ASBU BroadcastPro Awards celebrates the MENA’s best of the best
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1. HE Sameera Rajab with the winners
2. Dr. Raed Khusheim, Khulud Abu-Homos and George Kordahi
3. Jamal Khashoggi
4. Fadi Izzaldin
5. Eiad Al Najjar
6. Nick Grande
7. Peter Nothen
8. Ibrahim Al-Rowaitie and Samir Assiri
9. Moustapha Bekheet
10. Rizwan Qureshi
11. Ali Abu Khamra
12. Hamad Abdelrazaq
13. Lisa Robinson and Paulo Ferreira
14. Dominic Baillie
15. Ashraf Badriya
ENTERTAINMENT on demand

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Welcome

On November 11, at the ASBU BroadcastPro ME Summit, our keynote speaker Her Excellency Sameera Ebrahim bin Rajab, Minister of State for Information Affairs and the Official Spokesperson for the government of Bahrain, brought an important issue to light. Her sentiments were echoed a week later by Queen Rania of Jordan at the Abu Dhabi Media Summit. Both women expressed concern about how Arabs were being perceived across the world, thanks to outfits like ISIS.

“The perception of Arabs as terrorists, reactionaries and savages has never been more rampant,” HE Sameera Rajab stated in her speech. Queen Rania seconded that in her own speech when she declared how “a minority of religious extremists” was “using social media to rewrite our narrative … hijack our identity and relabel us.”

“The rich and ancient cultures of 22 countries … the cosmopolitan character of over 350 million people … the diverse heritage of these historic lands … Islam, a religion of peace, tolerance and mercy … the heritage of these historic lands … the cosmopolitan character …”

Wherein lies the solution?

While Queen Rania called for education to fight this, the rallying call from HE Sameera Rajab to the MENA broadcast community was to use the most powerful medium they had in their hands – television.

“It is true that television productions are associated with market conditions, yet we should not forget that TV programmes have a role in social life, one which should not be overlooked in the service of market needs … operators [and] producers must not forget that … TV programmes … influence public opinion.”

The ASBU BroadcastPro ME summit served as a platform for influential government entities this time to remind broadcasters about their social responsibility, even as they debated the technical and commercial aspects of television in the Middle East. We bring you the details inside.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director

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On this month’s cover…

Celebrating innovation at the ASBU BroadcastPro ME Summit and Awards.

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The new Blackmagic Studio Camera 4K includes built in optical fiber, talkback, tally and massive 10” viewfinder!

The Blackmagic Studio Camera 4K is the world’s most advanced broadcast camera for live, multi camera production in both HD or Ultra HD 60p. It features an incredibly tough, lightweight machined magnesium design with a massive 10” viewfinder, 4 hour battery, tally indicators, phantom powered microphone ports and built in optical fiber and SDI connections. That’s a fully self contained, broadcast grade, live camera solution!

**Full Size HD Viewfinder**

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**Optical Fiber and 12G-SDI Connections**

Connect Blackmagic Studio Camera 4K to your live production switcher with optical fiber cables for massive long distance! Also includes BNC SDI connections for advanced 12G-SDI so you can connect to HD-SDI, 6G-SDI or 12G-SDI equipment for HD and native 4K production up to 2160p60. The video connections are bi-directional and carry video plus full talkback, tally, audio and camera color control.

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The Blackmagic Studio Camera 4K features built in talkback using general aviation headsets, so you get better noise canceling and comfort all at a much lower cost! You also get built in tally lights that illuminate automatically when your camera is live so your cast and crew can easily see which cameras are on air! Talkback and tally signals are embedded in the return video connection to the camera, so you don’t have to run separate cables!

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Selevision and Arabsat formalise partnership at ASBU BroadcastPro Awards

Two stalwarts in the Arab broadcast industry formalised their partnership at the ASBU BroadcastPro Awards on November 11, 2014.

Dr Raed Khunshim, CEO of Selevision, and Mohamed Karim Mahmoud from Arabsat shook hands at the event and formally announced the launch of the region’s first Hybrid TV service.

With this partnership, Selevision and Arabsat will deliver the first Hybrid Broadcast Broadband TV (HbbTV) service to the MENA region. This new service will be provided to Arabsat’s customer base from three different locations: Jordan Media City, Du in the UAE and Overon in Spain. The Arabsat service will be complemented by Selevision’s OTT platform and its content library.

The service will be available to viewers on all HbbTV compatible set-top boxes in the market. The two companies are also launching the first HbbTV channel in the region as a pilot to present the concept to Arabsat’s customer base.

BSA completes radio projects in Libya

UAE-based Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA) has completed the installation of a 3.5kw FM transmitter on a 120m tower for Al Jabal Radio in eastern Libya, BroadcastPro ME can reveal.

The company also recently completed an installation for another Libyan radio station, Alwasat Radio. The project involved the installation of 3.5kw transmitters in radio transmission sites in Benghazi, Albayda and Tubruk.

Muhammad Irfan Gondal, CEO at BSA, also revealed to us that BSA has established an office in Gaziantep, Turkey to handle additional projects.

Lebanon’s Alfa Telecom selects Argela ITV platform

Orascom Telecom-managed Lebanese mobile network Alfa has launched its mobile TV service, powered by Argela ITV platform. The service will enable Alfa’s data customers to watch TV and movies on various devices through Alfa’s 3G and 4G networks or through Wi-Fi. The service provides the subscribers with the ability to watch live TV channels and video on demand (VOD) content on their tablets and smartphones.

Alfa Mobile TV covers content including sports, movies, news, music and entertainment for kids from a host of broadcasters.

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IN FIGURES

37.2%

Expected ad spend by advertisers on digital platforms by 2018. The total ad spend is estimated to increase from 28.2% in 2013 to 37.2% by 2018. Source: eMarketer
Saudi minister axed after TV channel closure

Saudi Arabia’s Culture and Information Minister, Abdul Aziz Khoja, was removed from his post following controversy over Wesal, an Islamist television channel. However, no link between the two developments has been confirmed officially. The order by King Abdullah said that Khoja was removed upon his request.

Khoja ordered the closing of Wesal channel, which was accused of inciting sectarian hatred.

“I gave orders to shut down the office of Wesal in Riyadh and to ban any broadcasting of the channel from Saudi Arabia. The channel is not Saudi in the first place,” he said.

Khoja’s duties have been taken over by the Haj Minister, Bandar Bin Mohammad Hamza, who will continue to keep his current post, Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Culture is considering shutting down several satellite TV channels that broadcast programmes deemed hostile to the government and the people of the Kingdom, a ministry source revealed.

Oman TV expands MAM with Tedial

Oman TV, the national broadcaster of the Sultanate of Oman, has expanded its MAM facility with Tedial. The expansion at the broadcaster’s HD digital studio facility has enabled the launch of its new channel, Oman TV Live, with the addition of increased storage and MAM client licences. The new contract also includes a 12-month service level agreement with an upgrade to the latest version of Tedial’s Tamys MAM system.

The TV station broadcasts three HD channels: Oman TV General, Oman TV Sport and Oman TV Live.

The new expansion also increases the speed at which content ingested into the Avid production workflow can be broadcast, significantly improving productivity and efficiency. Now, operators can select content that hasn’t previously been archived, for fast-turnaround playout. The process includes editing, compliance censorship, automatic QC, segmentation, subtitling, validation and archiving. The operator can also decide if content needs to go through the validation process or if it can be bypassed via the shortcut workflow, for immediate playout.

Tedial’s MAM technology forms the heart of Oman TV’s digital production facility, which launched three years ago, providing the country’s first HD studios.

CNBC Arabia launches news-based game show with Youtoo Technologies

CNBC Arabia has partnered with Youtoo Technologies ME to offer multiple interactive services for its audience. The broadcaster expects to launch a number of knowledge-based interactive services and game shows in the months ahead to engage with its audience. This partnership will launch its first interactive game show, targeting millions of viewers, and open the channel for interactivity between the broadcaster and the audience.

The knowledge-based game show, claimed to be the first in the region, enables the audience to respond to questions based on selected news headlines on the broadcaster’s website. This show empowers viewers to give their opinions and choose from various options on the selected news items, to win points. CNBC Arabia dubs it as a new way of rewarding a loyal audience.

Oman TV headquarters in Muscat.
DIFF 2014 to showcase promising Gulf projects

This year, DIFF will open on December 10 with The Theory of Everything – the Stephen Hawking biopic from Academy Award winning director James Marsh. Hollywood musical Into the Woods will close the curtain on the 11th edition of the Festival. The film blends classic stories from Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk and Rapunzel.

A total of 118 features, film shorts and documentaries are set to be screened over eight days at this year’s edition, including 55 world and international premieres from 46 countries in 34 languages. These cinematic works of art have been created by both established and upcoming directors and producers. At the opening ceremony, DIFF will present its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award to prominent Egyptian actor Nour El-Sherif, for his work on more than 100 films in a career that has spanned almost five decades.

Abdulahmed Juma, Chairman of DIFF, said: "DIFF has come so far in the past 11 years, introducing new audiences to Arab cinema, fostering talent and welcoming the industry’s greatest directors, producers, writers and actors. I am proud to say that DIFF has contributed to putting the region’s film industry on the global map.”

Samir Al Marzooqi, Dubai Film Market Manager, added: “I’m looking forward to meeting our guests, who are set to visit DIFF and see the significant steps taken in the UAE’s film industry for themselves.”

DIFF’s Make Feature competition jury will be headed by producer and director Lee Daniels.

Local content to drive MENA media growth: ADMS study

Un tapped demand for local, Arabic content will spur rapid regional media growth over the next five years, according to a new study unveiled at the Abu Dhabi Media Summit this year. The joint study undertaken by management consultancy Strategy& and Media Zone Authority Abu Dhabi, twofour54, also found that accelerated adoption of mobile technology, evolving in paid and digital media and a new wave of unique youth-produced content will be key factors in driving media growth in the region.

Noura Al Kaabi, CEO of Media Zone Authority Abu Dhabi, twofour54, said: “The MENA media market’s evolution is encouraging regional players to reorient their business models and explore investments in high-quality local content.”

ADMS 2014 calls for a fully connected world

Noura Al Kaabi, Chief Executive Officer, twofour54, wrapped up the 2014 edition of the Abu Dhabi Media Summit by telling delegates that with seven billion connected individuals forecast by 2020, the media and e-commerce industry may soon be managers of the world’s largest and most relevant “mall”.

The three-day summit was opened by Queen Rania of Jordan on November 18 and hosted regional and international speakers in a diverse mix of sessions. Bringing together international top-tier media players with their regional counterparts, the ADMS 2014 programme featured a series of high-profile conversations and interviews that mulled over the content, distribution and financing of media. Abu Dhabi’s emergence as a global media hub also figured prominently against the backdrop of the impact of recent trends on the media industry in the region.

Former Abu Dhabi Media head dies in car crash

Mohammed Khalaf Al Mazrouei, a noted cultural figure and former Chairman of Abu Dhabi Media, passed away after a car crash. Al Mazrouei served as Director General of the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Media. The Authority launched two of the most successful TV poetry programmes in the Arab world. It also launched the Abu Dhabi Film Festival, New York-Abu Dhabi Film Academy, Eastern Melodies Film Festival and the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, Klimal for Translation Project.

The UAE Journalists Association released a statement on Wam to mourn Al Mazrouei’s passing, saying that the UAE has lost a national symbol. The New York Film Academy also paid its respects to Al Mazrouei.

OSN Pehla adds three South Asian channels

OSN has added three niche channels to its roster of South Asian channels. OSN Pehla will now carry Sony Mix, Dunya and Masala TV. Dunya News and Masala TV will be exclusive to OSN in two months. This addition makes OSN Pehla one of the largest aggregators of South Asian content in MENA, with 36 channels.

Dubai producer releases documentary in Hollywood

All You Need is Love, a documentary focusing on the loves and dreams of the children of Good Morning School in the district of Mae Sot, Thailand, was recently released in Hollywood by Dubai-based Portfolio Films. Produced by Stuart Cameron and Muddy Erzah Ortega, executive produced by Suzy Amis Cameron, Patrick Dunn and Stu Higton of Octopus Advertising in Dubai, the film was shot over a period of 15 months at the Burma-Thailand border.

Commenting on the project, the film’s director, Stuart Cameron, said: “We are traditional documentary filmmakers and it was critical that our distributors understood our approach and shared our passion for the project. There is a hunger for such films in Los Angeles, which is why we chose a Hollywood release for the film.”

Shot on a Canon Mk 5D, the film is a 78-minute feature-length documentary and was edited in the UK. All promotional material and trailers for the film were created in Dubai by Octopus Advertising.

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New dates

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New legal firm to provide advice on media matters

Cameron Crawford, who served as Senior Legal Counsel for Twofour54, has now set up Indigo Media, a legal and business consulting firm at Twofour54, Abu Dhabi. The law firm will provide legal advice to clients in the media and entertainment sectors, with a special focus on adding commercial solutions based on detailed knowledge of the media and entertainment sectors, both globally and regionally. The firm also specialises in advising media clients on licensing.

NMK hosts series of seminars across the Gulf

Nicolas Kyeremtia, Electronics Enterprises (NMK) successfully launched two roadshows in Doha and Muscat last month. Brands that were featured as part of the roadshow included HK Audio, Shure, Roland, Neutrik and Clear-Com.

The roadshow, which took place in Doha on November 10 and in Muscat on November 18 attracted a broad spectrum of attendees, from systems integrators to end users. More than 80 people were present at the morning and afternoon sessions, the distributor claimed.

NMK product specialists teamed up with the manufacturer’s representatives to deliver comprehensive presentations and product demonstrations.

Yahoo acquires BrightRoll to boost online video business

Yahoo has acquired video-advertising company BrightRoll for $640 million in cash. The buyout is expected to help Yahoo win back ad revenue from rivals Google and Facebook.

The deal will enable the online giant to combine its premium desktop and mobile video advertising inventory with BrightRoll’s programmatic video platform and publisher relationships. Earlier this year, Yahoo sold shares worth $9bn to Chinese e-commerce firm Alibaba.

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.

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BroadcastAsia2015 unveils new TV Everywhere! zone

BroadcastAsia2015, slated for June 2-5, 2015, will unveil its new TV Everywhere! zone as increasing consumer expectations place new challenges on the industry to provide convenient and reliable access to content. With the proliferation of digital devices and today’s ever-changing market of always-on connectivity, content broadcasters are starting to look beyond TV to stream and monetise their content.

The new zone will explore the entire value chain of non-linear broadcasting.

The newly-opened MGI Training Academy in Dubai Studio City hosted the ‘Cisco Networking Bootcamp for Broadcast’ from November 16-20, 2014. The course was tailor-made to bridge the gap between IT and broadcast. The objective of the course was to provide attendees with the basic skills required to design and build networks in a modern broadcast/media environment. While 60% of the course was aligned to the CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate) certification, the remaining 40% was altered to make it more relevant to broadcast project engineers.

Jim White, Solutions Architect at MGI, conducted the course, which ran for five days from 10am to 6pm.

“The course we are offering is around TV. We give real-life examples that our attendees can relate to. The idea is to equip broadcast engineers to understand networks better,” commented White.

“Throughout the course, we covered the challenges that are encountered when building IP networks for broadcast and explore solutions. With this course, and some additional preparation, students will be well positioned to take the CCNA exam,” commented Joe MacQuarrie, Training Manager at the academy.

Neumann collaborates with SAE Dubai for product demos

Neumann, in conjunction with SAE Dubai, hosted an experiential day on November 20, 2014 at the SAE Campus in Dubai. The event was geared towards broadcast engineers, studio engineers and other professionals with an interest in microphones and monitors. It featured live demonstrations of the latest Neumann audio solutions including, for the first time in the region, the new KH-420 studio monitor and the TLM 107 studio microphone.
Are MENA TV networks profitable? Are we creating enough Arabic content? What new technologies are being deployed across the region? Is the demand for OTT being addressed efficiently? More than 300 professionals attended the fourth annual edition of the event to hear industry leaders speak and network.
It is estimated that there are currently more than 1200 Arab satellite channels, a number which, understandably, means Arab viewers have never been more spoilt for choice.

At the same time, this also raises some very important questions:
1. Do citizens and residents of the Middle East and North Africa really need all those TV channels and programmes?
2. Do these productions take into account the socio-cultural needs of viewers?
3. Do these films and programmes support and help preserve local cultural identities?

If the answer is ‘yes’, why is the Arab culture in continuous decline?

Even more serious is the fact that the perception of Arabs as terrorists, reactionaries and savages has never been more rampant.

It is true that television productions are associated with market conditions, yet we should not forget that TV programmes have a role to play in social life, one which should not be overlooked in the service of market needs. In our countries, we deal with non-interactive viewers or recipients, the so-called TV addicts who watch TV simply because they cannot not watch television. This serves the needs of TV operators and television production companies.

However, these operators or producers must not forget that the various TV programmes reflect certain cultural aspects and influence public opinion. Therefore, the role played by these programmes must be closely scrutinized in order to portray a positive image and contribute to supporting national and regional affairs.

‘Arab’ cinema and television productions remain scarce. The rush to procure the latest in media technologies over the past thirty years has not been matched by a similar improvement in the standards of content, especially state-funded drama and film productions.

“Nor is it surprising when one considers that books have not fared much better. Unfortunately, we have become amongst the least [of] nations in production and consumption of books. One considers that books have not been introduced in the school curricula nor are they being read. Therefore, having strict laws is no longer an option. Even European countries have accepted the reality, yet they created second-hand alternative solutions and new mechanisms to support national film and television production. I do not think we can provide miraculous solutions today, but we can still raise awareness about the reality of international production and its cultural and economic stakes, and work to support national and local production. “Finally, I cannot say that the situation of television and film production in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in terms of content, is better than other Gulf and Arab countries. “We need more time and effort to reform the sector and to encourage creativity and innovation through the modernisation of thought and laws as well as supporting investment and the conclusion of Arab, Gulf and regional agreements and partnerships. “We are also working hard within the five-year strategic plan of the Ministry of State for Information Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain, to study the establishment of a film production city, to be a creative station for Arab and gulf innovators in the area of film and television.”
Creating content for an Arab audience

PRODUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The ASBU BroadcastPro ME Summit began with a discussion on creating content for an Arab audience – what works, and what doesn’t!

The moderator for the panel, Lina Matta, Senior Channel Manager MBC 2, MBC 4, MBC Max, MBC Variety, began the debate by saying that this is the best of times for Arab production. With exclusive TV channels that carry TV dramas, and state-of-the-art technical studios, there is support for production from all quarters. Despite this, there seems to be a gap between production and demand. So what’s holding Arab production back? asked Matta.

Khulud Abu-Homos, Executive VP Programming, Creative Services, OSN, was the first to respond, saying that OSN has three channels that focus on producing and acquiring Arabic dramas. The problem lay in finding premium, quality content in the Middle East. The region is yet to find differentiators to stay ahead of the game. Abu-Homos pointed out that the Arab world is not creating enough original content, and is compliant in following trends. “As a pay-TV network, we see it as our responsibility to provide our viewers with high-quality content and not merely fill air time,” she said. Another major challenge that jeopardises legal revenue streams is piracy. Piracy is acceptable in the Arab world, as a lot of the viewers here expect content to be free. Abu-Homos also pointed out that there is not enough content produced for women or the young generation. Fadi Ismail of MBC disagreed saying that dramas are targeted at women – there are no sci-fi or crime-centric stories and most of the themes of drama revolve around women. Ismail added that there is a growing appetite for Arab content. “Content is king, local content is king of kings, and quality local content is king of the kings of kings.” However, higher quality means higher costs. Broadcasters have commercial and budget limitations, which is why many use a tried-and-tested formula. Panelists agreed that adapting foreign formats is a positive development and enriches the local industry. “If there was no Turkish drama, Arab drama would not have reached this stage. Gulf drama is still lagging behind. Egyptian and Syrian productions are improving, and Lebanese drama is also quite sought-after,” pointed out Ismail.

A thriving production ecosystem cannot be built overnight in the region. Ismail pointed out that it is expensive to produce in the UAE, in the absence of a local talent pool. “You cannot produce a drama in another place – it has to be supported by the ecosystem, which makes Egypt and Lebanon very attractive as production hubs.” Commenting on the need to develop a healthy ecosystem in the UAE, Samir Al Marzooqi, Manager, Dubai Film Market (DFM), added that production companies as well as government entities need to collaborate and the region needs to invest more in quality content. He added that the best way to counter piracy is to release content quickly on different media.

“Content is king, local content is king of kings.” – Ziad Kebbi, CEO, Maximum Media

“Films die after the festivals. We need to change our strategy to support sales and distribution, to reach our films to audiences and close this gap between production and screening.” – Ziad Kebbi, CEO, Maximum Media

“We need to push our films on every single platform with a minimum time window, be it theatre, DVD and TV or second screen,” said Marzooqi. He also explained that with films, the problem stems from the distribution model, which DFM would be addressing in its upcoming edition.

“Films die after the festivals. We need to change our strategy to support sales and distribution, to reach our films to audiences and close this gap between production and screening.” – Ziad Kebbi, CEO, Maximum Media

“Films die after the festivals. We need to change our strategy to support sales and distribution, to reach our films to audiences and close this gap between production and screening.” – Kebbi pointed out that there is talent in the region, but not enough to meet demand: “We need to grow the local talent pool.” He added that the MENA industry cannot be compared with the US or Europe. “If there was no Turkish drama, Arab drama would not have reached this stage. Gulf drama is still lagging behind. Egyptian and Syrian productions are improving, and Lebanese drama is also quite sought-after,” pointed out Ismail.

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TRADITIONAL BROADCASTERS AND TELCOS VS OTT

With the arrival of OTT, are traditional players backing off or rising to the challenge? OTT players and traditional operators battle it out at the summit

When the speaker line-up for the BroadcastPro Summit was first published, it came as quite a surprise to me to see Ben Kinealy’s name listed as moderator rather than panellist on the OTT panel, given that he’s the CEO of Intigral, one of the most important players in the MENA OTT space.

In fact, making Kinealy a moderator proved to be an inspired move, affording him the opportunity to set out a comprehensive overview of the nascent OTT industry.

During an intense 20-minute introduction, he outlined all the new players in video, the massive changes in broadband consumption that they have created, the effect this consumption has had on telcos and of course the effect that the new players have had on broadcasters, creating a whole new generation of “Cord Nevers”. He then outlined the broadcasters’ various defensive responses to the OTT threat, and the way the telecoms industry has responded to the new demands on their capacity.

He didn’t neglect the new content players in the market, content providers creating whole new TV networks that have never touched the traditional broadcast space.

The five panellists came from a diverse range of disciplines, which meant the session covered a great deal of ground. We learnt from Mahesh Jhaikankar, VP Plasma and Broadcasting at daa that “97% of internet content in the Middle East is still accessed from Europe and US hosts. By comparison, 60% of content consumed in Singapore is locally hosted.”

He noted that the UAE telecoms regulator has a list of blocked sites but illegal file-sharing torrent sites are not among them. It seems that internet traffic still wins over anti-piracy measures for operators.

A great deal of ground was covered, but the group consensus seemed to be that bundling and partnering between telcos and content owners are the most fruitful opportunities for legitimate OTT services.

The biggest commercial challenge for OTT appears to be balancing between keeping the price of delivering high quality content and services low enough to attract consumers away from pirates, while meeting the financial expectations of content owners and telcos.

The message from my perspective was clear. Running an OTT business in the MENA region is still not for the faint-hearted.

Nick Grande, MD of channelSculptor, summed up this discussion.
The region’s leading CTOs put their heads together to discuss the influx of new technologies and how to embrace change in an ever-evolving industry.

The CTOs had several points to discuss from the adoption of 4K, managing corporate expectations, transitioning to an IT infrastructure, tackling OTT and cloud as well as looking at software-defined networks. The discussion began with the moderator, Mark Errington, CEO of BroadStream Solutions, asking the CTOs if they saw 4K as becoming a reality, considering that a majority of broadcasters had just completed the migration to HD. Apart from debating whether 4K was really on the cards and what was driving its adoption, he also questioned what channel types were likely to adopt 4K first and if it would ever be part of the mainstream.

Dominic Baillie, CTO of Sky News Arabia pointed out that while quality of video is important, for a news channel, it is more important to get the news across whilst it is still hot. “Of course, we like the graphics to look great but sometimes when you are telling a story, the quality doesn’t really matter; it’s more important to get the story across,” he said.

For most broadcasters today, 4K is good for acquisition and the CTOs agreed that for viewers, it doesn’t make much difference whether they are watching the content in 4K or HD. Dr Naser Refaat, Acting CTO of Rotana, said that 4K cannot be limited to just acquisition but needs to be extended to all areas of broadcast for which the MENA broadcast industry is not yet ready.

From a production perspective, higher resolution impacts storage, while the playout and post-production impact the entire infrastructure. The existing broadcast infrastructure is not yet ready for 4K transmission, Dr Refaat added. The video quality is often lost in compression as “we are not yet ready to stream uncompressed material to the viewers to experience original high quality” he said.

Robert Taylor, Programme Manager for Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project, Al Jazeera, Qatar said that Al Jazeera has been considering 4K for a while. He pointed out that 4K is “roadmapped” into the Qatari broadcaster’s programmes area for acquisition as well as production but more groundwork needs to be done to deliver it to viewers. The existing broadcast infrastructure needs to be upgraded to be able to handle higher resolution files, in order to meet viewer expectations. “Speed is the key. In fact, I would say speed is king, when it comes to delivering content to the end user. It’s more relevant now in the multiscreen age than ever before,” Taylor pointed out.

Chris Anning, Senior Project Manager, Alarab News Channel added that the key focus areas for 4K were acquisition and playout. He said that 4K production was a good starting point, which many broadcasters are doing to prepare for the future. Broadcasters are aiming towards providing an immersive production and post-production facilities and studios.

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experience to their viewers, and to achieve that, better quality video is being discussed, which may be HD, 4K or even 8K.

In broadcast, it’s the immersive experience that’s king and content is a part of that, according to Taylor. Delivering in 4K is a part of that value proposition.

At times, CTOs are limited by the management’s expectations to meet commercial and strategic goals. The panel was divided on this. While some panellists said that the company should be led by corporate vision, others said that the CTO should define the technical roadmap of the company and convince the management to adopt it.

Baillie said that it is the CTO’s job to share his vision with the CEO. However, the solutions and technology deployed should adhere to budgetary restrictions in order to deliver a good cost benefit for the company. He gave the example of Sky News Arabia’s DR project that was built in-house on a relatively small budget. He also mentioned that investing in hardware is a thing of the past and the way forward is to take the software approach.

“We have invested a lot of energy into software development and design. Software can deliver a unique user experience at a relatively low cost,” explained Baillie. Technical growth needs a lot of forward planning and thinking, added Taylor. Taylor noted that Al Jazeera was working 8-10 years into the future in order to tackle issues they could foresee at that point in time. Everyone on the panel agreed that future-proofing the systems was the only way to keep the costs in check and still have a robust technical roadmap.

Stephen Smith, CTO – Cloud, Imagine Communications agreed that broadcasters need to accept that technology is changing quickly and keep pace. To keep in step with the developments in the industry, and to create differentiating products, broadcasters need to have a more software-centric approach, he noted. It takes a long time to educate a network guy to understand the real time nature of video, Baillie chimed in. The panel also agreed that it was a challenge to find people on the broadcast side, who have a thorough knowledge of networks. The IT and the networks teams don’t have a different mandate, they need to be on the same page to start with, the panellists concurred.

Baillie supported the argument to say that it’s no secret that engineers have been using IT systems for the last 10 years. However, with broadcast increasingly gravitating towards IT, the money spent on baseband infrastructure is also decreasing.

Cloud was also discussed in some detail and how it can extend to hosting content from remote locations. With broadcasting entering the virtual realm, is there likelyhood of broadcasting directly to the consumers without a role for middlemen? There was no consensus on when it will become a reality but there will come a time when content creators and content consumers will converge.

“The CTOs agreed that traditional broadcasters are transitioning to an IT infrastructure, it need not be as complex as perceived. Budget would pose a challenge if broadcasters were to replace the existing infrastructure with software-defined networks.”

Taylor and Anning agreed that today’s broadcasters operate in a hybrid environment. Modern broadcast infrastructures boast IT commodity equipment and the trend is only going to grow. “We have IT-based commodity solutions throughout our installation in Alarab News Channel as they bring the cost down and are more reliable. Adopting IT is not a Herculean task, we have done it for years and our engineers are qualified to handle it,” Anning claimed.

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Robert Taylor, Programme Manager for Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project, Al Jazeera, Qatar
Over the years since its launch, the CEO panel has remained the highlight of the BroadcastPro summit, always attracting the top names of the MENA TV industry and always offering frank, honest and open debate. My one frustration, which I’m sure is shared by many, is that the same questions tend to come up year after year without being progressed or resolved. We all know that the current business model for MENA FTA television is flawed, but as an industry we seem powerless to replace it, despite having successful international templates to learn from.

This year’s CEO panel was different. Under the expert moderation of Karim Sarkis and with the support of key members of the audience, the CEOs on the panel seemed to speak with a single voice – not only about the problems in the industry, but also about how to address them in 2015.

Business Model and Profitability

Profitability is a big challenge, and the price of some content remains a big business issue. As David Butorac of OSN put it: “The big MENA sports broadcasters have no desire to deliver a profit. The cost of content for our friends in Qatar and Abu Dhabi is a multiple of their revenue. It skewes the market. We can’t afford to pay the sort of money BeIN Sport pays for football, and we never will.”

Sanjay Raina, Fox noted: “We don’t work on a loss, but this is one of the most challenging markets. There is a three-way revenue stream here [between pay licencing, programming sales and advertising on FTA channels], but not necessarily a three-way contribution to profits. You cannot be in this business profitably if you take any of those legs away.” When things go wrong for broadcasters: “The first thing that suffers is quality of manpower, and the second thing that suffers is the quality of content (third and fourth runs).”

Fahad Al Sukait, of Rotana Media spoke about the perilous condition of the Egyptian film industry under relentless attack from pirates. “Don’t kill the goose that lays the golden egg. If you look at the movie in the Arab world today, it’s dying. Today you are enjoying buying this movie [pirated] at a low price. Tomorrow it will not be there.” He warned that there will be no Egyptian film production within two years if something is not done now. I noted the CEOs of leading MENA media houses discussed the future of broadcast in the region and how they would address issues in 2015.
that Sam Barnett, CEO of MBC, made precisely the same comment at the Abu Dhabi Media Summit a week later. Rapid and decisive action must be taken to save an industry that is treasured throughout the region.

Another familiar theme, echoing last year’s panel, was the increased localisation of regional channels, reflecting that taste is different in each of the 21 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and the very different demographics of the countries in question. Several members of the panel recognised the incremental revenue opportunities that exist for broadcasters by focusing on each country individually. As Nart Bouran put it: “People are realising that if you are able to target a more specific domestic audience, you have a greater chance of profitability.”

Audience measurement
Numerous other themes were touched upon in the session, but one subject came up again and again. Audience measurement has been raised in every BroadcastPro Summit CEO panel since it began; what was new this time was a common resolve to address the problem.

Dr. Riyadh Najm, President of the Saudi General Commission for Audiovisual Media, who was in the audience, outlined his plans for the Saudi Peoplemeters initiative, which he expects to be operating by the end of Q1 2015. “We are determined in Saudi Arabia to introduce a transparent, reliable and flexible mechanism to measure audience, and we are using the best technologies in the world. If anyone wants to join, even at the last moment, he is welcome. If anyone wants to sit and watch and join later, he is also welcome.”

The Saudi system will include advertisers as well as broadcasters and legislators, and it will be managed by recognised international experts and audited by both international auditors and regional industry watchdogs. Fahad Al Sukait noted the market resistance to Peoplemeters. “Everybody knows that the worst people metering system in the world is better than the best CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system, but let’s be frank: we are talking about a lot of money, and that money is sometimes being used to ensure that the current system remains the way it is.”

Against this, the panellists all accepted that transparent audience measurement will create a far more effective product for advertisers, delivering more value for their investment, and that advertising revenues will reflect this, potentially going from their current figure of $900m to $2bn or more. The greatest beneficiaries of this increase would be mid-tier broadcasters with loyal audiences for their key programming that cannot be demonstrated through CATI measurement. However, given larger revenue opportunity, even the main incumbents stand to profit from the change despite perhaps losing some market share.

I was struck by the unity and optimism amongst panellists; this was a collective rallying cry of “Enough is enough!” Together we can support the initiatives in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE and build a new chance for the industry by adopting internationally recognised audience measurement standards. Fahad Al Sukait said Peoplemeters “will be the turning point. You can see that people are getting tired and frustrated – you will see more alliances of companies saying, Let’s do the right thing.”

Nick Grande, Managing Director at ChannelSculptor summed up the discussion.

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End users, manufacturers, systems integrators and other members of the broadcast community came together at the fourth ASBU BroadcastPro ME Awards to celebrate the industry’s achievements over the past year.

The fourth ASBU BroadcastPro ME Awards took place on the evening of November 11, with more than 350 guests attending. The event was officially opened by Salah Eddine Maaoui, Director General of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU). The presence of ministers, VIPs and well-known TV personalities made the night even more special. The star of the evening was George Kordahi, who received an award for OSN’s popular reality show Moussameh Karim.

18 awards were presented in different categories spanning broadcast and satellite. The awards kicked off with BroadcastPro ME’s sister publication SatellitePro ME giving away awards in three categories, followed by the broadcast awards.

A special recognition award was presented to Mohammad Shihadah, CEO of Apptek for his tireless work in the field of human language technology.

The jury

The awards were judged by an eminent jury comprising experts from production and engineering:

• Abdulla Al-Balooshi Director of Technical Affairs, Information Affairs Authority (IAA), Bahrain
• Robert Taylor Programme Manager for Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project, Al Jazeera
• Hasan Sayed Hassan Managing Director of Master Media
• Khalid Abuali Broadcast Technology Consultant with Estara Holding in Qatar
• Harvey Glen A Dubai-based Director of Photography
• Kamil Roxas A filmmaker in Abu Dhabi
• Vijaya Cherian Editorial Director
Innovative Production of 2014
Dubai Media Inc.

The promo for the Dubai World Cup 2014, produced in-house by DMI, was unanimously chosen as the winner for the plot as well as its fine execution. "It feels great and I’m honoured to receive this award. I can’t thank the organisers of this event enough. I’m very happy to be here. DMI has been here before, but from the creative department, this is a first and we hope to participate more actively in the future." — Fadi Said Izzaldin, Head of Creative Services, DMI, with the award.

Best Studio Set of the Year
Alarab News Channel

Production House has delivered a rich variety of sets and camera positions within a relatively small space to Alarab News Channel. The video entry from Production House showcased a rich and contemporary design that used LED technology effectively to create beautiful effects. "This is the second time we’ve won an award from BroadcastPro ME. I am very thankful for this recognition." — Ashraf Badriya of Production House receives the award from Mohammed Alhaj of Gulfsat.

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Riedel’s Next Step
BEST LONG-FORM PRODUCTION OF 2014

CLACKET MEDIA

Syrian production Al Khwa, which was fully shot in Abu Dhabi, created a storm in the Arab world, evoking both positive and negative responses to its rather controversial plot but no one denies the slickness of this production and its entertainment value. “I am so happy to win this award, because this production took a lot of our time and thinking. I now need to produce something better to win another award next year.” — Eiad Al Najjar, GM at Clacket Art Production, with the award.

BEST LONG-FORM PRODUCTION OF 2014

ETANA

Two brothers from Babylon took it upon themselves to bring laughter into the lives of the Iraqi people. Not only did their content make our judges laugh, they had our audiences in splits at the awards as well. Ali Abu Khumra (r), GM of ETANA, receives the award from Laurent Roussel (l) of eutelsat. “This is the first time we were nominated for the BroadcastPro Awards, and I’m really happy with this recognition.” — Ali Abu Khumra
2014 MENA SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR
QVEST MEDIA FZ LLC

Qvest has undertaken several challenging MENA projects from Dubai and Doha to Tunisia. It is involved with high-profile installations such as the sports centre for beIN Sports and the Al Jazeera Work Transformation Project. More recently, it completed the Alarab installation in Bahrain. “We have been working on some great projects in the region and this award is for the team.” — Peter Nothen, MD of Qvest Media, with the award.

2014 INNOVATIVE PROJECT AWARD
SKY NEWS ARABIA

Sky News Arabia, which uses the networked resources of its bureaus around the region to provide business continuity and disaster recovery, was unanimously chosen as the winner by the judges. Pictured with the award is the SNA team and Paul Wallis (third from left), Director Middle East at Imagine Communications. “It’s a great achievement. At Sky News Arabia, we strive to think differently.” — Rizwan Qureshi, Senior Broadcast Developer, SNA.
BEST TELCO/ BROADCAST INITIATIVE
CHANNELSCULPTOR

ChannelSculptor has been applauded by several end users for its invaluable support. Its channel licensing and management service has provided up-and-coming telco IPTV networks and MENA broadcasters. Pictured is ChannelSculptor’s MD, Nick Grande (r) and Richard Saldanha (l) receiving the award from Bashar Alasad (c) of Integracast.

“It was a lot of work and preparation and was very stressful to launch on time so it feels really good to now win an award for it.” — Nick Grande

OUTSTANDING MENA OTT INITIATIVE
GO BY OSN

Go by OSN, which allows subscribers access to thousands of hours of premium entertainment, was every judge’s favourite in this category and well deserved.

The OSN team, Paulo Ferreira (l) and Lisa Robinson (r), receive the award from Clare Sturzaker of IBc Content Everywhere.

“It was a lot of work and preparation and was very stressful to launch on time so it feels really good to now win an award for it.” — Paulo Ferreira, Head of Commercial Digital at OSN

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Hamad has played a key role in shaping the technical roadmap at LIVE HD, which covers more than 85% of the region’s live sporting events today. Hamad Abdelrazaq (r), Head of Broadcast Engineering at LIVE HD, receives the award from Habib Kazan of First Gulf Company. “This award has left me speechless. I’m so happy to receive it and proud to be part of LIVE HD.” — Hamad Abdelrazaq

Alarab TV’s nomination combined all the buzzwords from production and MAM to HD/SDI, multi-platform live streaming and IPTV, making it shine brighter than the rest. Jamal Khashoggi, GM of Alarab TV and Nebras Hameed, Head of Creative Services, pose with the award. “This award adds to our responsibility to make Arabic channels felt in a very crowded and competitive market. Next year, I want the audience to realise that we have made a difference in the news business.” — Jamal Khashoggi

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MENA BROADCAST TRENDSETTER AWARD FOR 2014
SELEVION

The judges unanimously chose Selevision for breaking new ground with its HbbTV offering, which is believed to be a first for the Middle East.

Dr. Raed Khusheim (r), CEO of Selevision, receives the award from Jasper Klaus-Joerg of Lawo.

“It feels great to win this award. Of course, our biggest reward will come when our viewers accept our products and services, and understand what we bring to the region.” — Dr. Raed Khusheim

OUTSTANDING TV PROGRAMME
MOUSAHAN KARIM
OSN

This one-of-kind TV reality show has struck a chord with Arab viewers in the most special way. Collecting the award is George Kordahi (l), celebrity anchor and TV presenter with Khulud Abu-Honas, Executive VP of Programming & Creative Services, OSN.

“It’s really an amazing feeling, not only because of the programme but also because of the concept and the value of forgiveness, which is a much needed value in the Middle East. This recognition is truly an honour.” — Khulud Abu-Honas

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Unparalleled versatility: The Compact Prime CP.2 lenses are the world’s first cine lenses designed for all types of cameras. The lenses cover sensor sizes up to the full-frame format (36x24mm), ensuring compatibility with existing and future cameras. Thanks to the unique Interchangeable Mount System one set of CP.2 lenses can be used with all established camera platforms (PL, EF, F, Micro 4/3 and E mount).
BroadcastPro ME honoured Mohammad Shihadah, CEO of Apptek, for his contribution to human language technologies and making it relevant to broadcasters. Shihadah (r) receives the award from Salah Eddine Maaoui, Director General of the Arab States Broadcasting Union.

“This is such an honour. We’re so happy to see how language technology has come to play such a hugely critical role within broadcast.” — Mohammad Shihadah

Backed by one of the largest regional online and mobile entities, this music streaming service is one of the first regional digital music portals with a large library of more than 25,000 songs. Moustapha Bekheet (r), Head of Mazika, receives the award from Paddy Roache of Hitachi Kokusai Europe.

“We’ve worked really hard for this project so receiving an award on a regional level is amazing.” — Moustapha Bekheet
2013/2014 was a spectacular year for the Qatari satellite operator, following the successful launch of its first satellite in August 2013 and the start of its commercial services in December 2013.

Hussein Oteifa, GM, Middle East, SES (r) receives the award.
PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

In a rapidly changing media environment, the boundaries between IT and broadcast are blurring. The two industries have to move hand in hand to leverage the right solutions. Vibhuti Arora spoke to two senior executives from Cisco to find out more about the company’s strategy for broadcast.

As technology continues to advance, there is increased demand on network capacity, be it fixed, wireless or satellite. With big data, the storage is getting even bigger and users are able to cram a lot of data over various mediums. This trend is likely to continue as the data gets even bigger, especially in broadcast, where higher resolutions are picking up pace, with HD and ultra HD 4K and 8K adoption.

In parallel to this, video quality is improving too. At the same time, bandwidth requirements continue to go down. Five years ago, an HD video required about 4Mbps; today, it has been reduced to 2Mbps. The amount of stress that data centres are facing today is exponentially higher than in the past. Today, there are more users, more devices and there is a completely different demand on data, which is in a higher definition and bulkier than it used to be.

In order to keep pace with the fast-changing technology, broadcast companies need to be able to build cloud infrastructure in a more agile and more virtualised way. It is a matter of adapt or perish, according to Rabih Dabbousi, Managing Director and General Manager UAE, Cisco Systems International BV.

“As we migrate to an IP-based environment, we need to build the right infrastructure. The main challenges in adopting virtual solutions is the mindset”

Rabih Dabbousi, Managing Director and General Manager UAE, Cisco Systems International BV

It is no secret that video consumption on the second screen is on the rise. Mobile broadband users are demanding spontaneous access to video content, a higher-quality experience and more convergent mobile services than ever before. As a result of this growing demand, mobile data traffic is expected to grow manifold and the main driving force behind it will be video.

Is the second screen viewing likely to go over LTE? LTE broadcast enables operators to efficiently launch media services over LTE to meet this demand, but is it that simple? How practical is LTE broadcast? Are the networks ready for it just yet?

Dabbousi says that LTE networks have their limitations especially when it is seen as a mainstream solution. “Regardless of what we do with LTE or short to mid-field wireless technology, we cannot compare it to what fibre or satellite offer in terms of capacity.

“There are a lot of OTT media offers that monetise the networks of the service providers by offering media packages to broadcast over broadband, some of it is offered over 4G. This cannot be delivered as a solution to the masses,” he says. However, he points out that there are offers available today, where broadcasters provide fewer channels or lower quality or both, which are suitable to be carried over LTE networks. When it comes to carrying high quality video over LTE, it will take some time before it becomes a reality. “We have invested $2 billion in our inter-cloud offering that allows our channel partners and service providers around the world to sell Cisco solutions, to allow customers to leverage intelligent infrastructure,” comments Dabbousi.

The application-centric infrastructure is a data centre solution, as a package to analyse data based on applications and adapt it to the needs of the end users. It makes routing changes, security changes and bandwidth allocations. However, there is scepticism about using cloud and users, especially broadcasters are divided about using it as a host platform.

“The lack of trust is not about the technology but about policies and legal implications behind using somebody else’s cloud infrastructure that lies somewhere else, outside the legal boundaries of the company. From a technical perspective, cloud is the only answer and we have to get it right. Our duty is to offer it in a secure and seamless way,” clarifies Dabbousi. He also points out that the world is heading towards IP as traditional broadcast networks become very costly and less scalable.

“Cisco has a legacy of interaction and broadcast in the region is younger and less mature, but there is a great challenge in adopting virtual solutions is the mindset. In addition, one needs to find new revenue streams to justify that migration,” he points out. Dabbousi also adds that the MENA region has been quick to jump on the bandwagon of early adopters of technology.

“We are seeing a change in the mindset in the region. Media and broadcast in the region is younger and less mature, but there is a great deal of openness to next-generation solutions. Companies are leveraging IP and cloud environments. We are helping broadcasters to build infrastructure and offer the services that help them differentiate themselves in intelligent environments.

As technology continues to advance, there is increased demand on network capacity, be it fixed, wireless or satellite. With big data, the storage is getting even bigger and users are able to cram a lot of data over various mediums. This trend is likely to continue as the data gets even bigger, especially in broadcast, where higher resolutions are picking up pace, with HD and ultra HD 4K and 8K adoption.

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“The lack of trust is not about the technology but about policies and legal implications behind using somebody else’s cloud infrastructure that lies somewhere else, outside the legal boundaries of the company. From a technical perspective, cloud is the only answer and we have to get it right. Our duty is to offer it in a secure and seamless way,” clarifies Dabbousi. He also points out that the world is heading towards IP as traditional broadcast networks become very costly and less scalable.

“Cisco has a legacy of interaction and broadcast in the region is younger and less mature, but there is a great challenge in adopting virtual solutions is the mindset. In addition, one needs to find new revenue streams to justify that migration,” he points out. Dabbousi also adds that the MENA region has been quick to jump on the bandwagon of early adopters of technology.

“We are seeing a change in the mindset in the region. Media and broadcast in the region is younger and less mature, but there is a great deal of openness to next-generation solutions. Companies are leveraging IP and cloud environments. We are helping broadcasters to build infrastructure and offer the services that help them differentiate themselves in intelligent environments.
“Broadcasting is very heavy on applications and software. You want data centres to be smaller, but with higher capacity”

Wael Abdulal, Collaboration Sales Manager, Cisco Systems International BV

What is Cisco’s strategy for the broadcast sector? Cisco is investing in building broadcast-specific solutions. This goes beyond collaboration and video conferencing.

When it comes to broadcast, Cisco can address several areas. From application to control units, Cisco provides customer premise equipment for connectivity. We have built a broadcasting studio in our office in Dubai, mainly to communicate internally between various Cisco offices, but this setup works well for a broadcasting environment too. Instead of having a video conference solution or a desktop conference solution, we have built a real setup with a complete broadcast chain, with some elements of it empowered by Cisco, especially the video part.

This setup is suitable for broadcasters as a means for secured communication. It’s ideal for delivering confidential information within a company’s setup. There are several applications in the public domain, but for enterprises and broadcasting companies what matters most is to receive the content securely. It’s more than just delivering content, it’s about delivering content securely.

The green room in our Cisco Dubai office is one step in that direction.

Can you give us some examples of the kind of broadcast projects you have executed in the region? We have worked for several customers to build their networking infrastructure from the ground up. Cisco built an entire infrastructure for communications for a large broadcaster in the region. The broadcaster has built MPLS over Cisco solutions, and its network is managed and monitored by Cisco. As an example of a secured network is when the broadcaster’s foreign correspondents and freelancers communicate with the main hub – they do so via the secure network built by us.

What has changed in the broadcast ecosystem? Historically, broadcasters needed big space in data centres. Today the data centres are smaller in size, but they offer more capacity. For instance, some years ago when we built a collaboration solution for a customer in the UAE, we used 30-40 servers for collaboration of 1000 contact centre agents in their data centre. Today, we can run that on eight servers with full redundancy. Virtualisation is the way forward – it won’t be a choice in days to come but a necessity. It helps us put the system on air faster, more efficiently, more securely and with less downtime. Virtualisation reaches content faster to market with less operational headache.

What is your role in managing data centres for clients? Broadcasting is very heavy on applications and software. You want data centres to be smaller, but with higher capacity. Cisco offers application collaboration solutions for routing or data centre needs to manage and analyse the data. This comes with a complete management and provisioning tool, from ground up.

We provide on-premise solutions or take it as a service from a cloud provider. We don’t offer our solutions directly to clients, but build the clouds for service providers, who then give them to the clients. We work with both private and public clouds. We don’t host the data, but manage infrastructure for customers through our network operating centres. Broadcasters like to have their core media assets on their premises, but they also leverage certain functions from the cloud, for example conferencing solutions.

What is the role of IT providers in online streaming? We offer solutions to broadcasters and enterprises for online streaming under our Capture, Transform and Share. It is called Enterprise YouTube. YouTube, as we all know, is a public platform; but for enterprises, security and confidentiality are major concerns. To address these, all the videos from webinars or other content are stored on a secure platform, privately owned by the client. We call this Capture, Transform and Share, because we have the technology to make it accessible from various sites on various devices. We also provide a portal to share it to view it from any location. Moreover, this information is catalogued and also offers speech recognition.

What are the main challenges for an IT company to enter the broadcast arena? In order to deliver a service to a vertical, you have to understand the vertical. For example, we have built an entire ecosystem around hospitality. We would like to take the same approach for broadcast. Although we understand the industry and it is our core focus now, we need to add elements to the ecosystem by partnering with other entities. We are taking steps to accomplish that with our partners. There are lots of back-end components that we need to work with partners to complete the broadcast ecosystem.

What have you achieved so far? It’s common knowledge that in a broadcasting-grade network, there is no room for error; as mentioned, these networks need to be secure and robust and we need to provide speed and backup, which are imperative to the broadcast industry. We can provide satellite and GSM connectivity for broadcasters. We have partnered with service providers such as satellite companies and telecoms to strengthen the network.

“These days, it’s about delivering the right information at the right time from anywhere. Connectivity and reaching the content on time are two main concerns of broadcasters. We are seeing customers leveraging both satellite and wired communications for broadcasting to build a secure infrastructure”

Wael Abdulal, Collaboration Sales Manager, Cisco Systems International BV

What have you achieved so far? It’s common knowledge that in a broadcasting-grade network, there is no room for error; as mentioned, these networks need to be secure and robust and we need to provide speed and backup, which are imperative to the broadcast industry. We can provide satellite and GSM connectivity for broadcasters. We have partnered with service providers such as satellite companies and telecoms to strengthen the network.
OTT apps have not only reformed the traditional business models for broadcasters and pay-TV providers, they have also resulted in the rise of a new class of suppliers specialising in app development, says Meghali Sharma.
Thanks to a world of ever-evolving smart applications, television viewing has become a multiscreen experience. The disruption has become the new industry norm, and TV-Anywhere applications have not only reformed traditional business models, but have also resulted in the rise of a new class of suppliers who leverage the power of the internet through mobile or web applications to reach end-users directly.

Today, broadcasters have a tough choice to make – if they don’t adjust their operating strategies, they are likely to fall prey to competitors born on the internet. To remain afloat and healthy, broadcasters need to consider how to sustain their businesses by leveraging TV-Anywhere applications. What new opportunities will these applications bring?

TV-Anywhere Applications
There is a large number of TV-Anywhere apps, from broadcasters, cable and satellite providers and standalone OTT operators. These include HBO Go, Watch ESPN, Cartoon Network, CNBC, Syfy, Comcast’s Xfinity TV Go, Time Warner Cable’s TWC TV, and Dish Anywhere. The majority of these applications were launched within the last three years and provide authenticated access to full episodes of the broadcaster’s programming. These applications are now approaching mainstream usage as the West as they steadily gain the rights to stream more content and continue with a heavy marketing drive that began a year or so ago. The main selling proposition is to offer a distinct user experience, built around the broadcaster’s brand and the opportunity to provide a deeper level of viewer engagement. To put this into perspective, Adobe’s State of the Industry Report 2014 states that TV-Anywhere viewing in the US increased 246% compared to 2013, driven mainly by interest in sports. Mobile video viewing saw a year-on-year increase of 57%, while overall online video was up 43% with more than 35 billion viewings.

In the Middle East, despite the popularity and high consumption of online video, monetising the opportunities has remained a huge challenge for all stakeholders – broadcasters, pay-TV providers and OTT operators. Content rights at the device level, a natural reluctance to pay for content and piracy have had a detrimental impact on the uptake for TV-Anywhere services, monetising services like OSN’s Go, Etisalat’s eLife, STC’s myInvision, Mobily’s mView and Icflix have seen only limited success. Nonetheless, these applications still provide new avenues for broadcasters to reach their customers anytime, anywhere. Going forward, we are confident that big data and social media will allow broadcasters to target customers with specific content based on user profile and preference, transforming this potentially lucrative market into a significant source of revenue.

Operational Boundaries
Broadcasters and other content providers need to keep in mind that content is still king and that programming represents the primary value to the end-consumers. TV-Anywhere applications are not just an added expense, they are an additional channel of distribution and an added stream of revenue. The goal is to keep subscribers happy by giving them access to content wherever they are. This means forming partnerships with multiple stakeholders to attract a wider audience and delivering via multiple channels, including smartphones, tablets, web and TV.

Partnerships with device manufacturers:
The popularity of the internet-based economy and the growing prevalence of OTT services, coupled with stiff competition, has forced device manufacturers to look beyond their hardware and software and focus more on applications to entice customers. Broadcasters could partner with device manufacturers to preload their equipment with the relevant apps and offer subscriptions to premium services. Broadcasters will be able to take advantage of the manufacturers’ strong distribution network and marketing to attract new customers, while increasing propensity to pay among customers who have already tried their premium TV-Anywhere offering. Icflix, a UAE-based video OTT provider, recently used this approach by targeting customers with their TV-Anywhere offering.

Partnership with telcos:
Regional telcos are constantly looking for new revenue streams and are incrementally looking to target 100% of their subscribers’ communication budget. One clear opportunity for broadcasters is to partner with integrated operators for delivery of their content through IPTV offerings. However, uptake of the IPTV services has been slow for most of the region’s telcos because of the limited reach of their fixed-line infrastructure, the high popularity of free-to-air TV and the high subscription cost. Recently introduced hybrid box solutions, which feature OTT to deliver content over fixed or mobile broadband, can help broadcasters significantly expand market reach. Another area where broadcasters benefit from partnerships with telcos is mobile apps on handsets, which has become a key distribution channel. Although not yet standard in this region, operators around the world tend to pre-install certain applications on their smart devices. This is clearly an opportunity for regional broadcasters to not only increase their customer touch points but also introduce special tariff plans with free or fixed data allowances for TV-Anywhere.

Partnership with independent OTT providers:
Global, independent video OTT providers such as Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime are becoming a key source of online video consumption, with their ability to offer large libraries of on-demand content attracting new users. Netflix alone has more than 50 million subscribers in nearly 50 countries. Broadcasters cannot afford to overlook the growing popularity of OTT providers, as they have the ability to rapidly scale up and gain market share. It’s interesting to note that Netflix already partners with cable providers to extend the reach of its services and facilitate the merger of linear with OTT television. Although video OTT providers are yet to have the same level of impact in the Middle East, their services are becoming increasingly popular, a message to broadcasters that they need to be prepared and prompt in developing partnerships. These are indeed exciting times for the industry, with applications continuing to cross traditional business boundaries, innovation cycles incrementally diminishing and continuous service enhancements essential to delivering a superior user experience. In this era, having the right mobile application strategy is essential for broadcasters, as the success of a business model is defined not just in financial terms but also by the ability to continually engage customers and deliver innovative propositions in the market.
Abu Dhabi, The Capital documents Abu Dhabi’s journey to modernity. In an exclusive interview with the film’s producer, Beno Saradzic, BroadcastPro ME finds out how the project used high-security, sensitive locations to tell the emirate’s story

Capturing a city’s growth can be a challenge, especially when the city has grown exponentially in a short time. This was exactly what Beno Saradzic had to deliver when his production company, Timesand Studios, was awarded the project to showcase Abu Dhabi’s development in key areas and give a view of the emirate’s future.

The brief given to Saradzic’s team was that the film should convey a unified message covering key government sectors, and offer an optimistic view of the emirate’s future by depicting a positive image for residents and visitors. The film also had to offer previews of major employment sectors in Abu Dhabi, as well as the most important achievements and ongoing key projects, and all of this needed to fit into a 12- to 15-minute time capsule.

Titled Abu Dhabi, The Capital, the film was screened at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival just before the premiere of Ali Mostafa’s feature film From A to B, which officially opened the Festival. It was also announced as the winner of the Silver Dolphin at the Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards.

“Awards are always welcome and an international award such as this one further propels us to do quality work,” says Saradzic, who was the executive producer of the film along with Hermann Meingast. Saradzic was also the time lapse and aerial cinematographer on the project.

Saradzic explains that the main reason the film won because...
“Audio-visual media should strike a chord with the audience and put forth what it was meant for, in a simple and straightforward manner, and that’s what our film did. The film required a documentary approach. We didn’t script this film, we worked with certain guidelines and questions that we wanted to ask our interviewees. We spoke to people who have contributed to the growth of the emirate of Abu Dhabi and are proud to say so. We realised that there was a genuine sense of pride in their voices and a sense of achievement, which we wanted to capture. These, I think, came through very clearly on screen and worked in our favour,” he says.

The production team at Timesand Studios began by scouting for locations that would best depict the growth of the emirate, aiming to capture the most significant milestones and destinations in Abu Dhabi’s road to progress.

“Right from the Airbus factory in Al Ain to Sky News Arabia’s broadcast hub to filming the way 999 operates, we decided to capture the most impactful shots that would sum up the UAE capital’s growth,” says Saradzic. Saradzic handled the aerial footage of the film as the director of aerial cinematography.

“The producer’s role landed him with much more responsibility. The producer’s job is not easy. As a producer, my mandate extended way beyond cinematography, it was multidisciplinary, as I had to be involved at every level of the project.”

Shooting in natural light
Saradzic explains that because the film was a documentary, the director didn’t want to light it up. It had to be shot as much as possible in natural light to give it an authentic and credible look.

“We wanted to achieve a natural reportage look in this film. Everything was shot using Steadicam, and whenever possible, minimal lighting was used. The end result has a raw feel to it.”

Beno Saradzic, Producer, Timesand Studios

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“We were all surprised with a piece of France in Al Ain. It’s a state-of-the-art factory, made to the highest standards, to produce aircraft. The factory is staffed by a large number of young Emiratis, both men and women. We had Arabic speakers in the crew to facilitate our communication with the factory staff and they ensured that the interviewees were not intimidated or stressed. As a result, we managed to capture sound bites from happy, proud workers, who knew they had a role to play in their country’s progress,” comments Saradzic.

Time lapse was a critical part of this project. To time lapse, a large sequence of still pictures is transformed into video. The still cameras are used with motion control equipment so that when you see the playback in real time, it looks like a dolly was used.

“We shot for 40 days back-to-back, averaging between 12-14 hours each day to capture five minutes of time lapse shots, and ended up with well over 2Tb of still images to output five minutes of real time footage,” explains Saradzic.

While time lapse was captured with Canon EOS5Ds, aerial filming was done using Sony Cineflex, which features a gyro-stabilised system. The Canon 5D Mk III was used for aerial still photography, and the ground shots were done on a RED Epic Dragon camera. The film was edited and graded with Adobe Premiere and various plug-ins.

“The producer’s job is not easy. As a producer, my mandate extended way beyond cinematography, it was multidisciplinary as I had to be involved at every level of the project”

Beno Saradzic, Producer, Timesand Studios

Premiere has made tremendous advances in the past few years and you to do that. The cine lenses used were from Zeiss. In addition to that Canon’s entire range of primes to capture the city’s nuances. The aerial filming was done using the Sony Cineflex system – we were in the air for a total of 15 hours in the helicopter over the period of three days. Aerial filming can be tricky because you are granted permission for a limited time,” adds Saradzic.

Aerial shooting was a key feature of this film that made many impossible shots possible. A combination of technology and creativity contributed to the film’s success.

To save time, we even edited some of the scenes right there on the film set. The editing was carried out at the edit suite in Sharjah at Landmark Film Production Equipment Trading & Rental post production studio. All of the camera and lighting equipment was rented from there as well.

“We used the Canon 300 and 500 extensively to shoot all aspects of the emirate, from deep desert to the city. With a super 35mm sensor depth of film, this camera can achieve a great cinematic look instead of a TV look. Both these cameras have big sensors that allow you to do that. The cine lenses used were from Zeiss. In addition to that Canon’s entire range of primes to capture the city’s nuances. The aerial filming was done using the Sony Cineflex system – we were in the air for a total of 15 hours in the helicopter over the period of three days. Aerial filming can be tricky because you are granted permission for a limited time,” adds Saradzic.
The world of TV has changed dramatically in recent years. Consumers are finding and viewing content on more devices than ever before. The influx of devices, coupled with consumer demand for all content to be available across all devices, has led to a fragmented, complex and chaotic marketplace. Finding services that deliver great content, and finding the content offered by those services, can be like finding a needle in a haystack. Although the marketplace is chaotic, multiscreen premium content services can help broadcasters and TV content providers differentiate their offerings with a range of compelling value-added services. The best technology systems also give them an efficient way of managing and reducing that complexity.

Delivering interactivity, engaging with consumers
The killer app for television is still watching television, but as TV has become much more interactive, the way in which consumers find their way to that content is changing. Linear consumption is decreasing and content is now being viewed on a wider ecosystem of consumer devices. As well as making it easier for consumers to watch content whenever and wherever they want, broadcasters and TV platform operators are now able to tap into a wider universe of consumers. This is allowing them to generate new revenues, create a more engaging interactive experience and to change the relationship consumers have with their service providers.

The next evolutionary step will be interactivity between platforms. Consumers will become frustrated with each device interacting with entertainment platforms on a 1:1 basis and will expect better cross-device connectivity. We are already seeing a growing demand for companion apps, allowing consumers to use smartphones and tablet devices to enjoy a richer way of navigating through content available on smart TVs. As well as providing remote control functions, advanced search and richer EPG data, companion apps can include social connectivity and in-programme functions such as voting, tweeting and so on.

The challenge that we all have is to get better at building ecosystems of managed, connected devices and making the user experience logical and intuitive. As a consumer, if I have an entitlement to access content on my iPhone then I want those same entitlements to be mirrored on my smart TV, PC, Android tablet or even perhaps, via Google Glass. So the challenge spans not just elegant user experiences and technology, but also includes the need to ensure that acquisition teams negotiate content licensing and distribution rights that enable platform operators and broadcasters to deliver a truly engaging multiscreen service.

If you build it, will they come?
If content is king then surely so is discoverability, both of that wonderful content, but also of the service itself. Success is, therefore, a function not just of an engaging user experience but also of ensuring that potential users can find the service in the first place. The marketing effort required to make consumers aware of apps and services is immense. There are more service providers, more devices and increasingly complicated content rights. Launching a fantastic OTT multiscreen service is not easy, making it succeed is even harder. It’s not just a case of if you build it they will come – they have to find it first.

Also, the devices themselves can often be cumbersome to navigate and it’s difficult to find new services in the vast expanse of the app world. Incumbent providers have a headstart, and companies like Netflix, which have invested heavily in technology, marketing, content creation and distribution deals, already have a strong position from which they can promote themselves. Device manufacturers are trying to bring cross-platform content discovery to the market, but they’re missing the first step, which is for consumers to discover the services themselves. Consumers should be in control of the home screen and should be presented with attractive application suggestions in an integrated way. The manufacturers control the platform and with active editorial functionality and recommendations should be able to provide recommendations to consumers in a more attractive way.
Despite the rise of digital platforms, experts predict that traditional TV will continue to be the dominant way to view video, but will it stay as lucrative for advertisers?

**How lucrative is TV?**

Broadcasters are fighting the threat of advertising money being syphoned to the web by converging online advertising technology and techniques with mainstream TV advertising. So doing so, they claim to have tapped new revenue streams bolstering TV’s future.

“There has been considerable buzz about the rise of digital video advertising, a widespread perception that people no longer watch TV and that advertisers will follow the eyeballs online where targeting is apparently so much easier,” Jill Hind, COO, Enders Analysis told IBC.

“We believe that TV will remain the dominant way to view video for many years to come.” Figures from GroupM show that TV revenue is growing in real terms although the year on year increases are slowing. TV spot ads will actually rise 5% in 2015 in contrast to online video advertisements, which will rocket 50% in 2015, but from a significantly smaller base.

Enders’ research reveals a marked decline from 2010 in TV viewing, with decline driven by younger age groups, but predicts that linear TV will still be at 77% (from today’s 98%) in 2020.

Another 8% of that total will be from catch-up watching the main TV and Enders also suggests that viewing of videos on smartphones and tablets will be dominated by content from the main broadcasters.

Jamie West, Director, Sky AdSmart & Commercial Development, argues that the TV advertising market needs to be shaken up.

“We can compete on a level footing with digital media that claims to be the only market that can offer addressability, targeting, reporting and understanding return on investment.

“TV trading across the world operates just as it did in the days of Mad Men,” he suggested.

“It trades in the UK against a dozen regularly used target audiences. Sky Adsmart turns that on its head.”

Sky Adsmart is the payTV broadcaster’s addressable advertising service.

“Adsmart is all about moving the conversation from competing with TV to competing with the full media mix,” he explains.

“TV advertising in the UK is worth £8.8bn,” he said but Adsmart competes in a £12.8bn market.

“TV is about bringing mass audiences and widening the field of opportunity for brands. Online is very different. It reaches audiences at the right moment, it builds relationships and gets them to act.”

Jill Hind, COO, Enders Analysis

on the first two letters of their postcode – much more precise than a national or even a regional buy.

“This means we compete on a level footing with regional and local media,” he stated.

“Although there is another pile of money from brands who don’t advertise on TV,” he says.

“This is an opportunity for broadcasters to offer a chance for those advertisers to connect to their audience through our media.”

Programmatic buying – the automated trading of video inventory – is gaining ground quickly.

“With programmatic, the brand doesn’t talk to media sales people any more. It is like a trade index for stock. There will be a number of new currencies to buy. Broadcasters should be helping advertisers to do real-time bidding, programmatic buys and providing the metrics they need to measure the effectiveness of their advertising.”

“The share price of AIM, listed online advertising company Blinx, fell dramatically in February year when allegations were made in a blog about irregularities inflating Blinx advertisements viewing figures. Although the allegations were proved themselves to be grossly inflated, if not outright false, Blinx attributed a stock warning in July to more general “industry-wide issues of efficiency and effectiveness” compounded by the accusations.

Hind identified concerns about the quality of digital inventory and the transparency of online ad campaigns as blocks to the growth of online video advertising.

“Online has huge challenges to reach its true potential,” she says.

“There is a knowledge gap where marketers and advertising agencies often don’t seem to understand the full potential of online advertising and programmatic buying.”

Another challenge in the lack of a shared audience measurement system, which enables a shared trading currency.

“Viewing and money moves away from the TV set it is incredibly important that both broadcasters and advertisers get to understand their overall audience and how effective their campaigns are,” she says.

“Project Decentra from UK ratings agency Barb, will be a significant boost to the UK online sector when it is finalised in two years’ time,” she said.

Will online be fighting TV for every last penny of the ad budgets? “They fulfil different functions now and probably always will,” she said.

“TV is about bringing mass audiences and widening the field of opportunity for brands. Online is very different. It reaches audiences at the right moment, it builds relationships and gets them to act.”

Steiber concludes: “There is an opportunity for broadcasters to bag new money. But the proposition must be about combining TV with the digital to offer advertisers the power they need.”

Source: IBC Content Everywhere
We are offering our key clients a chance to reserve their space in the BroadcastPro ME & SatellitePro ME branded desktop calendar for 2014. The calendar will feature 12 companies – one for each month of the year with their logo and advertisement. With one full page dedicated to each company, the company’s name and logo will be carried prominently on one side while the company’s advertisement will be displayed on the following side with the logo at the bottom of the page.

The calendar, which will be distributed with BroadcastPro ME & SatellitePro ME in Dec 2014 and also at CABSAT 2014, gives your company an opportunity to be viewed for a whole month.

For inquiries, please get in touch with Rodi Hennawi.

Phone number: 00971 50 714 0427
email: rodi.hennawi@cpimediagroup.com

Sony PSMEA recently organised training sessions to demo its latest camera release — the PXW FS-7. Conducted over three days, the workshop attracted camera specialists from production houses, TV stations and universities.

Play with FS-7 was held from November 8-10 at Light House Studio in Dubai. The training sessions were organised to give users a feel of the new PXW FS-7 camera and allow them to meet Sony product and industry experts. Alister Chapman, DoP and cinematographer, conducted the sessions to give attendees hands-on experience of the Sony PXW FS-7. Five FS-7 cameras were available for attendees to try out the various functions of the camera. The camera’s ability to shoot in low light conditions was demonstrated, as was its function as a handheld camera.

Attendees were also encouraged to record footage with the new camera, to understand the workflow better. Chapman demonstrated the entire workflow of the FS-7, from shooting to post.

The sessions were conducted with small groups of camera professionals to ensure that each one of the attendees got individual attention. Sony experts from the regional office were on hand to discuss the workflow of the camera.

Chapman showed how the camcorder was suitable for documentaries, unscripted TV, news magazines, indie features and corporate videos.

Issam Abaza, Technical Director at MBC, said that he went to the workshop mainly to have a practical session with the FS-7 as well as to get some valuable tips on best practices and 4K workflows.

“It was a good networking session and gave us an insight into the FS-7's workflow and performance. It is an excellent camera at this price point,” he said.

Sumesh Senan of Click Smiths also agreed that the FS-7 offered good value for money.

“It shoots very well in low light conditions and also adapts well to slow-motion filming. Having come from a DSLR background, this is a great camera to graduate to the next level and for a very good price,” he said.
Visit IBC Content Everywhere MENA

Arm yourself with the most up-to-the minute knowledge about investing in, creating, monetising and distributing media over multiscreen by attending IBC Content Everywhere MENA.

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To attend and save up to $450 on a Gold Pass go to www.ibcCE.org/MENAreg to book your place.

FOR-A unveils new video switcher

FOR-A has unveiled its HVS-2000 video production switcher, the newest addition to the Hanabi switcher family. A flexible unit allowing up to 60 SDI inputs and 22 outputs, the 2 M/E HVS-2000 is MEL+by, which allows a traditional AUI bus to transform into a functional M/E with cut, mix, wipe and key control. The unit runs on what has been dubbed a 64 HVS-2000 engine, ready for SD, HD, Full HD (1080) and 4K production. The switcher also features an easy-to-operate, highly functional control panel. The HVS-2000 control panel features crystal clear OLED source name displays, multiple colour LED buttons, user buttons and a built-in touchscreen menu and remote shuttle options. The switcher boasts ONStage, a function designed specifically for stage events.

Envivio puts HaloT over Apple product line

Envivio has announced the availability of version 4.0 of its Halo network media processor (NMMP) video solution product, which supports all Apple devices, such as Apple TV, iPhone 6 and 6 Plus, and the just announced iPad Mini 3 and iPad Air 2.

With Halo version 4.0, Envivio now supports all of the latest multiscreen video streaming formats, such as Adobe HDS, Apple HLS, MPEG-DASH and Microsoft Smooth Streaming, with H.264 and HEVC video support and new content protection schemes.

Halo version 4.0 claims to improve TV Anytime workflows by performing video encryption for video protection and interfacing with all of the complex CDNs and DRM systems, including Microsoft PlayReady, Adobe Access and Google Widevine, making it simple for operators to support new consumer devices.

www.envivio.com
**Telestream releases Wirecast 6.0**

Telestream has announced the immediate availability of Wirecast 6.0, the latest version of its popular live streaming software. Wirecast is a cross-platform, all-in-one live streaming production software that enables capture, live production and encoding of live streams for broadcast to multiple servers and platforms simultaneously.

With new production capabilities, streamlined workflows, and expanded content source options, Wirecast 6.0 offers the capabilities of more expensive hardware solutions with the flexibility and affordability of a software application. Wirecast is suitable for broadcast professionals looking live web shows, news, online gaming, sporting events, concerts and events.

With Wirecast, users can stream multiple live cameras while mixing in other media. Wirecast 6.0 also introduces a new user interface and improved performance.

**Joseph Electronics takes the road to fibre**

Joseph Electronics’ DFT-12 EXP and DFT-12 JR fibre transport systems require only two RUs, each featuring 12 paths of 3G/HD-SDI and ASI signals over one or two fibres. Additionally, modules for AES or analogue audio, MADI, 1 Gb Ethernet, RTS intercom, P/0 interface (voltage and unipolar data can be fitted into the four available expansion slots) to provide complete signal transport, including power supplies, are standard to ensure a complete backup of critical paths.

Full-fibre redundancy and automatic fail-safe switchover is available as an option for all DFT series frames.

**Gefen extends 4K UHD**

Gefen’s new 4K Ultra HD extender over one fibre delivers resolutions up to 4K (3840x2160@30Hz) with RS-232 and bi-directional IR using one SC-terminated fibre optic cable.

This long-range solution is effective up to 1000m at 4K resolutions and up to 2000m at 1080p@60 full HD. RS-232 offers an easy method of system automation while bi-directional IR facilitates control from both local and extended locations.

Installation is plug and play simple, requiring a single strand of multi-mode fibre optic cable to connect the sender (source) to the receiver (display). The use of fibre optic cabling provides EMI (electromagnetic interference) protection for mission-critical applications. The metallic enclosures further insulate against ambient noise. Automatic calibration based on the length of the cable is included to refine the quality of the delivered video.

**RCS brings the sports LaunchPad**

LaunchPad is currently in use by early adopters across Europe and the Middle East for select broadcasts airing in Arabic, English, French, German and Norwegian. LaunchPad Discovery and Sky Deutschland adopted an early version of the solution and provided RCS with feedback, which is reflected in the commercial release. In the future, RCS also plans to extend its LaunchPad sports portfolio to include motorsports, rugby, basketball and other sports.

Reality Check Systems (RCS) has released LaunchPad, a customisable, interactive solution designed to simplify dynamic touchscreen analysis for soccer broadcasters. Combining RCS’ proprietary software with third-party hardware and cloud data from domestic and international soccer matches, the solution is available in a variety of configurations and gives on-air talent access to real-time analytics and telestration tools to engage fans. LaunchPad boasts a user-friendly interface as well.
Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity

The flavour of the month is disaster recovery, and having a DR site in place is critical for most broadcasters. Most DR solutions are generally off-site, away from the main site – usually within the same city to be easily reachable, but sometimes outside the country or region. In the end, DR site placement is down to the broadcaster.

The need for a DR site and procedures is well understood, however, there is a key element which seems to be overlooked: business continuity.

What is business continuity? Business continuity is a set of procedures and workflows designed to minimise impact on production staff and output. These procedures are important, as they maintain output and buy time for an assessment to be carried out to understand the severity of the fault. Can it be fixed? If so, how long will it take? Is it a serious issue? Do DR procedures have to be implemented? This time is the most important and critical period to allow the right decision to be made.

If the fault can be resolved within a few hours, then business continuity procedures should be able to keep things going. However, if it’s a serious issue that may take days or weeks then there are two options: keep business continuity in place until the problem is resolved, or move to the DR site.

What about a catastrophic failure or an evacuation due to fire – then what? Again, the business continuity plan comes into play. It should be able to cope with this scenario, and could be as simple as running evergreen material until the DR site is up and operational. Business continuity is the glue in an effective and reliable DR plan. It is what maintains output until a fault is fixed or the DR site is ready.

One element often overlooked is rehearsal of the business continuity and DR plan. We often forget to practice procedures until we need them. The problem is that when we do need them, we end up not knowing what to do.

If you think about it, we all have a Plan A and a Plan B. This is no different. Plan B Business Continuity

Plan C Continuation of Output (evergreen material or a simple graphic)

Plan D Disaster Recovery

Therefore, it’s important not only to have a business continuity and DR plan, but to rehearse it on a regular basis so that staff know what to do during such events. A good business continuity and DR plan is priceless. [Mohammed Akhlaq is Managing Director at World Media Consultancy.]
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