CEO Raed Zidan uncovers new opportunities in Middle East radio with niche stations in MENA Radio.
Brio’s console has been boosted by new channel expansion packs. Packs increase the Brio12 DSP count from 48 to 64 input channels and the Brio36 from 64 to 96 input channels.

Brio is packed with pure broadcast features as standard: broad IP functionality, MADI connectivity, comprehensive monitoring, automixers, loudness metering, full 5.1 capability, extensive IFB resources and built-in I/O.

Still small in size, now even bigger in stature. Find out more at IBC 2018, stand #8.C61
Annual Event

The BroadcastPro ME Summit & Awards is our annual flagship event to promote and celebrate excellence in the broadcast and satellite industry across the MENA region. The event features extensive networking opportunities, seminars and awards presentations by key industry and government leaders.

The Summit

The summit creates an engaging platform for MENA TV, film and radio professionals to discuss and debate the most pressing topics and trends in the market.

The Awards

The gala dinner and awards ceremony brings together the industry to celebrate excellence in the MENA broadcast and satellite industry.
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August 2018
The new freelance relations team at twofour54 Abu Dhabi has reportedly secured more than 40 briefs for freelancers in their first 60 days. The dedicated team was set up to assist more than 580 freelancers registered currently, and connect them with government entities and the 470-plus partners at twofour54. Freelancers can obtain a sole proprietor 12-month licence for $1,225 (AED 4,500) or a six-month licence for $613 (AED 2,250).

Twofour54 offers new scheme for freelancers

The new freelance relations team at twofour54 Abu Dhabi has reportedly secured more than 40 briefs for freelancers in their first 60 days. The dedicated team was set up to assist more than 580 freelancers registered currently, and connect them with government entities and the 470-plus partners at twofour54. Freelancers can obtain a sole proprietor 12-month licence for $1,225 (AED 4,500) or a six-month licence for $613 (AED 2,250).

Weyyak completes one year

Weyyak, Zee’s Arabic OTT platform, completed a year in May with a whopping three million unique users on the platform and 10m video views during the month of Ramadan. The platform has also recently signed an agreement with Sharjah Media Free Zone (SHAMS) to encourage media students and new local content creators to send in their short films and productions, which will be showcased on Weyyak if they meet the standards set by the platform.

Speaking about the ongoing success of the platform, Nadine Samra, VP Digital Business MIBA for Zee, said: “Weyyak just completed the first anniversary in May 2018; we have launched successfully on several devices including Apple TV earlier this year. We are very encouraged by the huge numbers that we got during Ramadan. We had launched a number of Indian drama series dubbed into Arabic exclusively on the platform such as Auraa Banaty (Badalte Rishton Ki Daastaan), Noqta Ala Sater (Doli Armaano Ki) and Begurarai. These drama series were launched during Ramadan but continue to run with new episodes on our platform.”

Zee, however, is looking at new initiatives to boost its library of exclusive content. “We are constantly looking at adding new content and have a big library of Arabic and Indian-dubbed content. But in our quest for more exclusive content, we are also looking at new partnerships. We currently have over 10,000 hours of HD content with more than 600 titles. About 46% of the library is Arabic content and 54% is exclusive Indian dubbed into Arabic,” Samra pointed out.

As part of these efforts, a new cooperative agreement with SHAMS will see Zee offering training and recommendations to Sharjah’s media graduates and giving them a platform to feature their content.

“We have a lot of expertise and infrastructure so we can provide the necessary training and advice as well as internship for media students from Sharjah universities. The agreement includes cooperation on several different levels. Our aim is to encourage new talent and provide them with a platform to feature their content. Young people bring a lot of creative content and creative ways of implementation and directing. We are very optimistic that we will receive content to the standards that we want. This collaboration between the private and public sector is very important to reach out to creative talent out there,” Samra added.

Evs’ Ceo Exits

EVS’ Board of Directors and Muriel De Lathouwer have mutually agreed to end De Lathouwer’s term of office and duties as Managing Director and CEO, effective last month. EVS Chairman Pierre De Munster will succeed De Lathouwer on an interim basis, until a new CEO is appointed.

Eutelsat appoints Ghassan Murat MD of Middle East

Eutelsat’s Ghassan Murat will take the place of Laurent Roussel as MD of Eutelsat Middle East alongside his role as VP of Business Development & Strategy. Ali Kurur, Regional VP, MENA, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Afghanistan announced in a statement that Ghassan Murat will also oversee Roussel’s clients.

Former Mbc Exec Joins Vuclip as Gm

Abe Shady Aboul Naga, who was previously Director of Digital Business with MBC for nearly 10 years, has joined the regional leadership team at Vuclip as General Manager for Middle East. In his new role, Aboul Naga will lead a region-specific growth strategy for Vuclip and oversee all of its operations in the region.
Ajman to woo businesses in India and Egypt

The Ajman Media City Free Zone (AMCFZ) has announced a range of packages for potential business owners, including the decision to abolish all security deposits related to the visa process for new companies. As a first step, AMCFZ is entering strategic alliances with organisations in key markets such as India and Egypt.

Speaking ahead of the official launch, Chairman Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Humaid Al Nuaimi said: “We have identified key issues that a potential investor faces when setting up a new business, such as the cost of doing business, set-up costs, the regulatory requirements and their expectations, such as the availability of a long-term sustainable framework, which allows them to set up, operate and function with ease.”

Academy Awards induct 12 Arab filmmakers

A total of 12 Arab filmmakers have joined the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which runs the annual Oscars Awards. The filmmakers are now members of the academy in the categories of writing, directing, acting, documentary, animation and production.

The new members from Lebanon are Director Ziad Doueiri, Screenwriter Joelle Touma, Director Nadine Labaki and Producer Antoine Sfeir. From Palestine, the members are Director Aneenamar Jazzi and Actress Hami Abbas. The Tunisians on the panel are producers Dora Bouchnoua and Said Ben Said. Others include Algerian Actress Sofia Boulalla, Syrian Director Feras Fayad, Egyptian Director Mohamed Siam and Animator Yasser Hamed.

Dolby and Cinescape partner in three-year deal

Dolby Laboratories, Inc. and Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) have partnered for a three-screen agreement towards the future Dolby Cinema deployments in Kuwait. The first site is expected to open later in 2018 at the 360 Mall in Kuwait City with KNCC operating under the Cinescape brand.

Commenting on the expansion, Deog Darrow, Senior VP, Cinema Business Group, Dolby Laboratories said: “We are really pleased to be able to continue to drive momentum in our strategy to expand the Dolby Cinema footprint in Europe and the Middle East region. Customers in Kuwait will now be able to experience the ultimate presentation for all genres of film. Dolby Cinema combines spectacular image, moving audio and inspired design to deliver a superior and immersive experience for movie-goers.”

Elaborating on the partnership, Khaldoon Al Marzoug, Business Development Manager at KNCC commented: “We are committed to bringing our Cinescape customers the very best in movie entertainment and are really looking forward to offering Dolby Cinema. We are really proud to be the first location in Kuwait to be offering film lovers this state-of-the-art film experience.”

SMC’s Pulse 95 deploys Lawo

Sharjah Media Corporation’s (SMC) new Pulse 95 Radio station has made extensive use of mixing, routing and control systems from the German broadcast solutions provider Lawo.

The station is kitted out with a pair of Lawo systems comprising Ruby control surfaces with accompanying Power Core mixing engines and VuTron user interfaces. The installation is an extension of an existing NOVA17 Mk.II router already operated by SMC. Supporting from four to 80 faders and being AES67-compliant, Ruby consoles offer AutoMix smart mixing and a context-sensitive GUI through VuTron.

While the physical mixing surfaces carry Ruby consoles, source selectors, monitor controls, less frequently accessed features such as routing selections are available via context-sensitive multi-touch displays.

New CEO at Sky News Arabia

Sky News Arabia has announced the appointment of Angelos Frangopoulos as CEO and Managing Editor. In his new role, Frangopoulos will be responsible for the company’s global programming operations for all its broadcast, digital and radio platforms.

Frangopoulos will join the company from his current leadership role as CEO and MD of Australian News Channel (ANC).

The Dubai team at the global launch of Medikind

Ericsson Media Solutions rebrands as MediaKind

The new company will bring together media technology providers, Asper, Azuki Systems, Envisio, Fabric, HyCGroup, Microsoft Mediaroom and Tandberg Television.

In January 2018, Ericsson had sold its majority stake in Media Solutions to US private equity firm One Equity Partners. While Ericsson has retained 49% of the shares in Media Solutions, One Equity Partners joins as new majority owner.

The Power Core engine supports hundreds of AES67 and MADI I/O channels, and can be expanded with plug-in cards to accommodate further digital and analogue sources.

It natively offers 96 DSP channels, multiple AutoMix groups, and a 1920 x 1920 internal routing matrix.

Taking to the airwaves in early May, Pulse 95 – which broadcasts across the UAE on 95.0 FM, and also through SMC’s web and mobile app – offers a mix of news of the latest business and commercial developments from within the Emirate, accompanied by exclusive interviews, features, morning talks, evening segments, and a Blend of music.

Pulse 95 Radio’s goal is to be “a totally inclusive, fun, trusted, feel-good radio station, bringing the listeners’ positive, upbeat stories of real people”.

Ericsson Media Solutions rebrands as MediaKind as CEO Angel Ruiz elaborated on the vision of the new company, saying: “Our award-winning technologies, established industry heritage and forward-thinking experts equip organisations with the end-to-end technology solutions needed to embrace media of all kinds.”

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KSA comedians join Netflix’s global series

Saudi Arabian comedians Ibrahim Alkhalaifa and Mohamad Almadi join fellow Arab performers Adil Khaileta (Palestine) and Rawwan Halak (Jordan), as part of Netflix’s stand-up comedy series premiering in 2019. A total of 47 comedians from 13 regions will feature in the series. The series [title to be announced] will tape in seven languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Dutch, German and English).
Arabian Radio Network unveils new hub, launches Chinese radio channel

The Arabian Radio Network unveiled its new headquarters in Dubai Media City last month. The facility includes more than 41 multipurpose studio, production and visualization studios. ARN’s new operational hub in Dubai Media City is reportedly built for a multiplatform era, with more than 50 cameras capturing the on-air content.

The building houses 12 on-air studios and 28 digital production suites for audio and video production. The new studios include more than 150 touchscreens and panels.

ARN broadcasts 185 news bulletins a day. The new ARN media hub unites its Arabic, English, Hindi, Malayalam, Parsi and Tagalog radio newsrooms through a dedicated multilingual news hub. ARN’s production agency, Elkar, is also based in the new site. The facility includes what the company claims is the world’s first Studer Glacier multi-studio installation and the largest Studer mixer and core installation in the Middle East.

In addition, ARN, in partnership with Hala China, a joint initiative between Meraas and Dubai Holding, has announced the launch of a new 24-hour radio station called “The Sound of the Dubai Dragon”, which will serve the resident Chinese population in the UAE. Translated from Mandarin, it will be available on all Android and iOS devices by downloading the Dubai Dragon app that will soon be integrated into ARN’s Apple TV application.

A total of 185 news bulletins will be broadcast every day from ARN’s new studio.

Equinix and Omantel partner to build new IBX data centre

Equinix and Omantel have entered into a joint venture to deliver data centre and interconnection services to Middle East customers by developing a new network-dense data centre in Barka, Muscat. Equinix will operate the new IBX data centre, which will include 18,600sqft of co-location space and approximately 750 cabinets at full build. The first phase of the three-phase build will include 250 cabinets and is expected to be completed and open for business by Q2 2019.

China Media Group and CATV sign China Theatre broadcasting agreement

China Media Group and China Arab TV (CATV) signed the China Theatre Broadcasting Agreement in Dubai last month. China Theatre is a brand created by Central Radio and Television Station that works with the national television stations overseas.

According to the agreement, Chinese TV series Ode to Joy, Beijing Youth and Happy Life will be broadcast on Dubai’s CATV.

Image Nation poised to set up 24-hour Chinese TV channel

Image Nation is looking to establish a 24-hour Chinese television channel in the Middle East, in a bid to build on the success of its free-to-air Quest Arabiya channel, which has broadcast Chinese programmes once a week since early 2017. Chinese content on Quest Arabiya includes lifestyle and culture, and is dubbed into Arabic rather than subtitled. The channel will reportedly have its own brand.

In Figures

20% KA internet users on VPNs
Source: GlobalWebIndex

194m Number of 4K TV screens in use by 2022
Source: ABI Research

VQST equips Jordan’s Al Mamlaka TV

Independent Media Station (IMS), the company that launched Al Mamlaka (“The Kingdom”) TV in Jordan, collaborated with systems architect and ICT integrator Quest Media, to design and build the required technical infrastructure. The solutions offered included new production facilities, equipped with the latest technology solutions, to enable Al Mamlaka TV to produce a 24/7 live feed for satellite, mobile, social media and online platforms. Al Mamlaka started broadcasting last month. According to a statement, the news channel, based in King Hussein Business Park in Amman, will be an “advanced and qualitative leap with more freedom and professionalism”, compared to other Jordanian broadcasters. Under the royal decree, journalist and political analyst Fadah al-Bhtan was named Chairman of the station with Ayman Nafi, Marwan Almas, Nabeel Alouz and Bassem Tweini as board members.

While Al Mamlaka will offer public service broadcasting, officials have said it will be fully independent from Jordan Radio and Television Corporation (JEITVC).

OSN CEO to join IBC Leaders’ Forum; OSN’s Wavo joins Anghami with du’s new offer

Martin Stewart, CEO of OSN, will be part of the IBC Leaders Forum as it returns to IBC on Thursday 13 September, at the RAI Congress Centre. Key speakers joining him on the panel at this year’s event include Erik Huggers, former CEO of Vice; Anders Jerndorff, EVP and CEO of Nordic Entertainment at MTG; JB Perrette, President & CEO of Discovery Networks International; and Lindsay Patterson, Group Transformation Officer of Group M & WPP.

The Leaders’ Forum will examine where the next stage of growth will come from across the broadcast media ecosystem and explore the topics of consolidation, partnerships, online streaming, disruption, innovative finance models and data safety in the digital age. In other news, a six-month free subscription to OSN’s SVOD service Wavo is part of du’s new data SIM offer, along with a 12-month free subscription to music platform Anghami.

Jordon’s Roya TV reports record Ramadan audiences

Amman-based Roya TV network reported an 82% increase in online viewership by the end of Ramadan, with a total of 115m views. The network reportedly used online platforms extensively during Ramadan, in addition to the linear TV platform, including YouTube, mobile apps and the channel’s official website, to live stream original shows. Game show Ikhsar Wa irba7 (Lose & Win), which allows viewers to compete for money, saw a surge of 142% in Android screen views.

Saudi Broadcasting Corporation renamed

The Saudi Broadcasting Corporation will now be called the Saudi Broadcasting Authority, according to its Board of Directors. Speaking on the change, Executive President Dawood bin Abdulaziz Al-Shiryani said the abbreviation of the new name, SBA, is designed to remove confusion with the recently-Launched Saudi Broadcasting Channel (SBC).

Al-Futtaim and PVR cinema JV to focus on UAE, KSA

Dubai-based Al-Futtaim and India-based film exhibition company, PVR Limited, have signed an agreement to explore opportunities for jointly developing a cinema business in the MENA region.

IN FIGURES

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Emirati film to feature in six film festivals

Emirati feature film Fan of Amoory will be the sole UAE representative in official competition at six international film festivals across Europe, North Africa and South Asia.

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Raed Zidan entered the radio scene at a time when critics were questioning the industry’s future. The Chairman of Shock Middle East explains to Supriya Srinivas how his team leveraged radio’s unique role as a local medium while equipping the three stations of Dance 97.8, Heart 107.1 and Radio Hala 95.6 with the digital arsenal to overcome barriers of terrestrial borders and devices.

There are many stories you could choose to write about Raed Zidan — the serial entrepreneur with a real estate business; the first Palestinian to scale Mount Everest, and six other peaks around the globe; or the man who has discovered unique audiences in what we thought was a saturated UAE radio landscape.

In early 2016, Theo Makris, a British entrepreneur who had already launched a dance music radio station in the UK with radio expert Digby Taylor, ran some compelling ROI numbers by the Palestinian investor and real estate developer. A year into the launch of Dance 97.8, the radio station has more than 340,000 unique daily listeners, as per figures from market research company IPSOS.

“It was a no-brainer then for us to launch two more FM channels,” says Zidan, seated in his busy office in Dubai Media City, that has now grown from three employees to 50.

“After we saw the success of Dance FM, we...
looked at the market again to see what else we could launch, because our intention was one was to build a network and not just stop at one or two or three radio stations. Considering our infrastructure and the staff we have, we focused on another English radio station. With Dance FM, we are targeting the 25- to 35-year-olds, and with Heart 107.1, our target demographic is 30 plus.”

Radio authorities have urged the industry to invest in new formats such as podcasts and presenters with radio or media experience, some with just our presenters, every person who has been hired has had extensive radio or media experience, some with 15 to 20 years of radio experience.”

Radio personalities on Heart 107.1 include two-time Radio Personality of the Year Dave Chait and popular local presenter Padi Marsoor, among others. Beyond the acquisition of licences and FM frequencies and the recruiting of experienced on-air talent, Zidan stresses that the music played is curated with care. “Listeners do not want music repeated 50 times a day or music that plays on every other radio station.”

Our music committee is amazing at choosing the right music for the right audience for each station. We choose our music in-house; we do not buy ready-made lists.”

The studio for launching radio stations then seems clear - find a gap in the existing radio offering, move quickly to create a brand and put together an appealing group of on-air talent. Radio expert Digby Taylor and Head of Programming at Shock Middle East, explains that radio is categorised into formats. Heart 107.1, for instance, is defined as ‘Hot AC’ or ‘Hot Adult Contemporary’ and has captured an underserved demographic.

While terrestrial radio has undeniable advantages in terms of the medium's reach, habitual listenership, local presence and brands, analysts have urged the industry to invest in consulting digital services or face obsolescence. Taylor recognises that the radio industry can no longer wait out the digital disruption.

“We did not build the studies for just 2016, 2017 and 2018. We built them anticipating developments for the next five years.”

Heart 107.1 includes two-time Radio Personality of the Year Dave Chait and popular local presenter Padi Marsoor, among others. As the market for audio continues to change, the need to stay relevant and relevant to the audience becomes more important. While terrestrial radio has advantages in terms of reach, listenership, local presence and brands, digital services offer new opportunities for radio stations to engage with their audience in different ways.

The convergence of media and technology, including social media platforms, has opened up new avenues for radio stations to connect with their audience. Digital services like podcasts, live streaming and interactive content can help radio stations reach a wider audience and create a more personalized listening experience.

Music licensing is in its infancy, as does Heart FM. With Radio Hala, the digital medium allows them to tap into lucrative regional markets such as Saudi Arabia. In terms of global ambitions, Zidan makes it clear that he does not want to be restricted to the UAE, with Dance FM reportedly being consumed in Canada, as well as in the Heart FM studio. Panasonic HD cameras are installed in the main studio as well as in the Heart FM studio. We are hopefully building a second studio which will have the next generation of Alexa desks. And we are not standing still. We watch broadcast shows such as CARAVAT to keep looking for cutting-edge technology.

The fact that the Shock Middle East studios are IP-enabled will be music to the ears of IP proponents in the broadcast industry. “There are no audio cables in the building,” says Taylor. “It is all IP audio. I am proud to say we have the best IP radio engineering team in the country. Also, all our telephony is IP-based as well.”

To the inevitable question on the increasing digital threats, Zidan says: “It’s only a challenge in that music licensing is in its infancy in the UAE. shock Middle East has, from the outset, made a point of being fully licensed by the major record companies. Our licensing is worldwide. As a business, we felt it necessary to have full coverage and not to be geo-blocked.”

Analysts predict that by 2030, an estimated 75% of new cars will be connected to digital services, denting radio’s monopoly on the car dashboard and relegating AM/FM to just one of a series of audio options behind the wheel. This does not faze Zidan. “Our studios are ready for the digital age, and if digital radio kicks in, we are prepared. The way people consume radio is very different from 10 years ago or even five years ago. The latest audience surveys tell us that 44% of radio is consumed on devices. The convergence of media is critical to our business model.”

Even as radio broadcasters increasingly stream content over the internet and experiment with new formats such as podcasts and video, Zidan believes on-demand radio, as a more personal medium, will be more lucrative in the long run. His optimism is not misplaced.
considering a staggering 93% of the UAE’s estimated 9.2 million people tune in to radio daily according to Nielsen. Leaving nothing to chance, Zidan has ensured that Shock Middle East consolidates its engagement with its growing number of listeners with an in-house production facility, bespoke retail radio solutions and strategic partnerships with live events.

Knowing a dull commercial can have listeners tuning out, Shock Middle East has an in-house production facility. Zidan explains: “From day one, we have been producing advertisements in-house. We got lucky because we have, in our team, some well-known voice-over producers.”

Another key revenue earner has been retail radio, a concept tested in select malls and outlets in the UAE since 2003. Zidan explains the strategy: “There are round 60 Spinneys outlets in the UAE. The music you hear has been curated by us and branded as Spinneys Radio. We keep it fresh and updated. We also create promotional advertisements for them around specific products or events.”

There is an air of ‘anything can be done’ in the Shock Middle East studios, which possibly reflects the resilience of radio in the digital era, even while linear TV is floundering. When Radio Jockey Reine Abour Jeily offers fashion tips and sports updates between upbeat contemporary Arabic music on her Radio Hala show Dardasha, it helps that the Blackmagic camera attached to the microphone activates as soon as she starts speaking. 30-second segments of the show are then seamlessly broadcast on the station’s social media accounts.

While the American-Arab duo of Tim and Faris exchange witty repartee on Heart’s Breakfast Show, listeners also get a chance to chat with guests such as John Legend, Ricky Martin or any of the stellar artists who have stopped by the studio in the past on their way to play at the Dubai Jazz Festival.

Pioneering exclusive partnerships with iconic events in the Shock Middle East stable of radio channels, the Dance 97.8 team recently broadcast live from Tomorrowland, one of the biggest electric dance music festivals in the world.

Like his peers, Raed Zidan understands that radio in the digital age is about watching, interacting and sharing, as well as listening. What he has done particularly well is identify and address lucrative gaps in the radio offering in the region.

Is he done, we ask, given how crowded the UAE radio landscape is? “Crowded? Not really. New Zealand has roughly 4.5 million people and they have 350 radio stations. For 10 to 12 million people, we have around 40 radio stations. In reality, the GCC market is one of the least crowded markets in the world.” Clearly, Shock ME has more radio stations in its sights.

Zidan is already expanding the radio business to incorporate events. “We have now opened Shock ME Events, and we will be bringing in a couple of big acts towards the end of this year. We are, after all in the business of entertainment.”
With his second film, Dubai-based filmmaker Jac Mulder wants to make a mark in Hollywood. The veteran carries the hopes of a legion of supporters. In conversation with BroadcastPro ME, Mulder recalls the tumultuous days of conceptualising, writing and filming Twisted Blues.

“You want to be a good director? Make sure you know everyone’s job,” was a piece of advice Dubai-based South African director Jac Mulder received in early 2000 as a twenty-something with dreams of making it as an animation specialist in the emirate.

His 2014 release Bordering on Bad Behaviour won laughs and laurels at festivals across the US, defining the audience and genre for his to-be-released film Twisted Blues. But making a film, even with an award-winning debut, is not free from perils, especially in a region that has every facility for the big-budget Hollywood and Bollywood projects, but very little institutional support for the resident filmmaker.

“Besides operating a camera and editing, including colour grading, I’ve also trained myself in makeup, wardrobe and music composition. I made it my business to learn every aspect of filmmaking. I started with animation, editing and visual effects, but I continued to study everything from compositing to graphic design. I have studied over the years in Los Angeles, France, Australia, South Africa... both offline and online courses – whenever I could learn.”

The depth in Mulder’s range of expertise was critical to the making of Twisted Blues. The skills came of use when writing and developing the script, on the day he had to stand in for the DoP and, most importantly, during the months he had to spend editing the film. And every day on the 21-day shoot in June 2018, Mulder ensured that precious time was saved on the need to colour grade during post-production.

“Everything is shot so beautifully, I did not have to grade it. I shot it on my RED EPIC-W Helium 8K with Xeen lenses, among others, with the intention of doing minimal grading. I like to do my colour correction on the monitor on the day of the shoot. I know what time of day it is, am very specific about the look and feel I want to convey, and I pre-grade before I edit.”

“Everything was done on Adobe Premier Pro, with grading sorted on DaVinci Resolve. As the crew would set up the next shot, I would grade in the interim period. It would take me five minutes and eventually ended up saving me five hours of work in post. Also, I chose the EPIC camera for a reason. You have so much more latitude. I can control my blacks, highlights, roll-off, skin tones, and changing of filters is made seamless.”

Browse through Mulder’s work, including his TVCs from the early 2000s, and you get a glimpse of his approach to every frame. He elaborates: “From camera positions to the script, I consciously stay away from cliché and the mundane. With an explosion, you do not always have to show the bomb blast. I want to see what happens to a person’s face, the cigarette he is smoking, what happens to the people in the room, the glass flying, and so on.”

The writing for Twisted Blues began in early 2016 with Eric Berg as scriptwriter. The idea came to Mulder two years ago, during an “inspirational conversation” he had with Vox Cinemas. He was reportedly asked to base a film in Dubai and portray believable expatriate characters.

“They gave me a series of challenges. The film must be quirky and relevant to the UAE. And as I sat listening, a line came up in my head – you tend to bruise less when you force them to miss.”

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The single-line brought together a woman protagonist – an American in Dubai – and the unlikely sport of mixed martial arts. Lending international flavour to Twisted Blues are some easily recognisable faces such as The Scientist’s Brittany Benjamin (seated right), LBJ’s Brent Bailey (top right) and Grey’s Anatomy star Josh Crotty (top left), pictured here with Director Jac Mulder.

In Dubai, en route to Hollywood
"A women-centric film is not easy to write or direct. My script doctor Eric Berg, who is a nephew of actor Nick Nolte, was incredible in terms of helping me through the process" Jac Mulder, Director, Twisted Blues

Set to be released in September, the movie combines comedy, romance and action as the story of Mia (Brittany Benjamin) unfolds. She is an expatriate artist who rides a motorcycle and keeps to herself. At the advice of her best friend Johnny (Brent Bailey), she turns to MMA to protect herself but comes face-to-face with fighter Frankie (Josh Crotty), who refuses to train women.

He immediately squashes any suggestion of being inspired by Fight Club or Million Dollar Baby. From the setting of the film to the protagonist's journey through domestic violence and finally the comedy elevating the serious underlying issues, Twisted Blues is unique, says Mulder.

"I have lived in the Middle East for the past 20 years. And when the guys were getting their faces punched in, the women jumped on the tables with enthusiasm. After overcoming my initial mortification, I realised the subject matter appeals to both target audiences..." During the 18 months it took for the script to be fleshed out, Mulder had a qualified friend to operate as a sounding board and script doctor, all rolled into one.

"A women-centric film is not easy to write or direct. My script doctor Eric Berg, who is a nephew of actor Nick Nolte, was incredible in terms of helping me through the process. There are seven twins in the story, and the blues are the bruises; in terms of helping me through the doctor Eric Berg, who is a nephew of actor Nick Nolte, who was a judge at the event. I walked away with a big impression in Hollywood as well as locally. I believe this film has all the ingredients. We have a great story, a good script and wonderful actors." Leading international actor Josh Crotty, who is also the Executive Producer of Twisted Blues, says: "I have lived in the Middle East for the past 20 years. And when the guys were getting their faces punched in, the women jumped on the tables with enthusiasm. After overcoming my initial mortification, I realised the subject matter appeals to both target audiences..."

Pro softball players helped Mulder guide the actors through their fight scenes. They included Rim al Jub, a professional MMA fighter. Acknowledging her help in the making of the film, Mulder recalls: "I needed a female to train my lead actress. Battery only knew yoga and had no idea how to throw a punch. Rim had just two and a half weeks in which to train her. There were times when the actors would balk at throwing punches and I would stand in and fake punch. It was all very intense but fun."

"I came here because I believe in Jac's EPIC-W Helium 8K with Xeen lenses, with the intention of doing minimal grading. I like to do my colour correction on the monitor on the day of the shoot" Jac Mulder, Director, Twisted Blues

Even helped drive the cars at times. Platforms Gym provided space for the shoot, and six professionals from Al Quza helped Mulder guide the actors through their fight scenes. They included Rim al Jub, a professional MMA fighter. Acknowledging her help in the making of the film, Mulder recalls: "I needed a female to train my lead actress. Battery only knew yoga and had no idea how to throw a punch. Rim had just two and a half weeks in which to train her. There were times when the actors would balk at throwing punches and I would stand in and fake punch. It was all very intense but fun."
The phrase ‘content is king’ can no longer stand on its own. With the expansion of digital media and IP-based channels, the world is becoming a smaller place as consumers now have access to content across the globe. The growing availability of these services and faster broadband access have combined with advances in smart devices to empower consumers and have shifted control of the media landscape from content providers to end users. If great content is all it takes to be successful, why are so many end users still cutting the cord? Having great content is only part of the competitive battle for the media industry can reduce abandonment, increase engagement, improve repeat viewership and protect brands, writes Ted Korte of Qligent.

Providers these days, as price, accessibility, relevance, personalisation, quality and choice have all become critical factors in keeping viewers engaged. Quality is one of the most crucial elements in retaining viewers, even the best content can be beaten in audience views by an amateur’s cat video if service availability is limited or if buffer times, dropouts or blocky video are too excessive. A study by Akamai discovered that viewers will start abandoning a video if it takes longer than two seconds to begin playing, with another six percent leaving after every additional one second of delay. Meanwhile, an nScreenMedia poll uncovered that delivering better video quality has the biggest impact on the business of an online video service provider (OVSP).

As the path from content creator to viewer has grown in complexity, consumer satisfaction has become increasingly difficult to capture and maintain, thus forcing a new approach to assure high-quality content delivery. The use of real-time big data analytics on a combination of last-mile and end-user data can deliver valuable insights into consumer quality of experience and user behaviour.

**Why is quality suffering?**

The push for more content and online delivery has resulted in a huge degradation in the quality of media service delivery across all platforms, new and old. New technical problems that didn’t exist before were introduced as early as the analogue-to-digital transition. Broadband network distribution brought its own set of new problems with buffering, jitter and latency among the issues related to delivery over an unmanaged, packet-switched network. Additional technical problems will continue to arise as more insertion and embedding functions are pushed closer to the end user. Even measuring consumer satisfaction has changed since the analogue TV days – instead of calling in complaints, consumers go straight to social media or simply walk away silently.

Meanwhile, content providers’ resources are more strained than ever before. More investment is made in front-end content creation, new technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and social media integrations than in delivery considerations. Even non-content projects such as IP studio buildouts and workflow virtualisation are competing for scarce resources.

To combat resource shortages, some media companies outsource major workflow functions such as mastering control operations to third parties, which raises new problems to contend with in managing the end-to-end content chain.

**Analysing content delivery**

The traditional approach to monitoring content delivery has been a top-down approach. This process evolved from supporting a linear broadcast model, was deployed when purpose-built hardware was popular, and was mainly focused on infrastructure health. This legacy model for monitoring has a number of deficiencies when applied to today’s modern media delivery challenges, including limited visibility (blind spots), inability to reach out to the last mile or end user and limited-depth (quality of service – QoS – only, not quality of experience). With respect to customer impact, it can also only report mean estimations, not data about individuals.

This top-down hierarchical tree approach follows the distribution and delivery network itself, but falls apart if the network isn’t fully managed end-to-end. The new IP-based, non-linear, one-to-one model for monitoring must embrace a completely new interactive paradigm shift. It should start with a bottom-up approach, beginning with the end user and working up to the headend or origination point. Broadband delivery offers an affordable loop-back channel to aggregate quality and behaviour statistics from every subscriber. Cost-effective software agents can sit on set-top boxes or in apps that present the media to the end user, and capture stream quality and user interaction data. This data set is large, fast-moving and uncontrolled as users come...
and go for various reasons, but can be analysed together with controlled last-mile data, consumer device info, link health, stream quality, problem reports, customer experience management (CEM), user feedback and a variety of other data sets to extract a holistic view.

Once multi-layer, last-mile and end-user monitoring and analysis are in place, instead of seeing demographics, genders and households, providers will start seeing individuals emerge. Where does big data fit? This new approach to delivery and consumption analysis allows precise measuring of quality characteristics on a per-user basis in real time, instead of traditional mean user quality metrics based on large network segments representing a huge population. This is very important today, as individuals can make enough noise on social media to affect companies. The goal now is to make everyone happy, not just the majority. Interactivity introduces a user-centric view where data flows from subscriber end-points towards the monitoring centre, where it is enriched, validated or otherwise explained by other data sets. Finally, we see the consumption preferences, quality metrics and behaviour habits as users react, interact and engage with the content. By performing these analyses in real time with the ability to focus on specific customers, immediate action can be taken whenever problems occur.

Big data technology empowers analysis like never before, making it possible to augment, blend, enrich, exclude, filter and associate data across endless data pools, lakes and oceans. This enables us to search, trend, visualise, automate, recommend, alert, predict and prevent at enormous scale.

Four common goals of big data in the media and entertainment industry are to reduce abandonment, increase engagement, improve repeat viewership and protect brands. Knowing the quality of service (QoS) and quality of experience (QoE) in a controlled manner is foundational for measuring any of the other attributes of the end-user experience. Before audience measurement makes any sense at all, we need to know if the audience is actually receiving a high-quality content experience as it was intended to be consumed.

Big data is the solution most often required to correlate with uncontrolled data from end-user probes. As power in the media landscape has shifted to end users and content quality has taken a back seat to quantity, content is king and it will only apply again when big data says it does. Until then, the emperor has no clothes.

With the advent of big data, media companies can now understand why customers subscribe and unsubscribe, what kind of programmes they like and dislike, when they like to watch certain content, and their tolerance for poor audio and video quality. Supplemented big data with data augmentation mitigates the risk of poor data, empowered by a new bottom-up approach to monitoring end-to-end media path, as controlled data collection sources to correlate with uncontrolled data from end-user probes. 

Programme error chart

- Video buffering: 84%
- Audio out of sync: 69%
- Blurry/pixelation: 49%
- Slow start/ stops mid-play: 32%
- Hand waving latency: 26%
- Other: 3%

Ted Korte is CDO at Qligent.
Live OTT with undetectable latency disrupts traditional consumption of content and opens new possibilities for advertisers and content owners.

Divyesh Mahajan, CEO of Swoo speaks to BroadcastPro ME about engineering such a live online platform and gaining critical traction with audiences across MENA and India.

In the MENA region’s fragmented SVOD and OTT landscape, content alone is not king. Exclusive content, preferably in Arabic, would rule, but at under $10 per subscription, OTT revenue models are at best precarious. Divyesh Mahajan, CEO of Swoo, decided to go one step further than just provide Swoo, a platform for content creators. With the Swoo Trivia Show, he has stepped into the technically challenging arena of live online streaming ... with live audience interaction.

An anchor takes the viewers who have tuned in to the Swoo Trivia Show MENA on the Swoo app through a rapid-fire quiz on topics ranging from the FIFA World Cup to general knowledge-related questions. Participants are given 10 seconds to lock in their responses. Those who successfully tackle the 10 rounds of questions are eligible to share the prize money.

With a growing viewership for each episode of the MENA edition of the trivia show, there is clearly an audience for the live online format. Why did you choose to focus on the live format?

We have always aspired to operate in that intersection between traditional TV and the element of live interaction that the online space offers. I have always related to how TV works. There was a time in the 2000s that we would watch TV series at a particular time, and if you missed the show, that was that. There is, of course, a unique set of challenges with a live online audience, but we have been able to gain traction both in India and Egypt.

There is an operational aspect to producing the show, apart from the technological challenges. For instance, the parts of MENA and India – and encourage them to participate in the Swoo Trivia Show to earn money. It was only in November last year that we launched the platform. During this time, we have seen around six million downloads.

You have maintained what you describe as a "narrow laser focus on the live format". What is the Swoo Trivia Show?

The Swoo Trivia show is a live video streaming game hosted at a specified, pre-defined time with 10 multiple choice questions. Online participants have to answer each question in 10 seconds. Prize money worth thousands is awarded to the winning participants, redeemable through money wallet apps like Paytm and PayPal.

Mahajan outlines the unique set of challenges around catering to a live, online audience with real-time, two-way interactivity, but he says the newly-launched platform has been able to gain traction both in India and Egypt.

Mahajan is looking to disrupt the way social media and broadcasts are put together currently.

Divyesh Mahajan, Chief Executive Officer, Swoo.
host needs to know what the next question is; someone needs to fire that question. There is an element of coordination between multiple parties and that question lasts on the user’s stream for 10 seconds. In that span of time, responses are gathered, the host gets the summary in real-time and communicates the same to the participants in terms of how many got the question wrong, etc. All these elements have to come together with minimal latency.

Traditional OTT platforms typically adapt to each user’s connection by creating variable delay, ranging from seconds to minutes. While that should not pose an issue for watching one’s favourite serial on VOD, live content streaming cannot endure delays. What were the technical challenges in setting up the live streaming platform? Sending a live feed from one mobile to another is a complicated engineering feat, and on top of that a business model has to be created. The synchronised live OTT format that the Swoo Trivia show is complete with interaction from the audience, demands considerable technical work. Given that we do not have too much control over infrastructure in India and Egypt, we had to figure out ways to send out data packets in a timely manner and maintain user experience despite losses in the data packets.

“[For the live online format], we had to figure out ways to send out data packets in a timely manner and maintain user experience despite losses in the data packets”
Divyesh Mahajan, Chief Executive Officer, Swoo

Working with proprietary engineering solutions, we needed to get the OTT video platform delivering frame-accurate video and audio synchronisation across any device. There is no fixed recipe that works. Egypt has a different infrastructure than India. Also, from Egypt we are telecasting to the GCC including Algeria and Morocco. A 100% solution does not exist, but there can be a 100% management of challenges. We have done a lot of work in the open-source space, which forms the basis of what we want to build, refine and present as a go-to-market strategy.

We have relied on software to navigate through the challenges.

With an OTT market looking for differentiation, it is easy to see the commercial appeal of a live platform such as Swoo Trivia. Will you be monetising the platform soon?

Commercial engagement is in our roadmap. Given that our trivia formats attract a certain income demographic, we believe brands would find it appealing and monetisation will follow naturally. However, at present, our focus is on building all-important traction to attract regular participants. Eventually, we will look to have different monetisation strategies like social gifting, e-commerce, advertisements and product placement, among other options. Apart from the live format, the Swoo platform hosts more than 100 broadcasters across the MENA region. What are your plans going forward?

Typically, our content creators in MENA come from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Algeria, among other countries. Going forward, we will be creating formats to allow our content creators, such as doctors and other experts, to interact privately with their clients with an element of monetisation and moderation built into it.

The engineering behind the Swoo platform explained
Mahajan explains: “Swoo is a live streaming app with unique features such as broadcasting a conference (with multiple broadcasters). The user can watch, interact and comment on both live and recorded videos.

“The Swoo app is available on both Android and iOS platforms. We use highly scalable, low latency CDN servers to provide the best live experience.

“We follow MVM architecture on both Android and iOS. We also follow the latest Google and Apple guidelines for writing any new modules (such as using Kotlin and Swift).

“Swoo also hosts multiple live games that require highly scalable and efficient systems to manage thousands of simultaneous players. Our backend tech stack is mainly in JAVA and we follow micro-service architecture.”
The events at ConnecTechAsia 2018 created a whirlwind of innovative ideas and technologies that drew more than 40,000 attendees from 96 countries and regions. The exhibition floor and accompanying summit held at Marina Bay Sands and Suntec Singapore. The exhibition floor saw more than 900 product launches and several Asia-specific launches.

Vice President & APAC Sales, Grass Valley, Somu Patil, said: “The conferences are among the many platforms we created for the industry to share their knowhow and expertise and make the show experience more meaningful for both the exhibitors and visitors alike.”

The conferences at BroadcastAsia addressed a slew of relevant issues – 4K/HD, OTT, monetisation on different platforms, live streaming and AI in broadcasting, among other topical themes. Among the unique panel discussions was one dedicated to women in broadcasting as they negotiated the glass ceiling in the industry. Among the conversations we had with exhibitions, Somu Patil, VP, APAC Sales for Grass Valley, highlighted the expanding opportunities in the region.

“We see a lot of growth potential in the APAC region, with a number of greenfield projects where deploying newer technologies is facilitated. We see major trends in 4K and HDR in countries such as China, Malaysia and Australia, among others, where there is need to decode the video and re-encode afterwards. This solution therefore can’t just deploy in an OTT distribution model.”

It was evident that exhibitors had brought enough wow factor to remind us that ultimately the industry is about creating engaging content. Apart from fair bartending and dazzling sets at the Panasonic, Sony and Blackmagic stands, the 3D visuals floating in mid-air at the Kino-mo stand were a case in point. Fresh from signing contracts with end-users in Vietnam, Vadim Tsitou, Partner for Asia for Kino-mo’s HyperSyn solution, explained how the hologram-like images are useful for the broadcast industry beyond the obvious appeal to the retail industry. He said: “This device can be used everywhere and can be connected via the internet with a special cloud-based platform and you can broadcast remotely.”

Underpinning the convergence of the telecoms, media and technology (TMT) industries in an evolving business landscape, Victor Wing, Event Director for ConnecTechAsia, UBM, said: “We are pleased to hold the first edition of ConnecTechAsia, which has a renewed format for a more immersive experience with insightful sessions and displays for our attendees that reflect the latest industry trends and technologies.”

The busy exhibition floor saw more than 900 product launches and several Asia-specific launches.
to use AI to reduce the time taken to analyse and sort social media news content, giving newsrooms faster access to the very latest in user-generated videos.

Just as we were wrapping our heads around artificial intelligence detecting a fire in Mumbai or a crowd gathering in Poland, as they trended on social media, the team at Prague-based Suitest reminded us of the importance of customer experience. Co-founder and CEO Mirko Nedeljkovic explained how his solutions run automated end-to-end test scenarios for OTT platforms on a smart TV, Android TV, Apple TV, set-top box or Xbox One.

He said: “For broadcasters, testing is important because there are many manufacturers of devices and applications that are based on the HbbTV protocol, don’t behave the same on each device. So it is important to test each OTT application on every device in the market. Mere simulation is not good enough – you need to have test results from real devices.”

By all accounts, BroadcastAsia 2018 did a commendable job encapsulating the evolving broadcast and production industries with the emergence of technologies such as OTT platforms, live production, UHD content, and the latest cinematography and film production equipment, including 4K and 8K cameras from exhibitors such as ARRI, Canon, Panasonic, RED and Sony.

The event saw sessions from industry leaders such as Netflix, BBC, MediaCorp, Ooyala and ZengaTV, who discussed the role of social media and new technologies such as blockchain and how AI is reddefining business models. The event also staged the first-ever live esports tournament – the Southeast Asian League (SEAL) – at the esports Arena Studio. Another new feature area was Radio’s New Wave, which highlighted the future of radio broadcasting and discussed the shifts in audience behaviour due to streaming services such as Spotify and Amazon.

It was clearly exciting to see a vibrant APAC market at the event. Organisers at ConnectTechAsia managed to present effectively, on multiple platforms, the intersections between technology, media and telecommunications.

“The Middle East is a promising market and we believe there is an expanding market for our network management systems that is designed to work as part of a 24/7 network operating centre”  
Lee Chia Chu, Channels Director, Caton Technology

“Both monetisation and engagement are difficult to achieve in a crowded OTT marketplace and as solution providers, we offer plug-and-play solutions to media owners, telcos, ISPs and others”  
Venugopal Iyerang, COO, Apalaya Technologies Private Limited

“It is key to test, in real-time, OTT platforms on every device. There needs to be end-to-end, user interface testing of TV apps across current platforms. Just simulation is not good enough”  
Mirko Nedeljkovic, Co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer, Suitest

While new technology is liberating TV from its past constraints, voice, AI and data need to enable better user experiences, says Fabian Birgfeld of W12 Studios, a keynote speaker at the BroadcastAsia 2018 conference.

The world of TV today is full of sweeping statements. TV is dead. Technology complicates things. Easy is good. EPG is bad. The best user interface is no interface. Content is king. The list is endless. These declarations come when new technology is liberating TV from its past constraints. How do we ensure this translates into a better user experience?

TV has come a long way since the days when you just had to turn it on, flip through a few channels and watch the best show that’s on. OTT has changed the dynamics of entertainment. Small increments ensure that the TV experience can be personalised to audience tastes. But TV has lost some of its ease and simplicity.

Compiling this big screen is at the mercy of a remote control with more buttons and more features than ever before. Let’s face it, a remote control is not a natural way to interact with technology.

A few telling research trends predict that by 2020, 50% of all web searches will be done with voice (according to comScore) and 20% of user interactions will take place via intelligent personal assistants (according to Forrester). Most significantly, customer experience will become the key brand differentiator.

Customers increasingly expect technology to simplify everything the user is trying to watch. AI and data can add value above and beyond the consumption of content in order to stay relevant. Very few succeeded at both, no matter how hard they try, unless they have the scale of Netflix, Hulu or Amazon Prime.

In any eventuality, we have already entered the golden age of TV, with better content than ever before. Now we must add great technology into the mix, and TV can truly be great, in the comfort of the living room or on the go.”
IBC 2018: A CATALYST FOR INNOVATION

With profound shifts in consumer behaviour, IBC 2018 presents new opportunities across the value chain, with thought leaders offering their insights on how to thrive in the face of disruption. For our preview, we begin with innovations on the exhibition floor, which in 2017 attracted more than 57,000 attendees from 170 countries.

Crystal Vision will demonstrate its flexible IP platform, the Marble-V1 media processor hardware and the initial six software apps which run on it. These apps are IP gateways between sDI and sMPtE 2022 or 2110, and IP to IP translators for making adjustments to IP flows – including protocol conversion between s2022 and s2110. Among the full range of modular sDI interface Crystal flexes platform with IP and keying.

Software development consultancy Blue Lucy is launching a new version of the Blam at this year’s IBC, with a redesigned UI, new API, and an upgrade to the Adobe Premiere plug-in. The Blam is a media and operations management toolset which provides asset and workflow management from a scalable cloud-native platform. Blue Lucy will launch the new Blam asset and workflow management software with a significant upgrade of the Blam Adobe Premiere plug-in designed to reduce mundane administrative overhead in edit and streamline the creative.

Rohde & Schwarz will showcase the latest advances in scalable storage, satellite amplifiers and transmitters at IBC 2018, and launch a next-generation storage product – an extension to its shared storage solutions for collaborative media production networks. Also making its debut at IBC is a new transmitter product, R&S TMV3s, an air-cooled transmitter for UHF applications. Also new at IBC, Rohde & Schwarz will further extend its R&S PKU100 family of satellite uplink amplifiers with the addition of its first outdoor satellite variant. It is the first on the market to combine the best of two worlds, the company claims, taking solid-state amplifiers to the next level by incorporating adaptive predistortion and the advantages of tube amplifiers such as compactness, light weight and high efficiency.

Cloud PVR from Broadpeak will be a key highlight at IBC 2018, following what the company calls a record year of deployments worldwide, including with several tier-1 operators. Providing operators with a simple, scalable and flexible solution for delivering time-shifted TV services, Broadpeak’s solution reportedly enables subscribers to launch multiple recordings on various channels simultaneously without any constraint on available bandwidth or number of tuners on the reception device.

With Cloud PVR, service providers can deliver start-over and catch-up TV as well as innovative recording using a shared or private copy model. The recorded content can be processed on the fly to be viewed on any device type, the release stated. At IBC 2018, Broadpeak will demonstrate its solutions for not only cable, telecom and satellite operators, but also for content providers, including a CDN for managed networks and OTT distribution, origin packager, ad insertion and video delivery analytics.


More Blam with Blue Lucy

Stand 7.D43
Facilis fast tracks file system advancements

Facilis, a supplier of shared storage solutions for collaborative media production networks, will demonstrate Version 7.1 features and FastTracker 2.5 for the first time in Europe.

The latest release of the Facilis Shared File System builds on version 7.0, which includes an all-new web console interface and shared file system enhancements. Version 7.1 includes additional features that will help with the administration of large and small environments alike, the release stated.

With Facilis FastTracker 2.5, users can design custom ingest-to-archive workflows to LFSS and disk-based back-up. The new Facilis Hub Server will also be on display.

Stand 1.C16

Barnfind to unveil ‘game-changing’ frame

Barnfind Technologies has revealed plans to show what it calls a ‘game-changing’ frame at IBC that incorporates future-proof technology to support all emerging signal formats, including 4K and IP, and adds a long-distance component to its multi-functional, signal-neutral fibre transport platform. The new BTFI-43 features a network of functions and the capability to reportedly transport any signal format, making it suitable for a variety of applications including sports, telemedicine and government projects.

The BTFI-43 will be shown alongside enhanced versions of Barnfind’s core BarnOne and BarnMini families that reportedly offer more control options, enhanced functionality and improved configuration capabilities.

Stand 8.A41

Back to the future with Shotoku’s manual tripod

Shotoku Broadcast Systems brings a new manual tripod series to IBC 2018 – the SD and SE ranges. The SD range has been developed to provide a quality, affordable system for handheld cameras. Available in two variants, the SD20 will support 3kg and the SD40 5kg cameras.

The SE range has evolved from a concept of providing support with high functionality and wide-ranging applications for the extended range of camera systems now available. Other products include SmartPod, a fully robotic pedestal, SmartRail, Shotoku’s rail-based system, an upgraded TR-XT remote camera control system with an enhanced external control automation interface (ECI), and a free-d2 absolute tracking system.

Stand 12.E42

Cobalt Digital to demo advanced processors

At IBC 2018, Cobalt will showcase the 9900-UXE-4K, its latest generation of advanced image and audio processors for the openGear platform. The base card provides 30-SDI and 120-SDI I/O with SDI muxing and demuxing and up/down/cross-conversion. Options include RGB colour correction and SDR-to-HDR up-mapping via Technicolor’s HDR Intelligent Tone Management (ITM) processing. Also on display will be Cobalt’s new 9971-MVIB-4K, a series of openGear multiviewers, which support the latest signal types with a high-density modular design that can be expanded as required. The MVIB is equipped with 16 6K 120-SDI auto-detect inputs, which can be scaled across a full 3840x2160 UHD raster output. IBC 2018 will also be the stage for Cobalt’s new 9922-ENC-4K, HEVC H.265 streaming encoder for openGear.

Stand 10.B44

New “Smart Connectivity and Multiplay Devices” track to provide a platform for dialogue between telecoms providers, media players and the OTT sector.

The inaugural Global Gamechangers stage will host the thought leaders in business, digital, creative, transformation and news, all future-facing talent, from around the world.

Don’t MISS!

The new Dionic XT line of batteries will be shown in Europe for the first time at IBC2018. Dionic XT is the newest generation of Anton/Bauer’s Dionic battery series for broadcast and 14.4V cinema applications.

Available in two models – the Dionic XT and the Dionic XT150 – the Dionic series features ABS and rubber construction that cushions and protects the battery.

Stand 12.E45

Slomo.tv ready to play ball with videoReferee

Slomo.tv will introduce an integrated video assistant referee (VAR) system based on the latest generation of its videoReferee PC. The system, which has been used for many years across sports such as ice hockey, basketball and handball, has been adapted to accommodate football’s recently introduced obligatory FIFA requirements. Designated videoReferee “FC, the compact 4U video server records up to 26 HD/HD channels and has four graphics outputs. It has a separate multi-viewer for all channels capable of displaying live and delayed video. Video inputs can be displayed from a single camera, in quad view (four cameras) or multi-viewer format for off-side situations.

Stand 8.B40

TVU’s AI-driven platform to redefine workflows

Live IP video solutions provider TVU Networks will showcase the AI-driven TVU MediaMind Platform, which the company claims will potentially change how content is produced and consumed.

The core of the MediaMind Platform is TVU’s metadata-driven workflow engine. Combining real-time speech, object and face recognition with TVU’s real-time search engine, users are able to find the video assets most relevant to the story they are covering. The TVU IBC stand will also demonstrate how to stream and monetise video through its video marketplace, TVU Grid.

Stand 2.B28

Anton/Bauer charged for IBC with Dionic series

The new Dionic XT line of batteries will be shown in Europe for the first time at IBC2018. Dionic XT is the newest generation of Anton/Bauer’s Dionic battery series for broadcast and 14.4V cinema applications.

Available in two models – the Dionic XT and the Dionic XT150 – the Dionic series features ABS and rubber construction that cushions and protects the battery.

Stand 12.E45

Don’t MISS!
There has been a huge reduction in the amount of ultra-high frequency (UHF) spectrum available to production companies and broadcasters for all the wireless equipment they use, in an age when more and more production equipment, such as cameras, DMCs, comms and IEMs, is becoming wireless. We will soon reach a tipping point, and regional regulators have been quick to observe and react to this.

The journey so far

In 2009, we were providing wireless products in frequency ranges that included 700MHz, 800MHz and sometimes 900MHz, driven by the demands of our customers and without much scrutiny from regulators in the region. Then, in late 2011, we became aware of a drive by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in the UAE towards more comprehensive compliance on the import of short-range devices (SRDs) in the UHF spectrum.

The new policy includes a check and certification by the TRA to ensure that wireless equipment follows the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in the UAE towards more comprehensive compliance on the import of short-range devices (SRDs) in the UHF spectrum. The new policy includes a check and certification by the TRA to ensure that wireless equipment follows the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in the UAE towards more comprehensive compliance on the import of short-range devices (SRDs) in the UHF spectrum.

Ensuring compliance and safeguarding investments

The TRA decided to be an early adopter of the changes being planned by ITU and only allow manufacturers to bring wireless equipment in the 470-690MHz range into the UAE, with most other GCC countries following suit. This has prompted vendors to explore different methods and areas of the spectrum to transport signals wirelessly, such as more efficient usage of available bandwidth and manufacture of products that operate in the 1.9GHz range – an area of the spectrum where the ITU has already established guidelines that are unlikely to change. Perhaps most importantly, manufacturers have needed to start type-approving their wireless equipment to ensure that their partners can get stock into the UAE, and other Middle East countries that will undoubtedly implement similar policies, without having to go through the process themselves. This not only affords manufacturers the ability to sell the equipment in the region, but also safeguards the many production companies that carry out cross-border projects in the region.

While these new type-approved technologies come at a cost that is worked into the price of the solutions, rental organisations are likely to face far greater financial overheads if they invest in equipment that cannot operate at permitted frequencies, as they could potentially be left with systems that simply cannot be used in the region. It is therefore critical to safeguard investments by ensuring the equipment purchased has the necessary type approvals.

The introduction of the PMSE category by the ITU and the TRA will no doubt afford some kind of protection, or at least a voice, to those of us who still need to manufacture and operate wireless equipment for production. This will only remain the case if all of us engage in the licensing process and use the facilities offered by the regulators.

Ryan Burr is Head of Technical Sales & Application Engineering, System Solutions at Sennheiser Middle East.

“Offering an elegant, intuitive user interface.

The programme-making and special events’ category by the ITU and the TRA will... [offer] a voice to those who manufacture and operate wireless equipment.”

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