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Welcome

The ensuing tug of war between telcos and broadcasters over revenue sharing and viewers has hindered the development of TV to some extent, in my opinion. It looks like there might be some light at the end of the tunnel for broadcasters thanks to the new world of apps that might allow them to revisit that relationship.

There was an obvious need to reduce the reliance of broadcasters on telcos and the availability of a new app may well be the answer. Fortunately, this new technology will be launched here in the Middle East at CABSAT around the same time that a similar technology is being deployed in the US and the UK for the first time.

If the viewer downloads this app, it allows them to sync their tablet with the programme on TV, radio, and interact with that specific programme, the people beyond it or other viewers. They can do the same with a TVC and the advertiser.

That’s audience measurement for you, taken to a whole new level. There’s no SMS involved anymore, which means the viewer does not have to pay to interact.

Instead, the viewer “is paid” to interact through loyalty programmes. The concept itself is not new but it will be put to practice for the first time and for once, we will not be following but on par with the rest of the world in terms of deploying such a technology.

In keeping with our trend of bringing you the latest in the market, we introduce you to the authors of this technology in our News section in addition to bringing you several other exclusive case studies, reviews, tech trends and production notes from the Arab world.

On an aside, several high-profile executives from the broadcast industry will gather on the first night of CABSAT for a party, themed TOGETHER, by Saudi-based systems integrator First Gulf Company. BroadcastPro ME is the official and exclusive magazine for this event. We’re also hosting a roundtable, like we did last year, in association with EMC Ilios that will bring together key experts to discuss the management of digital media assets across all platforms. Coverage of both events will be brought exclusively to you in the next issue!

Don’t forget to drop by our stand (B7-53) at CABSAT to pick your copy of BroadcastPro ME and Volume 2 of Pro50. See you at the show.

Vijaya Chelian, Group Editor, Broadcast Division

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Your invitation to a Canon 4k screening

Join us for an exclusive screening event as we present the next chapter in the Canon Cinema EOS Story. Experience the quality of the EOS C500, EOS-1D and Canon Cinema Lenses in stunning 4k resolution at Cabsat 2013.

Date: 12th - 14th March 2013
Location: DWTC - Dubai, UAE
Booth No: C6-20
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SynkonAir launches / Glocom secures DMI deal / Al Aan begins radio transmissions in Syria / CMS Gulf undertakes consultancy for Waar TV in Kurdistan

The need for innovation in the broadcast market

Chris O’Hearn analyses TV advertising trends

Sony F5
Blackmagic Cinema Camera
FxFactory Pro

In conversation with Eliane Raheb
MBC on its new sound stage at Dubai Studio City

Big Data
OTT
Content Delivery Networks
HDTV
Guest column
System Integrated Turnkey Projects for Broadcast, Lighting and Pro AV
GLOCOM HAS SECURED A DEAL FROM DUBAI MEDIA INC. TO DELIVER A COMPLETE WIRELESS CAM SYSTEM TO COVER THE WORLD CUP IN DUBAI IN MARCH 2013

SAUDI TV CHOOSES ENSEMBLE AVENUE

Saudi TV has taken delivery of three Avenue Flexible Matrix Routers. The routers will be installed at Saudi TV’s network centre in Riyadh. Chief Engineer Hassan Salamah has made extensive use of Ensemble equipment at Saudi TV for many years. When the network’s broadcast centre in Jeddah was converted from analogue to SDI nearly ten years ago, Salamah chose Ensemble as his primary supplier of distribution and processing equipment. More recently, he used Ensemble kit to support the construction of state-of-the-art 3G/sec-capable HD systems at the network centre in Riyadh.

Salamah made the decision to purchase the Ensemble routers for a variety of reasons.

“The company’s products and service have impressed us since the first install we did,” he said stated.

The flexible I/O structure of the matrix, the ability of the control surfaces to display thumbnail previews, and the availability of a clean switch option impressed him. The routers will be used in a variety of applications in Riyadh, including a small master control suite and a mobile studio. Ensemble will be at CABSAT stand ET-30.

NEW COMPANY RESHAPES SOCIAL TV IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A brand new company, specialising in social TV and radio, will announce its official launch at CABSAT, BroadcastPro ME can reveal.

SynkOnAir, an Arab initiative founded by three entrepreneurs from broadcast, online and telco backgrounds, will locate its first office in Dubai with plans to go global eventually.

Speaking exclusively to BroadcastPro ME, Laurent Mairet, co-founder and CEO, and Samar Murad, co-founder of SynkOnAir, stated that SynkOnAir has been three years in the making. The company provides professional services and develops second-screen applications synchronising in real-time with programmes aired on radio, TV as well as commercials. The smartphone and tablets applications are aimed at enabling users and subscribers to engage and interact in real-time with broadcast streams.

“With the technology, TV and radio stations, and advertisers will go beyond a basic random profiling of their audiences to actually engaging directly with them as their respective programmes and TVCs are broadcast,” stated Mairet.

“Users will be rewarded for their in-App interactions with a generous loyalty programme that is intended to incentivise them to engage more with the programmes and with their social community.”

The apps are designed to make the community of users go social, comment, vote, play along, answer polls and buy products or services. “This is a brand new and exclusive synchronisation technology,” explained Murad.

“Similar technologies have been introduced in the UK and the US only a few weeks ago so the launch of our initiative in the Middle East will make this region proud. Usually, we follow the rest of the world. This time, we are on par with them on one of the most groundbreaking innovations that will reshape the media and advertising industry.”

YRFREE TECHNOLOGIES APPOINTS BAHRAIN’S MANTECH AS NEW PARTNER IN THE GCC

YRfree Technologies, a mobile video streaming technology specialist, has appointed Mantech Computer Services, Bahrain, as its distribution partner for the GCC.

Paul Abley, Business Development Manager (EMEA) at YRfree Technologies, said: “The YRfree Mobile platform can deliver tangible business benefits to any organisation with a remote or mobile workforce. The Live View facility enables personnel in the field, office-based managers and third-party experts to collaborate in real-time, by giving them simultaneous access to live images and project documentation. There is potentially a huge global demand for a technology that combines the convenience of the mobile phone with the accessibility of the internet and delivers Smart Data in a secure and manageable way.” YRfree Technologies Limited is based in the UK.

AL GHAD TV INVESTS IN PRODYS

Al Ghad TV, a new London-based Arabic-language news channel has invested in Pro dys solutions through Dubai-based local distributor Baba Broadcast Services. The channel recently invested in several Iskusnet codecs for transmitting quality video between its regional studios and for making video contributions with the Iskusnet portable codec. Iskusnet is an HD/SD H.264 bi-directional IP video and audio codec that can broadcast live supporting ad-hoc bandwidth aggregation of up to 11 links (3G/4G/Dual-Ethernet/WIFI) with a statistical real-time load-balancing algorithm that assures best possible network utilisation.

Speaking about Pro dys’ acceptance in the region, Ihab El Baba, Managing Director of Baba Broadcast Services (BBS) said: “We are the exclusive distributor for Pro dys in the Middle East and it has been received well in the region. We also recently sold Prontonet and Nomada – audio codecs for MBC FM to receive the audio live programme from its operations in different cities in Saudi Arabia to its Dubai headquarters over a 3G network. We expect to see more clients use Pro dys in 2013.”

Al Ghad TV is being broadcast 24/7 via Nilesat and Hotbird. It has offices in London, Cairo and Abu Dhabi.
INFINITY TV OPTS FOR HARRIS

Abu Dhabi-based Infinity TV has launched two new channels with the help of a complete workflow and infrastructure solution from Harris Broadcast. The entire solution was integrated by local systems integrator Media Consult.

The new installation includes a master control suite and an automated playout facility, all based on Harris Broadcast equipment. The systems include Harris Broadcast automation, servers, branding, routing and monitoring equipment.

Harris Broadcast ADC automated content management and distribution manages the playout of the new Infinity TV channels, controlling NEXIO servers. ADC also manages traffic between Harris Broadcast near-line storage to maximise efficiency, minimise bandwidth constraints and ensure that scheduled content is securely delivered to the playout suite in advance.

Harris Broadcast IconLogo and IconMaster solutions support various master control tasks, from on-air channel branding to the design of graphics and promotional sequences. In the master control room, signal processing and management is handled by the Harris Broadcast 6800+ modular devices and a Panacea router. Operators in the facility monitor all activity throughout the complete station using the Harris Broadcast HView Predator GX-II multiviewers.

Q.MEDIA ACQUIRES GULF FILM

Qatar Media Services (q.media), owned by the Qatari government, has acquired Gulf Film and Grand Cinemas, the largest film distributor and cinema operator in the Middle East. Gulf Film distributes around 50% market share of the Middle East’s movie releases. Among its sources for the Gulf territories are Hollywood majors such as Paramount and Universal.

Gulf Film also holds leading exhibitor status through its Grand Cinemas movie theatres, the region’s largest cinema chain with more than 136 screens and 60% of the UAE’s film exhibition market. Speaking about the acquisition, Yousif R. Al Khater, Group Chief Executive at q.media said: “Gulf Film is a great addition to q.media’s growing media and entertainment service portfolio and we will utilise its unwavering market dominance to our benefit.”

Selim El Azar, CEO of Gulf Film, said the acquisition “further solidifies our leadership in the entertainment arena and bolsters our combined vision for an era of unprecedented growth throughout the Middle East”.

q.media operates in seven international markets and in varying media sectors such as outdoor advertising, audio-visual communication channels and events management.

AL AAN LAUNCHES RADIO IN SYRIA

Following the launch of its radio station in Libya, Dubai-based Al Aan TV has ventured into yet another project with the launch of radio transmissions from Syria earlier this year.

The broadcaster initially set up a fully digital, four-channel playout facility from Dubai Media City. It then went on to set up three transmitter points in three of Syria’s major cities including Aleppo, Azaz and Idlib.

The contract was awarded to Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA), a consultant based in the UAE.

BSA had previously installed a four-channel radio playout at Al Aan’s HQ in Dubai, and its radio service was launched on Nilesat.

Speaking about the project, Mohammed Irfan, Broadcast Consultant for Al Aan TV, and CEO of BSA said: “Al Aan FM has three transmission points. The transmission stretches all the way to the Turkish and Kurdish cities which are near the Turkish/Syrian border such as Rehania, Killiez, Afineen and the villages of Antakya.”

Although the cost of doing this exercise is fairly high because the transmitters are run on diesel generator systems owing to power cuts, Irfan says the costs will drop once electricity becomes available.

Two 2.5kw FM transmitters were purchased from OnAir Meydia, a Turkish manufacturer while the rest of the kit was sourced from Elenos, an Italian company.

“This is standard FM kit. The key here was to get a good and stable UPS and generator mechanism in place owing to the lack of power. We imported 20kv AKSA generators with Neutron UPS systems.”

The radio equipment itself took three months to manufacture. The workflow itself is fairly simple. The playout point is in Dubai Media City and the radio service is available on Nilesat.

The service is uplinked from Samacom, Dubai. In Syria, the radio service is downlinked from satellite and the audio is replayed on FM. The satellite signal is free-to-air and thus, Syrians outside the FM coverage can also access it.

The playout centre in Dubai comprises 12 people while a team of seven technical people, hired and trained by BSA, man the operations in Syria.

“Al Aan has daily live shows from Dubai for listeners in Syria and Libya,” stated Irfan.

A spokesperson from Al Aan added: “FM distribution in crisis zones serves as an integral part of Al Aan’s strategy to focus on human-interest news and its impact on real people. Al Aan is utilising an all-Syrian news crew of some 20 stringers to bring news from Syria to the world. FM distribution means more Syrians are exposed to the brand and hence, can contribute to the output on a daily basis.”

“Al Aan FM’s top news show Studio Al Aan at 6pm Damascus time provides a well-rounded summary of the day’s developments. The newly launched Jisr al Khair (Aid Bridge) show connects aid-seekers and donors on the air, providing a unique service to the people of Syria at a time of great difficulty.”
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Riedel Communications has announced the launch of a dedicated sales and support office in Dubai.

Riedel’s Middle East operations will be led by Ahmed Magd El Din, who was previously Clearcom’s sales manager for the Middle East.

“The Middle East region is one of the most exciting and expanding markets in the world at the moment,” El Din said. “I’m looking forward to providing integrated solutions to our customers in the broadcast, event and installation markets that will help them run their business and applications at the most cost-effective and future-proof level.

Dubai-based consultant and systems integrator CMS Gulf wins the project. CMS Gulf will help launch Waar TV, the first TV channel in Dohuk, Kurdistan, BroadcastPro ME can reveal. Owned by the Mayor of Dohuk, Waar TV’s full HD facility is already in place and was integrated by a Turkish company.

CMS Gulf will undertake the unique challenge of hiring staff, training them and helping to run the operations at Waar TV until they can handle it themselves. Waar TV will eventually include an entertainment channel and a sports channel.

“We are providing the engineering consultancy required to run the operations,” commented Ghassan Alasad, Managing Director of CMS Gulf. “This is Kurdistan’s first TV channel and it is in the Kurdish language. Waar TV has three beautiful HD studios but no staff to train them and none they can hire as they do not have the experience of a TV channel there. Our team will be in Dohuk in March. We told them to bring 30 fresh graduates from college and I have promised them that I will take care of it. We have made customised training programmes for the producer and presenter, for the technical team including the cameramen, the editing staff and so on and thirdly, we shall train them to manage the whole operations,” he added.

In addition, CMS Gulf will also create the logo, the station idents and the entire full look and feel for Waar TV.

Grass Valley Launches New Office

Grass Valley’s new office in Dubai Media City is now open and will feature a special demonstration room showing the latest GV products and solutions including its LDX camera, the Stratus Media Workflow platform, and other products.

“The Middle East region is a high growth market for Grass Valley and is key for us to stay market-focused, and to demonstrate this in everything we do which is why we have moved our offices to Dubai Media City to be closer to our customers and partners,” said Alan Wright, Regional President for Europe, Middle East, and Africa at Grass Valley.

“All of our latest technologies and solutions are on show in the new office, and we’re looking forward to bringing broadcasters and professional users in so that they can experience Grass Valley’s latest portfolio of solutions in a live environment.”

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RIEDEL EXPANDS OPERATIONS IN MIDDLE EAST WITH DUBAI OFFICE

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Dubai-based Mediastream FZE, which represents and distributes several satellite TV channels in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), has signed an exclusive partnership agreement with E TV NETWORK LIMITED.

According to the agreement, Mediastream will have the rights to exclusively distribute English Club TV Channel in the Middle East. It also has non-exclusive distribution in Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, Djibouti, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia for the channel.

English Club TV is an educational channel to help people study the English language. It is available for those residing in Asia, Middle East and Africa through MEASAT 3A satellite.

Andrew Semchenko, CEO of E TV NETWORK LIMITED, said: “It’s a great delight for us to become business partners with Mediastream FZE. All viewers from the Middle East and North Africa will have a great opportunity to learn English. Having multicultural content, we have created the perfect platform for personal growth and education. English Club TV Channel is ready to help and support everybody who wants to succeed in their lives.”

Swarup Mukherjee joins TSL Professional Products

TSL Professional Products Ltd. (PPL) has appointed Swarup Mukherjee as Regional Sales Manager for the company’s Middle East, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh operations. Mukherjee, who was previously with Salam Media Cast, will be responsible for all direct and indirect sales, channel strategy and pre-sales engineering for the entire TSL PPL portfolio, including the newly acquired SoundField surround sound and upmix products. Mukherjee will be based in Dubai.

He has more than 12 years of experience as a systems sales professional in the region, having worked on some leading broadcast projects with Tek Signals and Salam Media Cast.

Danielle Perissi to head Image Nation’s new strategic media solutions division

Image Nation has launched a new division called Strategic Media Solutions to offer partners strategic direction and creative development across a range of media platforms. The announcement was made by Mohammed Al Mubarak, Chairman of Image Nation, and Michael Garin, CEO of Image Nation. The new division will be headed by Danielle Perissi, who will collaborate closely with Mohammed Al Otaiba, Head of Image Nation Abu Dhabi, as well as the company’s international partners. Image Nation Strategic Media Solutions will work with partners to create engaging content that enables their strategic and marketing objectives.

The company has already formed a number of alliances with Abu Dhabi government and commercial entities to develop multi-media projects including advertising campaigns, TV content, documentaries and social media campaigns.

Advanced Media appoints regional business manager

Vahid Macvandi, who was formerly with Sony PSMEA, has joined Dubai-based distributor Advanced Media Trading LLC (AMT) as regional distribution manager of professional video and photography products. Macvandi’s appointment is part of AMT’s 2013 plan to offer greater support and training to its regional customers.

“Macvandi is no stranger to Sony products as he worked on a range of their products including camcorders, monitors and audio solutions. He brings his vast product experience and market knowledge to AMT. His work with us will benefit both AMT and Sony.”

Macvandi is in the process of reviewing AMT’s regional expansion plans and aims to develop channel sales for different brands.
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YAHLIVE EXPANDS DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

HD TV satellite platform YahLive has expanded its distribution network of YahLive-certified satellite TV dealers and dish installation technicians to nearly 500, making its HD TV channels available to more MENA households.

An estimated 300 technicians were certified recently in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam alone, as part of its GCC YahLive HD Academy Roadshow, which provides proprietary technical training in HD TV and dish installation.

Following the successful completion of the three KSA events and one in Kuwait city and Dubai, YahLive plans to complete a total of 24 HD Academy events in 2013 with the goal of growing its dish installer network to an estimated 2,000 installers by the end of the year.

Speaking about uptake in the market, YahLive’s CEO, Mohamed Youssif, commented: “While the UAE’s broadcast market and infrastructure have been more conducive to HD conversion, the KSA market is also quickly catching up and is similarly witnessing the dynamic growth of the broadcast sector, specifically in HD. Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Culture and Information has recognised this growth and demand for HD broadcasts and is undertaking various initiatives to support the migration to HD. Our partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Information began last year with six Saudi TV channels being broadcast in HD, exclusively on YahLive’s satellite platform.

We launched the YahLive HD Academy in response to the HD revolution taking place across the region and to make the YahLive HD experience as accessible to as many TV viewers as possible and to support the future demand from consumers and broadcasters alike through an extensive network of partners, dealers and installers.”

YahLive presently has an HD bouquet of nearly 50 quality channels.

RANI RAAD TO HEAD CNN INTERNATIONAL’S COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Turner executive Rani Raad has been appointed VP & CCO of CNN International. Raad will be responsible for the commercial strategy and vision of CNN International and will oversee its advertising sales, content sales, business development, international research and marketing activities. Additionally, Raad will keep his current responsibilities, managing Turner Broadcasting’s operations in Turkey, the Middle East and Africa.

Gerhard Zeiler, President Turner Broadcasting System International, said: “Rani is the logical choice for this ambitious challenge due to his track record leading CNN’s global commercial initiatives and his vast international network.”

Raad is presently Senior VP and MD for CNN International Ad Sales, and senior VP Turkey, Middle East and Africa.
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FND BEGINS VIDEO PRODUCTION OPERATIONS IN UAE

FND, an independent video production company, and its subsidiary FNDTV, which claims to be the UK’s largest event broadcast channel covering the biggest international events, has set up operations in Abu Dhabi to service the growing entertainment, hospitality and corporate industries in the UAE. It has also partnered with The Decadent Group, an events management company based in Abu Dhabi to accelerate its traction in the UAE market.

FNDTV claims to have filmed some of the world’s biggest events, artists and DJs, generating more than 2.82 million views on the channel so far, and attracting an average of 115,000 views each month. FNDTV also has more than 135,000 followers on Twitter, growing at a rate of approximately 4000 new followers each month.

Speaking about its launch, Haris Effendi, founder and CEO of FND, commented: “The UAE is a very exciting market for FND and FNDTV, with new hotels, restaurants, bars and clubs opening all the time, and artists and DJs from all over the world coming to perform in the region. We’ve already received lots of exciting inquiries and have some great projects in the pipeline.”

Darrell Jacques, owner of The Decadent Group, added: “We now have the ability to leverage video production and content across The Decadent Group’s portfolio of companies, which enables us to offer our valued client base additional services and exposure for their brands and events. The UAE is one of the most exciting parts of the world to be in right now; we want to capture this and showcase it to the world.”

SALAM MEDIA CAST CHANGES NAME TO MEDIA GROUP INTERNATIONAL

Salam Media Cast has changed its name to Media Group International. The Ghanim bin Saad & Sons Group Holdings-owned company will exhibit under its new name for the first time at CABSAT2013. Speaking about the rebranding, Paul Hennessey, CEO of Media Group International said: “Our name change to Media Group International reflects the company’s ambition to stay relevant to our customers internationally. We are dealing more and more with broadcast media companies who are becoming international providers by utilising the IT and telco networks to deliver content. Recently we have signed a number of agreements that will help extend our capabilities to deliver full turnkey solutions to our customers. Broadcasters will benefit from this as they can easily manage one supplier dedicated to making their business successful.” Media Group International will exhibit under its new name at CABSAT.

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PARTICIPANT MEDIA AND DOHA FILM INSTITUTE CREATE USD 100M REVOLVING FUND

Doha Film Institute (DFI) and Participant Media, known for films as An Inconvenient Truth, Food, Inc., The Help, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel and Steven Spielberg’s Lincoln, have formed a USD 100m revolving fund to finance a slate of feature films. The announcement was made jointly by Jim Berk, CEO of Participant Media, and Abdulaziz Al-Khater, CEO of Doha Film Institute.

The five-year revolving fund provides production and development funding for 12-16 feature films, with Participant and DFI working in collaboration to develop the films as well as oversee production and arrange worldwide distribution.

In addition to the Film Fund, Participant and DFI are exploring a joint venture to create content for Participant’s new television channel that will be launched in August; establish a distribution outlet for DFI’s film production through Participant’s media interests in the US and other territories; create an Arabic version of TakePart.com, Participant’s on-line division and Social Action Network to jointly create Middle-East based content in Arabic and English for distribution around the world; and the establishment of a Middle East branch of Participant to be based at DFI’s Qatar headquarters.

Participant and DFI are presently co-financing, along with other parties, an animated feature film adaptation of Khalil Gibran’s The Prophet, which is in production for release next year.

Speaking about the alliance, Berk said: “This new relationship provides us with a partner whose goals of international expansion and desire to co-finance a diverse slate of films that entertain, enlighten and engage with global audiences are in total alignment with our own long-term business strategies. It also gives us the ability to extend the audience for our socially-relevant storytelling to the Middle East, and to mine new sources of compelling content for our digital and TV platforms.”

Al-Khater added that both DFI and Participant share a common vision “to finance and produce films that are both commercially successful and socially relevant”.

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Argosy is a leading global supplier of HD broadcast cables and infrastructure products. Its proven portfolio of products includes a complete range of best-in-class reliable video, audio and power cables, connectors, fibre optic solutions, routing switches, patch and termination panels, rack systems, KVM switches as well as an array of video accessories.

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Serving the broadcast industry

Argosy products are available from stocks at locations in the UK, UAE, India and Malaysia
I recently had a chat with the head of one of the region’s biggest broadcasters. Since they were one of the few broadcasters with money to invest, I suggested they should lead the world through innovation.

His response was: “We are at the forefront of technology; I send my guys to NAB every year.” There’s nothing wrong with that except that it wasn’t quite what I meant.

I have been to NAB, IBC, Broadcast Asia, CABSAT and so on. I always leave thinking it’s the same old story … there’s nothing exciting, nothing new. Yes, we saw HD and 3D before they became mainstream and now, 4K. But these are evolutions. When was the last time you saw something revolutionary?


Will we once again be playing catchup? What appetite will our businesses have to invest when we have only just rolled out HD at huge infrastructure costs? Do these ‘evolutions’ ever give us a return on investment?

Maybe the last real revolution came when Apple released FCP. Until then, an edit suite cost several tens of thousands of dollars. FCP was well featured and cost a couple of thousand bucks. Yes, you needed to buy hardware but in any case, it was affordable. Again, this ‘revolution’ was mainly from a consumer source.

So how does our industry actually work? When vendors meet broadcasters, they ask “what do you need?” Broadcasters ask vendors “what have you got?” Integrators take the best from the vendors to meet the broadcasters’ needs, so who is innovating?

There are some interesting companies lurking in the small booths at the edges of every show. This is where I found the likes of iPharro and a little Japanese company that had a reality show concept based in second life.

Occasionally, you may see something new — IPV with its data-mining, Miranda’s I-Control when first announced and some great ideas in Invenio when Harris partnered with a University. This is what I am alluding to.

It is very easy to see something at a show and implement it, even in an innovative way. There are many examples of
broadcasters coming up with a need and a vendor providing a partial answer. What we see so little now, however, are broadcasters driving innovation.

The BBC has its own research division from which products such as Pierro were born. Others such as NHK have their own research arms too. In the region, I’m unaware of any full-fledged research departments. If we cannot start one, we should at least support research programmes or partner with universities to see some true innovation come from the Middle East.

Look at the Fascinate project for instance, or Project Glass from Google.

Wouldn’t it be great to be able to say we were the first in the world to do this? Being able to show we have the talent to lead rather than to follow is important. We certainly have the resources and the ego. So what is lacking? The vision?

Why should we do this? Why should we stop following the leaders who have tried and tested products before we go to implement them?

For how long can we follow them? I guarantee you some things. Content isn’t getting cheaper yet our customers are getting more used to not paying for it. We are going to have to find different revenue streams which don’t rely at all on the content itself. Content will become a global market and the way we offer it and the services on top of it will become the only differentiator.

You will not find the answers to these challenges purely in our own industry. There is a lot we can learn from the Facebooks and Twitters of the world as they struggle to generate revenue from their massive user base. Add to that Google and Apple, Amazon and Yahoo, and you start to see the other alarming fact.

Consumer businesses have driven the major developments in our industry for a while now. We should seriously consider the threat to our core business.

You Tube is more popular with our youth than any channel; it is well documented that the younger generation accesses content on devices rather than on their televisions, which is where we traditionally invest the most.

These social giants have access to users, technology, information and budgets that we can only dream of. They will challenge and take our content and offer it in ways we cannot. The message is simple. Innovate or die.

CABSAT is here. When you see any of the tech heads from Al Jazeera, DMI, MBC, Sky, OSN and so on or the ‘enablers’ from the systems integration side or any of the ‘innovators’ showcasing their products, ask them what their vision is for the future of broadcast and let me know if they say anything you didn’t already know.

JD (name changed) is an entrepreneur and industry veteran with experience in the many facets of the broadcast industry. He has been travelling to the region for more than a decade working for and with multiple broadcasters. To comment on this piece, email vijaya@cpidubai.com
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Arabs Don’t Shop, Asians Don’t Call

Advertisers are key users of audience measurement because of the detailed data it provides. And they really are data-driven — these guys will have you reduced to a demographic and a number within seconds. Sometimes, I wish I had a PhD in Maths before speaking to them.

But when I look at the advertising which runs on regional channels, I get a shock. Because you’d be forgiven for thinking that Arabs don’t go to supermarkets, and Indians don’t like soft drinks or use mobile phones.

One of the key elements of tview and any people meter system is that ad spots are measured by the Gross Ratings Points (GRPs) they achieve in a target audience. If the advertiser wants to reach Arab women aged 18-49 then the broadcaster who delivers most of those eyeballs should be the one who makes the sale.

So looking at the ratings points in different markets is an interesting, and puzzling, experience and I have yet to hear a really convincing explanation for it.

Take the top ten advertisers ranked by GRPs in the Locals and Arab Expat market for January (See Figure above).

Some familiar names and products there — hygiene and beauty products, snacks and beverages, and mobile communications. The sort of thing that might be used by a fairly wide section of the population.

Now look at the South Asian top ten. (See Figure below). They’re also largely familiar brands, and while some have a clearly more Asian focus, there are others with general appeal. But only one of the top ten, Dabur Vatika, appears exactly in each list, with one other advertiser Dermoviva in both but for different campaigns.

The next ten would be equally exclusive and although the names may change in other months the pattern remains the same. About 80% of the top advertising is exclusive to either Asian or Arab audiences.

Practicality explains some of this. If you have a campaign in one language, it may not be possible or desirable to reversion it. But I suspect that’s only a small part of the issue. Maybe some feel that TV is not an effective way to reach one or the other audience, but it’s hard to see the logic of that for anything other than specialist or niche products. So why do we have this exclusivity?

Part of it may be habit, routine and relationships. People in different parts of the chain are used to working with certain partners and planning in a certain way. With limited data, it would have been hard to justify, or quantify, a change. As they say in Business 101, “What can’t be measured can’t be managed” and that has been the case until recently.

I think part of it is also a severe undervaluation of the Asian market. No doubt, there is a lower average disposable income but we’re talking mainly about daily consumables here, not luxury goods. And what the Asian market lacks in income, it makes up for in numbers. That’s about 50% of the population in the UAE after excluding low-income workers in camps and dormitories.

Yet, according to our estimates, the Asian stations take a mere 5% of the total ad-spend in the pan-GCC market. That’s surely a massive imbalance in relation to their consumption.

Now, the disclaimer. This isn’t my area of expertise. I look at results, not causes, so if I’ve overlooked some aspect of this, please tell me how wrong I am. But I know many of the people I speak to in the industry express the same frustrations. As one of them recently said to me “Indians brush their teeth too, you know” and I’m sure all that tabouleh in the supermarket isn’t just some cultural crossover.

Christopher O’Hearn is General Manager of Emirates Media Measurement Company, which has rolled out ‘tview’, the UAE’s new television ratings and audience measurement system and the first in the Middle East.
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Saudi-based systems integrator First Gulf Company has secured a deal to deliver a full 1080p HD broadcast facility that includes the installation of a whopping 96 cameras in Makkah. When completed, the Kingdom will boast the largest broadcast control room in the world. In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, FGC shares the details.
Every year, millions of pilgrims head to Makkah and Madinah in Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj and the Umrah. The logistics of accommodating such a large number of people has always posed a huge challenge to the Saudi government. Security, civil works and the ease of movement through the main mosque are part of the challenges but the most important of all is the need to provide the pilgrims who travel from far and wide, the ability to worship unhindered. At present, the Haram Mosque in Makkah can accommodate a little over a million worshippers at any given point in time.

The Saudi government has, therefore, embarked on a massive extension project to expand the area of Al Haram Mosque to accommodate more than 2.5 million people at a time and create better facilities for them. One of the most important aspects of this project is a USD 30 million 1080/50p HD broadcast project that has been awarded to Saudi-based broadcast systems integrator First Gulf Company (FGC). This project will be undertaken in phases to coincide with the extension plan.

General Manager and Managing Partner at First Gulf, Walid Al Moukhtar, says: “FGC is no newcomer to such projects or the challenges they pose. We worked on the first broadcast installation at Makkah two years ago and have secured most of the broadcast projects from the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information in the past, owing to our expertise in this field. We are fully cognisant of the specific needs of this environment and are able to cater to its unique requirements.”

The Makkah extension itself is no small project. The grand plan will not materialise until 2020, according to newspaper reports, but it includes several interim phases that have closer deadlines, and the broadcast projects are part of that.

The expansion of the Haram in Makkah will see the Matar area expanded and its number of floors increased to six, according to Dr Muhammad Al-Khuzaim, Deputy Head of the Presidency for the Two Holy Mosques.

In previous reports in the Saudi Gazette, Al-Khuzaim stated that the Ottoman expansion of Matar will be removed and the area will be expanded on three sides. The Holy Mosque, or Al Haram, will initially consist of four floors with two more floors due to be added in the future.

The Holy Mosque expansion project consists of three main areas, with the first being the expansion of Al Haram itself to accommodate more worshippers. The second phase includes the development of exterior areas and the third involves civil support services including electricity and water stations and so on.

FGC will provide state-of-the-art TV and radio broadcast facilities to cover the worship that takes place at the Holy Place live on Al-Quran Al-Kareem channel, a Saudi TV channel. The project includes equipping the broadcast facility with a new control room with complete broadcast equipment, and supplying and integrating a whopping 96 outdoor broadcast cameras on remote PT heads in the new extension as well as the present Holy Mosque.

The first project – also HD -- included 27 cameras, of which 22 were motorised with PTZ heads. It included a 64x64 video routing system and 3.5 M/E vision mixer with an uplinking facility. This project, which spanned an area of 250,000 sqms covered the Holy Mosque and the surrounding piazzas. It was integrated, tested and commissioned in three months to cover the Hajj season in 2009.

**Key kit**

- **Vision Mixer**: Kahuna 360/ Snell
- **Audio Mixer**: Vista 9/Studer
- **Camera**: SK HD1200/Hitachi
- **Robotics P/T System**: HS Series/Vinten-Radamec
- **Routing Matrix**: Harris
- **Video Measurement**: Tektronix
- **Monitoring (Multiviewer)**: Hview SX Pro/Harris
- **Glue**: Harris/Snell
- **Server**: Nexio/Harris
- **Tieline and Tally Management**: TSL

“We have secured most of the broadcast projects from the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information in the past, owing to our expertise in this field. We are fully cognisant of the specific needs of this environment and are able to cater to its unique requirements”

Walid Al Moukhtar, GM, First Gulf Company (FGC)
The first phase, however, was only a precursor of more things to come.

“The objective of this new project is to equip the Holy place with a 96-camera broadcast facility that can cover both the existing Holy Mosque and its extension in 1080P High Definition,” explains Orlando Castro, Director of Engineering at FGC. Castro is responsible for the design and integration of the project.

“The new broadcast facility will be installed in a new control room within the extension far from the existing one. It shall replace the existing broadcast facility.”

Several solutions are part of this project but an important element is the Hitachi SK HD1200 (1080P/50) cameras.

Castro says the cameras were not just chosen “because they are reliable” but because “they can also be mounted on robotic P/T head control systems, and have an open system that allows for minor modifications to achieve the required remote control architecture”.

The 96 cameras will be fitted with a range of lenses from the portable wide to the 1100x zoom box lenses. Thus far, only ten cameras have been deployed. The cameras will be mounted on robotic P/T heads from Vinten Radamec. A weatherproof system will be provided to carry the heavy payload of the cameras and the protective camera housing.

Although this is the main part of this project, FGC will eventually increase the number of cameras as the contractor progresses with the next phase of the extension of the Holy Mosque. In addition to this, FGC will also put in place a disaster recovery (DR) system at the site.

Naim Saidi, CEO of FGC, says the deal reflects the trust and the confidence the client has in FGC’s capabilities “to execute this sophisticated and unique project”.

“We secured this deal because of the high quality of our proposal along with our reputation and past experience in undertaking such projects. These are major criteria in selecting the right systems integrator. This particular installation will help broadcast live in High Definition all of the events and activities inside the Holy Mosque and the city of Makkah with strategically positioned robotic cameras.

“All of the projects we have undertaken in the Kingdom are HD projects and we have constantly innovated to meet the specific requirements of the end user and the unique nature of the Makkah environment.”

Coming back to the project, the cameras’ zoom, focus, pan and tilt movements will be controlled from the central control room. The cameras are placed at a distance of up to 3kms from the control room.

“The cameras that were supplied for the first Makkah project generated lesser heat and consumed lesser power than any cameras on offer at the time,” explains Paddy Roache, Director and General Manager, Hitachi Kokusai Electric Europe.

“The arrival of the first Hitachi cameras coincided with the delivery of the 24/7 transmissions from the Two Holy Mosques. This requirement in tough temperature conditions placed huge challenges to the systems and to the support teams but we met them each time. The cameras have been used extensively and their performance has been exemplary.”

Naim Saidi, CEO, First Gulf Company

“This particular installation will help broadcast live in High Definition all of the events and activities inside the Holy Mosque and the city of Makkah with strategically positioned robotic cameras”
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enhanced constantly in line with the FGC feedback from all our installations in Saudi TV. The cameras have also been improved with software upgrades in the field,” he adds.

The Tokyo-based Hitachi design teams led by General Manager, Nobuo Murata visited Saudi Arabia several times to plan and enhance the camera design and to listen to the feedback based on the Saudi TV installations.

“The dialogues revolved around camera housings, robotics, temperature control and airflow management in addition to the workflow and picture quality. FGC’s engineering team has huge experience working with our cameras leading to some critical enhancements. FGC suggested a method of air flow control and management with the ability to control and monitor the cameras remotely,” adds Roache.

Since then, the two engineering teams in Makkah/Riyadh and Tokyo worked together to produce a design modification across the latest Hitachi camera generation.

“These 16-bit 3G/1080 progressive camera systems are so flexible that the new design was completed and incorporated in the production cameras in a very short time,” explains Roache, adding that the SK-HD1200s were also chosen for the worldwide ATP tennis tour in more than 20 cities around the world.

In Makkah, these cameras are connected to their base stations in the control room using hybrid optical fibre camera cables that can reach more than three kms in length when the camera is deriving power from the base station. The same camera cable will be used to link the P/T heads to their central control.

Local power (the nearest power source to the camera position) will be used to power the robotic heads that can be remotely switched “on and off” from the control room. The outputs of the base stations of the cameras will be fed to a 256 x 256 routing matrix, a 128-input vision mixer and to the multi-display processors (multiviewer).

“A large control room will be utilised for the live broadcast operation of the system equipped with the most sophisticated and reliable broadcast infrastructure. 96 camera operational control panels will be grouped in one section of the control room with video measuring devices, intercom and router control panels,” explains Castro.

The camera that is being adjusted can be easily viewed in dedicated 21” LCD monitors located in the front of the CCU operators through a programmable GPI interface triggered by the joystick override of the camera OCP.

The largest section of the control room will be used for the main control desks and wall monitoring. The main control desks will comprise two rows. The first row will be utilised by the director, the technical director and up to 12 robotic camera operators. The second row will be used by the graphics and server playout operators.

Tape-based HD/SD playback and recording will also be part of the system in order to provide a failover to the video server system and to provide opportunity to use old legacy tape format. One 42-fader digital audio mixing console will be used for the prayer and for collecting ambience sound inside the holy place.

“Adjacent to the main control room will be a TV studio and a radio studio for Islamic programmes. Each studio will have its own equipment and a corresponding

“The new broadcast facility will be installed in a new control room within the extension far from the existing one. It shall replace the existing broadcast facility”

Orlando Castro, Director of Engineering, FGC
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The final output from the centre will be sent via satellite by its own uplink facility and via fibre network to the Riyadh TV centre,” explains Castro.

The present phase is limited to the Makkah Holy Mosque. However, CEO Saidi says a further extension to another side of the Holy Mosque is scheduled for the future. “The new extension will require at least another 20 cameras and we have incorporated this requirement into the new control room,” he says.

FGC is working closely with its key partners to meet the unusual demand of the project in order to ensure that the cameras can operate 24/7. “Hitachi is making sure that its cameras can be operated at a temperature of more than 55 degree Celsius during summer. Vitec is also ensuring the same for its robotic heads that will carry payloads ranging from 35 kg to 65 kg,” explains Castro.

The extension, however, is still under construction and is scheduled for completion at the end of the year. Once it is ready, FGC will require nine months to complete the integration and testing. “The time duration to complete the project will depend on the readiness of the site,” explains Castro.

“Once the new system is up and running, FGC will utilise the old system to be part of a Disaster Recovery System that it will eventually deploy,” adds Castro. “Initially, there was a suggestion to integrate the old system with the new one. However, due to the 1080P format requirement of the new system, this recommendation was ruled out.”

One of the major challenges in this project has been to keep the cameras and the peripheral devices that will be installed in the sun, working 24/7 despite the high temperature in the country. “Our engineering department is leading a team of engineers to develop a weatherproof camera box that can maintain the inside temperature at not more than 50 degree Celsius during summer and implement a temperature and component failure alarm that will automatically alert the control room should a failure occur,” says Saidi.

“We have been working closely with Hitachi to modify their camera head and the CCU in order to monitor alarms of external devices at various camera locations,” he adds.

Cabling again has been a major challenge in this project, as the distance of the cameras from the control room ranges from 500 meters to two kilometres. “Hybrid camera cables that carry all of the control and signal information need to pass through many cable containments before reaching their final destination,” explains Castro, “and these need to be secured. We need to ensure there are no damages. For this, we undertook a series of fibre cable tests to check their stability and reliability so as to ensure we are laying the right cables.”

When completed, this project will boast the largest broadcast control room in the world in a single installation. Post installation, Saudi TV’s engineers, producers, directors and other staff at the Al-Quran Al-Kareem channel will be trained in the operation, maintenance and the configuration of the whole HD system.
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Rebuilding Iraqi Media

In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of AV Solutions, a leading broadcast systems integrator in Iraq, talks about two recent TV projects undertaken in the country for media training, and the challenges of working in a politically volatile country.
Iraqi systems integrator AV Solutions is in the final phase of completing a multi-million dollar project for the launch of Al Jamiya TV, an educational channel from Iraq’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Al Jamiya TV is the first TV channel in Iraq that specialises in broadcasting content related to the higher education sector. The channel will carry a mix of educational content, research productions, documentaries, specialised lectures and scientific conferences, in addition to news broadcasts related to the colleges and institutes in the country.

The project includes two fully equipped HD studios, kitted out with Sony cameras and switchers; a master control room (MCR) that is primarily fitted with Harris solutions, a SAT uplink system from Advent, two OB cars and editing suites.

“Iraq has seen several wars in the last couple of decades and one area that has suffered due to the political turmoil is the country’s education sector,” says Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of AV Solutions, who operates mainly from his office in Dubai.

“This channel is an initiative from the Iraqi government to revive the education and training sector in the country. This makes Al Jamiya TV an important media project.”

Al Jamiya is a government initiative that is intended to function like a university on television.

They approached AV Solutions to design the entire facility for them.

While the studios were already built, AV Solutions stepped in to procure the right equipment and integrate them for the project.

“We have a technical team that takes care of some parts such as air-conditioning and other areas that are specific to TV stations but otherwise, the client had the facility in place. We put in the lighting for the studio, the equipment for the various areas and undertook the full broadcast part of the project,” explains Alaa Mohammed, AV Solutions’ Manager in Baghdad, who takes care of all the operations and relations with clients and supervises the company’s project management in Iraq.

Al Jamiya TV presently boasts two studios — a large 350 sqm studio fitted with four cameras and a smaller 100 sqm studio comprising three cameras. Both studios operate independently. The studios are equipped with Sony HXC-100 cameras mounted on Vinten support systems. Key kit include the Sony MVS-3000 switchers. The main studio is equipped with an ABC camera crane from Movie tech in Germany.

“We represent many of the leading brands in the industry in Iraq so sourcing products also becomes easier,” says Wattar.

The facility is attached to the College of Media in Baghdad University, thereby, giving students the opportunity to make training in broadcast part of the curriculum.

“Just like you build a hospital beside a medical college, it makes sense to have a TV facility next to the College of Media,” explains Wattar.

AV Solutions also undertook the lighting for both studios. Lights were sourced from ARRI and Photon Beard.

“We have primarily used cool or fluorescent lights for the studios mixed with some tungsten lighting. Photon Beard did not have HMI daylights so we sourced these from ARRI. The client required HMI daylights for their mobile kits.”

The systems integrator adds that the end user may opt for LED lighting for decorative purpose at some later stage.

“LED lights are more expensive. At present, the end user was keen to put in place quality equipment for training and to enable the broadcast of this 24/7 education channel. For now, fluorescent lights serve the purpose. They are more widely used, economical and generate lesser heat.”

The next part of the workflow is the gallery, which includes a Yamaha Digital audio mixer, the MVS-3000 – the latest Sony 2ME multi-format video switcher, as well as HDV VTRs. The project includes a mix of monitoring systems from Sony and Marshall Electronics, and some of those monitors receive signals from the built-in multiviewer processor inside the Sony switcher itself.

“The AV Solutions office in Baghdad.
The lighting is controlled from the studio gallery. The MCR is primarily run by Harris solutions including the Harris Nexio servers, Harris 3G-SDI routers, the IconMaster MCR switcher and glue core processors.

“The facility is geared to allow you to play out recorded content or to go live and play out from the studio itself. They also have two OB cars for outside production of news and events, in addition to editing suites and creative suites,” explains Wattar.

The facility is equipped with five DX multi-format I/O hardware.

The transmission of the main channel is via a SAT uplink earth station that has been installed at the roof of the facility. This part of the project is equipped with a 2.4m fixed antenna with Advent DVE5100 HD/SD exciters, Ericsson HD/SD IRDs, XICOM 400W TWTA amplifiers and Rohde & Schwarz spectrum analyser.

“Everything includes an additional completely redundant system,” explains Managing Director Wattar.

The playout system has a six bi-directional channels server, which allows for the simultaneous ingest and playout of six channels in total, all on the same shared storage system. This enables the channel to have more flexibility for playout operators. AV Solutions has a fairly large operation in Baghdad, with 23 staff members managing most of the broadcast

“We put in the lighting for the studio, the equipment for the various areas and undertook the full broadcast part of the project”

Alaa Mohammed, Manager, AV Solutions, Baghdad
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projects across the country. Its office in Dubai comprises nine people and primarily manages the administrative and financial affairs of the company. “We need an office in a place like Dubai, which is a hub. We prefer to ship products from manufacturers to Dubai. We keep our inventory at our Jebel Ali Free Zone warehouse. From here, it is sent to Iraq. We sometimes build and assemble systems and cars here but most of the other projects are put together in Iraq itself,” explains Wattar.

Logistics has been an issue owing to the political turmoil in Iraq as a result of which AV Solutions has always routed products through Dubai. “Things were not so simple earlier on,” explains Wattar.

“It used to be a huge challenge, when we first began operations in 2005. Dubai did not issue visas to Iraqis easily back then. Manufacturers were not willing to go to Iraq to train the end user. Lebanon and Jordan were the middle ground back then. We would ship items to Lebanon. They would be shipped from there and assembled in Iraq. We would bring the end user to Lebanon or Jordan for training.

“In the last year, visas have been easier to get. Plus, we get the manufacturers and end users together in Kurdistan – the northern region, which is considered safer than Baghdad and Southern Iraq,” explains Wattar.

In recent years, the availability of training facilities in Dubai from most of the brands AV Solutions represents including Sony, Avid and Harris has made it easy to bring end users to one spot for training, he says. “This does not mean that we take only the brands we represent,” Wattar is quick to explain.

“There are times, when clients question why we pick one brand over the other even if there are more cost-effective alternatives. Over the years, we have found that some products work better in some areas of the workflow than the others and integrate better. To avoid any glitches later on, it’s always best to put together solutions that you know work well together.”

The commissioning for the whole system will take place in March 2013. Some of the training will also take place in Dubai. “Training takes anywhere between seven and ten days,” explains Wattar.

“If we have a government end user, they usually feel more comfortable...
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“We have worked closely with the government of Iraq, which has stringent guidelines on who can bid for a project. We have undertaken the most number of projects in our country.”

Zaid Wattar, Managing Director, AV Solutions

Iraqi Media Network

Earlier this year, AV Solutions completed a USD 1.3 million project for Iraqi Media Network’s Media Training Institute. The project comprises two parts including a shared-storage based video editing facility, advanced audio mixing and editing systems, a graphics and video finishing system in the first part, and an SNG car with integrated production set for training purposes as the second part. All of this has been in HD format. The Media Training Institute, in its previous avatar, belonged to Iraq’s state broadcaster and included a lot of legacy equipment that it had gathered over the last three decades.

AV Solutions was brought in to kit out part of the facility and give it a new look and feel.

“This institute was established in the 70s owing to the need for skills in TV and radio broadcast operations, but the equipment there is now outdated,” explains Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of AV Solutions.

“Most of the people who worked for the national TV used to train at this facility before they went on to become cameramen and editors. Now, however, there are so many new graduates and they need to train on modern systems.

The system includes 10 sets of Avid Media Composer Nitriss DX editing suites all connected to a central Avid ISIS5000 32TB shared storage system, along with Avid Interplay Media Management, Avid Access and Assist client platforms. Besides this, the project includes an Avid Airspeed multi-stream ingest and playout server. The project also includes an Avid DS full-featured video compositing and finishing system.

A C|24 console with Pro Tools HD is part of this setup. The Avid Pro Tools HD system with Pro Tools HD I/O interfaces allow the system to capture multi-track sound sources simultaneously, and the C|24 control surface enables direct hands-on control of the Pro Tools HD mixing, recording, and editing. This Pro Tools HD consists of HD which has a high frequency response of up to 192kHz for AES sound. Although the facility does not include any studio cameras at present, three ENG camcorders are part of the new SNG car.

“IMN already has about seven or eight studios with new cameras so this is not a priority for them at the moment. As an institute, they needed to train people on how to edit with the software post shoot. This requires some theoretical classes as well,” explains Wattar.

The Media Training Institute, however, is housed in a building that has the capacity to accommodate ten such facilities.

“This project only occupies two rooms at present,” clarifies Ali Wattar.

In the meantime, AV Solutions has also transformed a Chevrolet Suburban car into an SNG vehicle. An Advent/Newsswift 150 HD motorised SAT uplink system is mounted on the vehicle. Key kit in the SNG include Sony switchers and monitors, Nevion routing and glue processing, two Sony HDV VTRs, a Proamax Spectrum analyser, and encoding and IRD form Advent.

“We have worked closely with the government of Iraq, which has stringent guidelines on who can bid for a project. We have undertaken the most number of projects in our country,” he says.

In the meantime, AV Solutions is presently working on at least six different projects in Iraq. Although the country has seen turbulent times, this system integrator stood its ground and has succeeded in making itself a leading player in the country.
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PRO REVIEW

Give me an F5

BroadcastPro ME was given exclusive access to the Sony F5, which will make its debut at CABSAT. Dubai-based DoP Andrew Donaldson, who tested the camera for us, shares his views.

The Sony F5 has essentially been brought into the market to replace the PMW-F3. It is a full HD camera unless you are prepared to spend more on an off-board recorder. As the proud owner of a Canon C300, its nearest competitor, I was very interested to get hold of an F5.

Straight out of the box, if you look at it, you’ll think it is very Alexa like, with the menu in an LCD window on the side. This is an upgrade from the F3. Gone is the standard setup with the Gain white balance/colour balance on small chrome switches.

The viewfinder with my test unit came with the lower-priced DVF-350 960x540 retailing at USD 3300. For me, this is a bit lacking on the diopter front for the miopic. They have a higher-res version in the DVF-EL100 1280x720 at around USD 5000.

Supplied with this was also a second generation Sony prime 85mm T2 PL mount. This is a true cinematic lens with no breathing when pulling focus.

Battery is v-lock with an adapter plate in between featuring two D-tap outputs, which are, unfortunately, placed on the operator’s side. The mini jack audio output is also on my side, which is slightly

The modularity of the F5 and indeed, the F55 means you can dock an off-board recorder unit on the back of the camera. This gives you the option to run your frame rate at up to 120fps in 4K or 240fps in 2K.
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Battery is v-lock with an adapter plate in between featuring two D-tap outputs, which are, unfortunately, placed on the operator's side. The mini jack audio output is also on my side, which is slightly annoying as when tethered to a sound man, this is more than likely to cause problems for both of us.

A headphone jack should be on the back or top, but Sony should really know this. They have been doing this for as long as I can remember. Behind the headphone jack are also two USB interface connections without cover. I assume this would not be the case with the non-beta version. Another point in the same vein is that the connection of the viewfinder is on the opposite side to the operator and is very exposed. It would be much better served to have the connection on the front out of the way where it’s less prone to damage.

Turning on the camera, I immediately set the camera to slog2. The minimum ISO then jumped to a very large 2000 so the ND was turned to 1.8 giving you -6 stops in bright sunlight — a very manageable T5.6.

On first use, the ND filter wheel is not so robust and I am sure if used a bit forcefully, it may be broken or damaged at some point. Placing the camera on the ground would certainly lead to damage to the filter knob and would leave the camera in this region susceptible to ingesting sand.

I went to S&Q top left on the settings screen to set the frame rate and saw that one can run up to 60 frames a second at full resolution internally. The C300 has to be switched to 720 to give you this option. It’s nice to have that added function at full resolution if you do need it.

The modularity of the F5 and indeed, the F55, means you can dock an off-board recorder unit on the back of the camera. This gives you the option to run your frame rate at up to 120fps in 4K or 240fps in 2K. This beats the C300, which will run only to...
30fps in full HD. It can be argued, of course, that once you have the separate recorder on board, it puts the camera into another price bracket altogether.

The interface window is quick and straightforward with all of the everyday items in easy reach. I really like this feature, as it’s far less work than the C300. There are no corners to work around and with one press of a button, you are ready to change your ISO, fps, colour temperature and frame rate with the side-mounted toggle.

We took the camera out to the desert for some footage. The whole time, I was also in contact with a post production friend to figure out how to ingest the footage when I got back. Sony has a new codec called the XAVC and my current edit programmes FCP 7 and Adobe 5.5 do not support this format. It seems there is no plug-in to fix this, and only an upgrade to FCP X or Adobe Premiere 6 will. I do hope I can put the footage in for a grade before finishing this article.

Moving on, Zebras on the viewfinder is very user friendly with a punch in to check focus and whether it is recording or not. Just one note of caution. With this lens, the viewfinder needs to be extended out far enough to clear the large barrel of the Sony PL mount lens.

Handling the camera is very good and compared to the F3, I would say it’s a comfortable experience not fighting to set up an EVF with a magic arm. I never enjoyed working with the F3 as at the time, there was no add-on EVF that could be used comfortably. In bright sunlight, seeing focus was stressful and a hit-and-miss with the fold-out monitor. Having a customised EVF is the way forward here, according to me. The same can be said of the C300.

An integrated viewfinder is a must for these cameras. I have always wondered why we cannot have the full package off the shop floor instead of adding on third-party viewfinders such as Alphatron and Redrock.

The F5 really scores well with this configuration giving you a straight up...
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The F5 really scores well with this configuration giving you a straight up "A headphone jack should be on the back or top, but Sony should know this. They have been doing it for as long as I can remember" Andrew Donaldson, DOP, Atlas Television.
“The detail is what you would expect from a camera in this price range, and reflects a mixture of very good optics and an upgraded sensor.”

Andrew Donaldson, DOP, Atlas Television

footage left no trace and did not degrade the pictures at all. In 8-bit 4:2:2, both cameras seem to provide pretty much the same picture quality but with Sony’s new XAVC codec and firmware updates, I think the C300 will be surpassed in most aspects of its limited recording formats (see update periods below).

*Internally, the F5 can record now in (1) MPEG2 4:2:2 8-bit, (2) XAVC HD 4:2:2 10-bit and (3) XAVC HD 4:2:2 10-bit S&Q 1p to 60p (HFR 120p in Sept 2013, 60p-120p in Dec). And with a F/W upgrade in Feb (4) SStP HD 4:2:2 and 4:4:4. With another F/W upgrade in Sept (5) XAVC 2K 4:2:2 10-bit, will be possible. The R5 adds 4K and 2K RAW 16-bit linear recording.

At high ISOs, both the C300 and the F5 cameras performed very well. I tested both at 16000 ISOs and found very little noise at all.

I think the F5 is a great camera for production houses and higher-end documentary makers. I personally would be very happy to work with it given it has a made-to-order viewfinder. The C300 comes with its own viewfinder but if you are going to be looking through it all day, it’s going to put a huge strain on your eyes.

Of course, you can buy a third-party viewfinder for the C300 but I think a made-to-order viewfinder offered by Sony for the F5 is preferred.

The extra $3000 dollars is worth it for the viewfinder. You can order the F5 with pretty well whatever adapter you want. You can use the Canon or Nikon glass so budget wise, the two cameras are much the same on that front.

The F5 for me, however, comes out on top as it is closer to what we are used to working with, stable on the shoulder with no need for a handheld rig.

The C300, by comparison, is less easy to work around shooting this way if you are using the audio interface and monitor atop the handle with an add-on viewfinder. It is definitely top heavy and is just fiddly when placed on the ground.

The ND range is workable on the F5 but if you want to decrease the depth of field to a minimum, you would have to introduce a matt box. Installing a set of rails off a base plate would cost you but again, the C300 has the same issues.

I liked working with this camera as everything was in easy reach and is ergonomically easier than the C300 to handle. I like to shoot off the ground and the shape of the camera lends itself to this type of shooting. Once I returned home, it was time to look at the footage. I could not ingest with log and transfer so I played the footage out the old-fashioned way — SDI out of the camera through an AJA I/O in real time.

Instantly, you see that the quality is good. The detail is what you would expect from a camera in this price range, and reflects a mixture of very good optics and an upgraded sensor. Grading the footage left no trace and did not degrade the pictures at all. In 8-bit 4:2:2, both cameras seem to provide pretty much the same picture quality but with Sony’s new XAVC codec and firmware updates, I think the C300 will be surpassed in most aspects of its limited recording formats (see update periods below).

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E⁵ – Efficiency to the power of five.
It’s Blackmagic!

In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Yusuf Thakur, the first end user in the Middle East to procure a Blackmagic Cinema Camera, talks about the camera’s features and how he rigged it in under USD 650

“What’s in your magic bag?” It’s the question Dubai-based natural history documentary maker and owner of VFX Films, Yusuf Thakur is often asked by industry professionals when he purchases a brand new camera. This time, it was the Blackmagic Cinema Camera.

As the first end user in the Middle East to buy the USD 3000 kit and being well known for improvising or inventing small accessories to complement every new camera he has bought, we felt the question was fully justified. And Thakur did not disappoint.

“You can rig this camera for less than USD 650 or you can spend three times the cost of the camera to do the same,” explains Thakur.

Unlike most other directors and filmmakers who prefer to buy off-the-counter accessories for their new toys, Thakur would typically rummage through his vast inventory of lenses, batteries and mounts to see what he could potentially try out on his new camera.

“I’m like a mechanic, I can fix my own car,” says Thakur, who shoots TVCs for a living.

At all other times, he is a natural history filmmaker and has tons of footage shot across the Arab world that are now beginning to emerge on TV screens after broadcasters realised their value.

His production house VFX Productions is tucked away in Al Quoz, Dubai, where several other production houses are also based, and has a team that has learnt his art of trying to engineer things themselves rather than going out to the store and picking up new gadgets over the counter.

When he bought the Blackmagic, Thakur says he was immediately impressed by the small size and the simplicity of the camera, which weighs only weighs 3kg.

He says the camera has several advantages and where there were limitations, he has devised some accessories along the way. Perhaps the one area where he wasn’t as successful was in the post stage, but even that has now been resolved as we go to press.

“The first thing I liked about this camera was the fact that it boots up instantly when you switch it on. I use the word instant
because most digital cameras don’t do this. The RED Epic, for instance, takes at least 10 seconds and some others take as much as a minute. Is this really important? I shoot wildlife. You could miss everything in 15 seconds,” explains Thakur.

Secondly, he explains how much he appreciates the form factor.

“This camera reminds me of a DSLR. It looks like a point-and-shoot camera and functions like one. There is nothing complicated about it. Blackmagic has kept it basic and user-friendly. It has an in-built battery as well, so you chose your format, whether 2.5K RAW, Pro Res or RS DNX, press focus and record.”

A camera like this serves as the ideal backup when shooting wildlife, he says.

Here, Thakur and his team created an adapter to power the camera from an Anton Bauer battery pack. Together with the internal battery, the camera can run for at least three-and-a-half hours, he says.

“We created adapters to make it possible to mount an Anton Bauer or a V-mount battery. To change between the batteries, all I have to do is change the head cable,” explains Thakur.

One of the biggest drawbacks that Thakur faced when he first received this camera was the inability to check accurately how much battery power was left. It only shows 100, 75, 50 or 25%.

LCD and viewing made easy with a little patented piece of invention called Grid.

A day after Thakur received the Blackmagic Design camera, he was on his way to Africa, for a shoot.

The bright, clean light from the African sun made it impossible for him to focus with the LCD. When he did, he could see reflections in it making focus impossible.

On the good side, the Blackmagic Design Cinema Camera’s LCD has a double focus feature. If you tap the LCD, it zooms in on your subject.

“I had to check focus at least five times and you could never be sure if the object you were shooting was in focus.”

In frustration, Thakur tried the Grid – a large eyepiece that he sourced from a Brazilian dealer for his Epic, and lo and behold! Focusing became a breeze.

The Grid is one of the first pieces of goodies Thakur pulls out of his magic bag. The Grid, which is now patented by Thakur and his dealer, is a lightweight eyepiece that you can attach to the viewfinder to give you a larger and more detailed view of the object.

“I initially bought this Grid for the Epic. You simply need to attach the Grid to the camera via a magnetic strip and view the LCD screen and it operates like a large viewfinder. The advantage is, you can use it when you need to and release it should you require that flexibility. Moreover, even when it is attached, you still have full access to all the buttons on the camera,” adds Thakur.

Although the Blackmagic camera features a peaking control, critical focus becomes easier only with the Grid, explains Thakur.

SENSOR

The camera comes with a fairly small sensor, smaller than a micro 4/3 DSLR. This remains the same in the newer version of the camera as well.

“To shoot wildlife, an average lens I would mount on this would not be less than 500mm. Multiply everything by 2.3 for this sensor. Essentially, the lens gives you something close to 1150mm. Now with a 1150mm lens, you’re trying to focus on a bird that is perched about 400ms away. And the LCD is supposed to help you make that decision. It’s a tough call. This is where the Grid comes handy.

“The 2.3 crop factor, by the way, is applicable to all 35mm lenses. Getting a wide shot, therefore, requires extremely wide lenses; an 11mm lens for instance, becomes a 25mm. You don’t have a wide choice of lenses available below 11mm that will not have lens distortion. I have read that an adapter from Metabones now eliminates that issue. So when you place a 11mm lens on top of it, it actually scales the picture down to the full size of the sensor. So you have a 11mm lens functioning as a 11mm lens with a projection onto the smaller sensor,” explains Thakur.

LENSES

The filmmaker has always maintained over the years that still lenses work perfectly for moving images, and he swears by his Nikon lenses.

“Still lenses are far better than any lenses in the market for camcorders. They are full frame lenses and if the optics can take care of the 35mm full frame, then it can take care of these sensors as well. Also, most lens manufacturers seem to have dropped the physical aperture on their lenses. The Auto iris function can never replace the manual iris control; you must have manual control and the best place is on the lens. It is irritating to keep punching and pressing buttons and checking the iris and you can never be 100% sure if it is accurate,” he adds.
Uncompromising performance at unprecedented speed

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Thakur uses two lenses with this camera. “The Nikon 17-35 is my stock lens. And if I use a long lens, I use the 50-500 Sigma. I use them with Nikon to Canon mount adapters. Both these lenses are the last generation with physical apertures and both have full electronic control if used with a Nikon mount camera,” he explains.

**HANDHELD**

One of the biggest advantages of having a small camera is to use its compactness to our advantage rather than rig it fully. The filmmaker says several end users who purchased this camera had complained that it could not be used in a handheld position but he goes on to prove them wrong.

“Here’s a piece of magic kit including a handle for USD 30 handle and a strap for USD 10 that lets you use the camera in a handheld configuration,” he says, as he puts his palm through the strap of the camera and holds it.

With a little handle purchased on E-bay that can be screwed on to the top holes of the camera, an adapter built in-house to connect the battery to the camera and a strap bought from the local market for USD 10, Thakur is all set for a handheld shoot.

“This handle, which is screwed on the

---

**On the Plus side...**

* IF YOU UPDATE THE CAMERA TO 1.2, THE BELOW ARE NOW AVAILABLE
- You can now use the camera in time lapse mode
- Canon Lens with electronic pins show FStops
- Time-code output on SDI
- Can now format in exFAT format on PC and use the SSD in camera for recording, no need of a Mac

**How we rigged the camera in under USD 650**

- Instant boot feature
- Base plate with rods for mounting long lenses USD 150
- Anton Bauer or V-Mount plate with interchangeable cables to power the camera with either type of batteries USD 150
- Nikon to Canon mount adapter USD 40 (Batteries used are from earlier camera purchases)
- Grid 5 Viewfinder solves focusing issues USD 250.
- Battery strap USD 10
- Handle USD 30
top of the camera is perfect as it allows you to swap it front to back or back to front. So if I am doing handheld, I can use it in this mode. In addition, with the new firmware, this camera also supports optical stabilisation with Canon lenses.”

**FORMAT**

One of the big advantages of this camera is that it can shoot RAW footage at 2.5K.

Of course, at the editing table, RAW footage is a tedious tale, but Thakur says, it’s well worth the while to shoot wildlife.

“If the shelf life of the product you’re shooting is less than a year and it’s being created for TV, there’s no need to shoot RAW. A film I shot ten years ago was broadcast on National Geographic: Abu Dhabi recently. Natural history projects have a long shelf life and I prefer to shoot RAW,” he says.

**CINE LENSES**

Would any filmmaker dare to use a pair of expensive cine lenses with a $3000 camera?

“Yes, indeed,” says Thakur as he fixes a large rail onto the tripod.

“90% of the time, I use the camera in its simple form because that’s the whole point of having a small camera. Only if I decide to put longer lenses on it do I use a baseplate with 15mm rods which support a lens in the front,” he continues.

“Always use one if you mount heavy or long lenses. In the rear, we use an Anton Bauer baseplate and battery mounted to the rods. It’s neat and simple and well balanced. You can still mount a follow focus in the front on the rod,” he explains.

“Once you get the camera, nothing is proprietary. You don’t have to buy a proprietary drive or a proprietary battery.”

Thakur’s only big investment for this camera was a 240GB SSD drive, which set him back by $210.

“This will give you a little more than an hour of RAW footage. It will give you

**The Good**

- Instant boot feature
- Easy, lightweight and quick-to-use
- Inbuilt scratch microphone
- Built-in battery

**The Bad**

- No Audio Level Display Meters
- No Focal Length
- No Accurate Battery Display
- In camera format of SSD

**The Ugly**

- Difficult to use LCD. In bright outdoor conditions, focusing can be a difficult. You are always worried if you shot out of focus, but the peaking focus feature does work.

**Solution:** With the Grid viewfinder, this problem is completely eliminated, and with the strap and Grid, the camera is easy to use in handheld mode, turning it into a DSLR-style camera.

far more if you were to record in Pro Res and DNX. Till now, I have not recorded it on any other format apart from RAW.”

One upsetting thing about the camera at the time I went to meet him was that the filmmaker could not delete a shot or format the drive in camera.

“You couldn’t format the SSD in camera. If you wanted to format it, you had to use a Mac. Now, we can format it in exFAT format on a PC and use the SSD in the camera for recording,” he adds.

**SOUND**

While you get perfect sound on this camera, you cannot gauge the audio levels on the camera.

“If you are over peaking, you just won’t know it because there are no level meters in the camera. This only requires a software upgrade,” he says.

**POST PRODUCTION**

The last part of this workflow – the post production – is perhaps the most cumbersome as the footage from the camera is in frames and not as a video file.

This camera, however, comes with a free copy of DaVinci Resolve, which is a $1000 colour grading software.

“It is a grading software; you have to do a first pass and then export all of your footage in a format that can be used in a non-linear software. It has to be edited and then graded again,” says Thakur.

“This used to be a tedious and time consuming process that utilised too much hard disk space. Initially, there were no comprehensive solutions to support the DNG format. Now, however, things have changed.

“The post-production workaround via GingerHDR wrapper now allows the Cinema DNG files to be imported and edited in proxy mode in real time or near real time in Adobe Premiere depending on the computer,” he explains.

Thakur had received his camera with a 1.1 software. He updated it to 1.2 and now has image stabilisation and iris control – two things that were not available in the first version of the camera. The only difference, according to him, between the camera and the new generation is the availability of a 4/3rd mount. The camera has a USB port that allows easy upgrade from the laptop. It also has a Thunderbolt port although Thakur says he has not had the time to check it out.

“It would have been nice to have an HDMI output but they probably wanted to keep the costs down,” says Thakur.

Overall, Thakur reckons this camera is designed for those who want to make the jump from the SLR world. He also agrees he’d be happy to use this camera as a backup to shoot wildlife.
The moment you are completely focused, but yet entirely flexible. This is the moment we work for.

**Compact Zoom CZ.2 Lenses**

**Compact Zoom CZ.2 70-200 mm / T2.9**
**Compact Zoom CZ.2 28-80 mm / T2.9**

Lightweight and compact zoom lenses featuring the Interchangeable Mount System (PL, EF, F, MFT, E).

The new Compact Zoom CZ.2 lenses are as versatile as they are powerful and incorporate features never seen before on lenses of this kind. They are handy, compact, ready for 4k and even offer full-frame coverage. With their zoom lengths of 28-80 and 70-200 mm, they give you a wide range of creative options.
I often produce and direct videos. On occasion, I also edit them. I recently had the opportunity to test Noise Industries’ FxFactory Pro with a friend and editor, Mike Goldschmidt. We have worked together on several projects, where this package would have made a big difference.

First, the bad news. If you’re not a Mac user, you can’t use it. But if you are a Mac user, this programme will enrich your life. The Noise Factory describes FxFactory Pro as “the first visual effects package that lets you customise and create your own plug-ins for Final Cut Pro, Motion, Premiere Pro and After Effects without writing a single line of code”.

FxFactory Pro includes 176 filters, generators and transitions for Final Cut Pro 7, Motion, Premiere Pro and After Effects, and 160 effects for Final Cut Pro X. That’s a lot for the USD 400 you will pay for the software. You can also customise these effects and save your version alongside the original.

It must be a universal law that all video jobs have low budgets and are always due yesterday. This software helps to quicken the pace of your work. Goldschmidt attributes that to the pre-set effects in the software.

“Once you’ve chosen one, you have the ability to roll it back to make it yours. I think this programme was written by editors. Most software apps are written by engineers and don’t necessarily work as seamlessly on the editing table.”

I agree with him. In most jobs, you don’t want to overcomplicate the timeline by searching around for odd effects. FX Factory Pro doesn’t affect the rendering time and integrates seamlessly into the workflow. It actually saves time because all the effects can be viewed with ease and are just as easily available. In fact, FX Factory Pro is extremely smooth and runs a little faster, using the graphics processing for extra grunt.
The effects in real time are impressive.

Goldschmidt especially speaks highly of the way the effects work.

“The effects themselves are not just the run-of-the-mill kind; your regular swipes transitions and blurs. To me, it seems like a bunch of other editors thought that they would like to create an effect, or recreate an effect they’d seen. There are always one or two hip effects. These are not just the cheesy kind you see used all the time on windows movies,” he explains.

We have elaborated on some of these effects a little further down this article.

Clearly, the Noise boys have thought this through.

Goldschmidt says: “What this has done is taken all the effects we love and use, and created them in one package. This is something I’d use all the time and I think the Noise Factory gave a big nod to professional editors. It’s a

**FxFactory Pro includes 176 filters, generators and transitions for Final Cut Pro 7, Motion, Premiere Pro and After Effects, and 160 effects for Final Cut Pro X.**
RTS VLink is a new software application that enables remote users to interface with RTS matrix intercoms, allowing the management of systems that would normally require an on-site presence to configure and troubleshoot.

RTS VLink places comprehensive communications control on the laptops, tablets, and smartphones that now accompany broadcast professionals in the field and in the studio, bringing greater efficiency and immediacy to the broadcasting of sports, entertainment, and news.

VLink

To learn more about how VLink can improve the way you communicate, visit www.rtsintercoms.com/vlink
A favourite is TOKYO PINPATOR. It is a new effect for creating picture-within-picture design, avoiding the use of key frames. All the animation is menu-driven. Again, this is a massive time-saver for editors who need this effect quickly. The Noise Factory describes it as a ‘3D DVE’, which makes it sound even more impressive. The advantage is that you can pick it up quickly and use it with confidence, even if the client is sitting over your shoulder watching you.

The bottom-line is that this package is a little box of miracles, a sort of Swiss Army knife for video editors. Its good value and will improve the quality of video for some time to come. It is also expandable and you can save the effects that you tweak.

The final word goes to Goldschmidt: “I would definitely buy it and I use it all the time. I think that it is very good value for money. The way it operates, the rendering time, and the look of it is very professional.”

One thing about editing is time. It’s easy to install and easy to use; it’s self-explanatory but the great thing is that it’s quick with all the effects, with video filters, regular filters and compositing filters.

What I like about this software is that it has its own window so you can reference a list without going to your FCP window. You choose an effect, you click it and it comes up. Perfect.

A lot of editors stay away from effects these days because we are story-tellers, not effects people. FxFactoryPro is easy because you do not have to worry about it looking good; you just drop it in. While we do need the traditional effects, the out-of-the-box effects required for broadcast such as the glow wipes and the cross fades are especially noteworthy.

In order to be fair, we searched online for critical reaction to the software. We couldn’t find any. In fact, we only saw positive notes from users.

Kevin Monahan, Author of ‘Motion Graphics and Effects in Final Cut Pro’ was very enthusiastic.

“What I like about this software is that it has its own window so you can reference a list without going to your FCP window. You choose an effect, you click it and it comes up”

Jonathon Savill

So what are the main elements of FxFactory Pro?

Video stylisation, colour correction, stills animation, transitions, keying, stereoscopic 3D and titling. These are grouped in categories, and you can apply the filters and transitions just by dragging and dropping them. The help functions are good. Most editors don’t read the manuals and FxFactory Pro is very intuitive. Nevertheless, it helps that the effects are defined and explained.

There are two new effects just introduced. Nattress bounce lets you bounce your footage on and off screen. The other is Nattress Shatter, which is a slightly cheesier broken mirror effect. One of the cooler effects is the Lo-Fi Look. This gives an old cine effect filter which would be good for creating retro footage for music videos. We also particularly liked the Motype titling. It lets you animate the titles without using key frames and has the sort of effects that turn a low-budget quick job into something that looks like you took loads of time on.

“... the look of it is very professional.”

Mike Goldschmidt is a Dubai-based film editor from New York and works with different tools including Final Cut Pro, Avid and CS6. Jonathon Savill has a Master’s degree in film production, and has been a BBC producer for fifteen years.
BroadcastPro ME takes a detailed look at how Qatar TV recently deployed Avid solutions to optimise its enterprise-level collaboration.

Avid interest in Qatar TV

TVSDC worked closely with the Avid Professional Services team to design a comprehensive, integrated media environment for Qatar TV.

The key objectives were to create an environment that was optimised for effective media management; provide strong links to business processes, and support and orchestrate workflows specifically tailored for the full complement of diverse production groups to let contributors collaborate fluidly on an enterprise level.

From there, the Avid Professional Services team worked in conjunction with Qatar TV to design, implement, and install a full complement of ingest, editing, news scripting, news playout, and audio post production solutions, supported by the asset management architecture of Interplay Production and Interplay MAM.

Qatar’s Television Support and Development Committee (TVSDC), which is responsible for designing and contracting most of the technology projects at Qatar TV and Al Kass, recently undertook a major technology revamp for Qatar TV that included building a new newsroom studio and broadcasting complex at its Doha headquarters in 2012.

“TVSDC was committed to investing in an entirely new system that brings innovations to the Qatar TV operation capable of rivaling broadcast operations in any media market,” explains Samer Younes, Consultant Engineer, TVSDC.

The team, therefore, needed to develop a new set of media production and management solutions to perform the myriad tasks inherent in such a large operation. Avid was approached.
A Closer Look at the Workflows

Ingest
Starting with the ingest process, Avid Interplay Capture lets the production team ingest media from both tape and live feeds. The solution comprises six Avid AirSpeed MultiStream servers providing twelve SD/HD-SDI ingest channels, all set to record directly into the ISIS shared storage system using Avid DNxHD120 format. For file-based agency feeds ingest, such as Reuters, Avid installed a Telestream Vantage system at Qatar TV.

All of the AirSpeed MultiStream servers are controlled by the user through the Interplay Capture application. Avid’s ingest tool that increases the speed and accuracy of media acquisition through advanced automated feed scheduling and control. An additional four Avid Media Composers can also ingest files directly from Sony XDCAM players.

Storage
After ingest has been initiated, assets are checked into Interplay Production and stored in Avid ISIS shared storage engines. Approximately 3750 hours of high-resolution, “protected” production material can be stored on ten new ISIS 7000 64TB chassis.

ISIS 7000 offers a self-balancing distributed architecture designed for intelligent processing for broadcast production on virtually any scale. At Qatar TV, this is mainly used for online production and news storage. An additional two ISIS 2000 chassis are available to park approximately 7000 hours of projects during the production process. ISIS 2000 is Avid’s nearline storage solution for building cost-effective large-scale media storage. For the main house format at Qatar TV, TVSDC chose Avid’s DNxHD120 codec technology.

The codec is engineered to create mastering-quality HD media at reduced file sizes with minimal degradation over multiple generations. DNxHD120 provides an end-to-end workflow and is fully supported by Qatar TV’s EVS playout system, Avid’s Interplay MAM, Media Composer, NewsCutter, and the Symphony editing systems used for production at the facility.

Editing/Finishing
Producers and journalists only require a browser and network connection to access the media assets through Interplay Central web-based clients to create their stories.

With this application, Interplay Central connects contributors wherever they are and provides an agile and effective means of media production. Qatar TV invested in 15 new Avid Interplay Central clients to provide this tightly integrated workflow between text script editing and video editing.

“This workflow was crucial for a channel, offering such diversity in programming, especially in news broadcasting,” says Younes.

For the news edit process, Interplay Central uses the Avid iNEWS news story integration, sending the news production material to five NewsCutter Nitris DX edit suites to finish the story creation.”

He adds: “The programme production teams produce the latest programmes, commercials, or other video in 16 Media Composer suites with the support of Nitris DX and Artist Series control panels. The 64-bit Media Composer NLE solution lets the editing team at Qatar TV work with practically any media format allowing the editors to undertake fast dialogue-based searches or script-based editing, mix and match formats, frame rates, resolutions, and more in real-time without rendering.”

For a high level of finishing, Qatar TV provides its production team with two new Symphony Nitris DX editors. Avid’s video editing and mastering application, which offers advanced and secondary colour correction.

Playout
The new broadcasting complex at Qatar TV is equipped with a news studio and a programme production studio.

The news playout is provided by an AirSpeed MultiStream server, controlled by an Avid iNEWS Command system for playout automation.

The system controls the video channels of HD video from two AirSpeed MultiStream servers as well as a Vizrt character generator providing graphics. The iNEWS client allows the producer to send created scripts in the news studio to

Mohamad Fares, Head of Broadcast Technology at Qatar Television.
Hello.
a teleprompter, to control the run-down order of the news programme and overall, lets him control the dynamic update of the story order for video and graphics. The programme production studio playout is using Avid AirSpeed MultiStream servers, which are manually controlled by High Tech panels.

THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM

MEDIA ASSET MANAGEMENT
At the heart of the system are the media management capabilities provided by the Interplay Production and Interplay MAM system, giving it the flexibility to handle the large volume and diversity of content Qatar TV generates.

Integrated links between Interplay's Production and MAM solutions ensure the seamless transfer of video assets, allowing a completed video sequence to be archived directly from the production environment and to be restored when needed. The Interplay production system integrates the creative and management processes. Producers, editors, assistants, and reviewers can collaborate in real-time to find, short list, review, annotate, and edit content while tasks such as media movement and transcoding are orchestrated in the background. Production assets created and being worked on in the Interplay Production system, are parked on the ISIS 2000 nearline storage chassis.

TVSDC opted for an Avid Interplay MAM solution to archive finished material on tape and share video assets for transmission. Integrated links allow the transfer of video assets from Avid Interplay Production to Avid Interplay MAM so that a completed video sequence can be archived directly from the production environment or sent to transmission.

Through Interplay MAM, proxy versions of the media are created, enabling any archivist in the system to play video in a web-browser at their workstation to log or add enriched frame-accurate time-based metadata. To restore media to production, users can efficiently search archived assets and initiate restore jobs. After receiving authorisation, the media is restored to Interplay Production and made available for high-end editing applications such as Media Composer and NewsCutter.

Interplay MAM is the main platform to move media from archive to transmission either manually or automated using an interface from Pebble Beach Systems.

Mohamad Fares, Head of Broadcast Technology at Qatar Television, says, “End-to-end workflow designed by the Avid Professional Services team in cooperation with our team, has optimised our media cycle of acquisition, production, distribution, and archiving.

“We can now easily exchange assets between our production and our archive system and if changes are needed, we can even apply them with no downtime while the system is running. We have become more collaborative and efficient than ever before, meeting our business and technological challenges.”

AUDIO
As part of this workflow, Qatar TV also made a significant investment in audio. The state broadcaster uses a digital dubbing suite with the audio production platform, Pro Tools HD and a 24-channel ICON D-Command digital control surface. D-Command allows the mixer to gain mix precision with touch-sensitive encoders and faders and offers a tight integration into Pro Tools.

The suite includes a video satellite client which allows the team at Qatar TV to playback HD video sequences to the dubbing suite. The Pro Tools system takes completed video sequences with audio tracks, created by the sound editors, and transfers them through the Interplay Production system for dubbing. Once that is complete, they are mixed down in Pro Tools and written back to the original story tracks in the ISIS storage.

In addition, Qatar TV invested in an S5 Fusion digital audio mixing console. This console offers an expandable DSP engine for standalone operation, and includes a complete EUCON Hybrid control to record and mix EUCON-enabled DAW projects. The entire project was completed on time and Qatar TV went on-air with the new system at the end of 2012.

Younes attributes that “to an open, well-integrated line-up of industry-standard solutions and the efficacy of the two teams from Avid and Qatar TV”.

“Qatar TV is now able to manage the entire lifecycle of virtually any kind of asset, optimise its value, and let contributors work collaboratively across the entire enterprise, thanks to this workflow,” he says.

“It has strengthened Qatar TV’s position as a leading Arabic channel in the Middle East and on an international level. Avid delivered the integrated media enterprise solution we required to be a competitive player while future-proofing our system for new projects.”

Tech Specs
- Avid Interplay MAM
- Avid Interplay Production
- Avid iNEWS newsroom system
- Avid ISIS 2000, ISIS 7000 shared storage
- Avid AirSpeed MultiStream servers
- Avid Media Composer, NewsCutter and Symphony editors with Nitris DX and Artist Series control panels
- DNxHD120 codec technology
ARRI ALEXA XT
Truly Cinematic
ALEXA XT STUDIO
ALEXA XT PLUS
ALEXA XT M
ALEXA XT

Equipped with LDS / PL Mount
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Tell us a bit about yourself.
Life and work for me is about video and television news. I have never done anything else and cannot imagine my life doing anything else. From the first day I entered a TV studio, fresh after university, I knew I had found my profession. During my early years as a travelling journalist, it was all about adventure and finding out things on stories. In later years, once I entered a management role, it was always about doing the right thing — on all levels — and the success of my company.

What have been Sky News Arabia’s greatest milestones in 2012?
2012 was an amazing year. It’s hard to believe that we received our studio building from the constructors on January 7, 2012 and went on air 24/7 on May 6, 2012. The hard work, meticulous planning and dedication of the team was key. Seeing the positive reaction to our channel since the launch has been very satisfying. I believe that in terms of quality and viewership, our biggest milestone is being ahead of our targets on all levels.

NART BOURAN is Head of Sky News Arabia, and in charge of directing and managing the channel’s news operations. His career in journalism spans over 20 years. He has worked extensively across the region covering major stories in countries such as Iraq, Algeria, Libya and Yemen, as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict. He joined Sky News Arabia from Thomson Reuters, where he was Director of Television for the Reuters News Agency. Former roles have included Director General of Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, and Director of News Centre for Abu Dhabi TV where he spearheaded their coverage of the war in Iraq in 2003.

I get excited when I think of all the plans and developments we have in the pipeline and the potential growth we can achieve in the days to come.

What are your plans for 2013?
It’s all about growing our viewership and building on our strengths in quality reporting.

You are part of the audience rating system in the UAE. Have you seen substantial progress since your launch and where do you see yourself in the next couple of years?
The ratings are on the increase and heading in the right direction and at a positive rate. Equally, the increase in use of our digital assets is even more encouraging. We’re reaching out to a particular age group that will be the bigger users of digital content and the future TV news viewers. Strategically, that was our aim and gathering momentum on that front is very important for us. I also think that research in the region, no matter how accurate or not, is patchy.
and does not give you the full picture. For a pan-Arab channel like ours, to get a full picture in every country and to benchmark against other channels in each location, is very difficult. That is why social media and online trends are becoming a credible measure for performance.

What advice would you give yourself if you had to go back in time and revisit your teenage years? Do less of what you enjoyed and more of what you didn’t.

Who or where did you learn the most critical business lessons that you carry with you each day?

Who is your most inspiring movie character? Why? That is a tough one. I think you go through different stages and experiences that make the answer vary. There are times when Clint Eastwood in Spaghetti Westerns would be apt. At other times, it’s Steve Carrel in The Office. Han Solo comes to mind. Depending on the mood, it could also be Darth Vader!”

Nart Bouran, Head of Sky News Arabia.

“I believe that for media organisations to be credible, they should always strive for self-sufficiency, even if it takes time”

Nart Bouran, Head of Sky News Arabia.

Which department asks you for the most amount of money or requires the most investment now?
As a journalist, by DNA, I will always say the newsroom deserves the most investment all the time. Even when they don’t really deserve it!

Can a news channel be profitable in the Middle East and if yes, could you share your business model?
I believe we have a sustainable business model that will take patience and hard work. I also believe that for media organisations to be credible, they should always strive for self-sufficiency, even if it takes time. That is the challenge for any media organisations in the region and we are on the right track.

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After a spectacular success in 2012, OSN’s CEO David Butorac is upbeat about the future. Here, he talks about past successes and what lies ahead.

What were your achievements in 2012?
2012 is the biggest year of growth that OSN has ever witnessed and from a development perspective, we did a number of things. Late in 2011, we launched our first Arab language channel OSN Tahala. It has soon become Number 2 among the 108 channels we carry. We invested in and launched OSN Play and OSN Plus HD, two very powerful technology platforms that we spent a lot of investment in creating, and launched one in March and the other in September. Play is at the forefront of platforms. We are very proud of our technology department, led by Mark Billinge and his team and the achievement in creating those platforms was huge. 2012 really consolidated our position as the premier pay-TV platform in the region. These two landmark technology platforms will take us forward into the digital age like no one else in the region.

What lies ahead in 2013?
2013 will see us building on the developments of the platforms that we created in 2012. So you will see continued advancement at OSN Play. You won’t just see a world-class pool system which is what it is today, where consumers can choose a vast array of content and pull it to their screens. We will also create push technologies within that to allow the consumer to do far more things with their box. We will launch electronic versions of their TV guide that will allow the consumer to control their viewing through their tablet or smart phones. In short, we will continue to enhance the consumer experience to make certain that the OSN customer receives seamless content and see it first on OSN before FTA.

Any statistics you can share on subscription numbers?
In terms of the business growth, we closed out technical piracy in the end of 2010 with the Conditional Access (CA) swap and that investment was a huge USD 55 million investment, which paid back in inside of a year. So in terms of ROI, that was a huge success. In 2011 and 2012, that shut down piracy and allowed us to accelerate the business. We saw more than 30% growth in terms of our subscriber base in 2012 alone. After 18 years of pay TV in the region, to have added more than 30% of subscribers is a big feat, in my opinion. That has been the result of a combination of our focus on premium content and creating a consumer proposition.

We hear you have had a huge increase in subscriptions in Egypt this last year?
When OSN was created in 2009, we were not able to do business in Egypt for the first couple of years because of some regulatory issues. So whilst the rest of the region took off, we were looking to see how we could operate in Egypt and that materialised in 2011. In 2011/2012, we were able to increase our growth in business in Egypt, the likes of which we hadn’t been able to do for many years. So yes, we are seeing rapid acceleration. It is our fastest growing market.

Do you not have any plans to have South Asian content on OSN?
We certainly recognise the size of the South Asian market, which is about 60% of the population here. We are very interested in acquiring South Asian content and have been approached regularly by the content providers who sit on other platforms. The challenge, however, is that there...
is significant piracy in the distribution of DTH platforms out of India that can be received here and obviously, they are significantly cheaper because of the lower costs and the price points in India. Now, until the economics of that illegal business is challenged, it is very difficult to compete with that. Even the platforms that are focusing on the South Asian market are economically challenged. So, we are interested in that market in both entertainment and sport as there is opportunity there, but as we have done with other diaspora, we shall look at how we can cater to that market and how regulators will potentially clamp down on illegal distributors outside of that region.

David Butorac, CEO, OSN

“At my first job … in television … the head of cameras … told me that we are in the business of creating illusions and that’s what we do in television”

Why did you choose a career in television?
I went to a school that had a fairly advanced AV department and I got involved in every school event that happened. We used to do outside broadcast, and had a camera studio set-up that we could roll around the school. We got engaged in the joy of being able to create. So, at 15, I decided I wanted to work in television and proudly came and told my parents that. It came as a shock to them, but the advice from my parents was it doesn’t matter what you do in life as long as you do it properly. I have held that dear throughout my career. I was fascinated by TV. At my first job, which was in television, the head of cameras, who employed me told me that we are in the business of creating illusions and that’s what we do in television. I like the
fact that we can create something and have the privilege of going into people’s living rooms, and the fact that people trust us. That inspired me and motivated me to want to work in an industry where we had access to everybody’s living rooms.

**When did you make the shift from being a cameraman to a manager?**

When I was at Sky, where I eventually worked for 14 years, my employer took a very strong position in investing in people just as we do here. They saw a greater role for me in the executive team, and afforded me a business school education. To go back a bit in time, I started my career at Sky London as the head of Sky News’ camera department. Then, from there, I moved on to become head of operations and looked after all the technical infrastructure at Sky News. Then I became head of operations for the whole of Sky.

When Sky was expanding into sports production, we had a significantly large production facility, a massive operation and I had the pleasure of running the department that managed all of that. It was then that Sky sent me to business school [Harvard] for an accelerated MBA.

**I hear you have also initiated several training programmes at OSN?**

We have engaged in training and are investing more in training. We have introduced a wide range of training schemes which we will continue to develop. One of them is the BBC training for technical skills in relation to our engineering and operations departments. We are also investing in employee development programmes for other aspects of the business.

**Which department requires the most investment at OSN?**

Our biggest spending is on content. In the next couple of years, we shall invest a billion dollars to acquire and commission content. Our second biggest spend is on technology. We will continue to innovate. Capital investments are significant.

**Are you a phone addict?**

I am not obsessed by it but smart phones are like electronic tagging devices, the ones that they give to prisoners who are just released from the prison to keep a tab on them. It’s a great device and we will probably struggle to survive without them but I don’t let them ruin my life.

**Could you share one exclusive piece of news with our readers?**

In Q2 2013, we shall be refreshing the look and feel of our brand again. We have channelled significant money to create a new look and feel for our network.

**Which are your two biggest markets for 2013?**

Our biggest market remains the UAE. Our two biggest growth markets are Saudi Arabia and Egypt but we see consistent growth particularly in the GCC. Saudi Arabia will continue to accelerate and surpass the UAE.
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NEW VIP Vertical Intelligent Power
Streamline your installation process with TSL's new modular, vertical power management distribution unit.

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For decades Sennheiser has been a reliable and innovative partner in broadcast and theatre. Therefore, we understand that world-class sound engineers have the highest of demands and expectations. With this firmly in mind, we took all of our extensive experience and rolled it into our first digital multi-channel wireless system. This is it and it’s in a class all by itself: DIGITAL 9000 provides uncompressed digital audio transmission, free from intermodulation, and delivers stunning sound and dynamics with a cable-like purity. Additionally, DIGITAL 9000 offers control functions that make system setup simple and fail-safe. The highly intuitive user interface provides a complete overview of system performance offering peace of mind in challenging live situations. A pinnacle of innovation, DIGITAL 9000 is the best-in-class digital wireless system available and represents a future-proof investment. We’re lifting the curtain. You’ll get to know it. DIGITAL 9000 – The Wireless Masterpiece.

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A new Toon for the Middle East

Alan Musa, General Manager and VP of Turner Middle East, Africa and the Pan Arab region on the company’s plans for the future

What were some of Turner MEA’s greatest milestones in 2012?
2012 was an excellent year for Cartoon Network Arabic in terms of both the channel and the web site. More and more children are watching the channel, and we’re seeing a significant growth in traffic, with increasing viewers, fans and subscribers on the web site, Facebook page and the recently launched YouTube channel. The year has been great for Turner as pay TV continues to grow. Cartoon Network Studios Arabia in Abu Dhabi has also expanded as the team continues to work on creating original content.

What are your plans for 2013?
We shall build upon our achievements of 2012. In terms of the channel, we have several new series and episodes from our established franchises, plus some new shows.

We plan to continue on building momentum and empowering children by understanding them and providing them with a space to laugh out loud, be inspired by engaging characters and stories, stimulate them and stretch their imagination.

In terms of business, we’ll seek to build on the strong client portfolio that we have developed from the day we became a local business.

I believe Turner EMEA has cut its staff by 30%. Any comment on how this may, perhaps, impact your operations in the Arab world?
It’s business as usual in the Middle East. If anything, we will be creating new UAE-based roles.

Any statistics you can share with us on viewership?
Our subscription numbers are pretty much tied to the growth of pay TV and free-to-air (FTA) channels, as we are platform neutral. So, as both pay TV and FTA are growing in the region, it would be a safe assumption to say that we are too.

Who is your most inspiring movie ‘character’? Why?
I’ve always admired Chuck Yeager from the movie The Right Stuff – mainly for his calm, assured approach to his role, his obvious bravery and skill, plus his “can do, will do” approach to life and work. More recently of course, I can see many similarities between myself and Mr. George Clooney!

Who or where did you learn the most critical business lessons that you carry with you each day?
A strong work ethic has always been the cornerstone of my life, and this was instilled in me by my dad. His advice was to constantly strive to achieve more than is expected, both in work and in life.

What advice would you give yourself if you had to go back in time and revisit your teenage years?
Take a few more risks.

Are you a phone addict? Do you need to check your mails on your phone if you wake up in the middle of the night?
Unfortunately, yes – but I’ve also learnt not to immediately reply to late night emails, as some things can get lost in translation during that hazy disrupted sleep.

Which department asks you for the most amount of money or requires the most investment now?
They all present compelling lists of reasons on a regular basis.

“Which movie character do you identify with the most?” I’ve always admired Chuck Yeager from the movie The Right Stuff – mainly for his calm, assured approach to his role, his obvious bravery and skill, plus his “can do, will do” approach to life and work. More recently of course, I can see many similarities between myself and Mr. George Clooney!”

Alan Musa, GM and VP, Turner Middle East and Africa

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Traditional broadcast is a one-way communications system that was used to set trends and create needs. For many decades “Mad Men” style marketing had thought-leaders influencing audience-watching habits. With the advent of the Internet and the availability of content on demand, something drastic started happening. The days of TV slavery are over – people communicate in real-time and are taking control of the content popularity; the game is changing.

Viewership measurement revolutionised

Until now, traditional broadcasting has only had access to high-level feedback on the consumption of TV content. Several companies such as the UK’s BARB, France’s Médiamétrie or the US’ Nielsen provide such services usually based on a statistically significant pole of the subscriber base. These systems have been refined over several decades and are now very finely tuned. They are powerful enough, for example, to enable a TV channel to adapt the script of a series during a season to better match to viewers’ reactions and expectations.

Ratings are also used to terminate unpopular shows. But these
Today’s broadcasters need more and more audio channels at ever-higher resolutions, more power to handle this increased channel count and more ergonomic control surfaces to manipulate them.

Naturally, Calrec has the answer.

With the same levels of reliability which Calrec are world-renowned, and a remarkably intuitive control surface which still manages to add enormous flexibility, Apollo is nothing short of revolutionary. Calrec’s Bluefin2 DSP engine equips Apollo with more than 1000 channels for 5.1 Surround production and its internal 8192² Hydra2 router turns the console into a powerful networking tool.

The world’s most successful broadcasters rely on Calrec consoles.

Apollo is the first of Calrec’s new generation.

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systems, from the dawn of audience measurement, cannot be exhaustive and worse, the information comes back late and carries some statistical error margins.

Sampling
However deep the analysis goes, these efforts have had two fundamental limitations. Firstly, they are based on a sampling approach with a constant risk of the sample being polled becoming non-representative of the whole.

This situation is getting trickier still with the advent of long-tail content, enabled by global players like Amazon or NETFLIX. Content providers can no longer capture all of the trends that are emerging by using only a subset of the viewers, making it very difficult to fully understand those micro-phenomenon.

Real-time
The second limitation throws even more severe limitations on past audience measurement solutions. Until very recently, content marketers have adapted their future offerings to better suit the demand they understood from past trends. The time lag between understanding past trends and implementing new offers has slowly been shortening. It is still, however, mostly a three-phase process: measure – analyse – adapt; with days or at best hours between the phases.

Social TV is no longer the reserved domain of tech-savvy early-adopters, as mass audiences are becoming more aware of live tweets, for example. Reality shows are not the only ones reacting live to what the audience wants. Taking a step back, social media is forcing any content-related service to not only react to the audience perceptions, but to do so in real-time. With IP delivery, real audience feedback is finally available, bringing you facts not hype.

Multi Device
With the proliferation of IP and viewing content on multiple devices, broadcasters must also work within a multiscreen environment. Because more devices have storage capacity, that also means capturing usage data from as many devices as possible. People behaviour, usage habits and content interest will vary depending on the device chosen for accessing TV.

“It is surprising, even counter-intuitive, that at the same time the complexity is increasing, the cost of making actionable sense out of all this data is decreasing”

Arman Aygen, Business Development EMEA, Mariner

An Opportunity for Network Operators?
Network operators that are eager to get back into the value chain have an opportunity to understand viewer watching trends, based on what show is popular on which device and cross correlate the common points between them (duration, type, time). Audience segmentation is getting more precise with watching habits appearing across the traditional gender line, but now into more granular age-groups, device ownership, geography, etc.

Big Data Challenges
There are at least two separate challenges to resolve to get into the “Big Data” game. Firstly, the data on video and related viewer behaviour must be captured. This challenge might seem trivial or herculean, depending on where you sit in the value chain.

Once the data is available, the next step is to access it from within what used to be called a data warehouse.

Today’s “Big Data” relies on some new technologies like Storm used by Twitter, the Apache Hadoop project, or Google Prediction API. With such technologies, it becomes possible to number-crunch vast volumes of data in near real-time. In the case of the big web players like Google or Twitter, “vast” means multiple petabytes.

Although this challenge may seem daunting, new cloud-based architectures will make it much simpler to implement.

The Big Data Promise
So what can broadcasters or network operators gain from having information that reports back on content consumption with a “Big Data” approach?

The most important goal is to enable near real-time decisions to be taken based on subscribers’ multi-screen behaviour. This might require the massively parallel execution of sophisticated queries. But, in the end, it will unleash more powerful search and navigation using multiple data sources. An immediate beneficiary of this approach would be the operator’s content recommendation service. Improving this enhances the customer experience and raises Average Revenue per User (ARPU). Once you can follow real-time behaviour, on the family living room TV, for instance, it is only a matter of “when” not “if” we bring truly personalised advertising – that is more enjoyable and profitable – to the people in front of the TV.

We are getting closer to real-time data analytics. It is surprising, even counter-intuitive, that at the same time the complexity is increasing, the cost of making actionable sense out of all this data is decreasing.

It is not a race for quantity, as content owners already have more data than they can deal with. But it is about having smarter data.

The ecosystem from content producer to end-consumer will be modified as Big Data brings its benefits to TV too. But as with any disruptive technology, those that embrace it are in a world of opportunities.
As OTT content gains traction, several stakeholders are scrambling to match new customer demands with infrastructures that will provide value-added experiences, says Chris Knowlton of Wowza

The rapid and global growth of the handheld device market, the emergence of more robust network infrastructures, and the drop in the cost of bandwidth is causing a shift in the way people consume their favourite content. Today, users worldwide are increasingly turning to handheld devices for streaming live broadcasts and watching video-on-demand. As a result, TV’s traditional over-the-air model is slowly starting to erode, making way for video-over-IP applications that are providing users with access to streaming video anytime, anywhere.

As this preference for over-the-top (OTT) content continues to creep towards critical mass, some stakeholders are still scrambling to match new customer demands with infrastructures that will provide value-added experiences that attract, retain, and increase their subscription base. Furthermore, several sub-trends have already started to appear.

Viewing Trends
Within the travel and hospitality sector, the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) movement is on the rise. Already used in boardrooms and classrooms, BYOD enables users to consume content disseminated within third-party environments directly on their personal devices. Cruise ships, hotels, trains, and inflight entertainment systems have already begun exploring how to stream protected content directly to users on their smart phones, tablets, or laptops, enabling consumers to access the viewing experiences they are accustomed to, even during travel.

Within living room settings, multi-screen set-ups have given birth to the emerging “second screen” phenomenon. As home viewers continue to watch content via big-screen devices such as smart TVs, they have begun to complement their experience with their handheld connected devices. This simultaneous multiscreen interaction enables viewers to obtain real-time access to supplementary videos on the programmes they are watching, catch-up on missed broadcasts via video-on-demand, or seek out details about the advertisements that appear on their screens.

Challenges for Providers
For content providers, the question is how to effectively address a migrating subscription base that is seeking high-quality TV-like experiences on multiple screens from the location of their choice. To date, many broadcasters have been forced to react defensively to answer this challenge, since viewers are rapidly turning to online subscriptions costing as little as ten dollars per month. As a result, some providers are quickly turning out apps and other user experiences that add costs and complexity to their rapidly changing workflows without properly designing an infrastructure that will fully take advantage of the TV anytime, anywhere trend.

Another challenge is the fragmentation of the device marketplace. Users continue to adopt all different types of devices, forcing providers to supply content in several resolutions, bitrates, and bandwidth capabilities, which also add complexity and cost to streaming workflows. For instance, different profiles are required for Apple, Android, and Windows devices, leaving providers to wonder how they can reach more than 50% of their traditional subscribers on their devices when new devices are constantly being introduced to the market. To compound matters, providers are usually not making any more money after investing in complex multi-platform solutions since online content is often included in viewers’ traditional subscriptions.
TriCaster is a complete, integrated Live Production system that allows users to simultaneously produce, live stream, broadcast, project and record HD and 3D network-style productions.

Switch between multiple cameras, virtual inputs and live virtual sets, while inserting clips, titles and motion graphics with multi-channel effects.
uninterrupted viewing experience. From an advertising perspective, IP video can also ensure that providers deliver appropriate advertisements to viewers based on their individual profiles.

Once providers implement an IP infrastructure, they can measure success based on the number of application downloads to shed light on how many people are actually using their service. Furthermore, if providers build a system that adequately incorporates advertising, keeping in mind that the market is starting to experience a small increase in streaming advertising expenditures, value and appreciation, providers can begin to experience a potential return on investment.

**MPEG-DASH and the Future**

Today, companies such as Microsoft and Adobe have already endorsed MPEG-DASH, the new standard streaming protocol meant to unify the market’s diverse formats and devices. Provided that the adoption trend continues, it will be interesting that within a few years, content producers might no longer need to pick proprietary platforms for delivering their content. This will obviously make decision-making much simpler and provide potential cost savings.

However, several questions remain before MPEG-DASH can deliver on its anticipated benefits. First, there is still no consensus on which single standard will be used, which codec will be adopted, and which encoding profiles will be available.

Also, similar to Comcast’s model, another excellent consideration for providers is to consider moving to a complete IP platform that eliminates the need for creating two separate sets of content: one for big screens and a completely separate set for smaller ones. This way, processes are streamlined by pushing content through a single workflow by creating HD video for big screens that is simply scaled down for smaller screens and resolutions.

In terms of adding value for customers, providers must ensure that all facets of the viewing experience are provided at a seamless, high-quality level. For instance, in the early days of Hulu, programmes were provided using high-definition streams yet advertisements were sent out at a lower resolution with unreliable audio, which provided a jarring experience for viewers. Whether it is interstitial advertisements, sports/stock tickers, or overlay advertisements, providers must ensure that every element of content is adapted to the individual streaming experience.

A major part of this requirement is ensuring delivery via adaptive bitrate (ABR) streaming — a method for detecting a user’s available bandwidth during playback. Essentially, the server will automatically adjust the streaming quality in order to offer a seamless, uninterrupted viewing experience. From an advertising perspective, IP video can also ensure that providers deliver appropriate advertisements to viewers based on their individual profiles.

**Complexity, Cost and Value**

The best way to reduce costs and complexity is to invest in an infrastructure that is designed to work with multiple streaming formats and reach different types of devices. This might still mean working with different companies to ensure that all the right pieces are put together, but this number can be significantly reduced by selecting partners in the media server industry that will deliver content to Flash, Smooth Streaming clients, HLS, set-top boxes, and more.

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In terms of adding value for customers, providers must ensure that all facets of the viewing experience are provided at a seamless, high-quality level. For instance,
What happens when content and audience connect is an everyday magic. More than 350 digital TV operators in over 80 countries rely on us to sustain that magic by protecting their content and revenue. Conax technology is proven, flexible and secure.

At Conax we work hard to innovate so that consumers can experience everyday magic on any device, at anytime, anywhere. So let the magic begin.

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The challenges in delivering a multiscreen experience

The explosion in the number of connected devices and changing consumer habits in demanding access to content Anytime, Anywhere presents a number of complex challenges for broadcasters, Pay TV Operators and content providers in delivering a seamless consistent viewing experience that combines Live and On Demand programming to their respective audiences. The first of this two-part series examines the business models that are being adapted by Multichannel Video Platform Distributors (MVPD) and pure OTT players. The second part, which will be published next month, will look at the technology challenges in delivering a true multiscreen experience to audiences.

Is this just OTT?

“Over the Top” (OTT) delivery is used to describe the delivery of streaming video over IP-based networks, predominantly the Internet. However, there are only a handful of companies that are truly engaged in a pure OTT delivery business model. These companies tend to be disruptive to existing broadcasters and pay TV operators. Pure play OTT providers, such as Netflix present a disruptive service to incumbent broadcasters and Pay TV operators in a given market. For pure play OTT providers to enter new markets, they need to secure the relevant rights for their content catalogue but need no further relationships with incumbent operators in a particular country to deliver their service, as they rely on the open internet and global Content Delivery Network (CDN) providers; a true OTT business model.

For incumbent players within their respective markets, the key objective is to expand their existing services to connected devices in order to provide greater choice to their audience in consuming services; delivering content across managed and unmanaged networks to managed and unmanaged devices; and multi-platform video distributors (MPVDs).

Multiscreen revenue opportunities

In general, broadcasters, pay TV operators and content providers are leading their multiscreen revenue initiatives by expanding their existing business models.

Pay TV Operators

The initial use of multiscreen delivery for pay TV operators was to provide a subscriber retention tool in order to provide additional enhanced services to their higher paying customers. OSN’s key objective behind launching OSN Play last year was to retain existing subscribers.

In the UK, pay TV operators, such as BSkyB have evolved from this customer retention model to provide multiscreen-only-subscription packages providing a subset of their live channels and VOD catalogue to subscribers. Monetisation is primarily through the extension of the subscription VOD business model (S-VOD) model, with additional transaction revenues (T-VOD) opportunities through access to pay-per-view content.

Broadcasters

Free-to-air broadcasters have followed their audience online through the delivery of on-demand catch-up TV services.

Cable Operators

OTT provides cable operators with opportunities to enhance their existing
services by introducing IP delivery of metadata and other additional services across their two-way cable network. As cable operators operate within a fixed geographic network, OTT also provides a mechanism of increasing the subscriber base by offering OTT-delivered services to off-net customers. Revenue generation is based on a pay TV S-VOD model, again with the ability to generate additional T-VOD revenues through pay-per-view movies.

**Pure Play OTT Operators**
Pure play OTT operators who aggregate content from multiple content providers primarily lead on either A-VOD (YouView), T-VOD (FilmFlex) or S-VOD business models (Netflix, Blinkbox).

**Content Providers**
There are also opportunities for large content providers in markets where the volumes of traditional DVD formats are low due to piracy. This presents opportunities for content providers to provide their asset catalogues on a direct-to-consumer basis in markets where they will not cannibalise large traditional DVD sales.

**Multiscreen technology challenges**
There are a number of functional components that need to be considered in technical building blocks in order to provide a multiscreen OTT experience. Together, these building blocks form the basis of a broadband headend, which for existing operators, is used to extend the functionality of the existing broadcast headend in order to deliver content programming and the user experience to viewers on a wide range of connected devices including PCs, smartphones, tablets, hybrid set-top boxes, connected TVs and games consoles.

* Management of the metadata workflow (ingest, tone of voice, presentation) through a Video Content Management System (VCMS)
* Management of the content pipeline (ingest, transcode, encryption, delivery) through workflow orchestration
* Management of a consistent end user experience across connected devices

**Connected Device Management**
For pay TV operators, the broadband headend requires integration into existing Subscriber Management Systems in order to extend the concept of tiered subscription packages across connected devices. FTA broadcaster services require integration into an external Advertising Sever platform to provide monetisation of content through post, mid and pre-roll advertising. Services providing transactional-based content require integration into payment gateways in order to charge customers for content.

**Management of the metadata workflow**
In a connected world, metadata provides a key differentiator for content search and discovery. The key component for managing metadata is a VCMS. Typically, a platform must be able to ingest assets and metadata from a number of content providers. Although there are emerging standards for metadata such as TVA, the metadata ingest process must be able to deal with variances in the formats that content providers use for providing metadata. In fully automated systems, there may also be additional metadata files that provide updates.

Depending on the content provider, the metadata provided with assets can vary, from the provision of a title, through to comprehensive metadata that includes title, summary, still images, full cast details, subtitles, content rights windows and a list of devices that the content is authorised to play out on. Therefore, VCMS platforms need to be able to cater for the variance in the provided metadata and allow separate workflows to be created in order to allow the content editors to update and provide additional missing metadata.

Due to the different form factors of multiple devices, the VCMS needs to be flexible enough to store different versions.
of the metadata that are required for the form factors of different devices.

Content rights

The licensing of content presents a number of issues in terms of providing a consistent catalogue of content across multiple connected devices, and the policies that should be implemented for the content lifecycle. If content has multiple rights windows, then should the assets be maintained until the content is completely out of rights? Should the content be deleted when the first rights window has completed only to be re-ingested at a later date? Are there contractual commitments to content revocation that need to be captured and adhered to? Are content rights available for all platforms and available to be delivered over both fixed and mobile networks?

Content Pipeline

The content pipeline covers the ability to ingest both live and on-demand assets into a broadband headend. A typical content pipeline for VOD and Live for multiscreen delivery is shown above.

VOD Asset Workflow

VOD assets are typically delivered to the broadband headend using secure FTP from external providers, or through integration with an existing broadcast headend MAM for assets that have already been ingested for scheduling and broadcast. Typically, assets are transferred to drop folders, which then allows the workflow management of a Video Content Management System to detect a new asset has been delivered, and then to initiate the appropriate workflow.

Depending on the format of the assets (Mezzanine or ready for broadcast), assets may need to be encoded into a number of different formats so that they can be played out across different form factors of the targeted connected devices. In this scenario, a high bit rate mezzanine asset is typically used in order to ensure that the quality of the transcoded lower bitrate asset for broadband delivery can be as high as possible. Additional supporting assets, such as trailers and images can also be ingested into the service for further workflow processing. A typical activity is to produce a number of different image sizes from a single ingested asset to pre-agreed sizes in order to provide consistency in the presentation of the images across different connected devices and display form factors.

Typically, target end devices do not support a single Digital Rights Management (DRM) format for content protection. Therefore, the broadband head-end may be required to create multiple encrypted output files for each supported DRM format. Popular DRM technology for encrypting assets includes Microsoft PlayReady DRM, Adobe Flash Access 2, Widevine and Marlin.

The packaging server ingests multi-
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Do you know these terms?

**NPVR** – Network PVR. The ability for a consumer to flag shows to be recorded and then access those recordings later across the network from their account. May share recordings between consumers or allocate dedicated storage for each consumer, depending on content rights.

**OSMF** – Open Source Media Framework. Adobe’s player framework for streaming video in Flash providing a rich plugin API for 3rd parties to develop to. Common plugins include ad insertion and monitoring.

**MVPD** – Multichannel Video Programming Distributor.

**OTT** – Over the Top, a term often applied to video streaming services on the open internet, in contrast to video services on proprietary IPTV networks (cable or satellite).

**CDN** – Content Delivery Network, a service which accelerates video delivery by caching content close to the consumer.

**A-VOD** – Advertising funded VOD. Typically ads are embedded in the video as pre-rolls or mid-rolls.

**T-VOD** – Transactional VOD. Usually a one time payment to rent or own a show.

**S-VOD** – Subscription VOD. A recurring payment to access a defined catalogue of content.

**VCMS** – Video Content Management System. A content management system specifically geared to manage the video asset lifecycle, including media files, metadata, business rules and so on.

**SUBSCRIBER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM** – A system that manages user subscriptions and their entitlements. Often in the existing ecosystem on an OTT project and requires integration.

**ADVERTISING SERVER** – A system that manages ad campaigns and the business logic for targeting ads.

**TVA** – TV-Anytime, a standard for exchange of schedule and program metadata.

**MAM** – Media Asset Management System, a system that provides low level tracking and editing capabilities for media assets.

**RTMP AND RTMPE** – Real Time Messaging Protocol [Encrypted], a proprietary protocol by Adobe often used for streaming video.

Similar to the traditional TV operator, service and content providers are offering or planning to offer live TV or VOD to the connected devices. The next logical step to enhancing these services is by offering ‘Start Over’, ‘Catch Up’ and full Network PVR services to any connected device.

Modern multi-screen encoding platforms provide a framework that integrates all the components residing in the headend to provide an end-to-end system for the delivery of live (Linear) TV, VOD, ‘Start Over’ and ‘Catch Up’ TV applications for OTT video services. Encoding standards and adaptive streaming approaches have converged to a point which means that even if a device requires a different container format, this conversion can be done cost-effectively service side and cached by the CDN.

There are still challenges surrounding different encryption standards, however, which means the same asset must sometimes be duplicated in order to serve it using multiple DRM technologies.

This will eventually be solved once a wide variety of devices support MPEG DASH, which provides a common encryption standard for video. We typically work with Apple HTTP Live Streaming (HLS), Adobe HTTP Dynamic Streaming (HDS) and Microsoft SmoothStreaming formats. H.264 is the common encoding format.

The selection of formats is usually determined by a combination of device support and DRM requirements. We are seeing widespread adoption of PlayReady DRM across many devices and also the ability to support this across multiple streaming formats.

In the second part of this series, we shall examine the live pipeline, content delivery networks and how to manage the experience across multiple devices.

**Mark Christie** is Chief Technology Officer (CTO) with KIT digital and is responsible for product strategy, research and development and the global managed service operation that KIT provides to its customers.

**Content Delivery**

Modern Origin Servers support all widely used HTTP live streaming protocols and HTTP progressive download. HTTP protocol has been widely adopted by the internet as the delivery mechanism for static content. Almost all of the newly developed adaptive bitrate streaming and progressive download technologies are now based on HTTP.

As HTTP is so widely used, all networks (open or closed; public or private; wired or wireless) can pass such protocol through today without change.
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It’s as much a pleasure to hear Lebanese filmmaker Eliane Raheb speak as it is to see her films. In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, the celebrated Lebanese director talks about her latest film Layali Bala Noom, her story and her journey as a filmmaker.
What were the challenges you faced?

First of all, this is a documentary that is two hours and eight seconds long. We had to maintain the storyline, the spectator attention, the suspense and the evolution of the characters for this whole duration.

The second main challenge was to be close to the characters and give them all the space they needed to unveil and open up with their many layers and complexity. For that, I did a one-and-a half year research, where I got to live with them, and witness their pain, their fears, their hopes and their dreams. They trusted me and I became a part of them. I wasn’t there to judge them, but to understand them.

The third challenge was to hold an on-going investigation throughout the film, searching for details about the Faculty of Sciences battle that happened in 1982, when Maher disappeared, and learn more about his last moments in order to track where he could be today. We are talking about an incident that happened 30 years ago. The ex-fighters have either died or left the country, and the few who are still alive wouldn’t easily open this chapter of their life and talk about it. The film ends with a search for Maher’s grave.

What’s the idea behind your film?

The post-war Lebanese governments promised us peace and reconciliation between different sects. On the contrary, throughout those years, I witnessed the lords of war became even more powerful. They have succeeded through their positions in normalising corruption and sectarianism while war is always in the air. Within this context, after the war was finished, I had many questions to ask to the older generation, especially those who fought during the war. However, when asking deep questions about the war, especially through films, we would always be faced with state censorship, asking us not to bring this issue up anymore.

There were many questions about the 15 years of war and no official answers, in the state nor in the media until the day I read in the newspaper that a high-ranking intelligence officer in one of the main Christian militia, Assaad Chaftari, was apologising about his war acts. In 2002 I met him, and had the chance to hear him out, and soon I started to believe that his confession could be the basis on which we should build a platform, where the confession and the apology would gain a new meaning.

Through confrontation with every detail of Assaad’s war actions and with his motives behind those acts, we hoped to help the Lebanese people come to terms with the war once and for all. Through Chaftari, I had the opportunity to meet Maryam Saiidi, the mother of Maher, a communist who was fighting during the war and disappeared in 1982. It was a battle between Chaftari’s party and the communist party. Apparently, Chaftari had some information about the disappeared son and was willing to share it with Maryam. The film became the story of Chaftari and Mrs. Saiidi – a man in search of redemption and a woman in search of her child. Though, they are two opposed characters with two different visions for Lebanon, they are united by the same conflict.
What was the equipment you used to shoot this project?
When I was researching, I used to record the interviews on a small Tascam digital recorder. Later, I used some parts of that audio research in the film. With regards to filming, we did not have sufficient budget in the beginning, and every funder wanted a 20-minute pilot, especially since this was a sensitive issue. So, I had to first shoot in HDV format on a Sony Z7 camera. As a result, I had great scenes that I decided to use in the final editing.

When we had more money, we shifted to HD, using a Sony F3 with prime lenses. We shot the rest of the film with it. In between the two shootings, I had to film an unexpected scene with one of the exiled ex-fighters who came to Lebanon for a few days, and I filmed him personally on a Sony Mini DV.

The formats and technicalities, however, were never that important in this film. It did not stop us from including it in the documentary, irrespective of whether it was on an amateur format or on a professional one. The mixture between these formats created a dynamic style, and the colour correction operator Dan Cohen did a great job while mixing these formats. The final film is on HD CAM and DCP.

What formats have you used in the past to shoot?
As a filmmaker, I have shot on different formats and I keep experimenting.

What did you use for post production?
I used AVID 6 for the rough cut and fine cut; DaVinci for colour correction and Pro Tools for editing and mixing sound.

What were the technical highlights of this project?
This film took me three years to complete. The research took a year and a half, the funding and the pilot took about seven months and the biggest part of the shooting as well as the editing took about nine months. When I shot the pilot, I used the Sony Z7 HDV as it was a good camera for a decent price. At that time, the professional ranges from Sony for HD were the EX1 and EX3 in the market.

How did you get involved in filmmaking and how has your journey been so far?
In my early childhood, my grandfather owned a movie theatre in the province of Zahleh, in the Bekaa valley. It was called the Opera, and there I could watch many films from all genres — silent films, Egyptian musicals, Indian melodramas, Karate films, as well as Hollywood action.

I was much attracted by the lights of the screen in the dark room, and I guess that was my first step in the cinema journey. During the war, we still got the chance to see some films there, until it closed in the late 80s. When the war was over, I was 18 years old and some audiovisual departments were launched in some Lebanese universities. I decided to study in the Institut d’études scéniques, audiovisuelles et cinématographiques (IESAV) faculty of the St Joseph University. Immediately after my graduation, I independently made a short fiction film Al Ard Al Akhiri which I shot on 16mm. It was about the Opera movie theatre where I spent my childhood, using it as a metaphor for Lebanon, its time of glory and its fall from grace.

My uncle had decided to destroy this movie theatre, the same way the nouveau riche businessmen were destroying the memory of Lebanon after the war, and I revolted against this act by making a film. The film received a good response and many awards. A year later, I shot another short film, Likaa (meeting), where I mixed fiction and documentary.

As filmmaking provides no livelihood in Lebanon, I made a living working as an assistant director for ad films. I worked there for three years, and hated it. From the agency that creates the ideas for the ads to the production, and passing by the marketing department and the clients’ moods, I felt the people and the situations were totally fake and exaggerated not to mention the inefficiency of the promoted products and the plastic smiles of the actors using these products.

Everything was totally disconnected from reality, far from the magic moments I lived when I saw films — where we saw stories of love, dreams, and fears. I decided to quit my job and left for Paris to obtain a Master’s degree in cinema. While I was there, I wrote a feature fiction The Labneh Party, but I didn’t get funds to make it.

In 1999, I returned to Beirut and along with some friends, we created a cultural association for the cinema “Beirut DC”, where we would experiment on how to make low-budget cinema, related to our lives and experiences.

There we produced about 15 films, and we conducted many activities to enhance the independent Arab cinema. Among them was the festival Ayyam Beirat Al Cinema’iya, that I directed artistically for six editions.

It was in the year 2000 that I really started working on documentaries. During the Intifada, I had many questions to the children who were reacting to the intifada in Palestine, and I searched for answers in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and France. It became a film about my own childhood and my relationship with Palestine. After that experience, I became more aware of the situation in the region and linked my own cinema universe to this reality. I enjoyed documentary filmmaking and its challenges and continued working in the documentary field and winning awards.

Layali Bala Noom (Sleepless Nights) has been premiered in San Sebastian, then shown at Dubai Film Festival, and now it is being screened in several other festivals worldwide.
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What is your inspiration?
At 15, I saw La femme d’à côté, a French film, by Truffaut, and that was a turning point for me. When I started watching films in the university, I learnt more about neo-realism in Italian cinema and liked it a lot. I saw that the reality of Lebanon after war had natural sceneries and real stories to explore in a new wave Lebanese cinema.

Nowadays, I also appreciate the Spanish and Latin American cinema and I still like to watch the old classical Hollywood movies.

I must mention that in the mid 90s, I also discovered the new Palestinian cinema. I was particularly intrigued by the documentary films of Nizar Hassan. Later, I even got to work with Nizar as he produced my films Hayda Lubnan and Layali Bala Noom.

When I want to make a film, I am mostly inspired by the stories of people that raise existential questions in me and make me want to understand more about their life and the world. But there is a theme that obsesses me, and comes back in most of my documentaries, which is the political religious identity, how it traps the people and alienates them from themselves.

How many people worked in your team?
Depending on the situation, we had around six to 12 people on other days. That also depended on the equipment used. With the HDV, six to seven people would suffice. The F3 with its lenses and its zoom required around 12.

What are you currently working on?
I have been a documentary teacher at the St Joseph University since 2003. Last year, I took a break in order to work on my film, so now I am back to teaching again. Simultaneously, there is a project I have been working on since 2012. It’s called Arabi Hor (Free Arabs).

With Nizar Hassan, we created a website that has aired about 160 short documentaries directed by young Arab filmmakers. The films produced within this website portray the influence of the revolutions on the people. Each of them is two minutes long and were shot in six countries. This is a cross media documentary project, in the sense that the films could have multiple uses such as internet, TV or cinema. Some of the films were aired on ARTE, on France 24, and in some cinema festivals too.

The first phase of the project has finished and had a great response, now we are looking for ways to continue the project, taking another theme to explore.

What are your plans for the future?
Frankly speaking, I am still working on Layali Bala Noom’s different translations and, most important thing, promoting the film further.

How do you see this region’s industry?
A very positive and dynamic one, especially as the new funds in the Arab world are allowing a larger number of young talented people to emerge and experiment with various styles. I believe that this accumulation will lead to a fine future for Arab cinema.

I enjoy watching documentaries produced in the Arab world, more than fiction. They are more creative, more challenging, and by taking real stories and treating them cinematographically, they reach a state of fiction that even fictional films cannot achieve. We still lack good producers, unfortunately.

What advice would you give new filmmakers?
I would strongly advise them to hold on their cinematic dreams and strive to fulfill them.

Your dream equipment would be…
To return to the basics of cinema and forget about all these formats and confusing equipment. I would like to give the 35mm one try before it vanishes.
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In March 2009, I wrote a paper for CABSAT analysing the potential for HD take-up in the MENA region. At that time, Luxe TV was the only MENA HD channel, whilst Europe already had 130 HD channels.

Four years on, there are now tens of millions of HD screens in living rooms across the region, and over 10% of the MENA channels are broadcast in HD compared with 9.3% in Europe. MENA appears to be ahead of the curve, but at what price? This follow-up paper examines the need for greater commerciality in regional HDTV.

THE CURRENT MENA HDTV MARKET

There are 103 HD TV channels operating in the region at the time of writing. See Figure 1.

OSN is driving the advancement of HD in the region, representing almost a quarter of HD channels available. However, there is another more significant trend in the region:

* More than half the HD channels operating in the region are government-owned, and
* 80% of these are broadcast free-to-air because encryption is perceived to undermine emerging HD audiences. These market dynamics are in stark contrast with developed television markets elsewhere.

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN HDTV

More than 35% of US satellite channels are now HD, and according to Nielsen, more than 70% of US homes own at least one HD TV.

In Europe, 917 (9.3%) of the 9,879 linear channels are HD (Source: Mavise). The proportion is similar to MENA, but the encryption mix is different. In Europe, most HD channels are privately owned, and between 75% and 95% are encrypted. See Figure 2.

In fact over 80% of the channels being aired in HD are encrypted versions of existing SD channels (Mavise). The SD versions are commonly free-to-air.

With the notable exception of state-financed news providers (such as Russia Today), who broadcast HD PTA, European broadcasters...
are using HD as a tool to develop new subscription revenues and recoup their investments in HD infrastructure.

**GERMANY REINVENTS PAY TV**

Those of us who have grown up with pay-TV tend to think of it like a gym membership. Ranging from USD20-80 a month, it’s another utility that sneaks into the household budget. Here in the Middle East, this monthly payment model has always met with huge resistance. People would rather pay cash up front than carry a perceived debt.

OSN, the most established regional pay-TV platform, has avoided this challenge by focusing on high income households and settling for a smaller penetration of the market. Overall pay-TV penetration in the region has remained low at around 6% - compared with 25% and above elsewhere.

TV strategists often compare the MENA pay-TV market with Germany, where consumers have similarly resisted paying monthly subscriptions. However, three years ago the HD+ business model was developed as a volume retail low pay approach to pay-TV. Consumers buy an HD+ receiver (similarly priced to a regular HD receiver) that comes pre-loaded with a 12-month free trial of HD channels. All of these channels are available free-to-air in SD, but an HD+ box is required in order to receive them in HD. After one year, the consumer is asked for 50 Euros to continue receiving the service for a further 12 months.

In October 2012, HD+ announced that 2.8m households were receiving the service, with 2m households in their free-trial period and 800k households paying the HD+ annual fee (up nearly 300% from 2011). Half of the satellite receivers sold in Germany are now HD. This is a staggering achievement in a market that has resisted pay-TV for 20 years.

**LOW-PAY HDTV IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

HD+ might seem familiar: MBC recognised that HDTV will undermine emerging HD audiences because encryption is perceived to be a challenge. MBC then went on to develop a “free to air” solution using “HD-Only” channels.

In fact over 80% of the channels that OSN re-launched in HD (having carried SD versions) have been replaced with HD-only channels. Other broadcasters, such as MBC, had resisted HD for 20 years. The switch from SD to HD has been a huge challenge for distributors, as it requires the introduction of encryption.

**FIGURE 1: HDTV CHANNELS IN THE MENA REGION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CHANNELS</th>
<th>UNIQUE HD CHANNELS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENCRYPTED HD CHANNELS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABU DHABI TV</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MBC</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AL JAZEERA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABU DHABI TV</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT OWNED FREE-TO-AIR HD CHANNELS</td>
<td>DUBAI MEDIA INC.</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>PRIVATE FTA HD CHANNELS</td>
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*Sources: Lyngsat, KingSat, ChannelSculptor*

**FIGURE 2: HDTV ON EUROPEAN HOT SPOTS**

![Figure 2](https://example.com/image2)

**FIGURE 3: SIMULCAST VS. HD ONLY CHANNELS IN EUROPE**

![Figure 3](https://example.com/image3)

*Source - Mavis*
HD IMPLICATIONS FOR MENA SATELLITE HOTSPOTS
HD requires significantly more satellite capacity than SD, even at MPEG4 compression rates. The great temptation for broadcasters is to try to make do with a low bandwidth (say 6 Meg) but this can be catastrophic to channel quality – poor or inconsistent image quality defeats the whole purpose of HDTV. European and US benchmarks point to 8-12 Meg being an acceptable level for HD channels, depending on the amount of action on the screen. At $ 100k per Meg, the capacity cost of an HD channel is, therefore, around $1 million a year.

Of course, price and availability varies between satellites according to demand. FTA SD broadcasters pay a big premium for a slot with a big audience reach. For example, the 7°W orbital position shared by Nilesat, Noorsat and Eutelsat is reportedly so crowded that broadcasters are queuing for SD slots that become available when existing channel tenants don’t pay their bills and get removed. Regional HD (MPEG4) audiences are still small, so commercial FTA broadcasters cannot justify $1m capacity costs – hence the reason why so many of the channels in Figure 1 are government owned.

With MBC already available in the market, attention is now focused on where and when FTA commercial networks such as Rotana Media will launch in HD. Satellite providers with capacity available for HD will need to offer strategic deals to attract big commercial networks.

Low pay TV operators offer the most integrated HD growth strategy for satellite providers. By partnering on an exclusive basis, they can create a virtuous circle: platforms driving audience to the satellite and the satellite providing a cost-effective platform for growth. In the case of new regional hot spots such as YahLive at 52.5°E, every MPEG4 decoder sold should be accompanied by a new dish installation.

CONCLUSION
If MENA broadcasters continue to launch HD channels free-to-air:
* Pay-TV penetration will remain low at 6%
* TV advertising revenues will continue on their current trends, and
* The cost of satellite capacity will increase dramatically

The resulting profit reductions will make the market less attractive to commercially run channels – whether regional or international. Regional satellites will become ever more saturated with state-financed broadcasters that can afford to operate at a permanent loss. This is a bad outcome for the industry and for consumers — who will have to deal increasingly with programming decisions based on regional politics rather than viewer preferences.

So far, the take-up of low-pay HD services in MENA has been steady but uninspiring, and every month, another few HD channels launches free-to-air. There is still time for a new “Low-Pay HD” platform to grow to critical mass, but this can only happen if there is trust and significant shared investment between satellites, broadcasters and platform owners.
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In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, Fadi Ismail, GM of O3 Productions, the production arm of MBC Group, talks about the new productions the broadcaster will undertake at the new sound stage in Dubai Studio City.

In the next couple of months, MBC will begin filming one of its biggest Khaleeji productions at Dubai Studio City’s first sound stage, which the broadcaster has leased for a period of five years. The comedy series, which will feature some of the biggest Khaleeji stars, is an ambitious local production by MBC and one of the first of a series of productions that will be shot in the new studio. The broadcaster hopes to make the series ready in time for Ramadan 2013.

The sound stage, which is the first in a series of three stages, is spread over a sprawling 15,000 sq. ft and offers state-of-the-art facilities.

MBC’s in-house team will work closely with international and local experts to put in place a cost-effective and fully functional studio that will provide maximum return on investment, Fadi Ismail, GM of O3 Productions told BroadcastPro Middle East.

MBC will customise the studio with lighting, systems and graphic set-ups according to its varied production requirements. A chroma will be part of the studio once it is fully ready.

MBC, being the largest FTA network in the region, has changed the dynamics of the TV viewing experience in the Middle East, by constantly bringing fresh content – whether acquired or produced directly, to the Arab audience.

The new sound stage that the broadcaster has leased will give fresh impetus to its plans to build a consolidated media content production base in the region. The broadcaster hopes to play a greater role in direct productions thanks to the availability of the new sound stage.

“MBC has constantly strived to raise the bar for content quality and being able to produce directly is a major step forward in that direction,” explains Ismail.

According to Ismail, the ratio of commissioned to direct productions by MBC stands at 70:30 today, but he hopes that the balance will shift in the
In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, Fadi Ismail, GM of O3 Productions, the production arm of MBC Group, talks about the new productions the broadcaster will undertake at the new sound stage in Dubai Studio City.

In the next couple of months, MBC will begin filming one of its biggest Khaleeji productions at Dubai Studio City’s first sound stage, which the broadcaster has leased for a period of five years. The comedy series, which will feature some of the biggest Khaleeji stars, is an ambitious local production by MBC and one of the first of a series of productions that will be shot in the new studio. The broadcaster hopes to make the series ready in time for Ramadan 2013.

The sound stage, which is the first in a series of three stages, is spread over a sprawling 15,000 sq. ft and offers state-of-the-art facilities. MBC’s in-house team will work closely with international and local experts to put in place a cost-effective and fully functional studio that will provide maximum return on investment, Fadi Ismail, GM of O3 Productions, told BroadcastPro Middle East. MBC will customise the studio with lighting, systems and graphic set-ups according to its varied production requirements. A chroma will be part of the studio once it is fully ready.

MBC, being the largest FTA network in the region, has changed the dynamics of the TV viewing experience in the Middle East, by constantly bringing fresh content – whether acquired or produced directly, to the Arab audience. The new sound stage that the broadcaster has leased will give fresh impetus to its plans to build a consolidated media content production base in the region. The broadcaster hopes to play a greater role in direct productions thanks to the availability of the new sound stage. “MBC has constantly strived to raise the bar for content quality and being able to produce directly is a major step forward in that direction,” explains Ismail.

According to Ismail, the ratio of commissioned to direct productions by MBC stands at 70:30 today, but he hopes that the balance will shift in the years to come with the broadcaster making greater investments in local productions.

“We have lined-up a number of projects this year between Dubai and Cairo while some commissioned productions in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are also being planned. Although, Turkish content is still popular, it cannot beat the appeal of local content which we regard as the king of kings. We have decided to produce locally in order to control the quality. A historical title is in the offing and we are also working on a social drama to release during Ramadan this year. Both these productions will be done in Egypt,” confides Ismail.

“We have lined up a number of projects this year between Dubai and Cairo while some commissioned productions in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are also being planned”

Fadi Ismail, GM, O3 Productions

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MBC also recently announced a partnership with Hollywood specialist Stargate Studios Global Production and the consequent launch of ‘Stargate Middle East’, which will tie in with the sound studio project.

The partnership, according to Ismail, will be a game changer and help to overhaul the creative process in the region and aid in developing more content in the local market.

“Stargate’s role does not end at providing only the technical expertise but they are involved at every stage of the production,” explains Ismail.

“That was the main idea of bringing this partnership to the region. They will provide the know-how and the workforce in addition to being the technology providers. The creativity that we hope to apply in the region will make use of these abilities. In association with Stargate, MBC is working on the systems integration of the sound stage with an in-house team.”

The primary objective is to maximise the potential of the studio, kit it out with equipment that can be used flexibly across various productions and ensure a good return on its investment, says Ismail.

“The idea is to make the project functional and cost-effective, which is why we are going the extra mile to garner the right kind of expertise from different quarters. We have experts and technical support from Los Angeles, Denmark, Croatia and Spain. Being a private company, we have to make things commercially viable while making creative sense.”

MBC will be investing in its own studio equipment as well to ensure that everything stays within budget.

“Renting equipment is an expensive proposition and we have ruled it out completely. We are investing in equipment and human resources which we believe to be more viable. We want to make Dubai a production hub in the true sense and making the facilities efficient in terms of cost goes a long way in that direction.”

Given its large size, the studio has sufficient room to house multiple productions and it will be customised according to individual productions.

Although Ismail says he does not know just yet if multiple productions will be filmed at the studio, he confirms that he has travelled to several countries including Argentina, Spain and Croatia scouting for studio development ideas to make optimum use of the space they have.

**Studio Specs**

The MBC studio is spread over an area of **15,000 sq. ft.** The newly completed facility is designed with the latest specifications and smart technologies. Equipped with advanced data connections and power sockets, the studio is ready to use where the clients can just plug-in and begin filming.

**The sound stage** can accommodate up to 300 people at any given time and 10-15 people can even stay at the premises during the course of a production.

**Lighting grids and catwalks** allow for easy rigging. The beams of each grid can hold a car or even a helicopter. The 28-tonne concrete **elephant door** enables easy entry for large vehicles.

The **remote-controlled doors** of the studio automatically close at the click of a button when a production is under way. These are indicated by flashing lights outside the studio, which can be accessed from different floors of the facility.

The **studio walls** are covered with thick panels to make them sound proof.

It also features **two make-up and hair rooms** and two dressing rooms in addition to a director’s room or the VIP room with spacious wardrobes.

There are **four fire exits** at the facility. The studio features a special fire-fighting system designed to the specific requirements of such facilities. During a live shoot, the alarms of the fire safety systems can be deactivated to avoid interruptions in the shooting.

The **fire alarms** are connected to the control room security and MEP systems so that security personnel can be notified of the exact location of the fire.
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"We do not aspire to build a museum that has equipment that will be used sparingly. We want a functional base that offers conducive conditions and good facilities to produce quality content regularly. Dubai has experimented in ad/films and music but with attempts such as this, we are laying the foundation for drama and movie production here," adds Ismail.

Sound Stages

While Ismail is hopeful that the MBC sound stage will be operational by April, two larger sound stages of 25,000 sq. ft each, are scheduled to release in Dubai in June and September 2013, respectively, Jamal Al Sharif, Managing Director of Dubai Studio City tells BroadcastPro ME.

The two studios will be interconnected by an elephant door to operate as one 50,000 sq ft sound stage should there be such a requirement. The combined studio will be the largest in the Middle East. These sound stages are complemented with workshops and backlots and are expected to further boost local production volume which witnessed a 25% growth in the year 2012.

"This is not your average studio. This is a place where a crew can literally stay for weeks without getting out. There's a laundry room, make-up room, bedrooms, living rooms and so on. We have green rooms, screening areas, of/fices and the stage itself," says Al Sharif.

Dubai Studio City will be partnering with broadcasters to offer them infrastructural and logistical services, soft services, power, and telecommunications for the long-term development of production facilities in the region. In addition to these, Dubai Studio City offers several incentive programmes to attract more productions to Dubai.

The recent launch of Dubai TV and Film Commission, of which Al Sharif is Chairman, is aimed at aggressively pushing the emirate as a hub for international film production.

"Dubai Film and TV Commission has stepped in to make Dubai more appealing for production companies and is lending support to production staff and freelancers in order to build a thriving local talent pool. The incentives include special facilities for the crew, visas, accommodation, airline, sorting out equipment, and so on," explains Al Sharif.

Dubai Studio City has big plans for the future as it negotiates with hotel chains to open three-star and four-star hotels in the vicinity of the sound stages.
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Training in Yemen

In the last week of January, a team from Katarat Ebda’a went to Yemen to train young, aspiring filmmakers develop their talent. Carl Weibe, CEO and Creative Director, and Magy Saeed, Director of Talent Development, Katarat Ebda’a report from Yemen

ITDC (International Training Development Centre), a Yemen-based NGO, undertakes several initiatives in the country. One of their recent initiatives was to bring a production team down to Yemen to train young filmmakers and, in turn, equip them to train others. Katarat Ebda’a was approached for the project.

When we reached there, we discovered talented young men and women wanting to make a difference in their communities through the media. They did not just want to learn how to shoot, they wanted to share that information with other people who had the same aspirations as them.

Adeeb Ahmed Mahyoub, Marketing and Projects Manager for ITDC says there has been no filmmaking in Yemen for the last three years although “interest is strongly increasing now”.

“Our role is to raise awareness about media in schools, colleges, and among the youth. This training programme was aimed at providing talented youth with a simple introduction to filmmaking in order to change their preconceived notions about the media. This training helped us in getting a better insight into the craft of filmmaking. I will personally use what I learnt to create awareness films and positive films. I will help the youth who have very limited knowledge of the media to learn more. I want to transfer all the information we received to them so that they will learn and, in turn, educate others.”

The 45-hour production workshop, which was attended by 10 aspiring filmmakers, included lectures, hands-on training and the production of short films. The workshop covered the production process, camera equipment, story-telling, interviewing, lighting, audio and editing. This was in addition to stressing the values of teamwork, good planning, creativity, and other principles that are essential to filmmaking.

In recent months, there has been a surge in the number of documentaries, short films and comedy series from Yemen.

Sharif Saleh Mohammed, a third-year student at the Faculty of Arts expressed optimism about the future of media in the country.

“We have very talented youth and with the right training and equipment, we can make a difference. I joined this workshop to learn about production and pave the way for the future of filmmaking in my country.”

Ahmad Al Mekhlafi, a well-known actor in Yemeni TV drama serials, who is also involved in graphic design, added that he was committed to furthering filmmaking in the country.

“I liked the exposure we got to the latest production systems in the market. I plan to produce my own productions and participate in other projects as well. I have big dreams.”

Filmmaking in Yemen is not without its challenges. There is a dearth of both human and financial resources. In addition, the paucity of equipment in the market whether for buying or renting, hinders productions. Qualified experts that are able to provide adequate training and mentoring within the country are few

“Met them... taught them ... listened to them and shared their dreams. They produced short films on issues that disturbed them, issues that they wanted to communicate to their communities, and did not know how”

Magy Saeed, Director of Talent Development, Katarat Ebda’a
and far between. I was impressed by the fact that the Yemeni filmmakers made do with the equipment they had. The lack of tripods, the availability of only consumer cameras used in homes and limited lighting equipment did not discourage them. They were willing to forge ahead to create films.

This workshop exposed the filmmakers to some professional cameras and editing capabilities and helped them understand how they could potentially use the tools they had more creatively.

ITDC in consultation with the Katarat team secured some Sony cameras, Manfrotto tripods, and simple lighting instruments made locally, to help the young filmmakers practice their craft. Additionally, Apple Macintosh computers running FCP editing software completed the basic equipment set-up for the training. Our team provided in-depth training on the technical side.

Maha Ahmed Al Omari, a local female attendee and filmmaker rues the lack of media courses in local universities.

“We need more courses and colleges that teach media,” she says.

“Such workshops will reshape filmmaking in Yemen because it is creating something from nothing. I will keep updating myself and learn more online.” she adds.

Moussa Ahmed Abdellah, a graphic designer and legal accountant sees the importance of using filmmaking to make a positive impact on society.

“I will work hard to communicate messages that will benefit the community by spreading awareness through modern media. I love this field. I have ideas and messages that I want to communicate. I need to learn how to film so that I can communicate my ideas. We hope to see a stronger industry in the future especially in documentaries,” she says.

Magy Saeed, Director of Talent Development at Katarat Ebda’a was also impressed by the commitment and willingness to learn.

“Met them, taught them, coached them, listened to them and shared their dreams. I was amazed not only by the talent they possess, but with the passion that drives them. They produced short films on issues that disturbed them, issues that they wanted to communicate to their communities, and did not know how. Their passion for wanting to train others is very strong. I was asked by many of them if they could teach what they had learnt. It was clear we will be back again to help them train others or what we call “train the trainers”.

The Katarat Ebda’a team will return to Yemen this month to work with five selected filmmakers in equipping them as facilitators to be able to train others on the basics of filmmaking. ITDC will sponsor a series of youth development training initiatives during this summer, a key element of which will be filmmaking, with the objective of empowering them to train others. 

The above photographs were taken by Maarten de Wolf at the workshop in Yemen.
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**BROADCAST SOLUTIONS ON WHEELS**

German systems integrator Broadcast Solutions, which recently opened an office in Dubai, will be at CABSAT with a brand new, six-camera OB/SNG van. Broadcast Solutions says the van has been specifically tailored to meet the needs of Middle East customers and combines OB and SNG facilities within one small compact vehicle that could previously only operate as a small standard SNG van. The systems integrator will also showcase its other products and offerings.

“We have seen a trend in the Middle East and have designed a hybrid van that caters to these requirements,” commented Peter Jakobsson, Director of Business Development. “To meet the increasing need for standardised SNGs, optionally combined with OB capability, we have developed a range of SNG solutions called S-DSNG. These make use of the absolutely latest satcom technology and the best auto-pointing antennas. All of this is remote controlled, allowing us to create very attractive solutions that are easy to use. In these solutions, we optionally integrate OB functionality where we can include up to six cameras in a good working environment in a standard panel van.”

The seven-metre van is a small version of the many different sizes of OB vans that Broadcast Solutions is accustomed to creating for its clients. It’s a heavy duty four-wheel drive that can easily be used in the desert. It includes full-scale air-conditioning customised for this region; a standalone power system with UPS support and 25kW onboard power; fully redundant 1.5 metre auto-pointing satellite dish and six commodious operator positions for the crew. The van is wired for up to six HD cameras. All of this has been accommodated within a small vehicle that weighs only 5.3 tons. The brand new vehicle is available for immediate delivery in the region.

“We needed to show something live so that customers could see our innovation and quality,” says Managing Director Stefan Breder.

“This OB van has been specially built for the Middle East. It has an air conditioning system that takes into consideration the special desert climate in the Middle East. It’s also important to note that unlike most other suppliers, we take care of the whole chain from concept to completion in house while others normally shop around for subcontractors for each individual project. Since our main business is the supply of the complete chain, we put equal importance to the smallest detail as well as to the main system components.

With this van, Broadcast Systems will also offer some standard sizes to reduce costs and delivery times.

Breder explains: “Normally, each OB van is specially designed for a company. Every OB van is sort of different while being fundamentally, the same. With this concept, our aim has been to design a vehicle that is fundamentally the same and then, customise some bits. This makes the whole process more cost effective and ensures shorter delivery times. We always have OB vans in different stages of completion on stock so we can deliver in very short time.”

In addition to the facilities, the audio/video system in the vehicle offers full flexibility with a state-of-the-art routing system. In addition, the monitoring system is just as flexible with its router and multi-viewer system. Although capable of high-end productions, this system is still easy to configure. The S-6 DSNG is designed to cover shows, concerts, sport events, talk shows and other similar applications.

**Tech Specs**

- **WORKING PLACES FOR:** Director, Vision engineer, Camera control/engineering, graphic, audio engineer, Slomo operator.
- **VIDEO SYSTEM** Up to six cameras, 2 M/E video mixer with two built-in multiviewers where each has up to 10 channels, 2 x VTR, 2 x DVD/BlueRay, a dual-channel character generator, four-channel slomo, and a complete set of glue equipment as converters distributors and embedder, de-embedders from Axon.
- **AUDIO SYSTEM** 16-fader digital audio mixer with meter bridge, 36-port digital intercom system, Telephone hybrid and GSM hybrid, Digital effect processor, CD/MPEG player and commentary unit
- **SATCOM SYSTEM** Redundant uplink system 2x 400W with Auto-pointing antenna, encoder/modulator MPEG 2/MPEG 4, IRD MPEG 2/MPEG 4, DVB-S and DVBS-2 off-air reception, DVB-T reception.
- **VEHICLE** VW Crafter, 2,0 l TDI 120 kW, robust 4x4 drive, storage area in the rear.
- **POWER SYSTEM** 25kW power generator to run the complete vehicle, UPS system for supporting of the complete van for 20 minutes.
- **AIRCON SYSTEM** Separate aircon system for equipment and working area designed for temperature up to 60 °C. Overall 20kW aircon power.
HARRIS BRINGS PLATINUM

Harris Broadcast’s Platinum IP3 router – the broadcast industry’s first router to accommodate separate video, audio and data paths within the same frame – will make its debut at CABSAT along with several other products.

The Platinum IP3 is the first signal router that can scale to multi-frame configurations for very large broadcast and media operations using a common architecture, simplifying installations and eliminating costs associated with external components and complex cabling. The architecture maximises on-air security, with a new approach to audio, video and multiviewer signal protection based on redundant crosspoints and integrated routing designs. This “three-path” architecture for signal routing marks an evolution within Harris Broadcast’s Platinum routers – the first to offer a “dual-path” architecture for separate video and audio paths. The triple-path architecture of the Platinum IP3 retains the ability to cleanly separate video and audio signals while becoming the first broadcast router to offer a true path to network convergence.

“Offering a future-proof design that looks beyond baseband/IP convergence to cover ultra-high-bandwidth needs, including 4K and beyond, gives our customers the opportunity to prepare for approaching changes,” commented Harris Morris, President of Harris Broadcast.

“The ability for our customers to intelligently scale routing systems to any size using a common architecture, along with the best possible on-air protection, delivers real-world benefits that are clearly viable today.” The Platinum IP3 delivers multi-format signal routing up to 576x1024 in a single 28RU frame. It can scale to at least 256x256 in multi-frame configurations without external distribution amplifiers or combiners, reducing costs and labour.

The design eliminates the need to take stations off the air while scaling into multiple frame systems – another industry first. As with other Platinum routers, the Platinum IP3 accommodates multiviewers, frame synchronisers, advanced I/O options and audio mux/demux capabilities within the frame for a space- and energy-saving integrated solution. The ability to customise router size, and the integration of multiviewers and other systems, make the Platinum IP3 ideal for traditional broadcast plants as well as mobile production trucks, houses of worship, cable/IPTV facilities and large satellite TV operations among other end users.

“The Platinum IP3 breaks barriers by ensuring that customers are not dead-ended by limitations to matrix size, control options or expansion of integrated functions,” added Paul Eisner, vice president of workflow, infrastructure and networking, Harris Broadcast. “This architecture gives users the freedom to protect their initial investments and build on their existing systems while also preparing them for an IP future.”

RIEDEL MEDIORNET CARDS FOR GV

Riedel’s new MediorNet MN-GV-2 card allows the user to network the Grass Valley 3G camera systems and base station including the LDK and LDX series via MediorNet. It helps to route bi-directional camera signals including all embedded audio and telemetry control data through the MediorNet fibre infrastructure.

MediorNet’s network approach allows the free assignment of cameras to any base station/CCU within the network, providing superb flexibility in set-ups and eliminating the need for re-wiring when production configurations change. Ultimately, the Grass Valley camera system becomes an integrated part of the MediorNet backbone solution for signal distribution streamlining production scenarios, sports broadcasting applications and fixed installations.

The MediorNet MN-GV-2 card provides two Grass Valley 3G fibre ports that either connect to Grass Valley cameras or base stations. The card fits into MediorNet Modular Mainframes occupying a single card slot with at least two high-speed ports.

SEEING WITH VIEWSAT

ViewSat, a global provider of broadcast and transmission services for TV and radio, will be at CABSAT to discuss its expansion plans in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. ViewSat plans to expand into the MENA region in September 2013, specifically in relation to its streaming capability. The company aims to offer an even broader level of service to customers this autumn, with an ambition to enhance its reputation on a global scale.

ViewSat achieved several milestones in 2012 including the upgrade of the Harmonic encoding system for the Eutelsat 7 West A platform; the installation of a 750kw generator and UPS for power back up; expansion of the Miranda SDI matrix from 128 to 512 and quadrupling rack room capacity.

ViewSat’s playout services increased from 6 to 43 and a 9m KU transmit antenna was commissioned for services to the Middle East. This latest round of investment takes ViewSat’s expenditure on equipment in the six years since the company launched to more than £2.5 million.

“CABSAT 2013 is a great event and a wonderful opportunity to build relationships – not only with our customers but prospective customers as well. We look forward with great anticipation to demonstrating our services as a global broadcast provider,” commented Awaas Jaswal, CEO of ViewSat. “With our focus on the Middle East and wider global expansion we are ensuring – with this participation in Dubai - that we have the appropriate network and systems in place to reach global audiences. It is with great anticipation that we are preparing our showcase at CABSAT 2013,” he added.
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*David Sallak, Chief Strategist for M&E – Office of the CTO.*

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**CANON C500**

Canon’s new EOS C500 digital cinema camera, which is capable of 4K video output, will be shown at CABSAT this year. Designed for motion picture and high resolution digital production industries, the EOS C500 offers the ability to output 4K images as RAW data for recording using an external device. The camera’s uncompressed 4K output also unleashes the full potential of Canon’s expanding range of 4K-resolution EF Cinema Lenses, while an EF mount with Cinema Lock makes it easier for operators to switch lenses during shooting.

As well as uncompressed 4K footage, the EOS C500 supports 12-bit or 10-bit RGB 4:4:4 output signals for 2K (2048 x 1080 pixels) or full HD off-board recording – delivering rich colour and high compatibility with image processes such as chroma key positioning. The camera also supports frame rates up to 120p in both 4K and 2K modes, providing enhanced creative flexibility for high-speed (slow motion) video capture.

The inclusion of Canon Log Gamma delivers the high quality video and wide exposure latitude demanded by professional cinematographers. The availability of a PL mount variant provides support for industry-standard lenses, while the EF mount model is the first Cinema EOS camera to feature a modified EF mount with Cinema Lock.

Designed as a result of user feedback, EF mount with Cinema Lock has been developed to make it simpler to swap lenses mid-shoot. Instead of the user having to rotate the lens, the new mount rotates to lock lenses into place – providing easier operation during studio and field-based shooting.

**HALL 6 STAND F6-30**

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**AVT MAGIC**

AVT shows the brand-new MAGIC ThipPro Telephone Hybrid which is available as ISDN, POTS and VoIP version for up 16 callers with eight digital and two analogue Audio lines plus two Handset/headset interfaces.

MAGIC ThipPro provides all functions in only 1 RU plus the possibility to extend the ISDN/POTS version later to a Voice-over-IP system simply by software upgrade. Up to 20 simultaneous PC workplaces can be installed with the MAGIC ThipPro LAN and the MAGIC ThipPro Screener Software. The system can be shared between several studios. Individual caller and Audio lines can be assigned to each studio.

**HALL 4 STAND B4-21**

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**IMT’S MICROWAVE GEAR**

Integrated Microwave Technologies (IMT), an advanced digital microwave systems player serving the broadcast, sports and entertainment markets, showcases its latest digital microwave video systems for portable and fixed-link applications from Nucomm and RF Central brands at CABSAT. IMT will be demonstrating its RF Central 2-GHz microLite HD Transmitter.

The camera-mountable 2-GHz microLite HD transmitter features SD/HD encoding in a miniature transmit solution package and has been specially designed to address both the domestic and international broadcasting band requirements within a single unit.

The microLite HD covers from 1.9 to 2.5GHz and delivers up to 200mW from a package of less than 12 cubic inches. Designed for a new generation of HD (SDI)-capable compact cameras, the transmitter supports video and embedded audio transmission.

The unit’s size makes it ideal for broadcast ENG operations. The 2-GHz microLite HD may be camera mounted via a hot shoe or paired with Litepanels camera-mounted lighting solutions. It features superb H.264 SD and HD encoding capabilities and operates in the standard 2k DVB-T COFDM mode. The H.264 video encoder supports the main profile of the H.264 standard, providing a 30 per cent bit-rate reduction or video quality improvement compared to encoders that only support the H.264 baseline profile.

**HALL 8 STAND D8-20**

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**LIVE PRODUCTION FROM EVS**

EVS will introduce “Enriched Live Production” and its latest product enhancements for an integrated live production workflow at CABSAT. Look out for the new multi-touch tablet for LSM (Live Slow Motion) operations. This tablet is now fully integrated into the LSM remote control panel. It features a fluid and easy-to-use interface with drag-and-drop capabilities that allows LSM operators to browse content more swiftly and manage playlists much faster. During the show EVS will also illustrate how Canal+ uses EVS’ second-screen media delivery platform, C-Cast, to engage Ligue 1 football fans and maximise the value of its content. C-Cast technology is used to power the French broadcaster’s Canal Football App. EVS will also be holding a breakfast buffet on Wednesday March 13 at its stand.

**HALL 6 STAND F6-30**

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**BM AUDIO GRABS THE MIC**

B.M Audio Equipment is exhibiting for the first time at CABSAT. It will be distributing two high-end brands namely Avalon Design and Brauner Microphones, products for broadcast and studio in Middle East. The Phantom Classic, Phantera, Valvet and VM1 will be showcased. The mics will be connected to Avalon preamps VT-737sp, AD2022, and the new V5.

**HALL 7 STAND 7-23**

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NEVION’S VS906  The VS906 is a modular, multi-channel audio or data contribution codec for highly efficient audio or data transport over IP/Ethernet networks. It enables users to deploy multiple audio or data circuits in point-to-point local loop applications or over long-distance packetised networks.

When used in combination with Nevion’s management platform, the entire radio-over-IP process can be easily managed from anywhere in the world. With companion video transport cards, it provides a comprehensive media delivery platform for virtually any environment, including long distance, metro area and campus networks.

As well as professional broadcast contribution, other applications include studio-to-studio media exchange, live sports and event contribution, and managed data services over IP. The VS906 provides multichannel data and audio encapsulation using standards-based circuit emulation, including linear encapsulation of uncompressed analogue and AES audio. It also provides bandwidth optimisation through the use of audio compression. Each audio and data signal can independently be transported as unicast or multicast streams, providing the capability for point-to-point or point-to-multipoint transport through the IP network.

HALL 5 STAND A5-20

PALS IN DRIVE MODE

Pals will exhibit a fully equipped eight-camera OB van based on Mercedes Vario with a DriveNews PDA-150 antenna system, Pals FlyNews PFA-150 fly-away antenna and a DriveNews PKM-77 Ka-band antenna. The Pals DriveNews system antenna systems are specially designed to meet all your requirements for vehicle mounted antennas with a concept of ‘go anywhere with high performance’. The DriveNewsTM PKM-77Ka and PKM-120 KA are fully motorised offset antennas with 77cm/120cm reflectors and prime focus feed-horn system housed in a POD (shell) for protection against weather influences and to improve vehicle performance. The PKM-77Ka and PKM-120Ka antenna systems were especially developed for Ka-band satellite video contribution and IP data communication operation. The lightweight and compact construction makes it possible to undertake the installation on any kind of vehicle, even a smaller one.

HALL 2 STAND F2-10

TRILOGY UNVEILS MESSENGER

At CABSAT 2013, Trilogy will launch Messenger, an entry-level matrix-based intercom that includes the features and functionality typically only found in far more expensive systems.

Messenger bridges the gap between the constraints of low-end, two-wire party line systems and the cost and complexity of full-blown professional broadcast communication systems.

The Messenger package is easy to install and simple to use. At CABSAT, Trilogy will also feature the latest developments in its premium Gemini intercom system; Mentor XL the SPG/TSG for studios, mobile production, playout and post; and the Watchdog signal detection and changeover unit.

HALL 6 STAND A6-22

GRASS VALLEY FLEXES LDX MUSCLE

Grass Valley’s LDX Flex is the newest member of the LDX series camera range. The LDX Flex shares the same image quality and flexibility as the rest of the series, launched at IBC, but comes in a single, affordable format. Customers can purchase the LDX Flex in the format they need today, confident that as their business grows, their camera can grow with them by adding new formats and functions through software upgrades.

The LDX series is Grass Valley’s answer to the increasing demands of HD live and studio-based production and business flexibility. Featuring three of Grass Valley’s in-house developed Xensium 2,000 x 2,000 pixel FT 2/3-inch CMOS imagers, the LDX Series offers the best of all worlds; unmatched resolution, while working with all common studio and sports lenses; superior sensitivity - up to 1 f-stop better than any other camera on the market at 1080P; and total format flexibility through upgrading to all models in the series. With four levels of capabilities— LDX Flex, LDX Première, LDX Elite, and LDX WorldCam — the series fully supports Grass Valley 3G Transmission solutions over fiber and triax, and any combination of both.

Besides the LDX series, Grass Valley will also be showing, the K2 Dyno Replay System for intuitive instant replay; Trinix NXT routing switches and multiviewers; Kayenne and Karrera comprehensive video production centres; and the Grass Valley STRATUS nonlinear production tools, which simplifies entire live production workflow by combining common processes, device control, and asset management into highly configurable, multi-tasking intuitive user workspaces.

HALL 6 STAND A6-22
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Dalet will introduce the new, cost-effective Dalet Brio packages at CABSAT. These new offerings include the cost-effective Dalet Brio server in a choice of pre-figured configurations along with embedded applications for different types of ingest, production, and playout workflows.

The new Dalet Brio package includes the IT-based Brio server preconfigured with a specific number of inputs and outputs (2:2, 4:4, etc.) along with a selection of embedded applications that allow the video servers to be used as standalone for sports and OB vans, news, and studios. The servers can also be controlled by typical automation systems such as Etete or Harris via VDCP. Its News Pack is a 'ready-to-go' Brio package for news.

All Dalet Brio servers support broadcast quality video in a wide range of codecs, including DV25, DV50, AV100, AVer-Intra 50-100, P2, DNxHD, and ProRes and others. Dalet Brio servers can play any supported files, including a mix of SD and HD, on the same timeline.

HALL 5 STAND BS-30

UBMS PLANS BIG SPLASH
The United Broadcast stand will be highlighting brands such as Sony, Sachtler, Ianiro, Vision Research, Arri, Libec, Autocue, Nila, Marshall Electronics, TVU Networks, Dayang and Tiffen, just to name a few.

Expect to see a number of technological sensations on the UBMS stand including the Dayang “Fresco” new-generation multi-viewer system; the Nila high-brightness LED fixtures; the Vocas matte box and rigs; Rotolight’s Advanced LED lighting systems and more importantly, Sony’s PMW 200 and NEX-FS700 full-HD Super Slow Motion camcorder.

HALL 6 STAND C6-10

FUJINON PUTS XA77X9.5BESM IN FOCUS
FUJINON’s new XA77x9.5BESM cost-effective HD EFP field lens features OS-TECH image stabilisation, FIND diagnostic system, 16-bit encoding, dust-proof and anti-fogging technology, macro shooting, and remote control.

The XA77x9.5 is designed for use within OB vans, at stadiums, sporting events, arenas, larger venues — any where a long lens would be beneficial in capturing detail and close up images from far distances. The XA77x9.5 features the company’s patented OS-TECH image stabilisation technology; OS-TECH contains sensors that detect the slightest movement caused by vibration. A correction signal is applied to the optical system, which helps to maintain a stable image when shooting from an unstable platform, or in windy conditions.

The lens’ advanced diagnostic FIND (Focused Intelligent Network Diagnosis) system aids in preventative maintenance and troubleshooting by evaluating lens electronic and mechanical parameters. The XA77x9.5 also incorporates FUJINON’s dustproof and anti-fogging technology. Its 16-bit optical encoding output provides high positioning accuracy in virtual environments. An advanced back focus system on the XA77x9.5 allows macro shooting from as close as 2.7m from the subject. With an optional controller, the advanced back focus provides enhanced production features. This lens is compatible with all existing FUJINON EFP controllers, and full remote control via RS-232 is standard.

HALL 7 STAND A7-20

DRAKO TERA COMPACT 8
IHSE USA will introduce its Draco Tera Compact line of products supporting switching and long-distance extension of DVI, HDMI, USB 2.0, USB HID, audio and RS-232 signals. With the same control and software features found in the Enterprise version of IHSE USA’s Draco Tera line of HD-KVM switchers, the new Draco Tera Compact 8 provides exactly the same easy setup. IHSE USA’s flex-port technology allows each port to auto-configure itself as a source or destination. Just plug a CPU extender or console extender and the switch will automatically configure the port to the connected device. KVM configurations can range from a single computer to seven consoles or one user to seven CPU devices or any combination in between.

From a basic On-Screen Display (OSD), users can easily set up parameters and user configurations. The optional Java-based control software adds more flexibility and the system can also be customised using third party controllers with the expanded API command protocol.

The Draco Tera 8 supports Smart Tie-Line technology so that it can be integrated with larger KVM networks as your KVM requirements expand.

HALL 7 STAND A7-40

Said Bacho. Vice President of Middle East & South Asia, Harris Broadcast
TriCaster is a complete, integrated Live Production system that allows users to simultaneously produce, live stream, broadcast, project and record HD and SD network-style productions.

Switch between multiple cameras, virtual inputs and live virtual sets, while inserting clips, titles and motion graphics with multi-channel effects.

NEWTEK AUTHORIZED MASTER DEALER IN MIDDLE EAST

Model presented TriCaster 8000. Specifications and features may vary depending on TriCaster models.
UBIFRANCE, the French Agency for International Business Development, is thrilled to be part of CABSAT 2013 and we’re proud to present 25 companies in the French Pavilion. Those companies cover the whole range of the broadcast industry such as production, media asset management, radio, CAS, video and audio systems, and HbbTV solutions. The audiovisual sector in France is mainly driven by the development of digital technology that has led to radical changes both in industry and in the services development. We have seen unexpected success with digital terrestrial TV. 97.3% of the population is covered now. There was a sustained rate of growth in access to digital media. At the end of 2011, 26.6 million French households had access to digital television (DTTV, satellite, ADSL or cable), which means 99% of the households have a television set. Nearly 61% of French households have taken advantage of that access and have gone fully digital. DTTV is responsible for much of the growth (50%).

The reception of TV via ADSL also accounts for significant growth (25%). Cable television (7%) remains an alternative for large cities, while satellite TV (18%) is growing in areas where cable and DTTV are not present. The number of pay channels has gone up to 136 and the services available have significantly increased with the development of broadcasting in HD. François Sporrer, French Trade Commissioner and Director of UBIFRANCE for the Middle East.

**MEDIA SYS IN A BOX**

MediaSys will showcase a range of brands including BOXX Technologies, which is well known for its high-performance workstation computers and rendering systems for VFX, animation, engineering, architectural visualisation and more. BOXX Technologies delivers systems that provide a creative experience to digital artists who rely on professional software applications. BOXX Engineering strives to maximise the performance and stability of BOXX workstations and renderBOXX rendering systems to allow creative professionals to efficiently produce higher quality material in a production environment.

**THOMSON GOES GREEN UNDER ARELIS GROUP**

THOMSON Broadcast will highlight its newest high-power FUTHURA Green Power TV Transmitter Family fordrastic energy savings and long-term reliability. The GreenPower solutions also includes a comprehensive range of low- and medium-power range repeaters and transmitters based on the same newexciter platform as FUTHURA. This exciter supports in dualcast, DVB-T/DVB-T2 standards and all advanced features. The MPLP capability allows, within a single channel, to deliver different services including mobile, SD, 3D, HD or digital radio with various robustness features.

**RTW TOUCHMONITORS**

RTW will exhibit its entire line of TouchMonitor audio metering products at the QvestMedia stand during CABSAT. The newest member of the family is the TM3-3G, a compact yet versatile solution for metering, de-embedding and monitoring 3G SDI audio. It features a 4.3-inch touchscreen for horizontal as well as vertical orientation that can display any of the eight audio channels contained in a 3G SDI stream. It also includes a large number of graphical and numerical instruments showing single-channel and summing loudness bargraphs, PPM, true peak, SPL, loudness range (LRA), dialnorm and correlation for this purpose. The TM3 provides comprehensive loudness metering in compliance with all globally relevant standards (EBU R128, ITU BS.1770-3/1771, ATSC A/85 and ARIB). It also features the Magic LRA mode, specifically designed by RTW for intuitive visualization of the loudness range and integrated-loudness parameters.

**ONE CONNXT DEBUTS AT CABSAT**

ONE CONNXT live demos will show broadcasters how to deliver content with plug-and-play simplicity via a custom web-scheduling portal. Cloud services provide broadcasters an ultimate video storage system that allows regional time shifting with any time playback capability.

ONE CONNXT was designed to meet or exceed broadcast standards offering quality and reliability comparable to traditional broadcast. The ONE CONNXT technology is an improvement over traditional broadcast methods for parts of the world like the Middle East where infrastructure can be challenging. It uses a proprietary conditional access system with throughput optimisation that cleans up internet connections and ensures global reach. Another advantage of the ONE CONNXT system is that broadcasters can move content independent of packagers or playout facilities. Broadcasters keep complete control of their expensively produced product lessening the risk for piracy. It also allows broadcasters to optimise content for their customer base and eliminate costly middlemen.

**ADVANCED MEDIA GEARS UP**

UAE-based distributor Advanced Media will introduce several new products at CABSAT including the Sony F65, Teradek, Floatcam HD, Profoto video lightings as well as a variety of professional video and broadcast brands and accessories. The distributor will also demonstrate 4K digital cinematography with Sony F65, F55 and F5 cameras along with their complete workflow. A product to look out for is the Teradek.

**EXPECT TO SEE IT ANYWHERE**

Anyware Video develops tailored products and makes them affordable for small-to-midsized stations as well as for local and themed channels. Following the success of video solutions such as CastGenie, DubMaster, and Pige Catch-up, the company presents an all-in-one automation solution that makes all key broadcast functions available on a single machine. The all-in-one automation solution remotely controls all broadcast parameters using an extremely simple GUI. Broadcasters can control several dozen channels in parallel from a single display. It manages the entire channel from a single page, including all playlists and media. The same interface displays real-time alerts concerning any problem, backed by continuous verification of all the equipment. No more laborious searches into the cause of a channel problem: the solution notifies you directly and identifies the problem. Both broadcasters and local channels obtain anywhere, anytime control, from a mobile phone or a tablet using a simple web browser.
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Afshan Naseem, Manager Technical, Apna FM Network, Pakistan

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THE UK TRADE FAIR HAS BEEN ORGANISING THE UK TRADE & INVESTMENT (UKTI) SUPPORTED UK PAVILION AT CABSAT FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS. In our first participation, the UK pavilion had six companies on 54sqm; this year we will see 46 companies on over 800sqm. The Middle East market is a significant market and UK companies have invested heavily in the region to create strategic partnerships and collaboration. Our challenge is to take away as much of the hassle of organising the stands from the companies and let them concentrate on their business. This year, we have secured additional funding from UKTI to raise awareness of the UK companies’ pre-CABSAT and during CABSAT. Through this funding, we have created a digital brochure that went live mid-February and were promoted with banners and mailers on the BroadcastPro web site and dedicated lists. The UK hardcopy brochure was also included in the BroadcastPro CABSAT preview and will be distributed at the show. Broadcast technology is consistently developing and the UK will continue to lead the way. TV One, OASYS, Exterity, I like Music and Radica are new to CABSAT this year and will be exhibiting remote site monitoring products, IPTV delivery, automated play out solutions, online digital music library for broadcasters and production companies, video, audio and multimedia processing equipment.”

Mark Birchall, Managing Director, UK Trade Fair.

TC ELECTRONIC MAKES A NOISE WITH DB6

TC Electronic is launching a brand new DB6 Audio Broadcast Processor for the first time to the world at CABSAT 2013. DB6 is a TV and Mobile TV transmission processor that is able to handle everything regarding loudness in one simple process - loudness metering at the input stage, up- and/or down conversion at any stage, loudness processing, on-line lip-sync delay, loudness metering at the output stage and logging of all relevant loudness statistics. In short, it is an intelligent ‘One-step Loudness Management’ solution where programmes are not ‘sausage processed’, regardless of which platform they are delivered to.

DB6 is a new addition to the DB family of processors that also includes DB2, DB4 and DB8 that have been serving 24/7 at several of the world’s leading broadcast stations for more than a decade.

EXTRON UPGRADES H.264 STREAMING MEDIA ENCODER

Extron Electronics’s upgraded SME 100 encoder enables the support of additional network and streaming protocols. The SME 100 now supports push streaming in unicast or multicast applications applying native RTP or MPEG-2 Transport Streams. Session Announcement Protocol and Session Description Protocol are applied to manage push streaming sessions. These new network and streaming protocols make the SME 100 compatible with a greater variety of third party decoding devices and streaming configurations. Other new capabilities include HTTP tunneling and closed captioning support for the EIA-608B standard. These new features are included in all SME 100 units that are shipping, and this firmware upgrade is available as a free download for current users at www.extron.com. The SME 100 is available in two models, the SME 100 SD, which streams at resolutions from 166x120 up to 720x576, and the SME 100 HD, which streams at resolutions from 166x120 up to HDTV 1080p/30.

KROMA introduces the new 7500 preview series in 4”, 5”, 7” and 9”

KROMA introduces the new 7500 preview series in CABSAT. A new range of monitor kits in 9”, 7”, 5” and 4” with all the latest developments in broadcast monitoring: 3G inputs, dynamic in-monitor displays (IMDs) and tally, audio de-embedder with on-screen vumeters and headphones output, and the acclaimed waveform and vectorscope tools from the 7000 series.

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**QVEST MEDIA HAS NEW LAUNCHES**

Qvest Media will launch its consulting and development services at CABSAT while also showcasing other services such as application and infrastructure development and support for media companies and broadcasters. The systems integrator will showcase products and applications from its partners: Arvato Systems, MediaGeniX, Dnaka, Teracue, Jünger and others at the show. Arvato Systems will present its MAM solution VPSM and CipicJOCKEY, a studio production tool that helps users to manage workflows in control rooms and post production houses. MediaGeniX is presenting its cross-medial broadcasting, scheduling and content lifecycle software WHAT’S On. Their software allows broadcasters, telcos, platform operators and on-demand service providers to engineer their programme planning and scheduling for over a decade. EUROSTAR Group’s latest Android Hybrid STB enables users to access content such as Live TV from satellite, games from Play Store and avail various services from the internet. The content can be shared from STB to other devices such as smartphones, tablets (Android based) through DLNA, with Ice Cream Sandwich direct Wi-Fi support. The Hybrid ES 9900A comes equipped with DVBS2, media player and internet. It also features Android 4.0 ICS fully compatible for upgradeation. It supports the complete functions of Android such as Web Browser, Play Store, Whether forecast, Skype, YouTube, RSS and Picasa. It also comes with four USB 2.0 ports with full movies, photos, record, pause, time shift and playback support which allows you to watch and listen all various media files from MP3 to MKV (with support for subtitles) including viewing of your images. Other hardware specifications of the ES9900A include 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity, a SD memory card slot for expansion purposes. For video output it comes with an HDMI connector and CVBS and for audio it has the digital SPDIF output for Dolby digital support. The STB allows you to access FTA and conditional access satellite channels with Twin DVB S2 tuner for PVR watching one channel while recording another channel. It is fully compliant with DVB-S2 MPEG-4/H.264 and DVB-S MPEG-2, 1080i television and radio programmes with search option by Auto, Manual, NIT and Blind Scan. It is programmed with 150 predefined satellites with easy to add new satellites and channels features. It comes with the capacity to store 8000 TV and radio channels. The OSD comes with several user-friendly functions in 14 languages including Arabic and Persian. On-screen channel EPG of now, next and +1 hour broadcasts, +2 hour broadcasts, time zone compensation, contribution backhaul delay or for profanity checks. Also new to Synapse is the integration of Civolution’s SyncNow - 2nd screen solution. This system, which integrates on the client side, enables identification and synchronisation between broadcast, on-demand or recorded television content and interactive applications on companion devices (tablets, smartphones, laptops) to present compelling synchronised interactive user experiences including auto-check-in. The latest version of Axon’s Cortex software application will also debut at CABSAT. It makes the implementation of multiple video and audio signal paths easier, more efficient and cost-effective.
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Content security continues to be a moving target

Exploring secure and sustainable models for multiscreen content distribution

While a growing range of new consumer devices, video and distribution formats continue to create demand for more access to broadband networks, advanced video and entertainment services, the enormity of the challenge affects all service providers. Until now, only the largest operators had the capacity to integrate and roll out comprehensive next-generation TV ecosystems into their existing business models. Only they had the resources to test consumer acceptance to ensure return-on-investment (ROI).

A few trendsetters include Comcast in the US with its “Xfinity on Demand” TV-everywhere service, the recent OTT extension “Streampix”, the BBC iPlayer, Sky Go and TV Anywhere services. While deploying residential gateways to enable in-home distribution of content is an approach that is rapidly gaining momentum, the race is still on for the most comprehensive models that enable access to content and services anywhere-anytime and on any device.

Launching multi-device and extended broadband services is often complex and costly, and good business models ensuring acceptable ROI are yet to be established. Service providers, pay TV operators and telcos looking to secure market position with multiscreen distribution require scalability — the possibility to start small and grow big, and a business model that is futureproof.

In short, the race to enable future-driven and profitable content distribution has made it a level playing field for both long-time and new players. Both are scrambling to satisfy the consumer’s growing hunger to access and view content anytime and anywhere. The absence of established industry standards and best practices makes the choice of technologies and suppliers challenging.

Perhaps the only guarantee at present for multiscreen sustainability is CA and DRM solutions. Distribution platforms that enable support for multiple DRM solutions and a range of business models will be better prepared to support future CA/DRM requirements of new devices and new forms of distribution.

Connecting the head-end to the internet is a big challenge. To safeguard a sustainable and profitable business model, the entire OTT ecosystem must be secured. Content security continues to be a moving target. To ensure return on content and platform investments, the highest level of security is required for all devices. Technologies such as CA/DRM for preventing piracy are, by far, the most effective.

In the DVB arena, the major threat is illegal viewing using pirate STBs connected to the Internet. The only method of removing this threat is by chipset pairing technology. While chipset pairing is the most secure form of protecting content in the DVB arena, additional new technologies will become significant in securing cloud content.

Today, it is well-established that content protection from dedicated security hardware is superior to that offered by software running on general-purpose platforms. However, for content to be consumed “everywhere”, from tablets to smartphones, there is no such security hardware to leverage. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a security-optimised software solution for the various platforms. Hardening of software is crucial on such devices to compensate for the lack of secure hardware support. Watermarking of premium content, therefore, will become increasingly important in the future.

Although many solutions are available in the market, pre-integrated solutions can eliminate the weak link within unproven technology and service combinations in a complex OTT/multi-screen environment. A pre-integrated multiscreen solution provides flexibility and short time-to-market enabling focus on increasing ARPU through new business models for generating additional revenue streams.

In turn, operators are able to retain existing customers with new services. The benefits include increased network range, where cable and telco operators can extend their customer reach outside their home network by offering services over the top; the ability to sell content to consumers that are outside their traditional subscriber base, and reusing existing infrastructure such as networks and service centres. A pre-integrated, flexible and scalable solution can reduce time-to-market and operational complexity for delivering new services to connected devices. This will help increase revenues and reduce churn.

Tom Jahr is EVP Products & Partners at Conax
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Launched in 2006 to provide digital satellite services to private broadcasters in Sub-Saharan Africa, the company is now active across the global marketplace with operations in the Middle East and North Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Headquartered in the UK, ViewSat operates a series of satellite broadcasting platforms - supplemented with a dedicated fibre network, teleports and a playout centre to provide a high-quality infrastructure for customers’ digital satellite broadcasting.

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