeping everyone interested is no mean feat.

Superstars are aware what it is they need to achieve from the storyline. At times, the matches go beyond the ring and involve the audiences also. Our challenge is to not get complacent and constantly try to engage the viewers with something new and interesting.

We do more than 20 shows over 10-11 days on an average, and these work with extreme logistics. To move 40-50 talents and production crew and trucks in time for the next event involves precise planning and clockwork. One delayed fight and there will be 10,000 people waiting in the arena. We can’t let them down.

How many cameras cover each match? Our pay-per-views have wider camera angles in a five- to seven-camera set-up. We have been producing in HD and even tried 4K, but the distribution of 4K is limited. We also use these cameras to capture behind-the-scenes footage from the matches.

WWE: fast facts
Known as the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) since 1980, it was then named WWE Inc. in 2002 and is currently an American entertainment company that deals primarily in professional wrestling, with major revenue sources also coming from film, music, product licensing and direct product sales.

WWE is the largest wrestling promoter in the world, holding over 300 events a year and broadcasting to about 36 million viewers in more than 150 countries.

In 2014, WWE launched a 24/7 streaming network. The network includes past and present WWE shows, pay-per-views and shows from the WWE Library.

The network reached one million subscribers on January 27, 2015, within a year of its launch. WWE claims it is the “fastest-growing digital subscription service ever”.

Key metrics: 610m TV household reach in 170+ countries/territories, 25 languages, 80+ live events, 8bn+ annual YouTube views, 650m+ social media followers.
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Live production facilities, despite representing the final touches of an all-IP overhaul, will make the move to what is widely seen as a more agile and versatile environment, says Glodina Connan-Lostanlen.

As media companies and broadcasters evolve their TV infrastructures towards IP-based generic computing and networking infrastructure, the widely held perception is that live production operations involving the manipulation of real-time video and audio signals will be the last part of the broadcast facility to make the transition from SDI to IP.

That perception is reinforced by the findings of a recent survey of more than 700 media and entertainment industry professionals. Asked which operations they would first move to the cloud, just 14% said signal routing – far from surprising, given the very special demands of live video. But the same survey conducted at the end of 2015 also found that 60% of media professionals expect nearly all of their SDI-based operations to transition to an IP-based infrastructure in the next two to five years.

The most salient conclusion to be drawn from these two data points is that live production facilities, despite representing the final touches of an all-IP overhaul, will make the move to what is widely seen as a more agile and versatile environment. The transition of all operations from SDI to IP is inevitable for a variety of reasons, because it delivers considerable short- and long-term benefits.

Benefits of IP
IP is about building a future-proof infrastructure and the huge cost benefits which commodity IT hardware offers. It is about designing workflows that accurately match the enterprise requirements of the content company, and it is about providing a flexible, agile, future-proofed platform.

Media companies will bridge the gap between traditional and internet-based delivery and its business opportunities, and they will use the IP environment to develop more appropriate workflows for playout and distribution. A natural extension of this will be to leverage the same advantages in live production, moving that to new technology platforms and taking full advantage of an entirely IP-based workflow, from production to multiplatform distribution.

In addition to agility and flexibility gains, broadcasters will experience significant cost efficiencies because the IT industry continues to invest hugely in raising performance and reducing the cost of its standard hardware. As the media industry demands higher bandwidth (for 4K or high dynamic range, for example), the processing power is becoming available. There is no point in developing industry-specific means of handling Ultra HD when IP is ready and waiting.
The ability to effectively transport high-quality video over long distances using IP also presents broadcasters with the opportunity to reduce the amount of equipment required at sports venues and other sources of live entertainment. Moving to IP may eventually reduce the need for expensive outside broadcast equipment, enabling broadcasters to deliver live content at a higher quality for a fraction of the cost.

The reality is that IP-based live production is not a matter of if but of when. In fact, the viability of IP to deliver live programming has already been proven. Multiple proofs of concept and real-world commercial deployments are now in place using IP infrastructure to transport live video signals and offer complete IP production chains. This summer’s major sporting events (including the Olympic Games and the football European Championship) will see the latest generation of OB trucks and production facilities in active use in front of audiences measured in the hundreds of millions.

**Lingering obstacles**

A major technical obstacle potentially delaying the transition of live production operations to IP is a fear that IT-based environments based on generic computing and networking resources currently lack the precision, reliability and responsiveness that broadcast-quality video demands.

These concerns are valid. The major reason that high-quality video is the last communications asset to be fully digitalised and distributed over IP, following telephony by more than a decade, is the difficulty in duplicating the timing precision of SDI.

IT environments, including data centres, must be conditioned to provide the precise performance and synchronisation that video production operations demand. The good news is that experts in the media and entertainment industry are now working closely with experts in the IT and data centre realms to give IT environments the ability to host media operations without sacrificing performance, precision or reliability. The technology is advancing to deliver the performance required for both uncompressed and compressed video and audio over IP.

Another technical hurdle that many live production facilities will need to scale before they feel comfortable enough to move to IP is the current lack of widespread interoperability among IP-based solutions. In the SDI realm, seamlessly interconnecting solutions from multiple vendors is a given. Widespread interoperability is taken for granted.

That is not yet the case in the IP realm. Standards bodies are working on interoperability, and multi-vendor bodies like AIMS, the Alliance for IP Solutions, are encouraging the widespread adoption of practical standards. Other solution providers are pursuing technology developed and supported by a single vendor.

Without widespread industry consensus around a clearly defined set of open industry standards, production facilities are likely to put off their IP transformation out of fear of stranding assets they purchase today or becoming overly dependent on a single or limited number of solutions suppliers. Understanding and adopting the best of open standards for media in the IP world also calls for new skills and experience to be developed among engineers and systems integrators, enabling them to pass on to operational and managerial staffs the confidence that the new technology will deliver the performance standards they expect, without significant changes to practical operations but within improved enterprise-wide workflows.

It should come as no surprise that cultural issues, such as the need to acquire new skill sets, pose nearly as big a challenge as technology issues for media companies contemplating a transition to IP. The same study cited earlier in this article found that almost half (48%) of professionals surveyed believe that cultural concerns pose more of an impediment to IP adoption than the technology.

One way technology suppliers are dealing with this obstacle is by providing command and control solutions that shield operators from the complexity and ‘newness’ of IP by delivering interfaces and tools with the same look and feel as SDI-based tools. The best of these solutions enable operators to use existing and familiar control devices and surfaces to manage the routing of video signals across an all-IP or hybrid SDI-IP infrastructure, exactly the way they used to in the days of SDI.

**“Media companies will bridge the gap between traditional and internet-based delivery and its business opportunities, and they will use the IP environment to develop more appropriate workflows for playout and distribution”**

**Glodina Connan-Lostanlen, CMO, Imagine Communications**
As consumers increasingly demand convenient and reliable access to content, anywhere, anytime and on any device, BroadcastAsia2016 – taking place from May 31 to June 3 in Singapore – will showcase the latest and most cutting-edge technologies and solutions for OTT and multi-platform streaming services.

BroadcastAsia2016 will highlight solutions driven by shift in consumer demands. The event will gather industry leaders and newcomers from around the world, presenting game-changing products for next-generation broadcasting, including 4K/UHD, OTT/hybrid/LTE/IP/broadband/cloud, multi-platform streaming, professional audio and more.

The event’s TV Everywhere! Zone will take centre stage, as consumer expectations in the region increasingly present new challenges to providing more convenient and reliable access to content. Combined with the proliferation of digital devices and today’s ever-changing market of always-on connectivity, this means content broadcasters are starting to look beyond TV to stream and monetise content.

“Though still at an early stage, OTT video services adoption is expanding rapidly and gaining popularity in Asia,” says Calvin Koh, Assistant Project Director of BroadcastAsia2016 at organiser Singapore Exhibition Services.

“As broadcasters and content providers across Asia battle for viewers and look for innovative ways to monetise their content, BroadcastAsia2016 will bring together top industry service providers to showcase an entire ecosystem of the latest end-to-end solutions needed to stay ahead of the curve.”

With the evolution of linear channel brands already underway in Asia, the region is continuing to grow at an exponential rate and is witnessing an increasing number of traditional broadcasters entering the IPTV, OTT space. According to a Multiscreen TV & Video Forecast report by Digital TV research, it is even predicted that the number of viewers watching TV and video content on multiple screens will climb from 5.60 billion in 2010 to 11.32 billion by 2020, with TV sets’ share of total viewers falling from 73% to 42% during this same period.

Koh adds: “Our TVEverywhere! Zone will further fuel this space in Asia. Building on the success of its debut last year,
expect an even bigger and better zone as the event continues to place emphasis on OTT and multiscreen solutions and explore the entire value chain of non-linear broadcasting.”

Exhibitors
Exhibiting for the second time at BroadcastAsia2016, but for the first time in the TV Everywhere! Zone, is Nice People at Work (NPAW), providers of innovative analytics, delivery optimisation and content preparation solutions for internet content publishers and service providers.

“The fast evolution of the OTT industry has proved that we are facing an audience that is extremely selective with what content they want, when they want it, and in what devices. For this reason, media companies, now more than ever, need to deliver excellent video experiences in order to keep up with growing end-user expectations and provide a personalised service,” says Ferran Gutiérrez, CEO of NPAW.

“BroadcastAsia is the perfect place to be if you are in the online video industry, and we are very excited to be exhibiting at the TV Everywhere! Zone.” NPAW will showcase its YOUBORA analytics platform, a powerful analytics and business intelligence platform for broadcasters and media groups.

“Based on our past experience at the event, we know that it will be a great opportunity to introduce YOUBORA’s new functionalities and features, build strong relationships and share our expertise in business intelligence tools,” Gutiérrez says.

“We are looking forward to working and connecting alongside broadcasters and OTT providers in what we expect to be a strong market for our product, as well as discovering new technologies that could work hand in hand with ours and give customers an opportunity to deliver more engaging video experiences to their viewers.”

The exhibition brings together audio, film and broadcasting industries, and provides a launch pad for innovative technologies. Content is now on-demand and at consumers’ fingertips, with active Asia Pacific OTT video subscribers reaching 494 million last year. With the entry of disruptive players like Netflix in Asia Pacific, coupled with today’s increasingly demanding consumers, the broadcasting industry now faces new challenges in OTT, digital media asset management, video delivery, TV monetisation strategies and more.

The introduction of the TV Everywhere! Zone last year was a success, with more than 30 exhibitors showcasing the latest solutions in the entire value chain of non-linear broadcasting. Expect a bigger and better showing of companies in the TV Everywhere! Zone as the event continues to emphasise OTT and multiscreen solutions.

Imagine Communications, a veteran exhibitor in the TV Everywhere! Zone, will showcase the latest solutions in IP transformation.

“BroadcastAsia is a pivotal part of our annual calendar and Imagine Communications has been attending this show for many years, as it provides the ideal platform to discuss the changing trends and technologies with the key industry leaders from across the region,” says Joe Khodeir, Senior Vice President, Asia Pacific for Imagine Communications.

“At this year’s show, we will be demonstrating some of our next-generation video infrastructure, advertising systems and workflow management...
solutions that will help media companies transition away from legacy, proprietary hardware to IP-enabled, software-defined and cloud-virtualised environments, and provide the freedom to grow, change and adapt as and when they are ready.”

Khodeir adds: “We recognise that our customers have existing capital investments to be respected, and we are here to help them deliver compelling, commercially successful content today while developing a strategy to make the transition to an IP-enabled, software-defined future.”

In addition to the TVEverywhere! Zone, visitors will be able to stop by other themed zones, including the Cinematography/Film/Production Technology Zone – where visitors can find exhibitors demonstrating the latest motion picture production tools and software capabilities – and the Post Production Hub, where industry experts will share their knowledge and experience using technology showcased at BroadcastAsia2016.

Audio – which plays an important part in the broadcasting and film ecosystem by giving any production a resonant lift to create a dramatic impact on viewers – will also be featured heavily at its own zone, ProfessionalAudioTechnology2016. This area will allow like-minded exhibitors to come together and present technologies for the audio ecosystem from broadcasting, production/post-production, houses of worship, live event and entertainment production.

Conferences

TV industry is on the cusp of change and in the age of disruption. Be it IP-based broadcasting, OTT monetisation models or workflow management trends, stakeholders are continually looking for practical and cost-effective insights.

The BroadcastAsia2016 International Conference is designed to provide key broadcast stakeholders with practical and cost-effective insights into emerging trends in the convergence of broadcast and IP-based technologies and their implications on the TVE business.

How are OTT monetisation models changing the rules of the game for broadcasters, content creators and telco providers?
How are new technologies and integration of standards helping players maintain their foothold in the broadcast business?

Beyond the exhibition, the Conference will bring together top-level professionals from media and content giants, it will examine the changing business paradigm in the film and TV ecosystem, and highlight growth opportunities in content creation and distribution in a diverse Asian market. Delegates will learn key strategies to replicate the success of blockbusters in the region, gain new tools to achieve top ratings and have the opportunity to exchange ideas with more than 200 key players in content generation and media.

Both exhibition and conferences will be held alongside CommunicAsia2016 and EnterpriseIT2016 at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre in Singapore.
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WE ARE
16 May 2016 XL Club, Habtoor Grand Hotel, Dubai
NAB SHOW ATTENDANCE TOPS 103,000

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) has announced a preliminary registered attendance of 103,012 for the 2016 edition of the show. The exhibition featured 1,874 companies spanning 1,063,380 net square feet of exhibit space. NAB Show demonstrated again its power as the preeminent destination to make headlines, launch innovative products and connect with key influencers in media, entertainment and technology,” said NAB Executive Vice President of Communications Dennis Wharton. “We’re thrilled with the tremendous feedback from attendees and exhibitors, and we are delighted that NAB Show continues to be a must-attend event for global content creators and distributors.”

Cinegy launches ‘Cinegy Open’ and 8K initiatives at NAB 2016

Cinegy, which develops and produces software technology for digital video processing, asset management, video compression and automation and playout announced ‘Cinegy Open’, a new initiative to make powerful tools and useful information freely available to the public.

Cinegy’s APIs have been traditionally used internally to develop, test, and continuously improve its industry leading software solutions, an approach that is similar in many companies. However, Cinegy is turning this practice on its head by putting all of its APIs, manuals, and documentation out for public consumption. They will be updated automatically on a regular basis via a new Cinegy website, open.cinegy.com.

Cinegy Open will also offer a wide range of highly useful ‘Cinegy Open Tools’ designed for the IP convergence space, some under open source license, that can be downloaded for free and unconditional use without even having to register. These tools, including codec and stream analysis tools, can be used individually or across an industry to test, check, analyse, convert, or benchmark new solutions or even product rollouts.

On another note, having already made its 8K mark with the launch of the DANIEL2 codec, which can decode multiple 8K and 4K streams while performing real time compositing, colour correction, scaling, and titling, Cinegy expanded on the theme at NAB 2016.

Cinegy demonstrated Cinegy Air, its real-time playout server and multi-channel broadcast automation software, performing 8K playout at the show. NAB saw the final release of the codec at the heart of Cinegy’s 8K playout demo, DANIEL2. DANIEL2 is a GPU-based acquisition and production codec for recording from camera sources, editing, and post-production, as well as playout. The codec resolves a problem faced when designing 4K, 8K, or even 16K systems that need to handle multiple streams in real time. Being totally GPU focused, DANIEL2 eliminates legacy codec dependencies and vastly accelerates the entire production chain. Pictured above is Lewis Kirkaldie with Cinegy’s 8K solution at NAB.

www.cinegy.com
Avid unveils software-defined storage

Avid has introduced the new Avid NEXIS, which it says is the industry’s first software-defined storage platform specifically designed for storing and managing media. Avid NEXIS enables fully virtualised storage so media organisations can adjust storage capacity mid-project, without disrupting workflows. Powered by the Avid Media Platform, Avid NEXIS delivers media storage flexibility, scalability and control for both Avid-based and third-party workflows. It has been designed to serve the smallest production teams as powerfully as the largest media enterprises, and is the only storage platform built with the flexibility to grow with customers at every stage of their business – fulfilling a key tenet of Avid Everywhere. The software-defined storage architecture of Avid NEXIS is what allows customers to select components that meet their current needs, and easily expand storage capacity and bandwidth as their business grows.

www.avid.com

Telestream captures at Lightspeed

Telestream has developed Lightspeed Live Stream in response to increased demand among news, sports and special event broadcasters to simultaneously push live programmes OTT.

Lightspeed Live Stream encodes a live programme at highest quality and simultaneously streams the output via an origin server or CDN.

The Lightspeed Live Capture application can also be installed on the same server to simultaneously capture the source video into Vantage for further processing. Until now, file-based and siloed systems demanded a more serial workflow. By closely integrating the latest parallel file-based open workflows in Telestream’s Vantage platform together with the combined CPU/GPU power of the Lightspeed Live server and applications, the fastest possible delivery of all assets is realised.

www.telestream.net

Tedial builds media factory

Tedial’s Version Factory claims to be the world’s first true media factory workflow, a single efficient and cost-effective workflow that supports millions of file input to output configurations and can be managed from a single operator screen. Designed to interface to content management/rights management/traffic/work order systems for automated operations, the Version Factory stacks chosen media engines (transcoders, quality control, DRM and CDN); employs SMPTE standardised designs for future-proof N-input to N-output operations; and provides the maximum flexibility and scalability for OTT/VOD platforms, network operations and media companies focused on managing their brand across all distribution formats.

www.tedial.com

Hitachi Kokusai in the fast lane

Hitachi Kokusai Electric America (Hitachi Kokusai) unveiled the new SK-HD1300HS high-speed, slow-motion HDTV camera at NAB.

The camera can be used for both studio and field production, and provides picture fidelity at up to triple speed for slow-motion quality in demanding live sports applications. Hitachi Kokusai also introduced an array of new accessories for its comprehensive HD camera range. The SK-HD1300HS camera’s 2.6 million pixel, 2/3-inch MOS sensors combine with Hitachi Kokusai’s digital signal processing technology to deliver superior image quality with low noise, outstanding sensitivity, accurate colour reproduction and more dynamic range. Paired with new Hitachi Kokusai SMPTE optical fibre camera adapters and camera control units, the camera outputs slow-motion video compatible with popular slow-motion servers from third-party partners.

www.hitachikokusai.com

Kokusai also introduced an array of new accessories for its comprehensive HD camera range.
PlayBox Technology has announced a major extension to the capabilities of its ProductionAirBox Neo multichannel playout server. Central to this development is the integration of support for the NewTek Network Device Interface (NDI) open protocol for IP production workflow. NDI allows multiple video systems to identify and communicate with one another over IP, and to encode, transmit and receive many streams of high quality, low latency, frame-accurate video and audio in real time. This new protocol can benefit any NDI compatible video device, including video mixers, graphics systems, capture cards and many other production devices.

www.playbox.tv

ChyronHego creates CAMIO Universe

ChyronHego CAMIO Universe is a comprehensive software-based newsroom production ecosystem that empowers producers and journalists to create compelling news stories and deliver them rapidly to air.

The CAMIO Universe is driven by CAMIO 4.3, a new release of ChyronHego’s CAMIO graphic management server. With release 4.3, CAMIO not only controls ChyronHego’s Lyric graphics creation environment but also offers powerful template-based tools within a significantly expanded production ecosystem including the company’s Hybrid virtual graphics solution, the Metacast weather graphics solution, the PowerClips multi-format production clip server and the GS2 Multi-Touch touchscreen-generation platform, as well as the VidiGo Live Compositor video switching solution. CAMIO’s LUCI user interface gives producers, journalists and video editors instant desktop access to all of these tools. Users can generate news and weather graphics for live playout or editing using nonlinear editors (NLEs), control compelling and visually stunning broadcast touchscreens, set up camera shots and control robotic cameras, and even generate replaceable virtual graphics to accompany the station’s virtual studio design. The entire ecosystem is automated.

www.chyronhego.com

Sony and Grass Valley drive IP cards

At NAB 2016, Sony announced its collaboration with Grass Valley to develop industry-wide interoperability between the two companies’ IP-based solutions and devices.

In order to foster better interoperability across the industry and ensure a pathway for customers to a standards-based approach, Grass Valley plans to implement an IP-to-IP gateway card compatible with its GV-Node IP processing platform. This card will ensure compatibility between Sony’s Networked Media Interface (NMI) and Low Latency Video Codec (LLVC) technologies and systems, based on standards supported by the Alliance for IP Media Solutions (AIMS) roadmap.

Another result of this collaboration is Sony’s participation in the AIMS initiative to promote the adoption of widely supported open standards to foster IP-based interoperability and further industry migration to IP-based platforms. NMI, a key technology of Sony’s IP Live Production System, packetises, transmits and clean-switches HD and Ultra HD (4K) video, audio and metadata in real time over standard network infrastructures.

www.sony.co.uk

ZOO Digital secures home TV

ZOO Digital unveiled ZOOscreen, designed to stream screeners and bring the big screen experience to the homes of TV and movie judges. ZOOscreen, powered and protected by ZOOcloud, provides an ultra-secure way for content holders to showcase TV and movie screeners to authorised clients, prospects and judging panels by streaming directly to large-screen, internet-connected HD TVs.

Streaming content from multiple studios in the comfort of their own home, via one simple sign-in, offers the recipient all the advantages of the home entertainment experience. Viewers are able to absorb the full impact.

www.zoodigital.com

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ATEME releases TITAN solutions

ATEME has introduced AVC-I MXF record capabilities in its TITAN transcoder for ingest in Adobe Premiere Pro CC, a key component of Adobe Creative Cloud.

TITAN convergent video transcoding and recording capabilities allow users to distribute live content while also recording the Mezzanine feeds as MXF for up to 24h growing file ingest. ATEME can deliver a cost-effective, end-to-end solution that goes from premium content contribution with Kyron encoder/decoder to record and transcode with TITAN software, including real-time editing in Adobe Premiere Pro CC archiving and distribution workflows.

TITAN is a multi-codec/format video transcoding software for On-net/OTT Live/VOD distributions, as well as Mezzanine, post-production, playout and archive applications. As pure-software transcoder, TITAN is easy to install, configure and integrate into any existing workflow, including conditional access.

www.ateme.com

Baselight 5.0 extends HDR grading

FilmLight’s new Baselight 5.0 introduces a completely fresh look to colour control.

The latest release introduces a new set of tools to optimise both HDR grading and extended colour gamut.

Baselight was the first colour correction system to enable Dolby Vision mastering, and has continuously worked closely with Sony, NHK and the BBC to implement and improve upon alternative HDR mastering methods and delivery systems, including SMPTE ST-2084 and ARIB STD-B67.

High dynamic range (HDR) displays and projectors are more widely available, with the blacker blacks, glinting highlights for mastering while continuing to support existing TVs.

www.filmlight.ltd.uk

Domino introduces camera-back transmitter

Domino Tactical Communications introduced the Solo-7-OBTx camera-back transmitter at the 2016 NAB Show.

Domino’s Solo7-OBTx is a feature-packed camera-back transmitter that includes 1080p60 and 4:2:2 compression, integrated camera control, swappable RF modules and H.264/MPEG-4 video encoding. The Solo7-OBTx offers superior latency ranging from 1s to an ultra-low 10ms, along with ultra-low power consumption for extended field performance.

Also new is the Solo-8 SDR (software-defined radio), a dual input HD-SDI, COFDM and IP mesh transmitter that includes integral video analytics, recording and IP streaming. It can be implemented via PC software or embedded system. SOLO8 represents the first of a powerful new generation of wireless broadcast products emerging from Domino. Seen in the picture is JP Delport, Broadcast Sales Director at the DTC stand.

www.domotactical.com

ENCO showcases visual radio system

ENCO’s fully integrated visual radio platform uses the power of ENCO’s DAD radio automation and Presenter management interface to deliver a complete multimedia experience to web and mobile audiences.

Visual radio gives broadcasters a comprehensive content acquisition and production system for the scheduling and delivery of synchronised video and audio, with targeted advertising support.

ENCO’s solution offers built-in intelligence that eliminates some of the more complex tasks traditionally associated with high-end, studio-based video production. Operators can create a manual or automated workflow to deliver professional video feeds.

www.enco.com
The broadcast industry has changed dramatically over the last decade, even just over the last few years. While the viewer has certainly had a lot to do with it – demanding more choice, better content and more ways to consume it – for the most part, technology has played the leading role. From dedicated panel-per-device hardware and videotape machines to today’s software solutions that control largely file-based workflows, each successive generation has been more cost-efficient, more IT-centric and easier to use.

One of the best examples of this is the channel in a box. A revolutionary concept (that met with some resistance) just a few years ago, this now adds value to thousands of global broadcasters. Brought about largely to help multi-channel video operators become more competitive and cost-effective, the benefits of channel in a box include high reliability, ease of use, scalability and cost-effectiveness. Channel in a box enables broadcasters to automate playout, including video ingest, inserting adverts or graphics and playing out content on a set schedule. Broadcasters can effectively operate one or more channels from their own premises, easily and without a massive amount of investment in infrastructure.

As the broadcast industry has converged with the IT sector, the changes have become more pronounced. No discussion in IT would be complete without touching on the cloud, and now the broadcast industry is experiencing this same appetite for the technology.

Since 2010, the cloud concept has persisted in broadcast, but as with any new technology or trend, there are barriers – both actual and perceived – that need to be overcome before the benefits of a virtualised environment can be enjoyed. Cloud-based playout, for example, enables a broadcaster to control its entire operation in partnership with an established broadcast centre. This is accomplished via an IP network or public internet. The cloud solution can be customised to address the specific needs of each installation. And while there are many areas where cloud is used, cloud-only solutions are still a rarity in the industry. Again, when it comes to cloud playout, a completely software-centric playout solution with no auxiliary hardware required would be a boon to broadcasters everywhere.

True cloud playout, with graphics and branding, allows broadcasters to introduce new channels on an opex basis rather than invest in dedicated hardware. Established broadcasters who have already bought their own playout systems naturally want to get the maximum possible life from that investment before considering any change to a new mode of working.

Ideally suited to multi-channel broadcasters who want to schedule channels with local content – both programming and advertising – for single or multiple regions rather than use multiple satellite feeds with ad insertion, cloud playout brings added efficiency, redundancy, flexibility and cost-effectiveness to operations. It completely rewrites the financial model for broadcasters, allowing new channels for tightly specified subjects or regions to be introduced with speed and at minimal cost.

In addition, cloud-based operation enables new entrants to the broadcast market to set up quickly and easily, with no significant capital investment. It allows newer operations to be activated without the need to configure existing hardware, let alone order new equipment. Cloud gives broadcasters the freedom to conduct their entire operation, from content acquisition, refining and archiving right through to playout, via a single, highly reliable media ecosystem which can be accessed and managed from practically any location, at any time.

The most significant costs of running any programme channel then become, as arguably they always have been, the overheads of originating, acquiring or refining content and employing whatever administrative and creative people the organisation needs.

Phillip Neighbour is COO of PlayBox Technology.
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