EMERGING OTT LEADERS

Homegrown OTT initiatives transform Arab content marketplace

A NEW DIRECTION
Yahlive CEO speaks about addressing new markets

IN FOCUS
Filmmakers reveal trade secrets at Canon roundtable

THE BIG OTT DEBATE WITH INDUSTRY FIGURES
The amazing new PXW-FS7

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- Multi Codec – XAVC-I/L, MPEG-2 HD 422, Apple ProRes 422*
- Versatile E-mount
- 4K Super 35mm Exmor CMOS sensor
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Inside this issue

**05 NEWS**
A bird’s eye view of Burj Khalifa, EVS and Elemental installations in Qatar, exclusive partnership announcements and more news

**14 EMERGING OVER THE TOP**
UTURN and Growl Media speak exclusively to BroadcastPro about their OTT ventures

**24 THE BIG OTT DEBATE**
Regional experts discuss the relevance of OTT for business and content creation

**32 INTERVIEW**
Yahlive CEO Sami Boustany reveals the company’s new business strategy

**TECH SPECIAL**
34 Software defined networks – hype or reality?
55 Monitoring video and audio in a virtual world

**38 CANON ROUNDTABLE**
Cinematographers and filmmakers discuss the basics of image capture in today’s technologically advanced world of cinematography

**42 CABSAT WRAP-UP**
Key industry players talk about what they brought to the MENA’s largest broadcast show

**59 NAB SHOW 2015**
New products on show in Las Vegas

**64 GUEST COLUMN**
James Gilbert revisits playout automation

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Nilesat announces new regional broadcast initiative

Nilesat has announced the launch of its new regional digital platform, the Nilesat Smart Digital Broadcasting system. This major regional initiative is aimed at providing compression and multiplexing of 360 TV services and 120 radio services over 24 digital transport streams, with the ability to expand to up to 400 TV services and 30 transport streams.

Nilesat presently broadcasts more than 730 TV channels, and over 140 digital radio channels, which are uplinked from Cairo, Dubai, Amman, Doha, Riyadh and Beirut. Over 75% of the TV channels are free-to-air, and Nilesat claims its audience in the MENA region has grown steadily from 11 million households in 2003 to more than 60 million households in 2013.

Media Era Technologies (Mera-Tech) has been appointed integrator and consultancy partner to assist Nilesat in building the next generation platform with all its requirements. Nilesat claims it has selected the best vendors within their respective fields as this was paramount to building a future-proof platform.

Cisco, Newtec and Bridge Technologies are some of the vendors selected to set up the Nilesat Smart Digital Video Broadcasting system.

Selevision announces partnership with Batelco

As part of its aggressive expansion strategy, Selevision is partnering with the region’s telcos and content companies. Most recently, it sealed a deal with Batelco. The deal will enable Selevision to provide and power the cloud-based technology platform and content to Batelco, enabling the Bahraini telco to offer an OTT service to its customers in the country. The service will be available later this year.

“Just as we have evolved, so have viewers in the Middle East. We are confident that our value proposition addresses consumers’ changing appetite for entertainment and content,” said Dr Raed Khusheim, CEO of Selevision. “Our in-house team of developers and engineers will continue to bring new breakthrough products and services in order to deliver the most accessible and broadest range of entertainment to a diverse range of devices, anytime and anywhere,” he added.

The new OTT service from Selevision offers a core package of video-on-demand, live, restart and catch-up TV.

Elenos expands to the Middle East with BSA

UAE-based Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA) has been appointed official distributor of Italian radio solutions provider Elenos for the UAE, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Jordan, BroadcastPro ME can reveal.

Commenting on the partnership, Muhammed Irfan Gondal, CEO of BSA, said the addition of Elenos to the BSA product portfolio will help the company further expand its radio projects in the region.

“We have been focusing on radio for some time now, and this partnership will help us strengthen our business. Elenos is a renowned name in manufacturing FM transmitters and are well-known for their compact design, low energy consumption and reliability,” commented Gondal.

Elenos has offices in Europe, North America and Asia. This partnership will enable it to establish a new reseller base in the Middle East.

Zee Alwan on YouTube

Zee Alwan, Zee TV’s Arabic channel, has signed a strategic alliance with Diwan Videos to manage its YouTube channel. Diwan Videos will optimise the channel with the objective of increasing subscriptions and viewship along with sales and monetising opportunities on the Arabic language OTT channel.

Diwan Videos will also look after the channel’s content protection and copyright issues. No figures were divulged.

Muhammed
Irfan Gondal,
CEO, BSA.
Sennheiser ME to promote Rycate

Sennheiser Middle East has entered into a new partnership with Rycate. While the agreement makes Sennheiser the exclusive Middle East distributor for Rycate’s entire range of microphone and camera accessories, the company’s main focus will be on promoting the recently launched Rycate Cyclone Windshield System. The announcement was made at CABSAT 2015, where Sennheiser conducted live demonstrations of Rycate’s Cyclone Windshield system and other traditional offerings.

Dejero chooses EMEA Gateway

Dejero has named EMEA Gateway its distributor in the Middle East. EMEA Gateway will represent Dejero for the full LIVE! Platform of simple-to-use mobile transmitters, servers, software and cloud services throughout the region. EMEA Gateway offers sales and marketing expertise to the broadcast and media industries and represents technology manufacturers through its network of sales channels across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

ATG Middle East ties with Hiltron

Working in partnership with ATG Middle East, Hiltron has completed a satellite downlink system feeding a multi-channel compliance suite to a broadcast regulatory organisation based in the Middle East. The installed infrastructure includes three wall-mounted 1.8m dish antennas plus L-band signal distribution and modular encoder/receivers. Incoming data from the satellite antennas is converted into discrete programme channels, which are then routed to Linux-based IT-style servers.

Introducing Blackmagic URSA, the world’s first user upgradeable 4K digital film camera!

Blackmagic URSA is the world’s first high end digital film camera designed to revolutionise workflow on set. Built to handle the ergonomics of large film crews as well as single person use, URSA has everything built in, including a massive 10 inch fold out on set monitor, large user upgradeable Super 35 global shutter 4K image sensor, 12G-SDI and internal dual RAW and ProRes recorders.

Super 35 Sensor

URSA is a true professional digital film camera with a 4K sensor, global shutter and an incredible 12 stops of dynamic range. The wide dynamic range blows away regular video cameras or even high end broadcast cameras, so you get dramatically better images that look like true digital film. The extra large Super 35 size allows for creative shallow depth of field shooting plus RAW and ProRes means you get incredible quality!

Dual Recorders

Blackmagic URSA features dual recorders so you never need to stop recording to change media. That’s critical if you are shooting an historical event, never need to stop recording to change media. Blackmagic URSA features a modular camera turret that can be removed by unscrewing 4 simple bolts! The camera turret includes the sensor, lens mount and lens control connections and can be upgraded in the future when new types of sensors are developed. This means your next camera will be a fraction of the cost of buying a whole new camera! Choose professional PL mount, popular EF mount and more!

Built in On Set Monitoring!

Say goodbye to bulky on set monitors because you get a massive fold out 10 inch screen built into Blackmagic URSA, making it the world’s biggest viewfinder! The screen is super bright and features an ultra wide viewing angle. URSA also includes two wide 4” touch screens on both sides of the camera showing settings such as format, frame rate, shutter angle plus scopes for checking levels, audio and focus!

User Upgradeable Sensor

Blackmagic URSA features a modular camera turret that can be removed by unscrewing 4 simple bolts! The camera turret includes the sensor, lens mount and lens control connections and can be upgraded in the future when new types of sensors are developed. This means your next camera will be a fraction of the cost of buying a whole new camera! Choose professional PL mount, popular EF mount and more!

Lenses and accessories shown are not included!

www.blackmagicdesign.com/me
Al Aan TV to upgrade archives with TSL

Al Aan TV has contracted TSL to upgrade its archive management system, including its tape library and media software. The deal was sealed at CABSAT.

The proposed digital archive solution consists of two major components, the Spectra T200 LTO Tape Library to store digital archives and SGL FlashNet software to enable the movement of data from the news and production domains to the LTO Tape Library. The project will also involve an upgrade of the SGL server hardware to manage throughput from both Imagine Communications and Avid environments.

Commenting on the project, Raad Haddadin, CTO of Al Aan TV, said: “The Spectra T200 Library is easy to use, manage and maintain. Its installation and configuration is quick and simple, and component redundancy ensures reliability. It allows you to start with the features you need now and add features and capacity as your data grows and backup requirements change.”
beIN Sport opts for EVS MAX Highlights

EVS has implemented a comprehensive EVS workflow for beIN Sport. The beIN Sport MAX Highlights service enables the creation and management of sports highlight packages from the network’s centralised production facilities in Doha, Qatar.

“As beIN Sport provides exclusive access to prime sporting events like international football, basketball and motorsports, having a highly efficient and effective highlights workflow is critical to our programming,” said Ali Salem, Technical Operations Director at beIN Sport.

“EVS previously worked with beIN Sport to implement an ingest and playout center at its Doha headquarters, as well as a fully integrated digital workflow for its French channels. beIN Sport wanted EVS technology built into every point of the new workflow, from ingest and management to storage. Media Luis, part of Mediapro Group, was contracted by beIN Sports to provide the global service, including equipment and operations for the new system, while Media Plant – also part of Mediapro Group – was responsible for the workflow design and implementation.

Pictured from left is Tareq Eid from BSS Trading; Hassan Ghoul from Grass Valley; Ibrahim Saber from Okkeh Broadcast Facility; Grass Valley’s Said Bacho; Anwar Okkeh and Grass Valley’s Antoine Aouad.

Qatar TV and Al Kass deploy Elemental video streaming

Elemental Technologies has announced the selection of its video processing systems to stream video content for Qatar TV and Al Kass Sports Channels. Both the networks are using solutions from Elemental to process and deliver video for distribution to a worldwide audience on mobile phones and tablets, to generate additional advertising revenue and prepare for the 2022 World Cup.

“Our state-of-the-art broadcast operations rival any in the global media market today and are future-proofed to support major events in the future, such as the 2022 World Cup,” said Essa Ahmad Al Hitmi, Al Kass Head of IT Broadcast.

“Powerful video processing systems from Elemental enable us to offer fresh content to millions of viewers through a refined mobile experience.”

ARRI opens lighting subsidiary in Dubai

ARRI has established ARRI Middle East Ltd, a new subsidiary lighting company in Dubai. Local industry expert Sobahi Shafi has been appointed Managing Director of the company with the aim to address the growing needs of the Middle East’s film and broadcast markets. The new office reflects the significance of the Middle East market to ARRI’s overall global business and will help bolster the company’s presence in the territory.

“The opening of the Dubai subsidiary and the appointment of Shafi further strengthens our operations in the region,” Dr Jörg Pohlman, Managing Director of ARRI, told BroadcastPro ME.

“It is part of our long-term strategy to ensure that our customers have local sales and support as we continue to grow our business in the Middle East, and Dubai provides an ideal location from which to effectively serve this key market.”

Okkeh Broadcast Facility to kit new OB with Grass Valley solutions

Okkeh Broadcast Facility, a brand new company that was recently established in Dubai by Industry professionals Ibrahim Saber and Anwar Okkeh, who the aim of providing OB services to the region, has chosen to kit out the first of its OB fleet with solutions from Grass Valley. The OB van deal was brokered by systems integrator BSS Trading and will include GV’s LX5 Cameras, Karrera Switcher, K2 Dyno replay system and Vision router among other GV products.

In FIGURES

1294

The number of satellite channels in the MENA

Source: Arab States Broadcasting Union

ACQUISITION

Argosy Components Limited has entered into a definitive purchase agreement with EVWC, a US-based distributor. With 23 locations across eight countries, EVWC is a global provider of connectivity solutions for sub-assemblers, OEMs, and the broadcast and communications industries. EVWC maintains strong partnerships with a broad range of the industry’s suppliers and customers. EVWC has expanded its capabilities within the broadcast and communications marketplace with offerings in the US, Canada, UK, Germany and China. Argosy’s presence in the UK, UAE and South East Asia will help to bolster EV WC’s growing broadcast and communications initiatives, while offering Argosy access to EVWC’s globalised distribution network and on-site service.

ACQUISITION

Imagine Communications has implemented a new transmission server solution for OSN sports playout operations. The upgraded server network is a direct replacement for the existing system, which had been in place for several years.

OSN needed to upgrade its existing server network, largely dedicated to its sports channels, to meet the rising demand for HD content. The new network needed to be able to ingest 12 simultaneous streams and support a minimum of six playout streams at the same time. Completed early January this year, the implementation of the new servers has already enabled OSN to convert its two remaining SD sports channels to HD.

The solution is based on the latest Nexio AMP generation seven servers, attached to a mirrored Nexio Farad SAN, providing 48TB of storage and 9Gb/s bandwidth. Following a period of consultancy, Imagine Communications engineers, based in its Dubai office, worked with the team at OSN.
Ross Video opens Studios of the Future

Ross Video has announced the opening of three Ross Studios of the Future. The Ross Virtual Studio in Ottawa features a complete turnkey virtual studio with a small footprint. The Ross Studio space represents emerging customer requirements for small studios. Concurrently, Ross Video has opened a Ross Studio of the Future at the Ross EMEA HQ at Pinewood Studios in London and at Infinite Studios, a Ross business partner, near the Ross Asia HQ in Singapore.

Grass Valley expands Middle East office

Grass Valley's Dubai Media City office has been expanded to accommodate its growing regional team. Besides sales, pre-sales, technical support and service, marketing, and administrative resources, the office will house demonstration and training facilities for customers and channel partners. “This move strengthens our Middle East operations and enhances our ability to serve our customers with future-ready broadcast solutions from a state-of-the-art facility,” explained Said Bacho, VP, EMEA, Grass Valley.

STC chooses Ericsson for its IP network

Saudi Telecom Company (STC) has chosen Ericsson to provide an evolved IP network solution as it seeks to expand and improve its mobile broadband offering in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. STC has chosen to implement Mini-LINK nodes, which are optimised for native Ethernet transport to cater to the telco’s need for a carrier grade packet network with low latency. Ericsson Mini-LINK will also fully support STC’s network evolution towards all-IP networks.

Dubai Film and TV Commission reduces its processing fees

The Dubai Film and TV Commission (DFTC) has reduced its processing fees for all filmmakers and producers in Dubai. As part of its commitment to ensure an easy, cost-effective and outstanding filming experience for filmmakers and producers in Dubai, DFTC has reduced processing fees from USD 218 to USD 136 per application for each project filmed in Dubai.
As OTT platforms continue to challenge traditional models of television viewing, more companies are producing content purely for digital platforms. This digital revolution has taken the Arab world by storm, with more players looking for a greater share of the online pie. Vibhuti Arora speaks to some of the regional trendsetters, who are contributing to the OTT ecosystem.
No looking back
Kaswara Al-Khatib, Chairman and CEO, UTURN Entertainment

Launched in mid-2010 by four young professionals in Saudi Arabia, UTURN rose to fame with the YouTube comedy Éysh Elly. Five years down the line, the company has grown to become the largest Arabic multi-platform entertainment network. With 58 shows and a staff of 60 and growing, this online platform is making the world take notice. The company bagged awards for Corporate Achievement in Entrepreneurship and Individual Achievement in Entrepreneurship at the Social Media Influencers Summit held in Dubai last month.

Today, UTURN is viewed as a key media player and an inherent part of Arabic pop culture, and continues to make waves beyond the online realm. Saudi TV has started using its content as fillers, and continue to replicate their models and create new business opportunities. A UTURN app was launched last year.

“UTURN app was launched last year. The company has grown greatly since its launch five years ago. ‘We knew there was a gap in the demand and supply of online content but didn’t expect it to become this big,’ Al-Khatib comments, adding that although the idea was impressive and there was definite demand for it, finding talent to create content was a challenge to start with, and still is. ‘We started looking for people who had a passion for filmmaking. For the first six months, we incubated talents, and then launched the company.’

‘To cater to the growing demand for online content, UTURN has an in-house production team in Jeddah, comprising scriptwriters, studio producers, directors and assistants. ‘Our content is high frequency, very local and insightful. By local, I mean local content from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and so on, it’s no longer regional Arabic content. Each of these countries has something to offer that engages with their audiences. ‘We are talking to Arabic speakers worldwide, but the majority of our viewers are in the Gulf. We plan to reach out to North Africa, especially Egypt and Morocco soon, and the rest of the Arab region.’

According to Google, KSA is at the top of the list in terms of YouTube video viewing in the region, with 14.5 million users each day – three times that of the U.S. A study published by Google revealed that YouTube video views in the Middle East have reached 310 million a day, second only to the US. YouTube has a monthly penetration rate of 88% in KSA, 87% in the UAE and 74% in Egypt. 80% of UTURN’s viewership comes from mobile, showing the shift from the big screen to the small handheld device. Al-Khatib points out that UTURN caters to younger, more connected audiences who are often too busy to watch TV. Mobile gives them the freedom to watch entertainment content on the go, anywhere, anytime. “Digital is buzzing with activity; and online, unlike the linear TV model, we don’t compete for a specific slot. You can watch online whenever, wherever and on whatever platform you like,” he explains.

However, the fast turnaround of content keeps the creators constantly

Science of the Beautiful™

CION is the new 4K/UHD and 2K/HD production camera from AJA. Shoot vivid detail with vibrant colors at any resolution. Effortlessly unite production and post by shooting directly to edit-ready Apple ProRes 4444 at up to 4K 30fps, ProRes 422 at up to 4K 60fps, or output AJA Raw at up to 4K 120fps. CION ships with PL mount; EF, B4, and F-mount options available from third parties. Unrivalled monitoring output options put CION at the heart of production.
on their toes: viewers don’t find the content engaging enough, they are quick to go elsewhere.

“Because the consumer has so much choice, online content has a very limited window to have the viewer look up before they skip their content and move on to the next one. It’s the survival of the fittest.”

“That’s more, the feedback comes quickly via the platform itself when you see likes and shares or through social media. This medium also gives you enough room to experiment based on the audience’s feedback; you constantly try out new things,” says Al-Khatib.

Scouting for talent is a challenge due to the lack of professional film schools in the region. To address this, UTURN has launched a channel called Al-Fluran (“In the Oven”) as an open platform for people to contribute.

“We have a dedicated team that works for online platforms and scouts for content on the web. We work extensively with content creators and help them monetise, and handle the logistics and distribution for them, while they focus on the creative side of it. We see ourselves as the big brother of the industry, and don’t see other online players as competitors but as partners to jointly promote quality Arabic content. Every minute, 300 hours of English content is being uploaded, as opposed to three hours of Arabic content. This equation is lopsided, and much more needs to be done in the creation of original, quality Arabic content that appeals to today’s youth. Digital is so vast that there is room for everybody to grow, and the best way forward is to collaborate.”

Al-Khatib reiterates his company’s mission statement, which says UTURN is a means to export our culture, so we started UTURN in 2010. Today, I am focusing on premium content, especially high-quality episodic works on the lines of Mad Men and House of Cards in my new company, called Qubba. I believe this is a new trend globally, and the Middle East is ready for it,” says Mando.

Quubba is based on a different model than UTURN’s freemium model and is in talks with key broadcasters in the region to address their online content demand.

“We started UTURN initially with the intent to build our own platform, which was extremely painful. Then we met Abdullah Al-Rabib, Google’s Manager of Emerging Markets in the Middle East. He convinced us that YouTube is the way to go, at least in the beginning.”

The YouTube Partner Programme is open to anyone in member countries free-of-charge through the user interface, and gives partners advantages such as an overlay for in-video advertisements, placed in the bottom third of a video, as well as TrueView ads, which are queued up before the video plays. “YouTube, I think, is becoming more of a complementary tool. We are constantly expanding on other social networks, and seriously considering building our own platform to control our content and followership,” comments Mando.

Abdullah Mando says that his company provides entertainment to its viewers and as for the clients and partners, the MCN provides an effective tool to reach the right audience.
Appy with kids
Dinesh Lalvani, CEO, Growl Media

While the Arab region is showing a growing appetite for locally produced entertainment content catering to the young, the children’s edutainment genre remains untapped. Dinesh Lalvani set up Growl Media in Dubai to cater to this demand. He founded Flip Media, the largest digital interactive agency in the Middle East and ran it for ten years before selling it and venturing into the kids’ content genre.

“The idea was to create quality, culturally relevant, edutainment content for children in the Middle East, North African and South Asian regions in the form of apps, games, web, original video content and books,” comments Lalvani.

So far, Growl Media has created two contemporary characters, Alfie and Zee, for the South Asian and MENA markets, respectively. The content is based on feedback from parents and teachers of nurseries to offer age-appropriate content to pre-schoolers under the age of seven. The company plans to provide content for children up to primary school in years to come.

“We wanted to make sure our characters had strong cultural identities and a solid set of moral values, in order to provide key markers for a child’s own growth trajectory. We wanted to create inspiring role models that kids can both identify with and aspire to.

“In January this year, we crossed the million download mark for our apps, and in less than two months, surpassed 1.4 million views of our first season of Arabic cartoons The Adventures of Zee. Samsung chose Zee as its brand ambassador for its Galaxy Tablet for Kids, and her app is available on the Samsung Smart TV hub. Furthermore, our apps were also nominated by Apple as ‘Best of 2014’ in the app store.”

Growl currently has 14 apps in different languages including English, French, Arabic, Hindi and Bangla. It is also set to launch its AppyKids platform offering online video content for children.

What the MENA region requires is a blend of premium and original content. The maxim that content is king still holds true, says Lalvani. “To differentiate themselves, OTT players will need to produce and deliver quality content for their audiences. This will ensure that their platform will attract and retain an audience. Furthermore, by investing in original IP, they are free to monetise...
“In January this year, we crossed the million download mark for our apps, and in less than two months, surpassed 1.4 million views of our first season of Arabic cartoons”

Dinesh Lalvani, CEO, Growl Media

The content in many ways, “This is how we are approaching the launch of our AppyKids platform. We are investing our time and energy in creating compelling, high-quality content for children. We’re investing in our characters and stories by building a suite of content: cartoons, books, games, apps and songs which we will launch on our platform.”

Lalvani feels that the OTT business is very much in its infancy in the MENA region. There is a lot of investment being pumped in by the larger players to get into the space, but only as a way of protecting their business. With connectivity and bandwidth getting better every day, opportunities are opening up to new players to come into this space and create competition.

“One of the main problems with the current offering from existing players is the lag we experience in accessing new content made, due to distribution deals and various window periods. But the viewers in the region demand the latest content. Thanks to social networks and better connectivity, they know exactly when the latest show or episode is airing. This makes them resort to using VPN services to access this content on more established platforms like Netflix, Hulu, etc. – or worse, looking at ways of accessing pirated content through BitTorrent,” he laments.

Playing the right notes

Amir Shoushaa, EM New Media Entertainment, Rotana Music Sector

Rotana created its digital entertainment platform in 2008, packaging its music and movie libraries and offering them directly to mobile operators in the Middle East. It owns the largest Arabic music label, producing regional music in different Arabic genres – Egyptian, Lebanese, Khaleeji and others.

The decision to build a digital entertainment platform was a natural progression for the media house, according to Amir Shoushaa, EM of New Media Entertainment at Rotana Audio Sector. Rotana Audio has 1.3 million subscribers on its YouTube channel with 660,000 views.

“The idea was to reinvent our music offering to keep in step with fast-changing technology. We believe that in order to stay in business, we have to keep a tab on global trends, and online music is one of the fastest growing trends in the entertainment world. Rotana will continue to produce more appealing and engaging content, and strengthen our strategic partnerships in order to reach music lovers with the content they want, and in the way they want and when they want.”

With the industry constantly reinventing itself, operations have changed drastically since Rotana launched, as there were no digital services at the time.

“There is more social media engagement among customers, and it is growing by the day. The users are more discerning and more informed now than ever before. In addition to this, mobile apps have matured and become more sophisticated, and they continue to improve. I believe the services will further get more customised and personalised according to the tastes of the listeners,” Shoushaa concludes.

“On the contrary, we are coming to the fore as digital platforms continue to establish a foothold in the region’s entertainment sector, piracy still remains the industry’s blight.”

Having said that, he asserts, “Rotana will continue to produce more appealing and engaging content, and strengthen our strategic partnerships in order to reach music lovers with the content they want, and in the way they want and when they want.”

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In January this year, we crossed the million download mark for our apps, and in less than two months, surpassed 1.4 million views of our first season of Arabic cartoons”
The Middle East and North African TV market is not the same as the US or the UK markets. Viewing habits are hugely different, in part based on culture. Then again, it is difficult to categorise the MENA region as one vast pan-Arab market. With huge expatiate pockets dotting the landscape and so much variety within Arab culture, one size does not fit all.

The complexities of catering to a diverse range of people has become easier with OTT offerings, giving people a global platform to pick and choose what they want — although all of it is not entirely legal. No longer are viewers bound by packages offered by linear TV. With smart phone penetration among the world’s highest in countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, suddenly content has become more easily available through the internet. Regulators are still playing catch up — excuse the pun. Regional broadcasters have been quick to provide OTT offerings and some have been shouting themselves hoarse that viewers in the region are not permitted to watch content on Netflix and other platforms that do not have a licence to operate in the region. This brought us back to the table to discuss issues and possible solutions. How can we stop people watching content that is not legal to view in this region? Can linear TV survive in its current format or will we see a cosmic shift? Most broadcasters are investing in OTT while advertisers are placing significant chunks of their ad budgets in digital platforms, but is there any ROI yet?

Leading the debate was Luke Gaydon, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Media at Brightcove who began with the question that is on everyone’s lips these days — what are the chances of survival for linear TV? In the course of his introduction, he pointed out that in the UK, the future of linear broadcasting seems to be in live content. Debating the topic were Samer Abdin, CEO of Istikana; Sanjay Raina, CEO of Fox International Channels Middle East, Dominic Parrell, Director Platforms & Digital Technology, Broadcast Operations at OSN; Manoj Mathew, Chief Content and Creative Officer, MEA and Pakistan, Zee TV; Saner Geissah, VP - Consumer Home and Multimedia, Du; and Nabeeha Mohaimdi Bradford, Digital Editorial and Special Projects Senior Manager, Digital Media Department TV & Radio, Dubai Media Inc.

Will linear TV survive? Most of the attendees agreed with Gaydon that linear TV in its current format may not last much longer. Manoj Mathew of Zee pointed out that linear TV “as we see it today will slowly be phased out”. Nabeeha Bradford agreed, saying that as someone who oversees the OTT editorial and several digital projects at DMI, the future for a linear broadcaster lay in "readjusting to the view that it shouldn’t be broadcasting whenever it wanted but when the viewer wanted it.”

“I do watch linear TV but my child already only watches whatever she wants, whenever she wants to, on her device. With the new generation having different options to watch content, I can’t see linear broadcasting continuing in its current format. It must change to suit the requirements of the viewer.”

Sanjay Raina, CEO of Fox vehemently opposed any suggestion of a linear TV death warrant. “TV viewing in the MENA is very different from the UK or the US so those examples don’t work here. You have to see how mature audiences in China, Japan and other parts of Asia watch TV and those trends are very different from the US or the UK. TV is a community affair in most Asian countries and having more than one TV is not necessarily the norm in every home. It’s true that kids between the ages of four and fourteen prefer tablets and smart devices to the big TV but at 15, they will return to the screen at home.
“It’s right that kids between the ages of four and fourteen prefer tablets and smart devices to the big TV but at 15, they will return to the screen at home because it is community driven and TV becomes a talking point”

Sanjay Raina, Fox

“Linear TV is not going to die. There is enough space for linear TV for the next hundred years. People want to watch TV in large parts of the world as singular units or families. It may die in certain age groups for a certain period of time but it will come back. If anyone of us is here in a hundred years, it will still be linear TV that provides most of the revenue.”

Dominic Farrell who recently joined OSN from BSkyB, where he played a crucial role with their OTT offerings, added that increasingly, “customers want to watch time-shifted TV.”

“They are extremely busy and their free time is precious, so they want to be able to access content when and where they want it and OTT lends itself very nicely to time-shifted TV. I think the shift towards on-demand viewing will be very dependent on the size of the catch up offering that any service provides. I did a lot of extensive research around content discovery particularity in the home and the order in which people search for content when looking for something to watch. They typically first look for content on linear TV, then they sift through anything they have recorded and the on-demand catalogue is usually the last option. Unless you have a considerable catch up catalogue that takes that fear away from viewers that they are missing something that’s on right now, there’s always going to be a trend towards linear viewing. Once you have got that depth of catch up content, there will be more of a shift from linear to time-shifted viewing, as viewers will be confident that even if they miss something on linear, they will be able to view it at a later date via the catch up service.”

Do’s Samer Giissah redefined Linear TV as “live content being broadcast by the broadcaster on any device” explaining, “We are seeing a decline in the traditional way of watching episodes. People are not tied to the grid anymore. But it will disappear eventually because people will say they want to watch drama episodes when they want.”

Samer Abdul of Istikana, which has a huge catalogue of Arabic content agreed that “anything live will continue to find favour on linear”. However, he also explained that sometimes a viewer likes recommendations and the cues that guide him to view a programme rather than being bombarded with a vast and complete choice without any guidance.

“We have worked hard on trying to understand what modes are available for people to discover content. At the moment, linear offers some signals to the viewer such as the time when the programme is broadcast and the ratings. The problem with OTT is that there is so much out there but not necessarily enough cues to guide people on which programme may appeal to them. There is, therefore, this tension in the mind of the viewer between having a complete choice and being told what to watch. As OTT gets better with these social cues and sending signals to the viewer and the better we are at discovery, the more OTT will replace some aspects of linear viewing, and linear TV will lean towards live events.”

Brightcove’s Gaydon took this opportunity to discuss the editorially curated versus content discovery. Seeing that there are exciting algorithms at play here and a lot of surface recommendations that could influence their ratings, he queried what options were in place at the moment to push OTT content with viewers.

“One feeds the other,” Abdin commented. “The hashtags on Twitter and the buzz on social media leads people to watch content online. There is a correlation between first airings, social media activity and how #3 was watched on OTT. There is space for linear TV and it helps OTT because the first airing creates that buzz. At the moment, they are not mutually exclusive. They are complementary.”

In this context, Raina of Fox added that there was a need for “insurfer” act top boxes and integration with apps to enable remote operations. Giissah commented that they were already working towards this integration with the new du View app. OSN’s Farrell pointed out that personalising (the act of TV viewers engaging with a second screen at the same time as watching broadcast television) was increasingly common in all markets.

The challenges of OTT

The discussion then gradually moved to the many pitfalls of operating in the OTT space at the moment. OTT is seen often as catch up, giving content owners little incentive to produce fresh content. Istikana, for instance, only distributes content and does not produce any. Abdin says producing content is an expensive and time consuming process. However, he added that the ability to more accurately profile viewers meant advertising could be better targeted. We have yet to develop good advertising models for OTT and perhaps that’s why no one has made any money on it except perhaps YouTube, one of the participants chattered.

Matthew stated that “the cost of creating appointment viewing is very high” and OTT propensity purely serves to help people “catch up”. “You are first creating the content and then creating a habit with the appointment. OTT gives you the option now to watch what you have missed but you can’t live on catch up forever. Fresh content will win more traffic. Netflix is successful because there is catch up and new content,” he stated.

The panelists were also quick to add that a lot of people confuse OTT with YouTube or assume that YouTube is the road to success for those operating in the OTT space.

“YouTube has yet to prove itself as a monetisation platform for premium content. That’s why you do not see a lot of premium programming there. What YouTube does extremely well is help new talent in a strong way, both in terms of achieving recognition as well as initial financial success. These creators could well become the new wave of premium producers of Arabic content agreed that “anything live will continue to find favour on linear”. However, he also explained that sometimes a viewer likes recommendations and the cues that guide him to view a programme rather than being bombarded with a vast and complete choice without any guidance.

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content in the region,” added Abdin.

In search of the magic OTT business model
Gaydon gradually steered the conversation to OTT business models from renting and selling content to offering different subscription packages. He asked the panellists to explain some of their own business models for their OTT offerings.

Geissah stated that du started off by offering OTT as a complementary service to its existing TV subscribers. The telco is now looking at offering special packages to its mobile subscribers and also exploring other avenues to generate revenue first within the UAE and then, outside. It will charge a premium to those who are not its IPTV or mobile subscribers. Another revenue model that du is exploring is free content with personalised advertising.

“Free content will carry advertising and vendors will be given a better understanding of who sees what and when. The indication we have is that advertisers are willing to pay to have a more accurate profiling of their audience, which, in turn, helps them to tailor their ads,” he advised.

Farrell from OSN commented that different business models lend themselves to different types of content. Research is crucial to understanding viewership habits, how people like to watch their content and how they like to pay for it.

“The more research you do, the more you can tailor your offerings,” he advised.

Nabeeha chipped in with how DMI altered its strategy based on how its content was being consumed.

“We were showing Harim Sultan online and were charging a small fee of AED 2 for people to watch it but no one seemed to want to pay. So we decided to make it free of charge and we had 10,000 plus users watching it every day. When the last two episodes were being aired, we decided to charge AED 5 for each and suddenly, it worked. The revenue generated covered our entire target. Of course, it worked because the content was not available anywhere else.”

In short, by feeding the addiction and charging a nominal fee at the end, the state broadcaster was able to recover its costs.

Sanjay Raina commented that National Geographic was also going to launch its own player to encourage viewing.

Advertising in the OTT space
Fox’s Raina commented that many companies are now investing a substantial sum of their ad budgets into digital platforms.

“I know of companies that have shifted 40%-45% of their advertising to digital since 2009. Nothing has worked but they call this a ‘hit and trial’ phase. Their point is that they did 50 years of linear and something worked. So in the OTT space, they feel they have to take the same chance and see what works.”

He added that companies were now making five-second ads for OTT.

Abdin expressed scepticism about the current form of advertising in the OTT space saying that no one had found the magic button yet.

“Targeted advertising sounds good but no one has really cracked it. Facebook advertising is quite interesting because their profiling seems more successful and we have had more successful ROIs from ad spend on Facebook but that’s about it.”

Sanjay Raina threw some light on how research works and how sophisticated research systems help companies create ads tailored for different segments, including billboard measuring systems, none of which are available in the region at present.

Subscription rates – What is reasonable?
Luke Gaydon raised the issue of pricing, asking if the all-you-can-eat subscription model was sustainable, especially if licensing costs for specific content are higher.

Samer Abdin commented that Istikana charges a flat fee of approximately $8 a month rather than complicating it with several layers.

“We chose a simple subscription model because layering different offers on top of each other is complicated. Every layer you add to your existing setup requires a new and different set of messages, making it difficult for the viewer to...
“OTT gives you the option now to watch what you have missed but you can’t live on catch up forever. Fresh content will drive more traffic”

Manoj Mathew, Zee TV

understand exactly what the offer is. Messaging so that you avoid the people who download content because it is not available when they wanted it, bringing the discussion back to the significance of content anytime, anywhere.

They also agreed that while letting there must be regulations to mandate the content, and block and manage it as required. But simultaneously, there is the responsibility of ensuring that stable alternatives are available to the viewer. Otherwise, we’re asking for trouble. Merely blocking a service is not helpful,” Geissah reiterated.

Samer Abdin seconded that saying that “if the studios work better with online providers to offer a compelling online offering, the consumer may stop downloading content because it is an inconvenience.”

In many instances, they agreed that the people who download content also perhaps have a paid subscription but choose to download content because it is not available when they wanted it, bringing the discussion back to the significance of content anytime, anywhere.

“Piracy

This part of the discussion drew a lot of debate. Luke began the discussion by giving an example of a friend: industry commentator, who took the view that piracy is purely the fault of content creators, because as long as they insist on distributing the content and allowing it to be consumed at different times, it will be reused. He asked the participants if they agreed that evenraking windowing would eliminate piracy. Fox’s Ranier disagreed. Having worked with Sony Pictures in his younger days, he said that he is a firm believer in windowing but he believes in “crunching the windows”.

“A nine-month gap between a film being screened in the theatre and then, being screened on other windows is not going to work. Whether it is two weeks or nine months, the windowing is critical but it must go after that to SVOD or if you have a robust transactional model, it can go straight from the theatre to the other.”

Geissah revealed that “BitTorrent traffic is growing” in the UAE.

“Our own monitoring shows us that BitTorrent consumes up to 80% of our traffic after midnight.”

While every panelist vehemently opposed piracy, some pointed out that if compelling content was offered at an affordable price point, piracy could be contained substantially.

“The solution is a combination of high quality. Pirate sites cannot do that, not even close. So we try to push these messages and thus far we have had great feedback from the market,” explained Abdin, adding that payment gateways in the MENA was a painful point of discussion as many subscribers do not use credit cards or a payment system that works online.

Rama杰米达it saying the region does not have a robust e-commerce system that supports the use of credit cards and it wasn’t the consumers’ fault.

Services previously perceived to be add-ons or value-add services will quickly become almost like hygiene factors to people who are distributing content”

Dominic Farrell, OSN

content suppliers was not entirely possible, with legislation varying from country to country in the region. One suggestion from Abdin was to “cut pirate channels off at the funding level.”

“Perhaps it will help to work with the advertising networks to cut off the funding and urging them not to work with such web sites, but then again, content rights is always a contentious issue. Owing to the lack of transparency in the market, what is offered at a huge premium to a big channel, or a cheap price to smaller channels.”

Rains added that at least a million hours are floating in the market from operators who don’t have a licence to broadcast in this region. Hard and soft piracy, and the fact that even most youngsters know how to circumvent the system if a VPN is blocked, is not helping the cause.

The only thing that is going to work is offering compelling content at a palatable price, everyone agreed.

When season four of The Walking Dead was broadcast in the US, day 2 saw 1.25 million downloads of the episode on the second day in the MENA region. Although there was a suggestion that Hollywood studios should step in to counter piracy, panelists said the market was too small for the studios to justify having a solid presence in the region. Additionally, most studios operate through agents in the region. Unless a body such as the MPA comes to this market, we won’t see much change, they added.

Conclusion

The group concluded by stating that linear TV needs to revise its existing format to suit new business strategies should take into account the new mobile device and have more conscious of avoiding having a cookie. Zee’s Mathew said gamification would take OTT forward. Rains said that TV is beautiful and fascinating while everything else was a cookie. However, he added that the future of broadcast lies in mobile devices owing to its portability and the convenience of taking it across regions. Abdin commented that it’s still an open field, and linear OTT and VOD is not mutually exclusive but complement each other. Geissah said OTT is the future, and Farrell agreed.

“There will be to customer expectations. Services previously perceived to be add-ons or value-add services will quickly become almost like hygiene factors to people who are distributing content. Viewers are going to expect their content to be available any time across multiple devices. This will be the fundamental shift we can expect,” Farrell said.

Gaydon concluded the discussion by stating that he is an example of exhibiting relatively new consumer behaviour.

“I have a Netflix subscription in the UK and the device that I use it on the most is my iPhone. I watch it 45 minutes on the box on the way to work and 45 minutes on the way back home. That is a relatively new behaviour and I have been doing that for the last four or five months. A year ago, I would never have thought that would be the case. I believe most consumers are exhibiting similar behaviour. So the challenge to the people around this table to think about how consumer expectations for availability of high quality content anytime, anywhere and on any device.”

“The indication we have is that advertisers are willing to pay to have a more accurate profiling of their audience, which, in turn, helps them to tailor their ads”

Samer Geissah, Du
THE WINNING FORMULA

In an interview with BroadcastPro ME, Yahlive’s CEO Sami Boustany outlines the company’s new business strategy and how focusing on a Farsi-speaking audience signals new growth opportunities.

Our strategy to engage with the Farsi-speaking audience has been one of the reasons why we were able to attract broadcasters from Afghanistan. That, by itself, is an indication that we are on the right path.

Our strategy was to create a new market. There were several channels addressing this market but they were operating as islands. We have consolidated all of them under one umbrella and this has worked in our favour.

How has this strategy improved your revenue?

It’s been a quantum leap for us as we jumped from 2000 eyeballs to 25 million in just a year-and-a-half. Rather than competing for the same content, we focused on a different segment and created a new market, which reaped good results for us.

The main factors influencing this are understanding the demand of the broadcasters and choosing the right content. The IPSOS results will further boost the confidence of broadcasters, who have decided to come on board with us.

“We our strategy to engage with the Farsi-speaking audience has been one of the reasons why we were able to attract broadcasters from Afghanistan”

Sami Boustany CEO, Yahlive

Previously, your strategy was to have only Arabic content in HD. Has that strategy changed over time?

When we launched, we began with Arabic as the key focus area because we operate in the UAE but we needed to expand our offering. Likewise, HD was a key differentiator in the initial years but not anymore.

Sami Boustany CEO, Yahlive

“When we launched, we began with Arabic as the key focus area because we operate in the UAE but we needed to expand our offering. Likewise, HD was a key differentiator in the initial years but not anymore”

Our strategy and began to move our focus to languages as the key differentiator. We looked for high-demand areas and found Farsi language content as a good focus area. We offer a good blend of content focused on Farsi, and now we have included Kurdish and Afghan languages into that mix.

Of course, Arabic continues to be there because it is the language which most of our viewers speak and understand. At least 10-11 million Farsi speakers also speak Arabic, and more than 60% of the entire community is bilingual. There is a large percentage of Farsi speakers who also speak English, French and German. Most of our viewers speak multiple languages so we have a lot of traction among western broadcasters as well. We are trying to achieve a good blend of language-specific content tailored to the needs of a bilingual community.

It would be accurate to say that we have Arabic content that is now complemented with other niche languages as well.

We have drastically altered our business strategy to include other languages. Our primary audience now includes Farsi speakers and as I said, there is a big focus on Kurdish language content as well. This shift was done with the idea of creating new markets. We still have the MBC channels, because our Farsi-speaking audience wants MBC and Fox. We also get a lot of requests for Dubai TV so that is part of our offering now.

What is your biggest challenge at the moment? It is difficult to convince broadcasters to move into a new environment. We offer a more efficient transmission system but it’s often a challenge to bring more broadcasters on board.

30% of our channels are in HD. We understand why there is a reluctance, at times, to move from DVB-S to MPEG-4 or newer formats. There is not enough critical mass of receivers to justify the move. Most of the receivers in our key markets are legacy technology. We are encouraging our customers to adopt more efficient codecs, which is a cost saving for them as it saves them bandwidth and will also ease their transition to HD. It is a long-term investment for us. Once our broadcasters begin transmitting in HD, they will require more capacity from us so we are encouraging this move.

One of our targets last year was to move our customers from DVB-S MPEG2 to DVB-S2 MPEG4. We made that investment and provided the uplink facilities. All of our uplink facilities are geared to transmit in HD. Our customers just needed to drag their boxes on to us and we uplinked them; it’s more efficient for them because they need less bandwidth. This is taking longer than expected because the end user boxes are not yet ready for it. But once we get into millions of viewers, so a box swap is not a viable commercial solution.

Can you share any growth figures?

This year alone, we have grown our channels by 40%. On a two-year basis, we had a growth of 140%. On a monthly basis, we add an average of three to four channels. This year, we hope to see a quantum leap and expect a breakthrough in the market.

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As broadcasting moves into an environment increasingly driven by IT/IP architectures, Software Defined Networking (SDN) has become one of the most overused phrases of the past year. This is, in part, because it is correctly seen as an important technology related to IP, but also because some broadcast equipment vendors are intent on imposing their own variations of the technology. SDN, however, is a clearly defined concept that is already widely used in the telco world. It’s all about the abstraction and centralisation of the network control plane outside the network itself.

The ability to leverage the capabilities and favourable price points of the much larger IT industry by adopting IP-related standards is undeniable. The cost of deterministic, high-bandwidth packet switching and high-data rate physical network interfaces are being driven down by data centres and other key high-volume IT applications. Like it or not, more and more media interfaces are evolving to IP. As this happens, the mandate for a switching and control layer that can handle this reality becomes all the more important – and that’s where SDN comes into play.

In the early days of packet-based networks, the control and packet-forwarding functions of a router or switch were typically executed by a microprocessor, resulting in non-deterministic packet processing paths and times. As technology capabilities have evolved, larger routers and switches have largely separated the forwarding plane and the control plane, allowing for much more deterministic and scalable performance. The SDN journey is the next stage of this evolution, with the control and data planes decoupled and the control plane centralised.

As a result, enterprises, carriers and broadcasters can gain unprecedented automation and network control, enabling them to build highly available, flexible and deterministic networks that can readily adapt to the most stringent business needs, for example the very low latency and ultra-high reliability required by broadcasters.

Delving deeper, SDN solutions in the IT space are enabling simpler network switching elements to be controlled centrally for the required connectivity. Off-the-shelf switching elements provide extremely low-cost switching, and under an SDN control layer, can form highly effective networks. Network equipment manufacturers are providing SDN

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Wider area broadcasting and remote production

The requirements for wider area real-time media connectivity are increasing, particularly driven by the rising interest in remote production. For remote production, the ideal kind of synergy is critical in today's increasingly IP-centric professional broadcast environment.

Vendor neutrality and control functionality

Nevion, for example, is taking a standards-based approach to SDN, with its VideoIPath network management system at the core of the solution. VideoIPath allows the underlying technology base to be migrated while the user interface remains constant and familiar. This allows the system to facilitate the transition from traditional SDI routers to an IP-based solution with no visible change in the user control experience. In contrast, and as happens all too frequently in the new technology space, some manufacturers have moved ahead with proprietary SDN solutions that do not adhere to standards or provide a roadmap to a compatible world. It’s essential that both media interfaces and control layers are standards-compliant, to allow full interworking. Otherwise, the true benefits of IP cannot be realised. VideoIPath integrates with OpenFlow, a key SDN technology. OpenFlow is the standardised protocol used to control the flow of data through a network by direct communication with the forwarding plane of the network elements.

Technology-agnostic user experience

With the ever-increasing complexity of the digital packetised world, it becomes essential to avoid challenging end users with the underlying technology and complexity of service provisioning. Today’s solutions are designed with this in mind, providing a simple, non-technical interface for controlling end-to-end connectivity. Users deal with concepts that make sense to their business (connect studio 1 to studio 2), rather than having to handle the intricacies of the underlying network (network router ports, media gateway settings, etc.).

A continuing evolution

SDN provides the deterministic and scalable performance so critical to the professional broadcast community. Even more, SDN has the potential to provide more flexibility, lower costs and a future-proof route to a broadcast world where real-time and non-real-time content/media converge. SDN technology is providing the means to transition to IP, through technology-agnostic solutions such as the VideoIPath media management platform, including soft-reconfigurable media edge adoption. Systems such as these provide a fully open, standards-compliant way of navigating this new world with confidence.
CINEMATOGRAPHY
IN FOCUS

Canon Middle East brought together camera experts from different genres including mainstream cinema, production, news and OTT to discuss some of the key elements that helped them nurture their art and factors to keep in mind while choosing a camera. We bring you highlights from the discussion.

Canon Middle East hosted a roundtable at CABSAT titled ‘A Rendezvous with Cinematographers’, which featured celebrated Indian cinematographer Santhosh Sivan; Antoine Atyeh, cameraman supervisor at Al Arabiya News; Sherif Mokbel, DoP at Circus Studios; Khaled Gamal, shortlisted candidate for Canon’s EOS short film competition; and Mohammed Albsimi, Editor at Electrony.net. The discussion was moderated by BroadcastPro ME Editor Vijaya Cherian.

The objective of the discussion was to help students and budding filmmakers to better understand digital cinematography by bringing together a group of panelists who were specialised in different genres. The attendees included film students and young filmmakers, who heard first-hand from the experts about making the right choices of cameras and lenses when shooting either for film, news, short films or online.

Sivan spoke about his journey in filmmaking and how his love of art triggered his interest in films. He also emphasised how travel had helped him perfect his craft, adding that image capture largely depends on what you see in your frame and how you frame your composition rather than the medium or the tools used to capture it. He encapsulated his experience as an artist and how it set him on a lifelong visual journey.

“When I used to paint, I remember how I used to observe everything in great detail,” said Sivan. “When you paint, you conjure up a mental image of an object or scene that you see. In photography and cinematography also, your perspective is everything. You observe and then use your camera to translate that on to the screen.”

He went on to add that in cinematography, or any art for that matter, nothing is linear – everything is organic. “An image should have a blend of light and dark; it should have a mysterious element to it in order to make it more intriguing. You enrich your image capture with elements from your cultural journey, trust your instincts and adapt to the changing times,” Sivan told the attendees, adding that for a cinematographer, it is the imagination that should drive the composition forward while the camera will serve to complement that vision.

By comparison, for news, timing is everything. The ability to capture the right moment and shoot only what is relevant so that the cameraman spends minimal time editing with the objective of taking the footage to air as quickly as possible is key in news capture, pointed out Atyeh of Al Arabiya News, explaining that today, a news cameraman must also be able to double up as an editor. “You don’t want to shoot too much, capture only what matters. You learn from experience that you mustn’t keep shooting hours of footage. The idea is to make an impact on your audience, and little goes a long way sometimes,” he said.

Gamal, who has several short films to his name, commented that time is a challenge for every filmmaker and different situations make different demands of the filmmaker. “Some shots will require more time while others won’t. Then again, you won’t always have the luxury of time to shoot a scene,” he cautioned.

Well-known Saudi blogger Mohammed Albsimi chimed in at this point that the online medium demands a more personal relationship with the viewer. “You shoot, edit and at times, you are also in front of the camera; you do it all. In the digital world also, timing is key – that sense of urgency to ensure that you get it online before anyone else. The footage needs to be published immediately, otherwise, it loses its relevance,” he explained.

Sivan highlighted that the most beautiful things happen in a fleeting moment and capturing it is challenging. “To be able to capture or anticipate that moment and shoot...
it is a hugely differentiating factor.”

The panel also discussed how art merges with technology and how the cinematographer can use technology to his advantage. Mokbel took this moment to recommend the film Senna, which captures events very artistically and blends art and news beautifully.

The discussion moved on to camera spec and what a cinematographer would potentially look for, when shooting for a specific genre. Although Sivan pointed out that this would be dictated by the subject matter and personal choice, he settled on lenses, aspect ratio and anamorphic as the most important. He added that resolution is also important given how more people are shooting in 4K.

The cinematographer, however, cautioned that crisp and clear images are not necessarily flattering to actors’ faces. High resolutions work better for cars, where such detailing would be appreciated, he stated. He also commented that aspect ratio is often a personal choice or dictated by cultural mandates.

“We shoot most of the Indian movies in anamorphic with narrow aspect ratio, because our theatres are designed for that and it helps get the audience out of the TV mode. For a UK film, on the other hand, I would shoot on a wider aspect ratio, and use a wide variety of lenses.”

Santhesh Sivan, cinematographer

A dynamic lens range helps design a film as well. Every shot does not have to outdo the other; each shot is designed to work towards a crescendo for a particular scene, he elaborated. Atyeh commented that cost would impact his choice of camera.

Gamal commented that every film would ideally demand a different mix. “I change my camera for every film, because each film's needs are different. But if I had to choose, I would opt for the sensor as it is the most critical according to me.”

Mokbel cited ergonomics as having played a crucial role for his style of shooting. He also took the opportunity to do a quick presentation of some scenes he had created. While the final output looked as sophisticated as big budget advertisements, his behind-the-scenes methods of shooting revealed clever planning. “Based on each shot, I can decide which camera I need. If we need to shoot in a moving car, a GoPro may work well, while night-time shooting may be great with a Canon C500. I also use larger cameras, but I can't grab them and use all the paraphernalia that goes with them. Camera movement is very important for me. With this, I can create an impact, such as floating scenes to show something is suspended in the air.”

Albsimi, who primarily shoots in a much smaller setup for his blogs, commented that the sensor and lenses were crucial for him as it enables him to shoot in low-light conditions. He also added that for him, battery life was a very important factor.

The discussion touched upon the similarities and differences between various genres. The panellists argued that a film should be able to connect with its viewers. The cinematographer should be able to speak to his audience through his film.

Promo rate and zoom, the panellists agreed, are facts that come and go. All agreed that the focus should be on making films that have an emotional impact while the technology serves to support that art.

Atyeh recommended keeping it “simple and classic.”

The roundtable concluded with a discussion on the million dollar question of whether there was potential revenue in short films and online content. Sivan’s own contribution to Indian and world cinema has, no doubt, been financially rewarding.

The question was directed primarily at the rest of the team. While the panellists agreed that money served an important role, they all declared they would make the films they wanted to make. Albsimi pointed out that his OTT contribution was indeed raking in the dollars.

He commented that creating online content for corporates in Saudi Arabia was his bread and butter. Mokbel stated that it is his artistic work that brings clients to his doorstep. “Incidentally, people watch my fun films and come to me and say, they want me to make a film for them. So it has his rewards,” he stated.

Sivan added that he was not above such pleasures. Passion and professionalism go hand in hand, he said. “It’s about striking a balance and making films that pay so you can then make experimental films that make you happy, which may or may not pay. Keep your passion in filmmaking alive, develop a style of your own, and make sure every film that you make retains a part of you. Keep it original,” he advised.

Atyeh dissuaded the attendees from using smart phones for image capture stating that it a “device for communicating.”

“If you want to make a film, get yourself a camera,” he said.

Mokbel concluded that it’s crucial to enjoy what one does, adding that he left the world of advertising to follow his dreams to make films.

“Follow your passion, and have a good time while you make films.”
The three-day media, broadcast and content exhibition attracted more than 900 exhibitors from 60 countries and 13,911 trade visitors, and is now one of the world’s third largest broadcast exhibitions.

CABSAT 2015, featuring three days of exhibitions, conferences and new product launches, was deemed the busiest edition to date of the Middle East’s largest broadcast show by the organiser, Dubai World Trade Centre. The show was officially opened on March 10 by His Highness Sheikh Hasher Bin Maktoum Al Maktoum, Director General of Dubai’s Department of Information.

“In addition to being a strategic entry point for international companies eyeing expansion in the burgeoning regional media landscape, CABSAT is a pioneering knowledge exchange platform that empowers regional companies to better understand global trends, adopt innovative products and implement internationally tested monetisation strategies to deliver growth opportunities,” said Trixie LohMirmand, Senior Vice President, Exhibitions & Events Management, DWTC.

With more than 900 exhibitors from 60 countries, CABSAT welcomed 13,911 local, regional and international trade visitors for three days of new product launches, technology demonstrations, high-level meetings and networking events, and an expanded schedule of sector-specific conferences, training schemes and seminars headlined by the CABSAT & NAB Show Collaborative Conference.

The opening day of CABSAT 2015 featured a world-class line-up of heavyweight industry talent debating a host of topics in eight gripping sessions at the CABSAT & NAB Show Collaborative Conference. Corey Bridges – one of the original directors who launched Netflix in the USA, a former SVP of Marketing for Hollywood visionary James Cameron’s firm CAMERON PACE Group (CPG) and the current CEO of Lifemap Solutions – delivered the Conference’s keynote address. Bridges’ engaging remarks came less than 24 hours after Apple announced Lifemap Solutions had partnered with the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai to produce an Asthma App for ResearchKit – an open-source software framework designed for medical and health research.

“The rapid development witnessed in the technology and media industries in Dubai and the wider Middle East echoes the risk-tolerant culture which has embodied decades of pioneering success in Silicon Valley,” said Bridges.

Elsewhere, the future of digital broadcasting, the evolution of content absorption, a raft of disruptive technologies and various strategies to monetise content delivery and distribution avenues were high on the agenda for speakers from a host of satellite firms, telcos, technology companies and media houses – both visionary independents and industry heavyweights.
The rapid development witnessed in the technology and media industries in Dubai and the wider Middle East echoes the risk-tolerant culture which has embodied decades of pioneering success in Silicon Valley.

Trixie LohMirmand, Senior Vice President, Exhibitions & Events Management, DWTC

Visitors got to grips with various cutting-edge technologies and gadgets involving the entire content landscape, from creation, production and management to distribution and absorption. A raft of new products including drones, 4K and Ultra HD cameras, wireless camera motion systems, satellites, broadcast transport solutions, microphones, post-production terminals, lighting rigs and fixtures and video management systems were featured at the event.

CABSAT organisers have revealed that next year’s exhibition will feature the all-new Content Marketplace, a co-located event designed to unite the entire commercial ecosystem for filmed entertainment content. As a dedicated platform for launching and sourcing new content, exploring exchange and funding opportunities and sealing distribution partnerships, CABSAT’s Content Marketplace will connect studios and content creators, producers, distributors and licensors with a host of buyers – from free-to-air and pay-TV operators to telcos, brands, advertising agencies and media buying houses.

A stable, independent company with the industry’s largest portfolio of automation products – pick any mix of models

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• Automation solutions that grow with you from basics to the cutting edge of business models

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Aspera’s main focus at the show was to present the core tenets of our technology. Growing from the US, we are now focused on Asia and the Middle East. We are in the process of building a dedicated Aspera team here in Dubai to serve the MENA region.

With cloud technology picking up for broadcast and media for live, VOD and OTT, a lot of companies are looking at cloud providers for an option to store, encode and transcoded massive amounts of videos. We help customers receive a gargantuan amount of data and put it in the cloud for transformation and distribution.

In order to do that, they need a transport mechanism to take all of this content to the cloud. Aspera provides a means to move data over traditional IP networks. We see opportunity in the OTT sphere, mostly ingesting and delivering content to an infrastructure of some kind. Netflix does the entire content ingest in the cloud via Aspera and outsources all of its storage requirement. CDN’s are using Aspera to move content into their networks. For instance, Akamai has an Aspera option to put content faster into the Akamai infrastructure.

“**There are discussions around data gravity in the cloud**, which means once you park your data in a space, everything else will move towards it”

John Tkaczewski, President and Co-Founder, FileCatalyst

Traditional methods of file transfer have been unable to keep up with the sizes of today’s large 4K and UHD media files, and FileCatalyst technology enables delivery of large-format media assets without choking the infrastructure.

For instance, NBC Sports, Travel Channel, beIN Sports and Zee TV are some of the broadcasters that use FileCatalyst to deliver their digital content. OTT and IPTV use cloud infrastructure for the speed and convenience it provides. There is no up-front capital cost to start using cloud-based technology. It comes with a low entry fee that works well for short projects. Traditional broadcasters, however, are less trusting of the cloud.

There are discussions around data gravity in the cloud, which means once you park your data in a space, everything else will move towards it. As data accumulates, there is a greater likelihood that additional services and applications will be attached to this data. Services and applications can have their own gravity, but data has the most gravity. Data, if large enough, can be virtually impossible to move. Rather than transferring data, you gravitate the rest of it where your data is stored.

Mark Smith, Managing Director, EMEA and APAC, ScheduALL

It makes sense for broadcasters to automate the repetitive stuff and use people to do more complex and technically challenging jobs. The idea is to make use of stuff more efficiently through automation, but it doesn’t imply that people will be made redundant. ScheduALL’s self-provisioning software, ScheduALL Portal, simplifies the process of making complex bookings of occasional use transmission feeds in real time, directly into a transmission provider’s system. Portal utilizes a browser-based user-friendly wizard for selling transmission feeds, minimizing unused capacity, maximizing revenue and drastically reducing operational overhead in the selling process.

Portal uses ScheduALL’s LINK software to deliver efficiency and streamline the entire booking process for satellite, fibre and Ethernet transmissions.

Broadcasters can use Portal’s straightforward interface without possessing in-depth technical knowledge, while all of the power of LINK works silently behind the scenes to make complex decisions about transmission scheduling, capacity management and conflict resolutions.

**NEW JVC 4KCAM PROFESSIONAL CAMCORDERS**

Introducing four new cameras from JVC, including two Super 35mm models, each offering 4K and HD recording and professional features in a compact design.

Compact, convenient and ultra high definition, the GY-LS300CHE camcorder and GW-SP100E remote head camera are each equipped with a 4K Super 35mm CMOS sensor, accommodating a wide range of cinema and photographic lenses and adapters for dazzling cinematic effects. They record 4K Ultra HD and full HD files (H.264 4:2:2 50Mbps) to readily-available memory cards, with the fast shoot-to-edit workflow JVC customers have come to expect. No other removable lens video camera offers as much flexibility as the GY-LS300, in such a compact, easy-to-handle form factor.

The new JVC GY-HM170E and GY-HM200E handheld camcorders deliver professional features in a lightweight package. Based around a 1/3” 12.4 Megapixel CMOS sensor, accommodating a wide range of cinema and photographic lenses and adapters for dazzling cinematic effects. They record 4K Ultra HD and full HD files (H.264 4:2:2 50Mbps) to readily-available memory cards, with the fast shoot-to-edit workflow JVC customers have come to expect. No other removable lens video camera offers as much flexibility as the GY-LS300, in such a compact, easy-to-handle form factor.

To find out more about our new 4K camcorders, please visit ae.jvcpro.net/4kcam or email exportsales@jvcpro.co.uk.

"**There are discussions around data gravity in the cloud**, which means once you park your data in a space, everything else will move towards it”

John Tkaczewski, President and Co-Founder, FileCatalyst

New 4KCAM Professional Camcoders
The broadcast market in the region is undergoing a huge growth. We showcased our DVB gateway that can be used to capture large volumes of satellite content and transform it to IP for use within a building or compound. Large institutions such as airports are using IP systems for internal video distribution. Within a broadcaster’s facility for internal services, IP is used to deliver media assets. A collateral system doesn’t reach everywhere, so a robust IP infrastructure within the facility helps greatly. Broadcasters are also looking for content security for free-to-air feeds and requirements for conditional access systems within the business network.

At the show, we launched the latest Exterity Artio middleware platform that extends streaming beyond the LAN. Organisations implementing Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) strategies can utilise this latest release of Artio, to offer greater flexibility to end users.

The Middle East is growing its OB van fleet with bigger and more professional trucks. HD and 4K vans are now the biggest trend. Elsewhere in the world, remote production is a hot topic of discussion. It is interesting, but it will only come when IP infrastructure is ready. Once the network is ready, it is likely to change the model of production. The idea of producing live sitting in the studio seems attractive, but one needs to ask how feasible it is in the current scenario. When live broadcasting a football game, for instance, the stadium will have to be equipped with complete IP infrastructure to ensure proper connectivity. You cannot produce remotely; the crew will be sent to the stadium, no matter how robust the connectivity is. OB vans are not going to go anywhere from live production just yet, we may come up with a hybrid model with a little bit of both, but we cannot override the van completely.

Dr Alessandro Asti, Vice President, Aret Video and Audio Engineering

Colin Farquhar, CEO, Exterity

The future is 4K: in addition to the Sony PXW-7S camera, we also showcased a wireless streaming solution for newsgathering. The Sony stand had 4K as the core theme. We can do wireless streaming from the camcorder for newsgathering back to the studio, using the 4G network. For sports directors, we are offering a stitch solution with two cameras on one pitch. Two 4K cameras in the stadium cover both halves of the pitch, then you can stitch those images and get a full panoramic view of the pitch. Take the stitched output, record it on the server, and the sports director can then go to any point in time on any part of the pitch and broadcast it.

Last year, we showed this as a prototype; this year, we showcased it as a full-fledged solution. Broadcasters want to implement 4K, record in 4K and use it later. Mostly sports production is in 4K; you can derive any format from it.

Vivek Saldanha, Business Head – Content Creation, Sony PSMEA

Paolo Bozolla, CEO, ContentWise

MEA is a young market that has a lot of potential and some extremely relevant players. Broadcasters and operators across the region are becoming increasingly focused on user experience and are experimenting with new ways to bring a personal touch to their users.

ContentWise is committed to helping companies across the region deliver innovative content recommendations, discovery and predictions. Our agile and user friendly management tool is proving to be key for broadcasters and operators in this market, as it gives them the flexibility to change the behaviour of the client interfaces in a matter of seconds. With ContentWise, they can simply change a configuration without having to rely on complex and expensive activities of system integrators.

As pay-TV across MEA continues to grow, we are looking forward to helping companies deliver truly personal TV experiences.

Vivian Saldanha, Business Head – Content Creation, Sony PSMEA

Paolo Bozolla, CEO, ContentWise
The 21st CABSAT held in Dubai was Axon’s 16th successive attendance, underlining its commitment to the region and to our customers. Many old but several new visitors found their way to our stand located in Hall 1. The larger number of visitors was immediately noticeable on day one (a large number of European and Asian guests), with a steady stream of guests present at our stand for product demos and formal meetings. Axon hosted the now traditional “unwind and distress” reception prior to the official CABSAT party, which was well-visited.

The business was good as we signed two large infrastructural projects in the region during CABSAT 2015. Clear-Com is making more investments in pre-sales activities. One way of showing this was having our own booth at CABSAT this year. Previously, we have been on the UK pavilion. We have also launched a raft of new products since IBC last year, which shows our commitment to the industry. 40% of our business is broadcast, while the rest of it is accounted for by live events, theatres and so on.

Wireless connectivity over IP is catching up as a popular trend. The market has been demanding these products for a while, and we can see a definite interest there. Having said that, it’s early days to move completely to wireless, as wired and IP will coexist in years to come.

Mark Barkey, Regional Sales Director Middle East, Africa & Turkey, Axon Digital Design

Avid post-production workshop
Avid sponsored the two-day post-production training session at CABSAT. Avid Video Solution Specialist, Deepraj Sandhar, held a demo on Media Composer. The latest features of Media Composer were demonstrated, highlighting cloud collaboration and the Avid MediaCentral Platform.

Avid at NAB
Avid’s Chairman and CEO, Louis Hernandez, was in Dubai last month to meet with key customers at CABSAT. He revealed some of Avid’s new launches at NAB. “With Avid Everywhere, we have announced a series of improvements to services like resolution independence, the connectivity toolkit and collaboration either via public or private cloud. We have opened up the Marketplace now to video as well. There’ll be announcements around MAM, storage, the distribution platform and metadata tagging. Eventually, we will have a free version of every product within the Artist Suite. Pro Tools | First is the first free version of a professional grade product. Another free version within Artist Suite will be announced at NAB. With what we are offering, you are now limited only by your imagination.”

Louis Hernandez, CEO, Avid

Steven R Rossiter, TV Systems Application Engineer, GatesAir

AT CABSAT, we demonstrated how investing in new infrastructure today can accelerate the transition to digital broadcast platforms tomorrow, while keeping the overall total cost of ownership low well into the future.

GatesAir’s Maxiva VHF transmitters for DAB radio were demonstrated for broadcasters considering a transition to digital radio in the future. We see a huge potential in mobile applications, and GatesAir is working with governments and broadcasters to explore new ways of doing T2 LTE transmissions. It’s a method using future extension frame to time domain share on a regular DVB-T2 standard.

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Small and niche TV channels are now creating channels on the web, hosting content on the data centres just like live blogs. These low-cost web channels provide a platform for live video blogs for people who are passionate about sharing videos. This trend is catching up in Europe, where we have provided the infrastructure for several niche channels.

Social TV is also an upcoming trend in the region. Our solutions can capture IP streams coming from the internet and embed them into the video being broadcast. The audience can connect with the live broadcast, insert tweets, Instagram pictures as well as interactive videos. These videos are posted in data centres from where we source them, monitor them and QC them before they are published online.

Peter Jakobsson, Business Development Director, Broadcast Solutions

Broadcast Solutions showcased a large HD OB van at CABSAT this year and we were the first to introduce the industry to the concept of streamlined OBs with a modular set-up. This offers a fully functional 16-cam OB within six months. The truck is pre-engineered and pre-built on the same module, for a quick turnaround. It’s similar to shopping for a car. A boutique construction, on the other hand, takes longer because the OB is customised to individual needs. This works for big events such as the Olympics, where the broadcaster has enough time to prepare in the run-up to the games. We will be delivering a 4K OB van in the beginning of next year to a major broadcaster in the region. This is a highly specialised and customised van for the TV station and will take around 13 months to complete.

Mohammed Al Ajlouni, Chairman, ABS Network

We see a lot of demand for covering sports and live events in the region. Qatar and the UAE are hosting several regional and international sporting events that need TV coverage, and that’s where our services come in. ABS started as a news agency to provide content to studios as well as SNGs, camera crews, correspondents, editors and TV stations. We have contracts with TV channels who outsource their services from us. Al Hurra Channel in Iraq runs on an end-to-end service by ABS. We also provide services for Al Jazeera from Jordan, including equipment, studios, fixed as well as moving facilities. Our headquarters are in Jordan, and in August last year we opened an office in Dubai. We will soon be announcing an Arabic news agency specialising in Middle East affairs.

Watermarking is used by major studios to protect their original content. Before the Oscars, 200,000 copies were sent to various members of the jury and all of these copies were watermarked. Hollywood studios make content available to the Middle East viewers earlier on pay-TV than they do in the West. Early release VoD content, therefore, comes with watermarking to protect it. We have one existing customer in the region who is using our watermarking technology.
With a universal confidence monitoring system, broadcasters and other media companies can use just one product from a single interface by a single user to very simply monitor and troubleshoot the full range of signal and format types, says Graham Taylor.

With the evolution of the broadcast industry, IT- and IP-based technologies have become a part of virtually every modern facility. At the same time, most facilities maintain an SDI infrastructure that continues to play an integral role in supporting the transport of audio and video.

As broadcasters work to deliver more content to a number of outlets, the increasing complexity of the broadcast environment presents a new host of potential points of error, demanding that operators establish an efficient means of managing and monitoring a much greater number of signals in a broader array of AV formats.

Whether signals are moving between components within the facility or handed off from one facility to another, the broadcaster must be able to keep an eye on all key inputs and outputs, whether they be SDI signals or MPEG streams.

Universal digital broadcast confidence monitoring solutions, still relatively new to the marketplace, are designed to address this very challenge. Equipped with a unique combination of processing, monitoring and analysis capabilities that extend across the traditional divide between baseband and stream-based audio and video, such solutions represent...
In slightly more complex signal flows, where uncompressed streams from various sources are fed into an encoder and the resulting MPEG-4 streams fed into a multiplexer to create a multi-programme transport stream, the universal confidence monitor also provides valuable visibility into the integrity of audio, video and data. By placing a multi-screen confidence monitor with four integrated streams upstream of the encoder, the broadcaster can establish simultaneous monitoring of up to four SDI feeds. Placing another unit downstream of the encoder, where it accepts the compressed outputs, the broadcaster can keep an eye on four STPs outputs as they are routed to the multiplexer. Finally, a third confidence monitor – possibly a two-screen model – can be deployed for examination of the multiplex programme stream output.

When it is necessary to compare two programme stream multiplexers, such as the broadcaster’s main and backup streams, a dual-screen MPEG-4 capable confidence monitor makes it easy to compare transport streams, dive down into data tables and examine other stream elements, in order to isolate and address any issues that could compromise the broadcast.

MPEG-4 decoders and analysis tools facilitate careful inspection of the transport stream and its components in ever greater levels of detail. Operators can examine the programme number, PMT number and service description. Data from both PMT and PSI tables are typically complemented by alarms based on a subset of the ETR101290 standard, so the operator will know very quickly if tables are late, have not arrived at all, are out of specification, and so on. The modern confidence monitor units support for both baseband signals and MPEG-4 transport streams with stream-specific analysis, thereby enabling broadcasters to improve the efficiency and agility with which they can validate the integrity of the service they provide.

“Whether signals are moving between components within the facility or handed off from one facility to another, the broadcaster must be able to keep an eye on all key inputs and outputs, whether they be SDI signals or MPEG streams”

Graham Taylor, MPEG Product Manager at Wehrle Technologies

In a recent report on the development of the ‘Beyond the LAN’ range of products launched this year, Exterity showcases their Enterprise IP video solutions and demonstrates its capabilities at NAB 2015. The ‘Beyond the LAN’ range of products launched this year facilitates the distribution of high quality video content to a wide range of screens across a wide range of networks, including the corporate wired LAN, Wi-Fi, WAN and the Internet.

This capability is critical as many organizations look to integrate Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) benefits with their Enterprise IP video solutions.

Exterity to showcase ‘Beyond the LAN’ enterprise IP video solutions at NAB 2015

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Beyond the LAN

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WHAT'S NEW AT NAB
A look at some of the new launches at the show in Las Vegas

Harmonic to introduce HEVC decoder
Harmonic has announced that the company’s ProView 7100 is the industry’s first single-rack, multi-format, integrated receiver-decoder (IRD), transcoder and MPEG stream processor to support the HEVC standard.

As part of an end-to-end HEVC-based video transmission solution offered by Harmonic, the ProView 7100 enables video content and service providers to decode HEVC compressed streams up to 1080p60 resolution, maximising bandwidth efficiency for broadcast service delivery without compromising video quality.

From a high-density 1-RU chassis, the ProView 7100 IRD platform offers broadcast-quality SD/HD MPEG-2, MPEG-4 AVC, and HEVC decoding, in addition to MPEG-2 and AVC transcoding, to streamline workflows and decrease operating costs for video content and service providers.

For applications where preserving the highest possible video quality is paramount, the ProView 7100 supports AVC, HD and HEVC 2.2-2.8 Tbit/sec decoding up to 1080p60. The HEVC decoding capabilities are available to ProView 7100 customers via a simple software update and licence key.

Booth SU1210

DAC supports bigger archives
DAC will announce support for a new generation of archive-specific 8TB disk drives, which are set to transform the economics of deep archive storage on the ALTO offline platform.

The new disk drive technology is optimised for the long retention times and low throughput characteristics required for deep archives and preservation. DAC will present a new storage concept which overcomes the traditional economic barriers that have made cloud storage unaffordable for long-form broadcast content in native resolution.

Combining the strengths of a high-yield on-premise appliance backed by a copy of last resort in the cloud, the system offers a multi-petabyte class solution.

Booth SU10210

Plura reveals high-brightness portable LCD monitors
Plura Broadcast will unveil new monitors at NAB conditions, or in a typical high-brightness environment inside a sports stadium. These support up to 1300 cd/m² of brightness without a hood or sun visor, for less bulk and weight. With one touch of a button, producers can achieve the maximum brightness.

Plura Broadcast will expand its PHB-3G Series of high-brightness portable LCD monitors with a new seven-inch model.

Designed for a wide range of broadcast mobile, indoor and outdoor applications, the PHB-3G series delivers incomparable quality for ENG monitoring in the field under extreme sunlight conditions, or in a typical high-brightness environment inside a sports stadium. These support up to 1300 cd/m² of brightness without a hood or sun visor, for less bulk and weight. With one touch of a button, producers can achieve the maximum brightness.

Booth SU1210

Facilis shares storage on TerraBlock
Facilis will showcase the latest features of the TerraBlock shared storage system.

Upcoming releases of TerraBlock will include scale-out features for larger workgroups, integrated asset tracking, improved interoperability with third-party applications and performance enhancements for resolution-independent workflows.

Facilis TerraBlock is a multi-platform shared storage solution built for post-production and content creation. Flexible connectivity options include a 40Gb/s Fibre Channel and 100Gb/s Ethernet through Facilis’s Shared File System. TerraBlock shared storage enables collaborative workflows and supports a wide range of industry-standard creative applications.

Booth SL8911

Booth N2718

April 2014 | www.broadcastprome.com | 59
I-MOVIX will demonstrate the industry’s first 4K ultra-slow motion system to support both continuous super-slow motion and ultra-slow motion at frame rates of up to 1000fps. Combining the core X10 ultra-motion technology with Vision Research’s Phantom Flex4K camera, the X10 UHD supports operation in a range of modes to meet differing production requirements, and can be instantly re-configured for new 4K or HD shooting scenarios. The X10 UHD now has an increased dynamic range, further boosting the versatility of the camera in widely differing lighting conditions. With reduced noise levels to provide even sharper images, the X10 UHD now supports higher frame rates in SSM mode (continuous mode), further extending the performance advantage over other slow motion cameras.

Booth C8525

Forscene takes centrestage

At the 2015 NAB Show, Forbidden will feature the new Forscene, which was unveiled at IBC2014 and went live in December. The newly designed Forscene interface provides an efficient and enjoyable user experience. Forbidden has also given Forscene a new infusion of functionality by adding a media asset management (MAM) system. Through the Forscene MAM, users have the full potential of the platform – from acquisition to publishing – at their fingertips. Forscene MAM customers can: Move media between Forscene servers in different locations; Rename, share and publish media from various accounts in the Forscene MAM; Manage and configure ingest servers from the cloud; including assigning access to media storage and setting up watch folders for ingest; Configure publishing settings and formats from the Forscene MAM; and finally, through the Forscene MAM, users have the ability to configure and operate their entire Forscene environment – all from a single interface.

Booth SL5305

MediorNet adds a ‘Smart’ member

The 2015 NAB Show will see the launch of a new MediorNet device that will add increased flexibility and convenience to the MediorNet real-time network. The new RSP-2318 Smartpanel offers features and capabilities that will enrich the user experience and change the way broadcasters and AV professionals communicate. As the world’s first control panel designed to serve as a powerful multifunctional user interface, the Riedel device boasts a unique feature set that includes three high-resolution, sunlight-readable, multitouch colour displays; premium-quality stereo audio; a multilingual character set; and 18 keys in just 1RU. These features make Riedel’s new Smartpanel a powerful user interface that can be further expanded through the use of apps. Riedel’s first app for the RSP-2318 turns the Smartpanel into an intercom panel, with AES3 over CAt/coax optional. Additional features include exchangeable headset connectors for mono or stereo applications, an integrated power supply and individual volume controls for each key.

Booth C4977
Shotoku Broadcast Systems is marking its 70th anniversary at the 2015 NAB Show with the official launch of its new TP500 compact and lightweight pneumatic pedestal.

Shotoku brings smart rail camera system

The TP500 can support camera payloads of up to 55 kg, and ranges from 865mm to 1,485mm in height. It is suitable for multi-location use such as OB, studio or event production. The modular design of the pedestal allows simple transportation of the TP500 between locations, without compromising its ability to provide a stable platform for camera operators. In addition, the TP500’s integrated inflation pump offers flexibility and freedom, regardless of the broadcast location. The pedestal pairs well with Shotoku’s pan and tilt heads.

Booth C7033

Azure connects the world

Imagine Communications and Microsoft have released a public preview of Azure Media Services Premium Encoder.

This new cloud offering for on-demand workloads provides agility and scalability for global multiscreen deployments, enabling media companies to stream broadcast-quality content to virtually any device, anywhere in the world. Imagine Communications and Microsoft will demonstrate the Azure Media Services Premium Encoder at the 2015 NAB Show. The encoder enables media companies to rapidly and efficiently design and launch scalable, cloud-based media processing applications, workflows and services on demand, while dramatically reducing their IT implementation and maintenance costs. The solution streamlines common workflow problems through the integration of a studio quality processing engine with automated decision-making logic and advanced metadata processing. It also supports input and output coders.

Booth N2702

Cobalt Digital shifts to openGear

Cobalt Digital will showcase the TP60-TQ2-REF1 3G/HD/SD-SDI dual-channel test signal generator, an openGear card that sends dual test signals into a facility’s video chain in order to ensure the validity of downstream baseband SDI systems. The TP60-TQ2-REF1 is the only openGear card that can perform two separate tests on two separate paths.

It is also the only such card that generates a “bouncing box” confidence indicator to track the movement of a signal throughout the facility and show whether a test was successful. These features increase the card’s functionality and can reduce testing costs for broadcast facilities. It also features a stress-test generator that can intentionally send illegal characters into the video path.

Booth C7025

Fujinon brings new lens into focus

The Optical Devices Division of FUJIFILM North America will show a range of lenses, including its latest cine-style, broadcast studio and field lenses. The entire range of Fujinon Premier PL 4K-cine lenses and the Cabrio cine/WED-style lens series will be on hand and demonstrated in a wide range of applications and on a variety of cameras. The Premier PL 4K series features the fastest T speeds available in a family of zooms, with colour-matched 4K and beyond optical performance. The entire range of Premier PL 4K-cine lenses will be in the booth. All four Fujinon zooms are similar in size and weight. The latest addition to its popular series of cine zooms – the FUJINON Premier PL 25-300mm Cabrio – will be on hand, along with the rest of the Cabrio series at NAB.

Booth C7025

Cobalt Digital Digital will showcase the TP60-TQ2-REF1 3G/HD/SD-SDI dual-channel test signal generator, an openGear card that sends dual test signals into a facility’s video chain in order to ensure the validity of downstream baseband SDI systems. The TP60-TQ2-REF1 is the only openGear card that can perform two separate tests on two separate paths.

It is also the only such card that generates a “bouncing box” confidence indicator to track the movement of a signal throughout the facility and show whether a test was successful. These features increase the card’s functionality and can reduce testing costs for broadcast facilities. It also features a stress-test generator that can intentionally send illegal characters into the video path.

Booth C7025

Thomson Video Networks announces FUZE-1

Thomson Video Networks will launch the FUZE-1 playout system, a completely new paradigm that integrates the traditional playout functions of a channel-in-a-box (CiB) with premium-quality encoding and transcoding for broadcast and OTT delivery.

Suitable for applications such as ad insertion, branding, disaster recovery and EAS insertion, FUZE-1 provides advanced graphics, channel switching, built-in automation, an integrated asset manager and software transcoding capabilities. FUZE-1 enables live and file-based playback, advanced graphics overlays including animated bitmaps or text crawls, and video effects such as fade-in/out or video squash-in. It features a 1-RU IT server equipped with a secure storage system and a set of IP, AES, and/or SDI interface options.

FUZE-1 can be deployed either on-premises at data centres or in virtualised environments.

Booth SU2610

Apr 2014 | www.broadcastprome.com | 63

Booth SU2610

Apantac sharpens viewing with T# launch

Apantac will launch its new T# multiviewers at NAB. The T# multiviewer is based on a modular architecture from Apantac. Three frame sizes (1RU, 2RU, 4RU) and 16 pre-configured models are available.

The pre-configured models can be easily expanded by adding additional input or output boards. All boards are hot swappable and interchangeable between all three frame sizes. One of the most important new features in the T# multiviewer series is that all input sources can be duplicated up to 64 times (on a single display) and any input is available to any output.

When fully populated (using the largest frame), the hardware accommodates eight input boards, each with up to eight video inputs supported, for a total of 64 SDI/HD/3G-SDI and Composite Video inputs. T# is also built with 4K/UHD in mind. T# supports output resolutions up to 1920x1200 including 1080P. T# is 4K/UHD output ready.

Booth N6006
“Most broadcasters make each trailer, and each version of each trailer, as a separate project in an edit suite. This is slow, it ties up expensive hardware, and much of it is really dull work for the editor. Why not take that automated content packaging and apply it to channel playout?”

**Playout automation revisited**

No one would think of designing a manual television playout system today. The advantages of automation, in terms of efficiency, accuracy and reliability, are obvious to all. But that does not mean there is a single solution to playout automation. Channels differ hugely in their character, the way they are scheduled and the content they carry. All of that affects the technology they need to deliver it.

There are premium channels in each market whose output is so complex that a traditional automation system is still justified. These, typically, have a control system from one vendor, servers from another, processors from a third and so on – best-of-breed hardware under the control of an automation system that provides the right functionality for that channel.

Below that, though, there is another much larger tier of channels with simpler requirements. These are ideal for integrated playout systems, so-called channel-in-a-box solutions. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all product here. Some go for the lowest cost solution and live with very basic graphics. Others want to boost market cost solution and live with very basic product here. Some go for the lowest so-called channel-in-a-box solutions.

Most broadcasters make each trailer, and each version of each trailer, as a separate project in an edit suite. This is slow, it ties up expensive hardware, and much of it is really dull work for the editor.

Why not take that automated content packaging and apply it to channel playout?

- **Thematic channels** tend to be quite formulaic in their presentation. Think of a movie channel, for example; there is the first part of the movie, then a commercial break, perhaps with sponsor and channel bumpers in and out, and perhaps some promos to make up the time. Then the second part, and so on, until the end of the movie when you want to superimpose graphics on what is coming next. During the end credits, there are trailers for the next movie and what is coming up. Then another film starts.

It is simple to design templates for each part of the movie, together with the break content, secondary events and the rest of the look and feel of the channel. The actual content is known well in advance for a thematic channel. Things that many channel-in-a-box systems cannot do, like squeezebacks into dynamic graphics, can all be prepared offline.

Each complete sequence is then passed to a simple video file player. All this has to do is play one clip – which might be 15 or 20 minutes long – after another, and possibly add a logo. All the clever transitions that an ordinary channel-in-a-box system has to try to do live, such as promos and branding, are stored within the clip.

The channel looks better, because there are no restrictions on how you design your sequences, transitions, promos and audience hooks. There is no chance of a glitch in the playout, because everything is prepared in advance and you are transmitting a linear playlist from a server. For larger playout centres, you could run multiple instances of this solution in a processor farm, outputting faster than real-time, so costs are saved, too. It turns the idea of playout automation on its head, and for many channels, it could prove to be a transformative idea.

**James Gilbert is CEO of Pixel Power.**

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