How Al Jazeera America was set up in 12 weeks - Launch Tech Director Mohammed Akhlaq reveals all
Welcome

I look forward to welcoming all of you to the third annual edition of the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit and Awards on November 12 at The Address Dubai Marina. Since our first instalment, we have seen the number of nominations for the awards grow and the quality of the submissions improve substantially. Likewise, attendance for our event has increased each year.

There is one thing, however, that hasn’t changed, and that is late submissions. People invariably want one more day to submit their nominations after the final extension. Of course, the kind of excuses that pour in have gone from faintly amusing to the really bizarre over the years.

Besides “the internet was down” and the “client didn’t approve until now”, we have also heard about “a fire next door”, “a thief has broken into my house” (yes, that too) and, of course, this year, there was a missing dog and “a terribly infectious ailment because of which I’m bedridden” to contend with. Incidentally, I bumped into the man with the mysterious ailment a day later at a party and there was not even a snuffle in sight. But all of these make for merry memories and the important thing is that we do manage to get all of those entries in, eventually.

Having said that, we return this year with an exciting line-up of more than 25 industry speakers as they debate regional strategies for multi-screen broadcasting, 4K, telcos in the broadcast space, and explore steps towards creating sustainable business models in production, and TV and radio broadcasting.

I am also delighted to announce that the person featured on our cover this month will headline the summit this year. Mohammed Akhlaq, Launch Technical Director of Al Jazeera America, was tasked with getting a news channel up and running within 12 weeks in the US, with multiple sites ready for operations. He will share more details about the challenges of launching a channel in the US, given that most other international broadcasters, who are not originally from there, do not operate independent channels – only affiliates.

See you at The Address Dubai Marina on November 12.
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OKNO-TV buys Megahertz Broadcast

UK-based systems integrator OKNO-TV has acquired Megahertz Broadcast Systems.

The deal will extend OKNO-TV’s portfolio to include mobile production vehicles, live production and RF while giving the company an established international presence.

“The acquisition of Megahertz gives us an immediate in-house capability, with a team of highly respected engineers and project managers that will help to facilitate the expansion of our portfolio to include production vehicles and RF capabilities and to extend our footprint globally,” said Jon Flay, Managing Director of OKNO-TV (UK).

“We identified that sports and mobile applications were important markets and with Megahertz’s rich heritage in those arenas, we are looking to further accelerate our growth internationally,” he added.

Riedel acquires Code One

Riedel Communications has acquired Düsseldorf-based mobile streaming specialist Code One. As a developer of solutions for video streaming over wide area networks (WAN), Code One brings Riedel a valuable portfolio of WAN-focused solutions, as well as innovative technology for distributing video, audio, and data via mobile networks.

MEDIAGURU AND MEMNON TIE

MediaGuru, a global media services company, has entered into a joint venture with Brussels-based archiving specialist Memnon to form a company to handle archiving projects in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey. The newly formed company will undertake projects to archive audio and video broadcast content.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the FIAT/IFTA world conference being held in Dubai. Commenting on the new venture, Sanjay Salil, CEO of MediaGuru said: “We are setting up a digitisation facility in Dubai Media City which will provide managed services to clients. This will primarily service radio, television and film content. We believe that there are valuable resources in the region that need to be archived. People are very passionate about it and they have the inclination and the budgets to do so. I think it’s an opportunity for those in the business of archiving to provide the best facilities.”

Michel Merten, Managing Director of Memnon Archiving Services added that the storage conditions in the region are significantly challenging for the restoration of very old products, he said: “I don’t see any challenges specific to the region but the storage conditions in the region might pose a bit of difficulty for restoring.”

Salil added: “More importantly, I feel one needs to restore faith in these projects as previously some archiving projects have fallen through. Based on project record, we can restore that faith and ensure that our projects are successfully executed.”

Abu Dhabi Media Summit focuses on digital initiatives

Affordable internet access is crucial to the growth of developing nations, World Wide Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee said in the opening session of the Abu Dhabi Media Summit 2013. He was speaking via satellite link on the opening day of this year’s Abu Dhabi Media Summit.

Mark Hollinger, President and CEO of Discovery Networks International and Manjit Singh, CEO, Sony India, discussed local exports, the challenges and opportunities of 4G and the rising importance of the female viewer.

In a session titled Going Global – Opportunities and Challenges in a Media Centric World, Hollinger said Discovery now operates in 224 countries with nearly 1.6 billion subscribers across its 42 markets. Both executives stressed that producing localised content is becoming more and more important.

Hollinger said Discovery’s TLC network’s acquisition of Fatafeat, the Dubai-based cookery channel, was part of a strategy to produce local content for different markets. The content on Fatafeat is also a way to target the all-important female audience, he added.

Previously, Andy Bird, Chairman of Walt Disney International, spoke about the company’s shift away from exporting American content to global markets to become more locally driven. In particular, he spoke about the growing importance of China – the second biggest theatrical market outside the United States – and building strong, relevant localised content.

Orange to provide IPTV services in Beirut

Orange Business Services will continue to provide infrastructure and manage IPTV (Internet Protocol TV) services for Solidere in Beirut. The contract has been extended for two years.

Solidere’s IPTV services deliver a range of movies, sports and TV programmes, which are streamed directly to residents’ TVs over its broadband network that Orange designed and built. The company currently operates the network, enabling residents to enjoy some of the most advanced IP-based, on-demand telecom services in the world.

Orange offers a combination of technological and operational expertise under its Smart City programme, which provides digital solutions for cities with large infrastructures and extensive citizen services.

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Oasis Enterprises inks new partnership

Dubai-based distributor Oasis Enterprises has announced a new partnership with LDA Audio Tech, a known name in professional quality AV systems and products. With more than 35 years’ experience, LDA Audio Tech has provided public address systems for more than 1,000 installations. LDA has its headquarters in Málaga, South of Spain. The Spanish company introduced a new compact public address and voice alarm system called NEO at InfoComm MEA2013. Oasis Enterprises Professional Projects Division (OEPPD) looks at this partnership as a long-term commitment that will help it attain its business goals.

Al Jazeera deploys TVUPack

Al Jazeera has deployed TVUPack to extend its live newsgathering operations in Egypt and other locations throughout the Middle East. With TVUPack, Al Jazeera has been able to expand its live broadcast capabilities in a cost-effective manner, delivering coverage of live events, press conferences, demonstrations, and important breaking news such as the 2012 Presidential elections and recent civil unrest in Egypt.

TVUPack has the ability to deliver picture over 3G and 4G wireless networks and its dual encoder capabilities enable the solution to simultaneously record and transmit video in HD.

Additionally, TVUPack’s simple one button operation enables Al Jazeera camera operators to focus on capturing the shot rather than configuring the transmission in the field.

TVU Networks pioneered the use of one button operation without the need for manual configuration in the field. United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS) in Dubai, an official TVU Networks reseller partner, provided on-location support in implementing TVU solutions into Al Jazeera’s broadcast workflow.

MediaCast welcomes new technical specialist

Richard Lackey has joined Dubai-based distribution company MediaCast as Technical Sales Specialist – Pro Video. Having worked in the UK, South Africa and Dubai, Lackey brings with him more than ten years of production and post production experience.

His technical background involves extensive knowledge of digital cinema cameras, acquisition, workflow and post. With producer credits on many shorts and one feature film to his name, he also adds some film industry insight to his skillset.

Turkish Broadcaster Chooses Shotoku

Shotoku Broadcast Systems has been awarded a tender from Turkish Radio & Television Corporation (TRT) for a significant complement of manual camera support gear. Working through Istanbul-based Basari, TRT placed an order comprising the company’s professional tripod systems paired with heavy-duty pan & tilt heads – all technically qualified and approved by TRT. Shotoku Sales Manager David Shepherd announced this important company sale from its European headquarters in Staines, UK.

“Naturally, we are very pleased to see Shotoku’s continued growth in key regions such as Turkey,” said Shepherd.

“We are confident that our professional systems will offer Turkish Radio Television the superior level of quality, support and reliability for which Shotoku is known. We view such a substantial sale of Shotoku support gear systems to TRT as another positive step in our continued efforts to make serious inroads in this important territory and better serve our customers in these particular areas of the world.”

TRT opted for various Shotoku tripod systems including the SP compact model, and numerous units from the company’s heavy-duty TT/TD camera support range. The tripods offer excellent price/performance features and accommodate applications ranging from production to broadcast, studio, OB and EFP camera support.

The tender also includes SH100 pan & tilt heads, Shotoku’s premier ENG/EFP unit, and the recently launched SX300 fluid head for a variety of applications and the latest portable camera systems.

Hard Rock Nabq in Egypt installs Meyer Sound JM-1P

The new Hard Rock Cafe Nabq in Egypt’s Sharm el-Sheik resort area has recently installed a Meyer Sound JM-1P arrayable loudspeaker system. All audio systems were provided and installed by Cairo-based company Modern Touch.

The club’s main system targets the dance floor and adjacent seating areas with twin-flown clusters of three-each JM-1P loudspeakers, with four 600-HP subwoofers floor-stacked underneath. Seventeen UPJ-Junior VariO loudspeakers are spaced high around the room’s perimeter and in adjacent bars and seating areas, providing both main system support as well as softer music for daytime and early evening crowds.

Four MM-4XP self-powered loudspeakers are installed in the gift shop, while eight UPJ-1P VarO loudspeakers and four USW-1P subwoofers provide controlled sound on the expansive outdoor terrace.

Zee Entertainment adds ‘Film Hindi’ to Arabic portfolio

Zee Entertainment Enterprises has strengthened its portfolio of rich Arabic content with the launch of ‘Zee Film Hindi’, a channel dedicated entirely to Indian cinema. Catering to Indian cinema lovers across the Middle East, ‘Film Hindi’ will be identified by the slogan ‘Hindi Asli’, symbolising authenticity, maturity and a unique flavour that is synonymous with the Arabic world. The channel will cater specifically to lovers of classic Indian cinema with its rich repertoire of films starring doyens such as Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan.

The channel has a repertoire of over 500 movie titles, featuring up to 1,500 hours of entertainment for viewers, per year. ‘Film Hindi’ will also look to create original content in due course.
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RUBICON HIGH IN THE CLOUDS WITH PAUL MCCARTNEY

RGH Entertainment, a subsidiary of Rubicon Group Holding (RGH) and Unique Features are partnering to bring Sir Paul McCartney's children's book, *High in the Clouds*, to the screen in 3D. The partnership was jointly announced by Randa Ayoubi, CEO of RGH, and Unique Features partners Michael Lynne and Bob Shaye. McCartney will compose a number of original songs for the film, whilst Tony Bancroft (of *Mulan* fame) will direct the feature from a screenplay adapted from the book by Josh Klausner (*Shrek Forever After, Date Night*).

"It's a great privilege for us at RGH to be bringing this endearing and entertaining tale to the big screen in 3D. Working with Unique Features and Sir Paul McCartney, we hope to translate *High in the Clouds* into a memorable movie experience and launch a franchise to be enjoyed by children and families for many generations," said Ayoubi.

Michael Lynne, on behalf of Bob Shaye and Unique Features, said: "We know how special this project is for Sir Paul and how excited he is to be a part of this wonderful, creative collaboration. We look forward to working with RGH and the entire creative team to help realise all of our ambitions for *High in the Clouds.*"

Qvest Media to build Alarab news channel

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal has awarded systems integrator Qvest Media to design and build the complete production and broadcasting infrastructure for Alarab news channel. The Manama, Bahrain based channel is a 24-hour channel for Arabic-speaking viewers across the Arab world and beyond.

Prince Alwaleed also announced an agreement with Bloomberg LP in which Bloomberg will support the creation of five hours of financial and economic news programming throughout the day on the channel.

Thomas Müller, General Manager of Qvest Media, explained: "We tendered a bid for this project eight months ago. Now that we have been awarded the contract, we are very happy that the project concept we developed for the tender will be realised."

Qvest Media undertakes the entire technical implementation and integration of three studios with interconnected control rooms. Included in the project are installations of robotic and manual camera systems, sound technology, monitoring, and editorial processes.

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Excel Entertainment ties with Riva Group

Excel Entertainment, an Indian film production house, has entered into a joint venture with the Dubai-based Riva Group.

Farhan Akhtar, Ritesh Sidhwani and Riva Group Chairman Paul Roy have collaborated to form Excel Media, a company dedicated to the creation of original content across multiple platforms from television and web to gaming. Excel Entertainment’s existing media library will also be exploited across various digital media.

“We are excited at the prospect of expanding our global reach with this collaboration with Excel Entertainment, which is in my opinion the best film studio in India. We look forward to working with them and using our in-house knowledge and expertise to create ground-breaking content” said Paul Roy.

MBC to reduce SD content output

MBC Group recently announced that it was making significant progress with its migration to HD and will look at reducing its SD content output.

“As the number of HD households increase, we will start to reduce our SD output,” clarified Sam Barnett, MBC Group CEO.

“We have little interest in paying millions to support old technology that delivers a lower quality product. The recent shift of MBC Persia to an HD platform, namely My-HD, is one step in this direction”.

He did, however, comment that the challenge lay in the fact that “people don’t buy the appropriate set top box when they convert to HD”.

“Because HD channels are encrypted, people need to ensure that they only purchase an HD box that is able to receive and decrypt the MBC HD channels. Luckily, such boxes are available widely and our intention is to assure and make the MBC HD channels available through as many platforms as possible, while ensuring a steady growth in HD penetration as people replace their TV sets”.

RELATIVITY EXTENDS PARTNERSHIP WITH GULF FILM

Relativity has extended its Middle East distribution partnership with Gulf Film, a major film distributor and exhibitor in the region. As part of the multi-year agreement, Gulf Film will distribute Relativity’s films across all media in the territory including Relativity produced and acquired titles as well as third party and sales agency titles handled by Relativity International. Relativity is working on establishing a new venture, which will partner with local producers to create original film, television and digital entertainment content.

Ryan Kavanaugh, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Relativity said: “Demand for high-quality entertainment content in the Middle East has been expanding rapidly over the past few years. Relativity is committed to building on our already strong presence in the region and to help accelerate growth across the film, television and digital media landscapes.”

Emirati animation film screened at Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF)

Daddy ABC, a short film animation receiving increasing worldwide acclaim, was screened at Abu Dhabi Film Festival (ADFF) as part of the Emirates Film Competition. Daddy ABC was produced by UAE production house Blink Studios and supported by twofour54 ibtkar. twofour54 inajb handled the audio production.

Khalid Khouri, Head of ibtkar commercial, twofour54, said: “It’s fantastic to see yet another home-grown and award-winning production from Blink Studios. For twofour54, with its vision to build the media and entertainment industries in the region, Daddy ABC is a wonderful example of the coming together of the Abu Dhabi Film Commission, twofour54, its partners and local talent to produce world-class Arab content. For everyone else, Daddy ABC is simply great fun and definitely worth watching.”

NHK reaches Africa with Globecast

Globecast is providing services to NHK WORLD, delivering the channel via satellite to new audiences in Central and Western Africa. NHK WORLD, the international broadcast channel of Japanese national public broadcaster NHK, launched the new service on July 30 as part of Canalsat, a package of more than 130 channels, radio stations, and services operated by CANAL+ Afrique on the SES-4 satellite at 22 degrees west orbital position.

Carried as part of the Canalsat Afrique direct-to-home schedule, NHK WORLD is being offered free-to-air for these new African audiences, in keeping with its global brand philosophy for other markets. Globecast is providing a complete solution to bring NHK WORLD to the point of uplink, including contribution, encryption, and encoding.

Switch returns to Dubai for MENA release

Chinese blockbuster Switch was released in MENA last month by distributor Gulf Film. The film is directed by Jay Sun and produced by China Film Group. Dubai Film and TV Commission (DFTC), Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), Emirates Airline and Dubai-based production company Filmworks, all helped bring the film to life in Dubai.

Switch, which has become one of China’s largest grossing films of all time, marks yet another successful collaboration between international filmmakers and Dubai’s production industry. Public and private entities, locations, and local filmmakers have all pulled together to help shoot a large portion of the film in Dubai. Switch features Dubai’s iconic landmarks such as Burj Al Arab, Burj Khalifa and Atlantis, The Palm, as well as the picturesque landscapes of the rolling sand dunes and the waters of the Arabian Gulf.

DFTC partnered with DTCM to support the entire filmmaking process in Dubai, while Emirates also played a role in the film with the airline’s, Airbus A380 aircraft acting as a location for one of the film’s fast-paced action-scenes. Any international project filming in Dubai requires a strong and experienced local production partner. Leading Dubai production company Filmworks worked tirelessly to ensure that both the shoot and the final film were a success.

Al Jazeera and AT&T tiff under wraps

The legal fight between Al Jazeera America and AT&T will remain under wraps for now. This comes despite a ruling by a Delaware judge lifting the secrecy in their ongoing legal battle. The lawsuit stems from AT&T’s refusal to carry the news channel launched by Al Jazeera in the United States in August. Al Jazeera sued AT&T claiming the contract between the two was breached and wrongfully terminated by the cable operator.
GY-HM650 ProHD mobile news and production camera now features live streaming

The GY-HM650 now makes live video streaming possible. When equipped with wi-fi, 4G or 3G connectivity via USB, the GY-HM650 can stream live video transmissions in the background while continuing to record footage. The camcorder is upgradeable too – if you already own a GY-HM650, it can simply be upgraded via our website, providing the latest streaming functionality together with any future updates for free.

Equipped with three full-HD sensors and an integrated wide angle 23x autofocus zoom lens, the camcorder delivers exceptional light sensitivity of F12 at 2000 lux. In addition, thanks to dual JVC codecs, it records .MOV and XDCAM EX™ compatible MP4 or MXF files with rich, descriptive metadata on one memory card, while simultaneously creating smaller, web-friendly files on a second card.

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DIFF GEARS UP FOR TENTH EDITION

Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) has announced a record number of submissions for the 2013 edition, which have surpassed the Festival’s expectations for the upcoming event, which runs from December 6 to 14, 2013.

Receiving more than 3,500 film submissions from 143 countries, the overwhelming response and a 60% increase from 2012 reafirms that filmmakers from around the world are keen to participate in DIFF.

Since the inaugural festival back in 2004, the number of submissions has risen year on year. There has been an encouraging increase from the Arab world, which this year contributes to 35% of the submissions.

The diverse selection of submissions saw films from first-time entrants including Belarus, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Laos and Puerto Rico. DIFF has also received an encouraging number of entries from South Asia, Europe and North America as well as from Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon and Morocco have sent their entries. Submissions from Qatar have doubled this year.

DIFF has also announced packages for its Friends of the Festival (FOTF) philanthropic programme. The programme is designed to engage the UAE’s cinema lovers by providing a platform for them to become supporters of the arts.

Winning sc-fi script to be filmed

DIFF, Attitude Enterprises and the Middle East Film and Comic Con (MEFCC) will produce a short film based on a sci-fi concept written by Alastair Newton Brown, a resident of Dubai. The script titled Serenity Now was one of the 40 entries that were sent to Hollywood screenwriter Max Landis for review as part of the Sci-fi competition launched early this year.

“Serenity Now is pretty slick,” commented Max Landis upon reading the script.

“I’ve been really impressed with the level of creativity in the competition,” he added.

Ben Caddy, General Manager of ExtraCake, organisers of MEFCC said: “We’ve only just scratched the surface of amazing talent in the region. “We’ve had lots of success stories coming out of MEFCC, where Middle East-based talent have started to realise their potential. We hope this competition is another step in that direction for regional filmmakers and we’ll be entering the finished piece into awards programmes and festivals.”

Nomad Productions signs MENA deal with Omnisport

UAE-based video production house Nomad Productions has signed a new MENA deal with Omnisport. According to the new deal, Nomad Productions will be responsible for providing Omnisport with breaking sports news, exclusive interviews and features from across the Middle East and North Africa.

Omnisport, a division of UK-based sports media group Perform supplies market-leading sports news coverage to more than 150 broadcasters and digital publishers worldwide for TV, online and mobile services.

Phil Griffiths, Director of Nomad Productions said: “We are excited to be working with Omnisport, a service that is making a huge impact on global sports news distribution.”

Perform is well-known for monetising sports and entertainment rights in digital and traditional media. With some of the biggest global entertainment brands in its portfolio, the group has been a major driving force in the commercialisation of sport and entertainment rights online, on mobile and on TV.

Nomad Productions has appointed former news and sports journalist Eugene Haman to help fulfill the brief for Omnisport.
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PRO INFOCOMM

Sharp displays largest video wall
The 180-inch video wall on Sharp's InfoComm booth attracted the attention of many visitors. The company also showcased its custom-built software for entertainment and business.

Ravinder Kumar, General Manager, Business Solutions Division at Sharp Middle East said: “We showcased 30 different verticals at InfoComm. We have boutique solutions, signage software, retail solutions and education solutions in addition to our interactive display units.

“The new 32” 4K2K LCD monitor (PN-K321) with IGZO technology was displayed for the first time in a show. It was launched ten months ago but we announced the commercial availability of the product at InfoComm. IGZO technology monitors are particularly suited for post production and very high-end photography and gaming applications."

Sharp's 90-inch LED monitor is, by far, the largest commercially available LED.

Gefen expands in Middle East
Gefen showcased its latest solutions in digital connectivity to the Middle East at InfoComm. The InfoComm show also provided a platform for the company to reintroduce itself as Gefen EMEA, announcing its official presence in the Middle East market.

Anita Goebel, Marketing Director, Gefen Europe GmbH, said, “Gefen EMEA is our big announcement this time. We have been operating in the region but it has been through partners and resellers, with our current restructuring, we will have direct presence here. We hope to establish a base in the Middle East soon."

Exterity seeks more visibility in the region
Eleuterio Fernandes, Middle East Sales Director, Exterity said that the company is making inroads into broadcast now. Exterity has partnerships with several Middle East-based companies to establish a strong foothold in the broadcast industry especially the IPTV sector.

Eleuterio Fernandes, Middle East Sales Director, Exterity said: “We have ongoing projects with Etisalat, and Oman TV. Several others are also in the pipeline. We have been providing video wall multi-viewers solutions and now we plan to increase IPTV head-end capacity and capability."

K-Array and Sennheiser host sound seminars during InfoComm
Sennheiser Group and its vendor partner K-Array hosted two seminars covering live and installed sound during the InfoComm/GITEX week at Meydan Racecourse in Dubai.

The seminar featured installed sound elements with a demonstration of K-array’s flexible, array element speaker, the Anakonda KAN200 and the KZ10, an ultra-miniaturised line-array element. The second seminar featured K-Array’s live sound products, including the Concert Series speaker and subwoofer range. There was a demonstration of the KH4, hi-tech, self-powered PA system and line-array element and its complementary KS4 dipole subwoofer.

Mig Cardamone, Sales and Marketing Manager, Sennheiser Middle East said, “K-Array is known worldwide for its speaker technology. As the local partner for the brand in the Middle East, we decided that it would be best for regional customers and partners to get a hands-on experience of the brand by hosting these seminars, which were conducted by Francesco Maffei, the Product Specialist from K-array. Besides demonstration of the products, the event provided us with the opportunity of getting valuable market information and inputs, which will help us design solutions that cater to the specific needs of the Middle East market."

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Mig Cardamone, Sales and Marketing Manager, Sennheiser Middle East said, "K-Array is known worldwide for its speaker technology. As the local partner for the brand in the Middle East, we decided that it would be best for regional customers and partners to get a hands-on experience of the brand by hosting these seminars, which were conducted by Francesco Maffei, the Product Specialist from K-array. Besides demonstration of the products, the event provided us with the opportunity of getting valuable market information and inputs, which will help us design solutions that cater to the specific needs of the Middle East market."

**Exterity seeks more visibility in the region**

Eleuterio Fernandes, Middle East Sales Director, Exterity said that the company is making inroads into broadcast now. Exterity has partnerships with several Middle East-based companies to establish a strong foothold in the broadcast industry especially the IPTV sector. Exterity has developments with Etisalat, and Oman TV. Several others are also in the pipeline. We have been providing video wall multi-viewers solutions and now we plan to increase IPTV head-end capacity and capability."
Re-awakening of the camera market

The camera market is undergoing a renaissance of sorts as worldwide sales of cameras rise owing to several factors.

Since the arrival of Super 35 sensors, several years ago, a debate has waged on whether their use would spill out of Digital Cinematography, where they are already penetrating the ranks of independents and into other segments such as broadcast and institutional and moving well beyond rental houses. And, the report underscores that such a trend is already underway, and goes well beyond rental houses.

Previous market interest in 3D turned out to be a dud, in cameras and other gear, and some fears were voiced by users that investments in UHD might be similarly ill conceived. Despite those fears, however, end users seem to be much more enthusiastic and trusting of the future of UHD, sensing that higher resolution capture brings indisputable benefits to the entire workflow, beyond motion pictures or episodic programmes.

From a sensor use perspective, Super 35 sensor-using UHD cameras already represent 16% of all cameras owned, indicating a dramatic swing towards higher resolution and to the UHD level productions they enable.

After years of less than enthusiastic purchasing in studio and field cameras, in no small part due to the worldwide economic recession, sales of cameras are undergoing a re-awakening. This finding was revealed by a newly published report called Studio/Box Cameras World 2013.

This study not only looked at UHD in Super 35 and 4/3-inch sensor iterations but also all other sensor configurations currently utilised among the owned, bought and planned units. The main thrust of this interest is definitely in Super 35 and not nearly as much in 4/3-inch sensors.

Several manufacturers, including notably Ikegami, have abandoned 4/3-inch preferring to put their faith in the growth and expected expansion of Super 35. Ikegami, in fact, recently offered a Super 35 sensor camera solution jointly with ARRI blending key components from both firms and utilising third-party lenses.

Motion pictures and episodic TV have been transitioning to an all-digital workflow and that has been a huge driver to the new Super 35 sensor (and its derivatives). While this industry embracing of Super 35 is palpable and an exciting and market-moving development in cameras and for lens makers, the study also saw a rise and purchasing of more traditional 2/3-inch sensor cameras, as a rising tide of camera sales has ‘lifted all boats.’ So, even traditional solutions using smaller sensors have benefitted by renewed spending on cameras. This has had a salutary effect on lens sales as well.

On a global basis, from a sensor use perspective, Super 35 mm sensor-using UHD cameras already represent 16% of all cameras owned / installed as of 2013, indicating a dramatic swing towards higher resolution and to the UHD level productions they enable, and one that obviously goes beyond purely motion picture and episodic TV applications. The 2/3-inch represents 58%, ‘Other or Unknown’ sensors 21% and 4/3-inch represents 5%, respectively.

The arrival of UHD and larger image sensors has so far had no discernible impact on PTZ box cameras, but even there, it is expected that higher resolution – beyond HD – will be found attractive in the next few years and provide a boost to those, already increasing, purchases as well, just as colour did once introduce. This is likely to begin primarily in the arena of sports-oriented robotic camera systems.

That said, the Professional Camcorders World report for 2013 showed that camcorders, which were suffering are now also seeing somewhat of a rebound, based on similar factors to that being seen in cameras. They were being primarily battered by the rise and popularity of DSLRs, which are capable of using interchangeable lenses, allowing for a combination of primes and zooms, but the strengthening of the camera market is negatively affecting them.

Douglas I. Sheer is CEO and Chief Analyst of DIS Consulting Corporation of Woodstock, New York.
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On August 20, 2013, the United States of America saw the launch of a brand new independent channel from Qatar-owned broadcaster Al Jazeera Network that would compete with the likes of Fox News, CNN and MSNBC but on their home ground. It was no mean feat. In fact, with the launch of Al Jazeera America (AJAM), the Arab broadcaster had entered a market that many other international broadcasters with much longer legacies had failed to enter.

Al Jazeera had acquired Current TV, the cable television network founded by former US Vice President Al Gore, for an estimated USD 500 million in January 2013. Within six months, the new US network had more than 500 staff based in 12 US cities – Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C. – where Al Jazeera had its bureaus.

Al Jazeera Network’s entry into America, no doubt, marked a huge milestone for the Qatari broadcaster but within the network as well, it meant a huge victory for the man who was tasked with setting the wheels in motion to ensure the creation of a full HD 1080/60 tapeless environment at multiple sites across the US.

Setting up a whole television facility that could staff 170 odd people within twelve weeks was daunting in itself, but having to also contend with securing permissions and finalising sites within the same timeframe, gives a good indication of the kind of pressure the launch team, headed by Launch Director – Technology and Operations of AJAM, Mohammed Akhlaq, was under.

Akhlaq has had a long career spanning more than 27 years with the BBC and other broadcasters. He helped to successfully launch BBC Arabic and its Persian channels before joining Al Jazeera in mid-2011 as International Operations Director. In his new role, he was tasked with delivering changes across the network’s bureaus and channels from an operational and technology perspective. Alongside that, he was tasked with getting AJAM up and running.

“At the time I joined Al Jazeera, the network was already in discussions about acquiring an American channel that would allow us to gain a foothold in the US. Many had tried and failed so this was a major opportunity and one of the highest priorities for the network,” says Akhlaq.

On January 2, 2013, Akhlaq headed for the US for what was meant to be a week. He eventually stayed on for eight months, scouting potential sites to begin operations and working towards a tentative launch date of mid-June. That date was further extended to August 20, when the channel was eventually launched.

“I knew we had limited time and we had to account for the delay in the process of securing locations and permissions,” says Akhlaq. 

In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Mohammed Akhlaq, International Operations Director of Al Jazeera Network and Launch Technical Director of Al Jazeera America, speaks about the journey that led to the successful launch of the broadcaster’s channel in the US.
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“It was already mid to late January (2013) and we had no location, no studio, no requirements and no team. In short, we had absolutely nothing. But having been in
“At the time I joined Al Jazeera, the network was ... in discussions about acquiring [a] channel that would allow us to gain a foothold in the US. Many had tried and failed so this was a major opportunity and one of the highest priorities for the network.”

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the business for 27 years and most of it in a news environment, I knew that we would have to start with a search for premises. New York was our first choice because that is where most of the media are located and it has more than 200 facilities. Most of those facilities, however, were booked for long periods and most never had any production space to build a newsroom. We eventually narrowed our choice down to two potential locations that could fit our requirements although both would require intense work if we were to tailor them to suit our purpose,” explains Akhlaq.

Ultimately, Al Jazeera chose MCP, which is attached to the New Yorker hotel in New York.

MCP had only a small studio and no production area but it did have the core systems in place, says Akhlaq.

The deal was finalised with the help of Ted Nelson, CTO of USTV, a firm that provides television management services in the US.

“USTV used to deal a lot with MCP. Ted mentioned that the hotel had a bank space that was not used for years. So we had an empty and derelict place, which was separate from the studio. It wasn’t ideal but as an interim place that had to be fully operational by May 6, our target date to complete work, it passed.”

Akhlaq credits Nelson with having played a large role in helping to secure the premises and staff to man the operations.

“Ted’s background is very similar to mine – engineering and operations. He knew what we had to achieve with the timescale we had,” says Akhlaq.

Over the next few months, Akhlaq would find his mettle tested in several areas. Besides leading the team, he would also have to play the roles of lead negotiator, master strategist and diplomat when the occasion called for it. Through it all, we come across a person with strong leadership qualities and a very focused approach, determined to meet the goal he has been set despite the many challenges that constantly threatened to steer him off course.

One of the first things Akhlaq did was put together a small team with Nelson’s help. Together, they identified the staff they required and by Day 2, there were more than 100 people in construction, MEP and HVAC at the facility working 24/7 to meet the broadcaster’s ambitious launch date.

There were several conditions to meet. Editorial pre-requisites, for one, meant the team had to build studios and full production systems at several sites including Newseum DC, K Street DC, San Francisco and 33rd Street in New York. All of these had to, in turn, be connected to the main AJAM operations at MCP New York.

One of the elements that came up for discussion was trying as much as possible to stick to a workflow that would be similar to the Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation (AJWT) project.
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“There was no blueprint for AJWT yet at that point,” clarifies Akhlaq.

“Our primary goal was to ensure that we were up and running by the scheduled date, which was initially mid-June but that was later extended to August 20. But I tried to incorporate much of what I knew the general direction of the AJWT project would be so that when it did actually materialise, we could dovetail into them and our systems could be compatible and if it wasn’t, small tweaks could make it compatible.”

In the meantime, the requirements continued to grow. The main MCP studio was being used for news. A new studio was required for talk show programmes, sports and financial content.

A studio that Current TV had on a lease basis on 33rd Street, a couple of blocks away from MCP, therefore, was renovated, a new set was designed, new video walls, iNews, Interplay, a fully integrated news production system and five edit suites were built in there.

“Connectivity between the two sites was established using fibre circuits and one GigE circuit to allow staff to look into our assets at MCP so they could pull out the content they required. Although it was not ideal, from 33rd Street, they could use MCP’s news production system, which allowed for media assets to be shared across the network. The major issue here was that there were two programmes being produced from 33rd and these had to be ring fenced as Current TV was still on air. In effect, we had to build out 33rd with two systems running in parallel, one for the existing Current TV shows and the other for AJAM. So now, we had to install a new set for AJAM and in order for us to do this, we had to move the existing set to another facility and extend fibre connectivity back to the PCR (gallery) in 33rd Street, where we could operate the cameras remotely.”

Then there was the DC team that had a flagship one-hour show that was broadcast daily. They operated out of DC although the current Al Jazeera Network (AJN) DC hub could not facilitate this because they already had a couple of shows that were being run from there. The team found an alternative site at Newseum, which had a studio AJAM could use.

“Here again, we had to install a full news production solution, a Vizrt system and five edit suites and provide connectivity. However, we based this on the infrastructure that already existed at the Newseum site, which had more of a traditional news production workflow and required manual intervention.

Mohammed Akhlaq, Al Jazeera Network
“We designed our systems in such a way that our DC studio team could browse through all of our media assets in NY, and would be able to push and pull media, edit locally and transmit from their location with full Viz, playout, T/B, media management and other support. They were connected to New York but didn’t have automated Viz graphics. What they were allowed to do was browse through the assets in New York and request them. The requested files would then be fed via Signiant FTP to the staff at Newseum.”

A new infrastructure was put in place for iNews with six incoming circuits and four outgoing with full corporate IT infrastructure. Around 45 staff members now operate from this facility.

AJN DC K Street’s existing hub was supplied with extra connectivity to and from DC to New York and Doha. This area has been designed with additional floors for two extra edit suites and 45 staff with iNews.

All in all, the attempt was to create full functionality across various sites in the US.

One key aspect of the newsroom was the set design. AJAM wanted to incorporate two video walls – one huge 45-cube (9x5) wall and the other, a smaller 9-cube (3x3) one. The walls were specified and sourced from German manufacturer Eyevis, which manufactured the wall in Germany and was meant to freight the components to NY for assembly.

“The main issue here was that the large wall had a curve in it. This meant that the glass panels had to be cut to size to ensure the panel edges had the correct angles so that the curve was smooth and kept the joints tight and as thin as possible.

The delivery date for the wall altered several times due to the above challenges, which actually put huge pressure on our final installation. Of course, this could not happen so the panel was eventually flown in to New York,” explains Akhlaq.

Another significant element of the programme schedule was to take AJE’s News Hours but incorporate AJAM’s graphics to make the programme more relevant to its American audience.

“Here, Ali El Husseini, our AJN standards and workflows manager, and a wizard when it comes to operating Viz and graphics, came up with the idea of installing a Viz engine in Doha. This would be triggered at the same time as the normal Viz engines for the lower thirds. The gallery would operate as normal but the system
Left: Various areas of the facility.
Below: Akhlaq with Ali El Husseini, Network Head of Standards and work/follows, SME Vizrt at Al Jazeera.

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would also fire the graphics for the AJAM engine, resulting in two outputs from the gallery – one with AJE graphics and the other, with AJAM graphics. This allowed the content to be the same as the Doha News Hours but with our AJAM graphics. I believe this was a first and has never been done before,” claims Akhlaq.

In essence, the team built an entire newsroom with a complete news production system, fully automated and integrated Vizrt, with Signiant file transfer to and from all sites across all of its local and international channels and hubs with field crews having the ability to send and retrieve media. Other key solutions included Vantage for file transcoding and an archive system using Front Porch Digital integrated with Avid and a data cart from Spectra Logic. This entire system was to be seamlessly integrated with a fully automated workflow that required minimal manual intervention.

In the meantime, the clock was ticking. The contract was signed on February 17, 2013, leaving the team with 12 weeks to deliver a fully functional newsroom and studio to operate a 24-hour news channel – essentially, the team had to be ready both technically as well as operationally.

One of the big challenges Akhlaq’s team faced at this point was power. This required some out-of-the-box thinking as the team underestimated the amount of power that would be required to run such an operation.

“We had initially calculated a load of around 1400 amps but ended up requiring around 2000 amps. This was mainly due to the changing demands and the additional equipment we needed to add to ensure we could meet the editorial requirements. The plan evolved to install a separate supply from Comrad, the electricity supplier. In addition, part of our Disaster Recovery (DR) plan was to install a backup UPS large enough to sustain all the systems to minimise the impact to playout while also ensuring the ability to continue producing content.

“We built a power system that had a generator and mains that were routed via a change-over switch that would detect a loss of power from the main feed and switch to the generator. Both these power sources went to a UPS. This meant that in the event that we lost power, no loss would be experienced by the facility as it was on the UPS.

“The UPS could, by itself, supply enough power to sustain the facility for up to four hours before it needed to be recharged. The backup generator installed was specified to fire in less than three seconds from being triggered and stabilise within three minutes,” Akhlaq explains.

The system was tested successfully. Through all of this, the team maintained close contact with Doha’s Operations and Technology teams – a key prerequisite.

“Having come from the BBC, I was fully cognisant of the network strategy and objective. My remit, and the one that I set for my team, was to design a channel infrastructure that would allow full connectivity and sharing of media across the entire network.”

Mohammed Akhlaq, Al Jazeera Network
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For IT and broadcast, I had a small team of three – Miljenko Logozar, CTO of Al Jazeera Balkans; Mike Marno, Head of Engineering at AJE DC and Jeff Polikoff (VP of Operations AJAM). Logozar handled news production systems while Marno was in-charge of broadcast infrastructure.

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The problem was that we had no proof of concept yet; the workflow had not yet been defined. What we did, therefore, was build a system that we knew would work – Avid was a given and Al Jazeera Balkans (AJB) was the latest channel within the network that had a tried and tested news production system. The mandate for Miljenko and Mike, therefore, was to build a system based on AJB but with the latest versions and enhanced functionality, while also keeping in mind the network's refresh plan. This would ensure that we complied with the AJWT project as much as possible.”

One of the major technical highlights of this project was the installation of Avid Interplay Central at the facility.

Akhlaq says this install initially posed a huge challenge but was also a substantial learning curve for both parties on how to successfully integrate the solution within a larger network.

“I think we are the first major broadcaster to use Interplay Central in its true sense by pushing it to achieve more in terms of both desktop editing and content generation, giving reporters the ability to edit stories ready for TX from their workstations within the newsroom,” says Akhlaq.

“We had to engage Avid fully to fix a product that didn’t actually meet our requirements, but I believe it was the perfect real life environment for them to test their product and address some serious concerns. They eventually sent a team of developers on site to monitor and fix the issues and we had 24-hour on-site support. I am pleased to say that we moved towards a proper partnership with Avid at that installation instead of merely having a vendor-client arrangement.”

A second challenge was the playout and here again, Akhlaq’s team was faced with significant issues.

“For Press TX, we had to develop a remote control of our TX playout servers from NY to our service provider’s site at Stamford (Encompass), where our hardware systems were housed. Encompass did the uplink and distribution for Current TV. Due to time constraints, I decided to extend the contract and allow Encompass to continue running our playout and distribution services,” he adds.

AJAM’s scheduling and QC department in San Francisco would send a daily and weekly playlist for TX to Encompass. The Press TX at MCP would review it, validate and take control of the play services remotely from NY.

“We would always have the option to call Encompass and ask them to take control should we lose connectivity of control,” explains Akhlaq.

He credits the success of this project to the team he had with him including Mike Marno (Head of Engineering DC,

Besides the technical challenges, AJAM faced other issues. For one, half way through the build, a big union issue cropped up at the site with the hotel and it appeared that AJAM would have to stop operations, although the channel had nothing to do with the union.

Akhlaq stepped in and led a crisis meeting with the chairman of the hotel, his lead advisors and the legal team.

“After an hour or so of debate and strategising, I informed the chairman that we would be restarting work with immediate effect and that neither the hotel nor the unions had any right to stop work on our site. You may think that this was harsh but my timeline could not slip and the chairman of the hotel was given a strategic advantage, which allowed him to resolve the dispute without too much pain. Eventually, it was a win-win situation and we now have an even better working relationship with the hotel.”

AJAM’s travails did not end there. Three days before launch, disaster struck. A water pipe burst on the floor of the hotel creating a major water leak at AJAM.

Within minutes, AJAM experienced a waterfall feature in its newsroom.

Akhlaq recalls that it was the one time he panicked and “for the first time, saw real worry on the faces of our management team as well”.

“But after that initial hesitation, we quickly gathered our wits and everyone in the newsroom rallied through with coats and plastic bin bags to put in computers, monitors and so on. Within minutes, we evacuated the site as there was a real danger that the ceiling would collapse. I had the construction team, MEP engineers, HVAC teams, cleaning services, pumps, etc., on site within 20 minutes of making a call to my team and Ted from USTV. There was a real team spirit with everyone focused on fixing the problem,” says Akhlaq, playing down the huge drama that had ensued with the water leak.

Despite this, the whole set-up was revived within 12 hours.

“No one truly believed that we could get the newsroom operational within 12 hours, but we did it thanks to the fantastic efforts volunteered by our contractors and vendors. All of the major vendors called asking how they could help. It was amazing.”

Akhlaq recounts plenty of anecdotes that have all the makings of a motion picture.

From May 6, 2013, the team was ready for operations. To familiarise the teams with the editorial workflow so that there would be no hitches, Akhlaq started four weeks of technical rehearsals in collaboration with editorial leads.

“This proved to be invaluable as editorial workflows, system behaviour and training could all be compressed to work in parallel, thus saving time, which we simply did not have,” he explains.

Akhlaq’s team leads were the first staff members to come on site and help conduct the BAT (Business Acceptance Testing) and UAT (User Acceptance Testing).

“The leads were to define the basic workflow for their areas. This would test and ensure that the system behaved as we had designed it to and identify areas that may need to be readdressed. It was a real success because it gave staff ownership and when it came to training the rest of the team, the systems were well understood and where there were issues due to system or components not being complete, effective workarounds were put in place.”

With the channel now fully operational and staff in place, Akhlaq is back at Al Jazeera’s headquarters in Doha. But work on AJAM is far from over. The present installation is an interim arrangement until the network identifies a permanent site for its American operations.

“We are looking to secure new premises. We shall be ready to build a permanent multi-studio, fully functional broadcast facility for Al Jazeera America in the near future,” says Akhlaq.
Paul Mongey puts the new SONY PMW-300 XDcam camcorder through its paces

The new Sony PMW-300 XDcam camcorder replaces Sony's PMW-EX3. It is essentially a ‘semi-shoulder’ mount camera with an interchangeable lens. The PMW-300 is an evolution of the EX1/EX3 camera, adding 50Mb HD MPEG 4:2:2 recording, quite similar to the PMW-500. It adds 100Mbps HD XAVC 4:2:2 recording with a future firmware update.

One wonders if Sony is confusing the market again, with a mix of XDCam cameras complete with the PMW-100, 150, 160, 200, 300, 320, 350, 400 and 500. I know Sony is targeting different sectors of the industry with its comprehensive camera spread, but do we really need that huge a range? For me the PMW-200, 300 and 500 would cater to the industry needs just as well. Perhaps, Sony could have offered the new XAVC codec as a paid firmware upgrade for the PMW-500 rather than releasing another camera in the form of the 400.

Sony will release the PMW-300 with two lens options. The first package is the PMW-300K1 which supplies a 14x Fujinon ½” lens similar to the EX3 lens and the PMW-300K2 has a 16x lens Fujinon (plus mount conversion adaptor supplied) similar to the ½” lens supplied with the PMW-350 kit. But you can purchase the ACM-21 lens adaptor (with 1.4x magnification) to mount any 2/3” HD broadcast lens to this camera.

The PMW-300 has three full HD ½” Exmor sensors with the sensitivity and dynamic range similar to the EX3. My experience with ½” sensors is that the image always suffers a little more in low light but Sony has introduced 3DNR, a new noise reduction system, which should offer lower noise in low-light environments.

I am not a fan of semi-shoulder cameras, having shot on full size camcorders over
the past 25 years. A good camera has been designed to balance perfectly with lens, battery and top light attached. I spent a couple of days test shooting with the new PMW-300 and on the shoulder it is challenging to shoot for too long as the camera is front heavy and a little heavier than I imagined.

The PMW-300 is a welcome second camera on a shoot, shooting on Sony's familiar SxS memory cards in 50Mb MXF HD 4:2:2 in UDF format or 35Mb XDCam EX 4:2:0 similar to the EX3. In 50Mb HD 4:2:2, the PMW-300 can record on to either an SxS memory card or the new XQD cards (64Gb for USD 300) via the QDA-EX1 ($ 35.00) adaptor similar to the PMW-400 camera. But, at present, I do not know how many minutes you can record in XAVC 100Mbps on a 64Gb card.

A 3.5" LCD 16x9 viewfinder comes as standard with the camera with a higher resolution of 960x540 pixels than the EX3's viewfinder with 640x480 pixels. The test unit that I had on loan from Sony had this viewfinder but as it was a demo unit, there was no model number on the viewfinder. It did remind me of the 3.5" LCD CBKVF01 that comes with the

“I am not a fan of semi-shoulder cameras, having shot on full size camcorders over the past 25 years. A good camera has been designed to balance perfectly with lens, battery and top light attached”

Paul Mongey, Managing Partner, Media971
The PMW-300 camera’s S&Q settings allow the camera operator to record from one frame up to sixty frames per second.

PMW-350 camcorder. Similar to the 350, the 300’s viewfinder has a flip up cover allowing easy viewing of playback by the team on location. The ‘mirror’ switch on the operator’s side allows the image on the LCD to flip left to right or top to bottom. The rotating support arm, which mounts the viewfinder to the handle allows movement of four inches or so back or forwards.

Regarding the battery options for the camera, when I brought the camera home first, I thought, I could use NP-F970 batteries from my old retired second camera sitting on my kit shelf, the Sony HVR-Z1. But unfortunately, Sony is using the BP-U90, 60 and 30 battery system from the EX1 & EX3 range of cameras. This meant that I only had the supplied BP-U30, giving me an hour or so to work on this camera between charging.

This XDcam camera uses three ½” full HD (1920x1080) Exmor CMOS sensors and records up to 50Mbps in MPEG HD422, making it ideal for Chroma Key filming. I was surprised to see that this camera will be able to shoot 100Mbps data at 10bit XAVC and it will be available as a firmware upgrade next year. But until the 100Mbps upgrade pops along, this camera always has the many flavours of HD in Progressive, Interlace, 1920x1080, 1280x720 in 35Mb (FAT format) and 50Mb MXF (UDF format)... and for those who still need it, there’s also DVCam 25Mbps.

Of course, the PMW-300 is not a replacement for the F55 but will sit comfortably in the corporate or event industry. The PMW300 is the ideal next step to the very successful PMW EX3. It is a great camera for the mid-level market, allowing for the regular 35Mb from the traditional use of the EX1/EX3 and for clients who would like to move up to 50Mb or higher with the XAVC firmware upgrade next year.

**Slow & Quick**

The Slow & Quick (S&Q) settings allow the camera operator to record from one frame up to sixty frames per second. Sony recommends the SxS Pro and the SxS-1 cards for S&Q recording but also suggests that the XQD, Memory Stick and SD cards are not guaranteed for S&Q.

Unfortunately, I did not have one of the new XQD cards to test. I used my regular SxS-1 memory cards. Sony considers the XQD, Memory Stick and SD cards via the MEAD adaptor as ‘emergency’ media.

**IN & OUTS**

With the Sony CBK-WA100 optional wireless adaptor, you can view the recording/playback, transmit lo-res proxy...
The PMW-300 camcorder. Similar to the 350, the 300's viewfinder has a flip-up cover allowing easy viewing of playback by the team on location. The 'mirror' switch on the operator's side allows the image on the LCD to flip left to right or top to bottom. The rotating support arm, which mounts the viewfinder to the handle allows movement of four inches or so back or forwards.

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IN & OUTs

With the Sony CBK-WA100 optional wireless adaptor, you can view the recording/playback, transmit lo-res proxy.
files from the camera during recording and transmit the video out, where your client can use their smartphone as a mini monitor on location.

But I was interested in the remote control facility of both the CBK-WA100 and the supplied CBK-WA01 wireless adaptor. You can control the iris, colour balance, zoom and focus, which makes it very useful in a multicam set-up for a webcast, where you can change the camera settings in the control room during the event coverage.

Together with regular two XLR connectors with the Line/Mic/+48 settings similar to my PMW-500 you can record 4x audio channels at 24bit 48khz broadcast specification in HD mode. You can also have the internal camera stereo mic recorded on channels 3 & 4 for safety.

The 300 has both Genlock and Time Code IN/OUT connectors, which allowed me to sync lock the timecode with my 500 during some test two-camera shooting. There is one single BNC for Time Code with an external switch on the side to select TC in or out.

There are also two SDI outputs, allowing HD and or SD outputs with on-screen info which can be sent to your field monitor. It is good to see an HDMI out connector on this camera allowing playback of video footage on regular HD televisions used on event coverage or media training sessions.

It was good to see a regular composite video and audio channel 1, 2 out on the side of the camcorder that allowed me to hook up direct to a DVD recorder, should I need to make a quick DVD for a client in a media training session.

Assignable buttons
There are eight assignable buttons on the PMW-300. During my test, I assigned these buttons with the Colour Bars, Focus Magnifier, last clip delete, Picture Cache, Rec Review, ATW and ZEBRA. There are several other options to select including histogram, shot marks and clip continuous recording.

It was good to see the SxS memory card Slot Select button on the camera operator’s side of the camera unlike the PMW-500, where it’s stuck on the other side and difficult to get to when you are in the middle of filming an event.

I have heard that a large proportion of EX3 owners have never changed the Sony lens, which came with the EX3. As I can see, this camcorder serves well as a second camera on shoots and I would probably never need to exchange the lens for a longer Canon or Fujinon broadcast HD lens. But for those who do exchange alternative lenses – the 300 with a Canon EF 100-400 lens or longer would make a great set-up for a wildlife or documentary cameraman/DoPs who needs high data rates for their broadcaster.

I look forward to seeing what Sony’s 100Mbps XAVC update in 2014 will offer. And this data rate should make the PMW-300 an ideal multi format unit for events, conferences, webcasting and broadcast television.

The pricetag for the PMW-300/K1 (with 14x Fujinon lens) is just under $ 8,000, which is again a little too high for the camera that you get. If I was buying a new XDcam camera to accompany my PMW-500 and were to choose between the Sony PMW-300 and the slightly smaller PMW-200, I would choose the latter. It costs just under $ 6,500 with a fixed lens.

Pros and Cons

**Pros**
- smaller than a traditional broadcast camcorder (for example PMW-500) with 50Mb and higher recording
- semi shoulder mount is rather cumbersome when shooting for long periods off the shoulder

**Cons**
- It would be good to modify the 300 by adding a MOV cam or similar shoulder mount rig and push the viewfinder forward to make a workable shoulder mounted camcorder

A 3.5” LCD 16x9 viewfinder comes as standard with the camera with a higher resolution of 960x540 pixels than the EX3’s viewfinder with 640x480 pixels.

Paul Mongey is Managing Partner of Media971 FZ LLC, an HD/4K video production company based in Dubai Media City.
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IPTV’s adoption in the Middle East has not been so widespread despite its advantages. A look at the challenges that the operators face in the region and ways to overcome them.

IPTV is well-established in Europe and North America, mainly because of the strong presence of traditional telecommunications companies, which can deliver video over copper wires or fibre networks that crisscross the continents. However, the telecommunications industry in the Middle East is less developed and satellite operators dominate the market.

Establishing an IPTV operation is attractive because of its distinct advantages, but IPTV operators also face special challenges, particularly in the Middle East, which is a region marked by extreme socio-economic disparity and diverse geography. In order to be successful, Middle East IPTV operators must overcome those challenges and continually innovate, and to do that, they must choose the right ecosystem of technologies and partners to help them build their services.

The advantages of IPTV
IPTV has distinct advantages over its counterparts, especially the satellite. The cost of bandwidth is less than that on satellite, and IPTV offers greater speed. Once there is a cable going into the house, the operator and viewer have a pipeline for both pushing content and receiving...
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it very quickly. It’s something that is much harder to do on satellite, and it paves the way for viewer interactivity and personalisation that can drive subscriptions for the operator.

Another advantage is that IPTV can integrate easily with other IP-based services such as phone and internet access, allowing the operator to offer “triple play” bundles and capture the revenue for all of those services. Bundling is more complicated and expensive for satellite operators because they have to create partnerships with other providers to be able to offer the same services.

IPTV also has an edge when it comes to piracy, which is rampant in the Middle East. A typical satellite broadcast requires a card that scrambles the content, which is easy to crack and copy. But with IPTV, viewers have a set-top box with a specific IP address, so the operator knows exactly where a given piece of content is supposed to go at a given time, making it easier to track and harder to steal.

These are just a few of the advantages of IPTV, so it’s easy to see why a company would want to offer IPTV services. But creating an IPTV operation in the Middle East is not easy.

Why IPTV Is challenging in the Middle East
IPTV relies predominantly on telecommunications infrastructure — copper wires or fibre strands that must physically connect to a dwelling in order for that household to receive the service. The diverse geography in the Middle East has made it difficult to bring the wires to the houses in areas outside the cities, so the region lacks the ubiquitous telecommunications infrastructure that one would find in North America or Europe. This means that unless it is an established telco operator, a company would likely have to make a significant investment just to build its telecommunications network.

(Incidentally, cable operators have the same issues related to coax cable.) It’s no wonder then that satellite operations such as Al Jazeera, Canal+, and MultiChoice dominate the region today. After all, satellite delivery requires no expensive infrastructure, only a dish that sits on the rooftop.

That’s not to say that IPTV operators do not exist in the region. STC in Saudi Arabia and du and Etisalat in the UAE have built successful IPTV operations in those states, but it’s worth noting that those are also two of the more wealthy states in the Middle East — a fact that brings up another challenge: major economic differences. Some areas, such as North Africa, are very poor, so operators there must be sensitive to cost. When dealing with such socio-economic discrepancies, one product does not fit all, operators must, therefore, create multiple services for multiple economic levels.

On top of geographic and socio-economic factors that require significant investment, there is also the cost of continual innovation. Sports, especially international soccer, drive consumption in the region, so operators must always be looking towards the next new product in order to boost subscriptions ahead of the next big event. For example, right now Middle Eastern pay-TV operators are rushing to get new products to market in time for next summer’s World Cup.

It is against that backdrop that Middle Eastern IPTV operators must not only develop, but continually improve their IPTV operations in order to be competitive and successful. And they must do it while balancing average revenue per user while preventing churn, achieving growth, and controlling capital expenditures.

“The diverse geography in the Middle East has made it difficult to bring the wires to the houses in areas outside the cities, so the region lacks the ubiquitous telecommunications infrastructure that one would find in North America or Europe”

Steve Coutts, EVP Business & Corporate Development, Wyplay
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Then there is the best-of-breed approach, where an operator, or its assigned integrator, assembles the best components from different suppliers along the value chain into a seamless solution, effectively tapping into a rich ecosystem of suppliers that do IPTV well, are familiar with each other, and can drive each other’s innovation. This approach is more time-consuming and complex, to be sure, but can yield a more inventive, agile solution that is more competitive in the longer term. It’s a good approach for operators in the highly competitive Middle East market, where the product is expected to have a long life with numerous future evolutions.

Open ecosystems for IPTV

The trend in the Middle East and elsewhere is not only towards these rich, best-of-breed ecosystems, but also towards open ecosystems, some of which go as far as delivering source code to the development community. Two examples are Comcast RDK for cable operators in the United States and Frog by Wyplay for any pay-TV operator anywhere, both of which are driven by tier-one operators in their respective regions.

What are the attributes of an open-source ecosystem?

* Backed by tier one, innovative operators
* Published source code
* Large and diverse network of partners – STB providers, chipset manufacturers, third-party application developers, etc. – to ensure collaboration and spur innovation even more quickly
* Advanced tools to help create and deploy the solution (testing, debugging, etc.)
* Based on new, advanced architectures

The familiarity and collaboration among best-of-breed suppliers in these rich, open-source ecosystems reduce risk and time to market. These environments represent the future of pay-TV development and will do for the STB market what Android did for the cell phone. They provide a development architecture and network of partners that take care of the technical components so that operators can focus on the business of delivering IPTV.

Choosing the right technology and partners

IPTV operators need a platform and an ecosystem of suppliers that can evolve quickly to meet changes in the market. It’s the only way to guarantee they will remain relevant and deliver an experience that’s better than their competitors.

IPTV is especially technical and requires specific equipment, so it is important to choose the right equipment from the right suppliers. There are typically two approaches to choosing suppliers. One is the end-to-end approach, where a single supplier provides all or most of its own components in a pre-packaged product (backend + OTT solution + user experience + STB middleware + CAS + STB hardware). This approach is the simplest because, once the supplier is chosen, there are no more technical decisions for the operator to make. The trade-off is that the operator is then “locked-in” to this single solution provider for the better or for the worst. In order to ensure a competitive solution, however, it also means that the chosen supplier has to be the best at everything along the value chain, which is unlikely. This approach can work well for operators that dominate their market, need to go to market quickly, and/or aren’t concerned about differentiation.

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MBC recently strengthened the news component of its Egyptian channel MBC Masr with a turnkey newsroom and studio installation. Systems integrator Media Group International was selected to deliver this project under difficult political conditions in the country. Vibhuti Arora brings you an exclusive behind-the-scenes report.

Free-to-air network MBC Group recently contracted systems integrator Media Group International (MGI) to build a turnkey news facility in Cairo for its MBC Masr channel. MBC Masr is MBC Group’s 12th channel and was launched late last year in Egypt to provide viewers in the country with a selection of general entertainment and news programming. Given the political turmoil in the country, part of MBC’s mandate was also to build a strong news element within the channel.

The installation at MBC Masr, therefore, involved two phases. Saudi-based systems integrator First Gulf Company (FGC) undertook Phase 1 of the project, which included building a Master Control Room (MCR) for the channel’s entertainment.
programe. MGI, which is headquartered in Qatar, was responsible for Phase 2, which included building a studio and creating a turnkey news environment for MBC Masr.

Phase 2 involved a comprehensive project including broadcast systems design, engineering and installation. What is noteworthy is the fact that MGI worked under dire political circumstances to undertake an installation within a very tight deadline to ensure that MBC’s on-air broadcast mandate was fulfilled. The project was, therefore, completed within a span of four months and the channel went on air in April 2013.

Nick Barratt, Senior Manager of MBC Group comments on the decision to select MGI: “MBC usually undertakes system builds in-house using our skilled engineering team but due to the location and existing projects, we decided to outsource this build. MBC required one supplier who could deliver this important project and meet our tight budgets and deadlines. We also needed a company that was willing to operate in difficult circumstances. The change of leadership at MGI and their strategic alliances placed MGI in an ideal position to do this.”

Salam was rebranded as Media Group International in March 2013 under a new management.

MBC Masr is MGI’s first major project in Egypt following the company's restructuring, explains Paul Wallis, Sales Director of MGI.

“Our engineering team’s past experience in executing similar projects proved to be a key deciding factor in winning this project,” he says.

Creating a news environment became an increasingly vital addition to MBC Masr given the political situation in Egypt. While the installation was a necessity, the turmoil in the country and the consequent logistics involved in getting equipment delivered to the country served as a serious hurdle to the timely execution of the project.

The objective was to build a turnkey HD-capable newsroom that allows multi-format programming in both SD and HD. The installation required the design and build of a broadcast control room or gallery, a central apparatus room (CAR), an audio equipment room, a broadcast studio, three edit suites and a newsroom complete with the necessary IT infrastructure.

The MBC Masr facility is located in Egyptian Media City and previously served as a film studio. It now had to be repurposed to suit the requirements of a broadcaster. This, of course, called for careful co-ordination between the civil works and systems integration teams.

As the technical installation progressed alongside the building of the set in the studio, the systems integrator, the contractor and the set designers required to be in sync at all times. It is important to note that MBC Masr was on air at this time. Phase 1 had been completed and the initial programming for the channel was running as per schedule. This meant that Phase 2 had to carry on without disrupting the channel’s existing broadcast service.

“MBC Masr decided during the installation to expand the workflow by adding new programmes to meet the ongoing political demands at that time, which meant MGI had to accommodate multiple variations in the system whilst still delivering on the agreed deadline”

Raed Bacho, Broadcast Manager, MBC Group

**Snapshot**

**Key vendors:** Avid, Axon, Grass Valley, Ross, Studer, Trilogy, Vizrt

**Client:** MBC Group

**Location:** Cairo

**St:** Media Group International

**Objective:** To create a state-of-the-art newsroom and studio environment

“MBC MASR decided during the installation to expand the workflow by adding new programmes to meet the ongoing political demands at that time, which meant MGI had to accommodate multiple variations in the system whilst still delivering on the agreed deadline”

Raed Bacho, Broadcast Manager, MBC Group

![The master control room at the newly established MBC Masr news channel.](image)
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still delivering on the agreed deadline.”

MBC Cairo uses five Sony XDCAM cameras for ENG purposes and the AMA (Avid Media Access) workflow with NewsCutters to import the material to ISIS and check in to Interplay.

In addition to that, the facility boasts the latest Grass Valley LDX-80 studio cameras, which are based on CMOS technology as opposed to traditional CCD.

An ingest workstation at the newsroom enables the cameramen to ingest the footage as soon as they return from a shoot.

At the heart of the system is an Avid production system. Avid Interplay serves as the central database to connect and control all systems for ingest, file storage, editing suites, iNews, command playout and graphics.

Other technical highlights of the project include a live production switcher from Ross, a broadcast communications system from Trilogy, a Barco LED video wall and most importantly, a Studer all-in-one Vista audio mixing console, the first of its kind to be installed in Egypt.

The core component in the ingest part of the workflow is the Airspeed 5000 and Interplay Capture, which does baseband ingest. A Telestream Vantage system is used for file ingest and can accept any video file format and transcode them to Avid MXF file and “check in” to Avid Interplay.

All baseband recording is done by Interplay Capture while Quicklink is used as a file delivery system by the correspondents for delivering finished reports.

In addition to the above, listed users can ingest materials from the internet and other similar files that they might receive from various sources.

Part of the installation is the Avid Instinct for rough cut edit and Avid News Cutter for final video editing. The end

**Tech Specs**

**Studio:**

- 4 x Grass Valley LDX-80 camera chains with Vinten support

**Production gallery:**

- Ross Vision 2m switcher

**Audio:**

- Studer Vista 1 and Vista 5
- Axon Glue throughout
- Avid News production system
- Vizrt graphics
- Evertz multiviewer system
- Argosy installation materials
- Custom consoles furniture
user can employ Instinct to create rough cuts for their stories. These rough cuts are then picked up by the video editors and used as the start of an edit. The sequence created in Instinct is loaded to the Source Monitor from the Interplay window and then cut to the timeline of the NRCS (newsroom computer room) sequence. News reporters can add the text to their iNews story using Instinct if they wish or prepare the script in iNews before opening the story in Instinct. The craft editors then use NewsCutter to finish the stories in Instinct or start new stories from scratch. The journalist can also prepare the stories in iNews. Vizrt graphics are integrated with Avid at this point to save time. From each of the iNews client sessions, the journalist can open a Vizrt plugin window, which allows them to select a template, photos, graphics and so on to incorporate with the news. Later, at the on-air playout stage, both the news and the graphics can be played from Avid’s playout system so no manual intervention is required for the Vizrt play out. This, in turn, ensures cost savings. Finally, to play the stories to air, MBC Masr uses iNews Command, which can play both video and CG events to air. The latter is inserted into iNews by the newsroom journalist. MGI has a local partner in Egypt, who provides 24/7 support to the channel. The same company also services other broadcast clients in Egypt. This installation included several rounds of training with key manufacturers that was aimed at ensuring that the end user was fully skilled to handle the system operation functions while also being aware of equipment maintenance procedures. MGI’s in-house team provided the staff at MBC Masr with end-to-end knowledge of the broadcast installation with special focus on the Avid components. The main driver for getting on air was the elections in Egypt but the sense of urgency was heightened due to political unrest prevailing in the state. This was primarily because the political situation in Egypt had continued to worsen while the project was in progress putting huge pressure on the systems integrator to carry out the project in a much shorter span of time. “The project was challenging due to the recent political unrest which drove us to reduce the overall project timeline. The biggest challenge in this project was to be able to get on air to be able to report on the changing political situation,” explains MGI’s Wallis. The challenges were many. Equipment deliveries, the overall logistics including customs clearances and manpower resources faced huge roadblocks. “One of the biggest single issues we faced was the importation procedures in Egypt,” explains Wallis. “Although MBC is located in the free zone area, we often had to work with MBC’s own logistics team to ensure the goods arrived on site and in a timely manner. The second major challenge in this project was converting some of the products on site to run in SD. On at least one occasion, our team could not leave the facility overnight because demonstrators were protesting outside,” Wallis adds.

Today, MBC Masr has grown since its initial days to a full-edged 24/7 channel with a core news element designed to share news from Egypt with the rest of the world. Of course, the channel also serves as a general entertainment channel for its Egyptian viewers regaling its audience with dramas, talk shows and reality shows.

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user can employ Instinct to create rough cuts for their stories. These rough cuts are then picked up by the video editors and used as the start of an edit. The sequence created in Instinct is loaded to the Source Monitor from the Interplay window and then cut to the timeline of the NRCS (newsroom computer room) sequence.

News reporters can add the text to their iNews story using Instinct if they wish or prepare the script in iNews before opening the story in Instinct. The craft editors then use NewsCutter to finish the stories in Instinct or start new stories from scratch.

The journalist can also prepare the stories in iNews. Vizrt graphics are integrated with Avid at this point to save time. From each of the iNews client sessions, the journalist can open a Vizrt plugin window, which allows them to select a template, photos, graphics and so on to incorporate with the news.

Later, at the on-air playout stage, both the news and the graphics can be played from Avid’s playout system so no manual intervention is required for the Vizrt play out. This, in turn, ensures cost savings.

Finally, to play the stories to air, MBC Masr uses iNews Command, which can play both video and CG events to air. The latter is inserted into iNews by the newsroom journalist.

MGI has a local partner in Egypt, who provides 24/7 support to the channel. The same company also services other broadcast clients in Egypt.

This installation included several rounds of training with key manufacturers that was aimed at ensuring that the end user was fully skilled to handle the system operation functions while also being aware of equipment maintenance procedures. MGI’s in-house team provided the staff at MBC Masr with end-to-end knowledge of the broadcast installation with special focus on the Avid components.

The main driver for getting on air was the elections in Egypt but the sense of urgency was heightened due to political unrest prevailing in the state. This was primarily because the political situation in Egypt had continued to worsen while the project was in progress putting huge pressure on the systems integrator to carry out the project in a much shorter span of time.

“The project was challenging due to the recent political unrest which drove us to reduce the overall project timeline. The biggest challenge in this project was to be able to get on air to be able to report on the changing political situation,” explains MGI’s Wallis.

The challenges were many. Equipment deliveries, the overall logistics including customs clearances and manpower resources faced huge roadblocks.

“One of the biggest single issues we faced was the importation procedures in Egypt,” explains Wallis.

“Although MBC is located in the free zone area, we often had to work with MBC’s own logistics team to ensure the goods arrived on site and in a timely manner. The second major challenge in this project was converting some of the products on site to run in SD. On at least one occasion, our team could not leave the facility overnight because demonstrators were protesting outside,” Wallis adds.

Today, MBC Masr has grown since its initial days to a full-fledged 24/7 channel with a core news element designed to share news from Egypt with the rest of the world. Of course, the channel also serves as a general entertainment channel for its Egyptian viewers regaling its audience with dramas, talk shows and reality shows.

“On at least one occasion, our team could not leave the facility overnight because demonstrators were protesting outside”

Paul Wallis, Sales Director, MGI

“MBC usually undertakes system builds largely in-house using our skilled engineering team but due to the location and existing projects, we decided to outsource this build”

Nick Barott, Senior Manager, MBC Group
Tapping into the cloud

Beyond archiving and management, the cloud has enormous potential for streamlining media operations and making everyone – especially multisite organisations – more collaborative.

Once all of an organisation’s assets have been digitised, managing them is another challenge because of their sheer size and complex structure. That’s where an advanced CSM system comes in.

Unlike IT-centric storage systems, CSM systems are designed specifically for demanding media-centric operations and their highly active, symmetrical nature. They typically act as the backbone for the file-based infrastructure, providing storage, handling, and protection of valuable file-based media assets. The CSM solutions themselves can facilitate the automatic, high-speed replication of media assets within a data tape archive system for an inexpensive level of content protection. The copies can remain within the system to provide online resiliency, or these second (or even third) data tape copies can be taken offline and stored outside for more geographically diverse protection of valuable assets.

Beyond that, CSM solutions have evolved to provide various media-centric features in addition to basic storage functionality – features such as distributed transcoding, metadata mining, file-based subjective quality analysis, timecode-based partial restore, and more – all operating in a file-based domain. They also provide universal accessibility to these features via content lifecycle and policy engines, workflow tools, and open APIs for direct third-party control, integration, and collaboration.

With all that a CSM system can do, the natural next step is to move it into the cloud to take advantage of the cloud’s unlimited storage space and computing power. But most existing cloud services are built for the relatively small data requirements of IT, not for big data in the media space, so the per-use and storage...
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“CSM solutions have evolved” to provide various media-centric features in addition to basic storage functionality – features such as distributed transcoding, metadata mining, file-based subjective quality analysis, timecode-based partial restore, and more – all operating in a file-based domain.

subscription costs for CSM on such a service would be impossible to afford. Part of the reason for this staggering cost is the sole reliance on expensive spinning disk storage in these cloud service facilities. Media-centric cloud services, on the other hand, rely on data tape, which is still one of the most cost-effective, reliable, and robust storage technologies available. Some current technologies have incredible density and performance, and typically cost close to 100 times less than traditional IT cloud storage services.

Media-centric cloud services offer some distinct advantages, such as a better view of the file system. In media applications, each media asset producer and consumer device or system (video server, editing platform, newsroom system) presents very specific control and media interfaces that limit direct integration with generic file systems. These systems typically require a management layer to access, control, and interact with media content. This layer is provided by the CSM solution.

In addition, CSM systems are built to handle the complexity surrounding the storage, recall, replication, repurposing, and transformation of complex media objects. As such, they offer support for the Archive eXchange Format (AXF), an emerging universal object storage format. Media assets are typically comprised of a complex collection of media and ancillary files that must be maintained carefully in order to reconstruct, access, or reuse these assets. This concept is typically referred to as an object store and is the fundamental basis of advanced CSM solutions.

The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) AXF group is working to standardise the AXF format, which encapsulates any number of related files (of any type and size) into a fully self-describing and protected object package. By leveraging AXF, systems can ensure resilient and ubiquitous access to valuable assets. As storage and archive solutions make the transition to the cloud, a feature-rich CSM becomes much more important because transfer authentication, metadata, per-file and per-structure checksums, in-built object resiliency characteristics, access level control, and storage technology independence are inherent in its design.

Finally, leveraging stand-alone AXF access utilities that are currently available, it allows for universal accessibility to these media assets regardless of the system being used.

CSM solutions have largely been on-premise solutions because storage capacities, network bandwidth, and the lack of compelling and cost-effective offerings have acted as barriers to their adoption as a cloud service. But the emerging CSM as a Service (CSMaaS) offerings now present a cost-competitive option. Thanks to CSMaaS, along with ever more affordable and more readily available connectivity, previous barriers to adoption are disappearing.

Today there are CSMaaS solutions that provide all the features of a physical CSM system without the infrastructure investment and overhead costs. Instead, media organisations can deploy the system rapidly in the cloud.

For organisations that are sitting on decades’ worth of content that could be made available commercially, a CSMaaS solution is an easy route to these revenue streams without the need for a big, up-front capital investment.

True CSM is about interfacing with all media devices and storage technologies. It is about offering “content-aware” features such as transcoding, timecode partial restore, and asset analytics. It is about direct integration with business systems to link processes, resources, and metadata with the content repository in fundamental ways. And now that this capability exists in the cloud, it ensures assets are secure and available to be repurposed on demand without further operations or intervention – for a fraction of the cost of the typical cloud service – enabling media-based organisations to capitalise on vast libraries of video content.
Rino Petricola is Senior Vice President and General Manager of Front Porch Digital.

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Mohamed El Sehrawy’s film *For Granted* won the Sony PROduction award this year.

**Vibhuti Arora** caught up with the filmmaker to learn about the making of his first short.

El Sehrawy worked as a freelance photographer, a photography instructor and, very briefly, as a budget filmmaker in Cairo, before moving to London to study film. He is presently taking a Bachelor’s Degree course in filmmaking at the MET Film School in Ealing Studios London, which he is due to complete in 2015.

Al Sehrawy’s interest veered towards filmmaking after a very interesting encounter with a mannequin.

While working on his portfolio, he ended up using a mannequin as the lead model for his shoot.

What followed was a short film, which was originally made with the idea of entering a competition but formally introduced El Sehrawy to filmmaking. It was a two-minute film that revolved around a mannequin.

Back in Cairo, he was constantly updating his Facebook photography page, which is called “Sehrawy’s Photography”,

Light and Shadow

**Mohamed El Sehrawy** recently won the Sony PROduction Award for his short *For Granted*, which was inspired by a photo shoot he had conducted to expand his portfolio. El Sehrawy’s penchant for photography becomes evident in his film *For Granted*.

El Sehrawy and Abudahab shortlisted for cinema in the Middle East but for the past few years, the industry has been going back many years, but for the desired in recent years.

As history of Egyptian cinema goes back many years, but for the industry has not progressed as the film buffs know, the film industry has the potential to positively impact a country’s economy and influence to aid in the rebirth of cinema in the Middle East, more relative in a director and use my knowledge and competences still are and will to meaningful films, and his bigger dream is to bring respect and talent.
with his latest photos.

Talking about his first steps in the world of filmmaking, El Sehrawy explains that it started quite by chance: “The number of fans kept on growing on my Facebook page. Now, it is more than 15,000 people on my page. One day, I posted a photo and it was shared on Facebook homepages of my friends and cousins.

“Stylist Nada Abudahab, who was friends with my cousins, saw the post and approached me to shoot for her.”

Abudahab was working in Dior London at that time and wanted to pursue a photography project for her designs and costumes. She was travelling to Alexandria, Egypt for the project and invited El Sehrawy to join her. It was going to be a joint project, where she designed and styled and I did the shooting.

“We were required to work with models for the project, which unfortunately or rather fortunately did not happen. We couldn’t find a professional/competent model that was up to the standards we were looking for. We decided to use a mannequin instead. I called that mannequin Yolanda,” explains El Sehrawy.

The name Yolanda was inspired by Yolanda Reef, a beautiful reef off the coast of Ras Muhammad in Sinai, Egypt.

It’s very popular among scuba divers who flock to Yolanda Reef from all around the world. As a diver, El Sehrawy considers Yolanda Reef as one of the milestones of beauty.

Yolanda was an old and distressed mannequin that they found in a warehouse. Before the shoot, they sanded and spruced it up to give it the desired look.

“At that time, I had no clue that my relationship with Yolanda would go further and I would shoot my very first film with her,” he adds.

“After spending an entire day shooting in a villa in Alexandria, El Sehrawy and Abudahab shortlisted nine photographs for their respective portfolios. The same were later published in Volt Magazine, London. “After the success of this project, Nada and I talked about how one day we should create a short film starring a mannequin and try to get it as expressive as possible. That’s how it all started,” he adds.

“I began my career as a photographer and as I move on to films, I realise deep down my sensibilities still are and will always be that of a photographer,” explains the filmmaker.

Sehrawy intends to make meaningful films, and his bigger dream is to bring respect back to Egyptian cinema.

“I want to become a credible director and use my knowledge and relative influence to aid in the rebirth of cinema in the Middle East, more specifically in Egypt,” he says.

Historically, Egypt has been a hub for cinema in the Middle East but the industry has not progressed as desired in recent years.

The history of Egyptian cinema goes back many years, but for the past few years, the industry has been ailing because of the political turmoil and a lack of fresh perspective.

“Egypt is home to monumental wealth in classic cinema and art. As I’m sure most film buffs know, the film industry has the potential to positively impact a country’s economy as well as its people. However, this industry is like a double-edged sword. It must be treated with competence, balance, respect and talent.”

**Mohamed El Sehrawy, Filmmaker**
and thus, its people. However, this industry is like a double-edged sword. It must be treated with competence, balance, respect and talent. If you do it right, you will add a lot of value to yourself, to the economy and to others. Do it wrong, and you won’t stand a chance against the fierce global competition,” he explains.

El Sehrawy’s award-winning short revolves around two mannequins, and has no actors. “There are no humans in my film. Instead, my film stars a couple of mannequins. The entire story of the film is expressed through camera movement, light and music,” says the filmmaker.

“The film is a black-and-white silent, symbolic film that serves as a reminder to our egos that we must learn to stop taking things for granted,” explains El Sehrawy. For Granted was El Sehrawy’s first independent film, which he made especially for the Sony PROduction competition. The film was made on a shoestring budget with minimal crew. He used his monthly allowance to fund the film. His fellow students and friends helped him execute the project. “Nada Abudahab, who is a friend helped me on the film with costumes. Alexander Aked, Dennis Murickan, Paul Lambert and Tedd Beam are my classmates to whom I’m deeply grateful. If it weren’t for their help, I would never have been able to finish the film on time,” he says.

The post production and editing did not involve too much expertise either. “The only thing I did was cut and stitch the shots together. I don’t think that counts as post production. Funnily enough, that’s what film making essentially is – cutting and stitching till you get the desired result. So, my film”

“My advice to people is to never dwell on which camera is being used. It is never about what you have. It is about how you use what you have” Mohamed El Sehrawy, Filmmaker

The gear that El Sehrawy used in the filming of his first short—the Sony NEX FS700 camera, and other accessories.
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“The only thing I did was cut and stitch the shots together. I don’t think that counts as post production. Funnily enough, that’s what film making essentially is – cutting and stitching till you get the desired result. So, my film is symbolic at more than one levels. What we see in the film is what we shot” explains the filmmaker.

“There is no CGI in the film, no effects whatsoever, and no alteration in colour or contrast. The film was shot in black and white and in the contrast and sharpness that is seen in the film.”

What the viewer sees in the film is shot using a Sony NEX-6 camera without any major processing involved. The text and music were added later.

He did not use a written script but made the entire film purely based on instinct. He confesses that he did not see the need for a written script.

“There was no ambiguity, as I knew exactly what I wanted. The film was an offshoot of my photography and a script was redundant, so to speak,” he explains.

El Sehrawy bought a Sony NEX-6 camera for the purpose of creating this film, which was mainly produced to enter the competition.

“I had invested in several quality lenses but never had the chance to buy a film camera. So I decided to go for the NEX-6 since it allows me to use all my lenses. While that was a big attraction for me, this camera also generates the quality I was looking for. I thought, it being lightweight and compact also helped me in making the decision,” he says.

He is quick to add though that the camera is just a tool and should not be the mainstay of a film project.

“My advice to people is to never dwell on which camera is being used. It is never about what you have. It is about how you use what you have. There’s no such thing as a good camera or a bad camera. There’s only such a thing as you; the person behind the camera. You’re all that matters,” he comments.

Mohamed El Sehrawy, Filmmaker

Essential Kit

The gear that El Sehrawy used in the filming of his first short–the Sony NEX FS700 camera, and other accessories.
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Another edition of MIPCOM, a global market for entertainment content across all platforms, concluded last month in Cannes, France. Organised by Reed MIDEM, MIPCOM took place from October 7-10, 2013. The show opened to a star-studded evening as actors, directors, writers, producers and show business personalities walked the red carpet on the opening night party on October 7.

The 2013 edition of the show welcomed 13,500 delegates, from more than 100 countries. International acquisition executives numbered 4,623, of which over 1,000 were digital buyers.

The word on the MIPCOM show floor was that the market is seeing an extraordinary quantity of quality content from around the world, with international partnerships such as Sky Atlantic HD, Canal+, Shine International, Kudos and Shine France Films’ The Tunnel being a case in point.

Put simply, more and more companies, executives and talent, traditionally associated with cinema, are getting involved in television. Digital heavyweights that include Netflix and Amazon, are stimulating the content creation community and an increasing number of international partnerships are being forged, as global broadcasters’ appetites grow for accessing high-end series at their outset, rather than as part of an output agreement for completed work.

Jeffrey Katzenberg, CEO of DreamWorks Animation was honoured as the MIPCOM 2013 Personality of the Year. Addressing the MIPCOM audience in his keynote speech, Katzenberg shared his unique perspectives on the television business as part of MIPCOM’s Media Mastermind series of presentations.

Supporting the continuing momentum towards television, Katzenberg emphasised that mobile and digital will prove to be an asset rather than a threat to traditional television and there was plenty of online activity during MIPCOM.

“I don’t think there’s ever been a time filled with so much new and unique opportunity for the world of television.” He argued that despite fears in the past that high-quality online video broadcasting and instant access would be detrimental to traditional television, “by almost every single measure, traditional television viewing has not only remained robust, but has continued to expand.”

“Yes, there will continue to be exponential growth of internet-delivered content, but linear TV will continue to do just fine,” he said

“If people like Sean Maloney were to be right in their predictions that the internet will render linear television obsolete, then this would go against the entire half-millennium history of mass media,” added Katzenberg.

“Throughout this history, in not one instance did a new form of mass media replace an earlier form.”

Drawing from DreamWorks recent entertainment content acquisition deals he said: “Because there are so many emerging distribution options, there will
In partnership with Lifetime, MIPCOM brought together 150 of the most influential women executives in international television and entertainment for the Power Lunch.

The gathering aimed to create the global platform for women in entertainment to connect, network and expand business opportunities on an international level.

During the discussion, which focused on MIPCOM 2013’s main theme, ‘the new golden age of television’, H.E. Noura Al Kaabi highlighted the growth of the media and entertainment industry in Abu Dhabi and also spoke about the role of Arab women in developing the media industry and enriching Arabic content.

Al Kaabi said that the future of television is linked to content creation, and content creators should leverage the increasing interactivity of the TV platform. She also stressed the importance of developing locally relevant content that can compete with popular international formats.

Speaking specifically about the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) market, H.E. Noura Al Kaabi said: “We might not be ‘Hollywood’ or ‘Bollywood’ yet, but we are open to different cultures and our media industry is growing rapidly.”

Al Kaabi also emphasised the importance to broadcasters and online content providers of offering customised content for different audiences particularly in light of the over-supply of content available online. She said that advertising must also change in a way that resonates with the needs of different audiences.

Aside from the networking opportunities, MIPCOM saw the inking of several high-profile entertainment deals. New distribution company Federal Distribution was unveiled during the show.

Argentina was MIPCOM 2013’s “Country of Honour.” The Focus on Argentina featured a wide-ranging programme of high-level conferences, screening showcases, co-production matchmaking, and Argentine-themed networking events.

The same ran throughout MIPJunior and MIPCOM and highlighted Argentina’s world-renowned television and film production industry with the aim of providing the world’s entertainment executives the opportunity to discover the country’s rich content offering across drama, TV films, documentary and animation, in addition to co-production funding incentives and location scouting throughout Argentina.

Disney Media Distribution reported during MIPCOM that Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D will appear on several Chinese online platforms offering VOD services, including Tudou, 24 hours after the US airing and Amazon’s LoveFilm VOD platform signed an agreement with German rights giant Tele Munchen Group giving LoveFilm Germany SVOD rights to such titles as Iron Man 3, Magic Mike and Midnight in Paris.

French heavyweight broadcasters TF1 and pay-tv Canal+, became the latest groups to team up with Facebook in an agreement that will see the internet giant providing analysis tools to help the duo understand the online comments about their shows and better determine advertising targets.

At his MIPCOM Media Mastermind keynote, Amazon Studios Director, Roy Price, stated how Amazon’s call for people to propose film scripts and television series pilots saw some 14,000 scripts and over 4,000 pilots sent in. Amazon has since reduced the number to 24 films and 30 TV series which are heading for development.
PRO

“We might not be ‘Hollywood’ or ‘Bollywood’ yet, but I’m very happy because the UAE is the heart and soul of DreamWorks, and the UAE is the key to our media business,” said DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg at an Entertainment Power Lunch at MIPCOM.

Katzenberg described the UAE as being the right place to launch our media business, and the right place for world-renowned television and film companies to think of us as the Gulf.”

Katzenberg said that the UAE is linked to content creation, and content producers should leverage the increasing Arab identity and culture and that the UAE is the right place to launch their media business.

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Ensemble shines bright with Mitto Pro 2

Ensemble Designs has introduced the newest member of the BrightEye Mitto scan converter. The new model, the BrightEye Mitto Pro 2, leverages advanced manufacturing techniques to reduce costs while maintaining superior signal processing.

“Manufacturing equipment here at our facility in Grass Valley, California allows us to rapidly respond to changes in manufacturing process, discounted hardware, and the latest technology,” said David Wood, President and Chief Design Engineer at Ensemble Designs.

The BrightEye Mitto Pro 2 provides a host of advanced features for those needing to integrate video or imagery from the web or computer into their video productions. It boasts HDMI or analogue audio input, procamp controls for image and colour correction, adjustable timing, preset memories and a test signal generator to verify signal output from the unit.

“We are pleased to be bringing the BrightEye Mitto Pro 2 at such a competitive price point,” said Mondae Hott, Director of Sales at Ensemble Designs. “The response to this new scan converter has been overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to introducing the outstanding video quality, ease of set up and use, and advanced feature set that have given Mitto the reputation as being the superior compact scan conversion solution.”

The BrightEye Mitto Pro 2 is an addition to the Mitto scan converter product line that includes the BrightEye Mitto 3G, and BrightEye Mitto HD – both of which feature full audio mixing, audio delay for maintaining lip-sync, as well as the proc amp, preset memories, adjustable timing and test signal generator of the Mitto Pro 2.

Telemetrics on track

Telemetrics Inc. has added a new camera track system and two new control software platforms to its expanding product portfolio.

TG4 Teleglide track system provides the ability for either ceiling or floor mounting with curved track sections and stable support for elevating/Lowerings Telemetrics’ Pan/Tilt Heads via Telemetrics Televator Elevating Pedestals. The TG4 is full servo controlled, providing accurate preset positioning and repeatable motion as well as integrated cable management and soft electronic end stops.

Yet another key feature is that the TG4 is claimed to be smoother and quieter than its predecessors.

The Matrox Monarch

Matrox Monarch HD is a small, easy-to-use video streaming and recording appliance designed for professional video producers who need to simultaneously stream a live event and record a quality version for post-event editing.

It provides two independent modes in an integrated unit. From any HDMI input source such as a camera or switcher, Matrox Monarch HD generates an H.264-encoded stream compliant with RTSP or RTMP protocol. While encoding the video at bitrates suitable for live streaming, Matrox Monarch HD simultaneously records MP4 or MOV file to an SD card, a USB drive, or a network-mapped drive. Matrox Monarch HD is remotely controlled using any computer or mobile device with any type of web browser.

Tivo in the cloud

Tivo and Harmonic demonstrated a prototype of their next generation network PVR, fully equipped with an integrated multiscreen solution backend from Harmonic during IBC2013 in Amsterdam. This demo marked an important step toward TiVo’s goal to enable cost-effective and feature-rich paths for operators to transition towards an IPTV solution.

The TiVo network PVR will use TiVo’s cloud service and is a natural extension of the TiVo solution. This is an important next step for operators as they consider a transition to IP delivered content and utilisation of low-cost IP clients and consumer provided devices (tablets, smartphones, etc.) with an eye towards enhancing the user experience inside and outside of the home.

TiVo’s network PVR extends the TiVo service and consistent user experience while enabling consumers to easily find, consume and socially share cloud-delivered content through the TiVo user interface.

The foundation of the TiVo service and cloud-based architecture enables pay-TV operators to access a multitude of ‘TV Anywhere’ content, including IPTV, IPVOD, catch-up, start-over and nPVR from the TiVo service in the cloud on TVs via low-cost IP clients and consumer provided devices.

Nano power from Broadpeak

Broadpeak, a provider of content delivery networks (CDN) and high-performance video streaming servers for cable, IPTV, OTT, and hybrid TV operators worldwide, has introduced a second application of nanoCDN technology.

Broadpeak’s nanoCDN technology leverages in-home network components such as broadband gateways to make them part of the CDN. nanoCDN currently resolves live OTT consumption peak issues by turning millions of broadband gateways or STBs into active components of the content delivery infrastructure. Using multicast technology to the ultimate cache in the home, operators can cost-effectively manage the consumption peaks of live multiscreen services for millions of simultaneous viewers using only a few megabits-per-second from the network.

Relying on a combination of Broadpeak’s BkM100 CDN Mediator and Bka100 video delivery analytics products, operatorCDN provides telecom and cable operators with all the tools needed to successfully deploy and manage their own CDN services targeting content providers. This includes user profiles, billing information, quotas, and analytics. Using this powerful collection of bandwidth provisioning and management tools, operators can sell bandwidth directly to content providers or enable resellers to sell it on their behalf while providing an unmatched quality of service (QoS) to end users.
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Irdeto announces Multiscreen

Irdeto announced the evolution of Irdeto Multiscreen, a pre-configured solution ready for operator branding. Irdeto Multiscreen reduces the risk, cost and time to market for operators wanting to launch multi-screen services and a world-class experience in as few as four weeks. Multiscreen services worldwide are evolving rapidly as operators strive to meet consumer demand and generate new revenue, as depicted in Irdeto’s new infographic: Has Multi-Screen Reached the Tipping Point? To meet this challenge, Irdeto Multiscreen offers partners and a cloud-based infrastructure to help pay-TV, over-the-top (OTT) and free-to-air operators deliver quality video on any screen, including tablets, smartphones, IP-connected set-top boxes (STBs) and PCs. For operators looking to drive consumption and generate revenue with a personalised experience, Irdeto Multiscreen offers advanced recommendation engines, full social media integration and targeted advertising.

It is also designed to easily add on new applications and be compatible with an operator’s existing platform and preferred set of vendors.

NewTek develops the Network

NewTek continues momentum of the NewTek Developer Network, with the addition of 16 new companies to the vast ecosystem of companies that create compelling workflows for NewTek customers. The Network, which includes companies in several different workflow categories — streaming, graphics, content, controllers — has also expanded to include a media asset management category, and brings the total number of participating technology partners to 34.

“The momentum we’re experiencing with the NewTek Developer Network is tremendous, with the number of participating companies expanding to more than three times over what we had just one year ago,” said Michael Kornet, Executive Vice President of Business Development at NewTek. “Every product in the NewTek Development Network helps our customers to produce or distribute video content with greater quality, agility, and ease — and we are honoured that so many leading companies continue to approach NewTek with a keen interest in developing best-in-class workflows for our industry-standard TriCaster and 3Play systems.”

Dean Kolkey, President of NewsMaker Systems commented, “We are very excited about integrating with TriCaster to evolve the process of making news. Using the MOS Protocol, our NewsCaster product can link TriCaster directly to a newsroom computer system, and play back video clips, still graphics, CG text, and audio assets — directly from the TriCaster UI as sequenced within a news program rundown. This integration puts incredible flexibility at the fingertips of any news producer, helping to streamline equipment, automate production tasks, and efficiently deliver a quality TV news viewing experience.”

TCS Skquattro Mk 2 on a pedestal

The TCS Skquattro Mk 2, a broadcast camera pedestal, has been developed by The Camera Store (TCS), a Vitec Group company, which supplies camera support systems on a rental and purchase basis for use in broadcast television and digital film production.

“The Skquattro Mk 2 is an evolution of Vinten’s established Quattro pedestal,” explained Tim Highmoor, Head of Rentals at TCS.

“The Skquattro has been designed exclusively for the rental market. It enables operators to deliver low and high viewing angles, including live tracking shots with up to 99 centimetres of on-shot elevation adjustment, while moving camera, lens and viewfinder payloads of up to 100 kilogrammes over a smooth studio floor,” he added.

Four pairs of pneumatic-tyred wheels and four grooved track-wheels are incorporated in the Skquattro Mk 2. The pneumatic-tyred wheels allow easy transport to and from a delivery vehicle or to an outside broadcast location. Solid-tyred wheels can be fitted in place of the pneumatic tyres if required to allow traditional wheeled OB or studio operation.

QoE bridges the gap

Bridge Technologies has launched Objective QoE, a new monitoring technology for Quality of Experience (QoE) monitoring. Objective QoE eschews the conventional approach to QoE monitoring, by using only criteria that are appropriate to broadcast and digital media delivery. Objective QoE monitors a range of errors that typically occur in media delivery, including audio silence, colour freezes, colour black, and freeze frames, to detect failures affecting the quality of experience.

This contrasts with the traditional approach taken in many QoE systems that are based on criteria derived from telephony, such as MOS (Mean Opinion Scores) and arbitrary values such as ‘bluriness’. Based on MOS and ‘bluriness’, a full HD transmission of the Superbowl would score highly, while a transmission of Casablanca – in black and white, and with the blur and scratches of an old movie – would score badly. Objective QoE provides a solution that actually delivers data and alerts that media operators really need. QoE can also be incorporated into any Bridge Technologies monitoring infrastructure.
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Wohler appears radiant

Wohler Technologies has announced the release of the new RadiantGrid Detect and Correct legalisation option now featuring the unique RightHue algorithm. This new option for broadcast gamut processing on the RadiantGrid Intelligent Media Transformation Platform assures that all video output by the RadiantGrid platform meets strict gamut specifications. More specifically, the option ensures compliance with the restrictions on luminance and RGB levels defined by the Digital Production Partnership (DPP) and European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

“As the first deliverable developed for our new Detect and Correct architecture, this new broadcast gamut legalisation option further extends the RadiantGrid platform’s media transformation capabilities,” said Craig Newbury, Vice President Sales, RadiantGrid. “In fact, this option represents the first, technically superior, file-based legalisation solution integrated at the point of transcode — reducing the cost and complexity of processing while simplifying and retaining an end-to-end file-based workflow.”

By enabling and automating processing entirely within the file domain, the RadiantGrid Detect and Correct legalisation option with RightHue eliminates the unscalable real-time bottleneck of baseband processing, and does away with generational degradation of additional decode-encode cycles required by baseband or outboard file-based solutions. It also allows facilities to forego nonlinear editor processing and to establish highly efficient and cost-effective processing that meets set parameters uniformly and accurately.

Prism Sound adds the Titan

Prism Sound’s new Titan multi-channel audio interface offers recording professionals ultimate quality analogue and digital I/O for Mac or Windows PC at sample rates up to 192kHz via a simple USB interface.

“As with every product we release, Titan came about as a direct result of customer feedback,” says Graham Boswell, sales and marketing director of Prism Sound. “For some time now, customers using external hardware devices such as Pro Tools have wanted easy access to Prism Sound’s audio interfaces, but at an affordable price. Titan is our answer. It offers all the award-winning features of the competitively priced Orpheus but with the USB functionality that users want.”

In addition to the USB host interface, Titan is the first Prism Sound device to feature the new MDIO interface expansion slot. This miniature expansion slot can be used to expand Titan’s connectivity, for example, by adding a direct connection to Pro Tools|HDX systems.

Titan also features digitally-controlled preamplifiers – four for microphones and two for instruments, which are automatically select when the respective sources are plugged in.

It has a powerful built-in DSP engine which provides high precision input and output conditioning functions, as well as a fully-featured mixer for every Titan output channel, including ADAT channels. Each output can be driven with its own zero-latency mix of input channels and DAW feeds, allowing flexible performers’ foldback feeds to be created, as well as stereo or 5.1/7.1 surround monitoring feeds, controlled by the front-panel rotary control if desired. Titan’s analogue outputs are suitable for use with analogue summing boxes.

More colour from RTS

RTS introduced the RP-1000 series – the newest member of its colour display keypanel family and the successor to the flagship KP 32 CLD. The 32-position RP-1032 offers an advanced display and functionality. Its modern, modular design fits into any broadcast control room or truck application.

Its key features include a full-colour, high-contrast HD TFT display with high-efficiency LED backlighting — hosts an intuitive, fully customisable GUI that allows users to assign different colors to different functions. It also offers enhanced multi-language support for system alphas; multi-directional keys for talk, listen and emulation of traditional level control function; connectivity — support of up to six auxiliary inputs, three relays, independent digital gain control for microphone sources and configurable audio routing; full-feature DSP — acoustic echo cancellation, equalisation, mixing, filtering and metering; user-programmable buttons provide custom shortcuts to menu functions; key sequence options — RTS colour display keypanels can be ordered with new colour key sequences and button screening, or the classic key sequences and button screening configured for the backlit numeric keypad.

The keypanel has scope for future expansion as it supports the RP-1932 expansion keypanel and both the RTS RVON VOIP and OMNEO IP optional network audio cards.

BTX improves signage

BTX Technologies, a distributor and manufacturer of interface, integration, and system products, has announced that Net Display Systems (NDS), a developer of digital signage software, has unveiled its new PADS4 Release 3. With the new release, NDS’ PADS4 now offers desktop communication, enriched content creation, and an OS independent playback solution for corporate digital signage environments. The new software is available now, exclusively from BTX.

The PADS4 Release 3 features two unique new applications — PADS4 Messenger and PADS4 Desktop Viewer — for communicating through desktops, laptops, and tablets within corporate digital signage environments. Important company announcements can now be scheduled through PADS presentations as a message for desktop viewers, while PADS4 Messenger allows for maximum control over internal digital communication. Combining PADS4 Messenger with PADS4 Desktop Viewer creates a complete corporate messenger solution.

The new release also introduces the PADS4 HTML5 Viewer, an OS independent, browser-based PADS viewer that both enables users to deploy signage projects using a low-end solution and allows the opportunity to create hybrid digital signage installations. NDS also now offers the possibility to serve both high-end solid windows viewer requirements (with XPERT and XPRESS Viewers) and lower-end, low-cost player support (e.g. Android/Linux players). Each PADS4 Viewer can be managed within one signage network, with the same PADS4 Designer and the same PADS4 Scheduler.
NVIDIA has unveiled the visual computing industry's latest "unprecedented size and scope." The NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU, the highest performance professional graphics card currently available, is said to bring "the most powerful GPU ever built," enhancing applications such as the Quadro K2000 GPU, the predecessor to the new model.

"The NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU is the highest performance professional graphics card currently available," said Ed Ellett, Senior Vice President of NVIDIA's Professional Graphics Business Unit. "With its unprecedented size and scope, the Quadro K6000 is designed to meet the demands of the growing number of applications that require the highest performance."

The Quadro K6000 GPU delivers double the performance of the Quadro 6000 GPU, with the capability of its predecessor, the NVIDIA Quadro 6000 GPU, and features the world's largest and fastest graphics memory. The GPU is designed to meet the needs of designers and engineers, enabling them to make the most of their creative work while simultaneously improving operational efficiency and controlling costs.

"Previously, the task of creating or manipulating a single asset could take hours to complete. Now, with the NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU, the process can be completed in minutes," said Ellett.

"The NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU is the highest performance professional graphics card currently available," said Ed Ellett, Senior Vice President of NVIDIA's Professional Graphics Business Unit. "With its unprecedented size and scope, the Quadro K6000 is designed to meet the demands of the growing number of applications that require the highest performance."
Thomson shines with the Amethyst

Thomson Video Networks has introduced an advanced technology offering for DVB-T2 environments, combining the company’s widely deployed NetProcessor T2 gateway and Amethyst redundancy switch. The NetProcessor T2 gateway is a versatile and powerful solution for cost-effective generation of DVB-T2 streams, and the Amethyst smart switch enables seamless switching between two T2-MI streams. Working together as a complete solution for terrestrial television, the two products not only enable national network head-ends to generate a fully compliant DVB-T2 stream, but also allow local head-ends to receive and manipulate incoming streams for regionalisation.

“Previously, the task of creating or manipulating a DVB multiplex and adapting it to DVB-T2 required the operator to manage multiple devices. By combining key DVB-T2 functions in a single device, Thomson Video Networks is providing a highly efficient means of providing redundancy and reducing costs in terrestrial head-end architectures,” said Eric Gallier, VP Marketing at Thomson Video Networks. “Our field-proven NetProcessor T2 gateway solution is on the air with all major transmitters, and more than 200 units have been deployed worldwide – giving operators the peace of mind they need for seamless and reliable terrestrial operations.”

Thomson Video Networks’ NetProcessor acts as a pure DVB-T2 gateway, capable of generating up to four simultaneous and independent multi-PLP T2-MI streams.

NVIDIA enhances visual experience

NVIDIA has unveiled the visual computing industry’s latest technology — the NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU.

The Quadro K6000 GPU delivers five-times higher computer performance and nearly double the graphics capability of its predecessor, the NVIDIA Quadro 6000 GPU, and features the world’s largest and fastest graphics memory.

Combining breakthrough performance and advanced capabilities in a power-efficient design, the Quadro K6000 GPU enables leading organisations such as Pixar, Nissan, Apache Corporation and WSI, Professional Division of The Weather Company and Innovation Engine of The Weather Channel, to tackle visualisation and analysis workloads of unprecedented size and scope.

“The NVIDIA Quadro K6000 GPU is the highest performance, most capable GPU ever created for the professional graphics market,” said Ed Ellett, Senior Vice President, Professional Solutions Group at NVIDIA. “It will significantly change the game for animators, digital designers and engineers, enabling them to make the impossible possible.”

The NVIDIA Quadro K6000 will be available beginning this fall from Dell, HP, Lenovo and other major workstation providers; from systems integrators, including BOXX Technologies and Supermicro; and from authorised distribution partners, including PNY Technologies in North America and Europe, ELSA and Ryoyo in Japan, and Leadtek in Asia Pacific.

Small is beautiful with Magnolia

LED display panel designer and manufacturer SiliconCore Technology has launched Magnolia 1.5mm pixel pitch LED display. The Magnolia is the smallest pixel pitch display in the market, making direct view LED displays possible for the first time for close proximity applications.

Eric Li, CEO of SiliconCore explained: “The Common Cathode mode is a much more efficient design, ensuring that power is not lost to heat, thereby reducing power consumption and increasing the lifespan of the display.”

The design of the Common Cathode LED driver circuits makes these LED displays suitable for markets that traditionally used lower quality display technologies, such as LCD, plasma or DLP projection cubes. Typical applications include corporate lobbies and conference suites, high-end signage in retail environments, VIP areas in sporting arenas and large format displays for command and control centres. The very tight pixel pitch of the Magnolia results in the elimination of Moire effects and, combined with the specialised circuitry that eliminates ghosting, these displays are particularly well suited for TV broadcast studio applications.

By virtually every measure, from viewing angle, to total brightness, contrast, colour saturation and the overall clarity of the display, the direct view LED displays from SiliconCore are by far the best technology available anywhere.

Avid likes to share

Avid introduced the new Avid ISIS 5500 online shared storage system, offering value for small- to mid-sized post production, broadcast, education, and corporate facilities. The next-generation ISIS 5500 represents the continuing innovation of the company’s industry standard storage systems. It provides critical new capabilities to help small and mid-sized media organisations more easily and efficiently deliver better quality, inspiring content — by streamlining and accelerating editorial workflows.

“Media organisations of all sizes are facing relentless pressure to increase content production while simultaneously improving operational efficiency and controlling costs,” said Chris Gahagan, Senior Vice President of Products and Services at Avid.

“With double the storage capacity and a host of new software features, ISIS 5500 brings both critical capabilities and breakthrough value to small- and mid-sized facilities.”

The new 64 terabyte (TB) engine doubles storage capacity at the same price point as the ISIS 5000 32 TB system, delivering the value that media organisations urgently require. A new 64 TB capacity that complements the existing 16 and 32 TB engines provides efficient, linear bandwidth scaling to sustain performance, making it easy to scale workgroups, bandwidth, and capacity.
As audiences become less passive, broadcasters must continue to develop compelling and enriched content to retain their attention. Second screen content delivery is the first step in achieving this.

Broadcasters such as ESPN, Fox Sports and Sky Sports, to name a few, seized the opportunity and created second screen apps for smartphones and tablets. But, they’re now finding it’s no longer enough to create long-term brand differentiation.

This approach allows broadcasters to give viewers, and other stakeholders, a more relevant and unique content delivery offering. As budgets for large live productions get squeezed, broadcasters will have to make their operations more flexible and efficient. Connectivity is no longer simply about multimedia fulfillment. It’s about cost-effectively and efficiently delivering unique, enriched, engaging and relevant content services – and, ultimately, about creating new revenue streams.

By taking the connected approach to the next level, we can still fulfil a multimedia workflow – a good starting point. Connectivity has relevance across three main workflow-based applications: multimedia, contribution and distribution.

Multimedia
The content appetite of end users has grown significantly. To satisfy them, broadcasters need to invest in solutions to enrich the live production with a multi-device experience. Multimedia content delivery means broadcasters benefit from:
• engagement – providing extra content around a shared live experience;
• enrichment – enhancing video with compelling and relevant content such as tweets from stars or stats; and
• extended consumer experience – providing additional exclusive content and unseen angles.

Broadcasters, including Sky Sports and Canal+, have already integrated connected technology into their services. Sky Sports launched its iPad content delivery app during the Champions League final in May this year, giving viewers the choice of what content to consume – at a glance opening up access to replays and slo-mos of key saves, tackles and goals from more than 20 different camera angles during the game. Subscribers also have access to an up-to-date, aggregated Twitter feed and match statistics. And in France, the Canal Football app results speak for themselves with nearly 500,000 downloads in the first six months.

Distribution
A built-in distribution workflow means content can be packaged and quickly made available for sports federations, sponsors and advertisers, thereby opening up new revenue streams for existing content. Press and other third parties can select and buy clips. For example, sports federations can use this extended connectivity to distribute content to teams, referees and coaching assistants for in-depth analysis.

The 2013 Bol d’Or FIM Endurance World Championship in France made use of a connectivity backbone to deliver content to its exclusive app, while motorbike race teams were able to view specific camera angles for analysis. Getty Images, the official provider for rights managed videos, was able to browse through video sequences and make content available to agencies for download via their website. More than 50 high-res video highlights were available for download less than one hour after the live broadcast, meaning event sponsors could access key video sequences and order packaged clips with their own branding.

Contribution
Contribution is all about bringing efficiency into the live production process where fast turnaround is critical. Browsing server content from any location and sending clips directly to central storage is something broadcasters will increasingly need to do. It removes the waiting around for content to be retrieved during production. An example of this is how Fox Sports makes use of connectivity solutions to produce highlights packages during the game, rather than having to wait until the match ends. It also means they can tell their stories differently and enrich the live programme with relevant content that has been overlooked by LSM operators at the venue, but has been spotted at the broadcast centre – such as an angle that clearly shows a penalty. They can enrich their coverage, including half-time analysis, with additional material and alternative camera angles, giving viewers a better overall experience.

By embracing an extended connected approach, broadcasters can benefit from enriched live productions, companion device viewing and remote production, all through one solution. The broadcast industry has come a long way in a relatively short space of time, from simple second-screen media delivery to solutions that handle distribution and centralised contribution to help production teams be more creative and efficient. And, most importantly, to achieve things during a live production that weren’t possible before in the battle to retain and attract viewers.

Johann Schreurs is Solution Market Manager for Remote Interactivity at EVS.
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