From talent sourcing to adapting international series, Arab Format Lab is redefining regional content.
From not having any cinema screens until last year, it is estimated that KSA will be able to accommodate around 2,400 by 2030 and generate $950m in box office revenues, according to a PwC report. If you throw F&B and ad revenue into the mix, PwC reckons revenue will get bumped up to $1.5bn. This is only one of the many reasons why content producers, cinema owners, popcorn vending machine owners (that’s right! 30% of revenues in theatres are generated from selling popcorn. What am I doing in publishing?), construction specialists and tech providers attended the MENA Cinema Forum last month. They could smell the money ... and the popcorn.

With so many cinemas opening in Saudi Arabia and the opportunity to screen content that appeals to a culturally sensitive audience, we see the floodgates opening for Arabic-language content producers along with opportunities for Hollywood, Bollywood and other established international players.

Good content remains at the heart of the TV, OTT and cinema business, and this will be the keynote discussion at the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit on November 13. Creating commercially viable Arabic content is also the focus of our cover story this month, on how a small team has gone across MENA scouting new talent to create Arabic adaptations of international formats.

Also at our summit this year, PwC will release an exclusive report: Entertainment and Media Outlook Middle East. Of course, besides this, with streaming services and social media platforms trying to unseat traditional broadcasters from their thrones, it is time to think of new strategies to maintain the sanity of the MENA media ecosystem and keep our revenues coming in. So while these new platforms will discuss how they intend to take over mass audiences, and the tech experts will help us decipher new technologies, the CEOs will talk about the strategies that will help build a robust MENA media business.

To gain new insights into today’s MENA media market, register to attend the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit at broadcastpromeawards.com. See you at Habtoor Grand on November 13!
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UTURN Entertainment to create original content for Snapchatters

Kaswara Al-Khatib, CEO and Chairman of Riyadh-based online content producer UTURN Entertainment, has announced the launch of new original shows on multimedia messaging app Snapchat.

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME at the UTURN offices within the In3 Media premises in Dubai Production City, Al-Khatib said, “We are creating tailor-made content for Snapchat. We are among the first in the Middle East to do that. As one of Snapchat’s Discover partners, we have been creating 18-second snackable content for Snapchat, which is not the easiest to create given the time constraints. The new format will allow us up to seven minutes to tell our story.”

UTURN Entertainment, established by Saudi nationals Kaswara and Soraka Al-Khatib, is an online entertainment network for Arabic-speaking users. Established in 2010, it has grown from a producer of online videos to a multi-platform network with more than 35 million subscribers across its various social media platforms.

In 2016, UTURN joined eight other regional publishers – Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, Eurosport Arabia, Layalina, MBC, Sayidaty, Sky News Arabia and Zahrah Al Khalee – to publish on Snapchat’s Discover channel.

Al-Khatib reveals that the UTURN content on Discover has garnered more than nine million views in the region. “We used to publish three days a week on Discover. We are now going to produce five days a week.”

The online content production company’s focus on Snapchat is based on its enormous popularity in Saudi Arabia, with more than nine million daily active users. To further consolidate the Kingdom’s affinity for the social media platform, parent company Snap Inc. received an investment of $250m from Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal earlier this year.

The significance of the region for Snapchat is also indicated by advertising revenues. In the first three months of Snap Ads being available for purchase via self-serve tools, Snap reportedly tripled the amount of advertiser spending in the auction – and of all the international offices, the MENA region was the top contributor to growth in Q4 2017. We met Kaswara Al-Khatib just as his team of young Arab nationals were brainstorming to produce Snapchat clips reflecting contemporary Arab youth.

Elaborating on the Snapchat Original initiative, he said: “We are excited about this. Snapchat is probably the most active social media in KSA. Most of the youth are on Snapchat, and as an entertainment company, we need to move where the youth is rather than wait for them to come to us. With Snapchat Original, new possibilities have opened.”

UTURN has more than 33m subscribers on social media at present, and over 10bn minutes of video have been viewed since the group’s creation.

Sharjah Media Council unveils AI-based smart media platform

Sharjah Media Council (SMC) launched a media platform at GITEX last month. The new platform, which works through an electronic cloud, will reportedly help control media content, archive images and monitor news across various networks.

The first phase of the project involves the provision of smart and interactive media tools by the Sharjah Government Media Bureau (SGMB), towards total readiness for the management of media content. The second phase addresses the dissemination of news from all institutions and government departments across the Smart Media Platform.

du inks deals with Amazon Prime Video and Netflix

du – the Emirates Integrated Telecomunications Company (EITC) – has signed a distribution agreement with Amazon Prime Video to offer du customers choice in video content. This announcement was made during GITEX Technology Week 2018.

In other news, EITC announced a partnership with streaming giant Netflix to enable du and Virgin Mobile customers to access Netflix across TV and mobile services. du and Virgin Mobile customers will access Netflix on ‘second screens’, paying for the service through their mobile bills.
Front Row-KNCC secures deal for Arabic version of Perfect Strangers

MENA cinema distribution and entertainment partners Front Row Filmed Entertainment and Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) have inked a deal with Medusa Film for the Arabic-language remake rights to 2016 box office hit Perfect Strangers (aka Perfetti Sconosciuti). The Arabic version will be a Lebanese/Egyptian co-production in collaboration with Empire International and Egyptian production powerhouse Film Clinic.

Gianluca Chakra, Managing Director of Front Row, said: “Whether you’re a man or a woman, we all have something to hide... lying is universal. Paolo Genovese and team have delivered a story of seven long-time friends who decide to play a game over dinner by putting all their mobile phones on the table, thus revealing every text message or phone call they receive that evening. Hilarity ensues, proving that each has three lives: public, private and secret. The deal was negotiated by Gianluca Chakra and producer Farouk Alatan of Medusa. Film Clinic’s Mohamed Hefzy, Hisham Alghanim of KNCC and Empire International’s Mario Jr. Habib will also be involved in production and financing. Front Row President and KNCC GM Hisham Al Ghanim said: “We are also looking into more potential remake rights that could resonate well in MENA.”

Front Row/KNCC and Empire will distribute the film in the Gulf and Levant. Film Clinic will handle theatrical release in Egypt, and Front Row will handle post-theatrical sales across the region. Shooting is scheduled for Q2 2019 according to Gianluca Chakra.

Zee introduces OTT platform ZEE5 across 190 countries

India-based media and entertainment firm Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEE1) has announced the launch of its over-the-top (OTT) streaming service, ZEE5, in more than 190 countries across the world. Except in markets such as China and the United States, the digital platform is present abroad across the Android, iOS and web formats. Currently, ZEE5 provides multigenre content including news and entertainment in English, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Bengali, Oriya, Bhojpuri, Gujarati and Punjabi. The service has English subtitles and a live TV offering, along with video-on-demand content.

First Fox original series for MENA premieres

The Open Road, the first Fox original production from the Middle East, is a new travel series starring two Arab women bikers’ riding on their own across the UAE, Lebanon and Jordan. It premiered simultaneously on 11 channels across the region, with simulcast on Facebook and YouTube.

Shams to crowsource Emirati film

Sharjah Media City (Shams) has partnered with Arab Format Lab to launch “The Emirates Entertainment Experience”, a new filmmaking initiative aimed at identifying and nurturing talent in the UAE. Outlining the new project, HE Dr Khalid Omar Al Midfa, Chairman of Sharjah Media City (Shams), said: “As part of this project, we will launch an Emirati film made by audience members. In an interactive community of UAE-based talents, a group of scriptwriters, actors, directors and people who are skilled with respect to audio, cinematography, lighting, music composition, graphics and interior design will compete. The project, which will include training and workshops, will culminate in a ceremony to recognise the winners.”

“The Entertainment Experience” is a Dutch format for which Arab Format Lab has secured the licence for the UAE. It is a digital platform where people can register in the category they like and be part of a team that will produce a movie. At every phase of the project, the teams will be asked to produce ten minutes of that movie.

Fajr Kassim Ali, Media Development Director at Shams, added: “It is part of the Shams DNA to incubate and enhance talent; this is our core business.”

Khulud Abu Homos, Chairperson and CEO of Arab Format Lab, told BroadcastPro ME that this project has been implemented in many regions, including the Netherlands, China, South Korea, North Africa and Turkey, and has served as a platform to identify new talent in the filmmaking industry. The website will be launched within a few weeks.
KSA’s Nebras Films opens 5,500sqft post-production facility in Riyadh

Saudi Arabian production company Nebras Films has opened a post-production facility in Riyadh. London-based media and entertainment technology solutions providers root6 and Jigsaw24 carried out the four-week installation process.

The 5,500sqft facility has a centralised media control system called ContentAgent, a proprietary technology developed by root6, which provides a central hub for remote work throughout the entire system via ContentAgent. “This is, to my knowledge, the only facility in the Middle East with this capability. We currently have eight full-time post staff and we’re currently expanding the head count term media business while supporting the operator’s entertainment business transformation to next-gen cloud services, applications and mobile-first offerings.”

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME, Cian Patrick McLysaght, Post-Production Supervisor at the new facility, said:

“ContentAgent allows for the flow of media between suites and workstations in a process that is virtually immediate. For instance, if an editor is working on a long-form project at a lower resolution then the Flame artist can very easily pick up and conform a 4K version of that edit, virtually immediately from the original source camera media, as the metadata of that media is carried throughout the entire system via ContentAgent.”

McLysaght stressed that remote work is possible at the new facility. "A major feature of ContentAgent allows for satellite offices, be they producers, editors and directors, to log, view and edit material remotely and update their work in the Riyadh office. “This is, to my knowledge, the only facility in the Middle East with this capability. We currently have eight full-time post staff and we’re currently expanding the head count with talent from Europe and the Middle East.”

Parent company Nebras Films is a production house based in Riyadh that provides a range of services, including equipment, production crew, props and sets. Nebras recently co-produced From A To B!, the first Western film to be partially shot in KSA, based on the early life of Saudi Arabia’s King Faisal.

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Image Nation Abu Dhabi has begun production in Saudi Arabia on No Kitchen Required – a TV series that follows five regional chefs as they learn to cook traditional food in the wilderness. Image Nation has collaborated with Emmy award-winning producer Marc Lobor. The series, which is an international BBC format to be adapted for local audiences will run on Quest Arabiya – an Arabic-language factual entertainment channel.

Image Nation has already developed a series of flagship partnerships with O3 Productions, the production arm of MBC Group. This year, it is beginning production on a feature film and spin-off of a TV series based on bestselling Saudi sci-fi romance novel HIWJN. Cast and shot in Saudi Arabia, the project will reflect the pop culture phenomenon of the novel. Following this, Image Nation and O3 Productions will co-produce four feature films, including comedy Love above the Law, written by Saudi YouTube star, comedian and actor Fahad Albutairi (From A To B!).

In other news, Image Nation Abu Dhabi will release feature film Shabab Sheyab in cinemas across the UAE on November 22. The trailer has been released for the family-friendly comedy about four friends who embark on a Dubai adventure after escaping their senior citizens’ home. Image Nation is the studio behind Shabab Sheyab, and the film is produced by Rami Yasin’s Breakout Films and Starship Entertainment – a partnership between Al Yasiri and Al Feeli.

Tanweer Films is distributing the film across the MENA region.
34 Middle East films premiere at Sharjah International Children’s Film Festival

The sixth edition of the Sharjah International Children’s Film Festival (SICFF 2018), held last month, witnessed 138 movie screenings and 12 world premieres, six interactive panel discussions and numerous workshops, including one with Lebanese child animation coach and stop motion artist Dania Makleh, who dedicates his time to teaching refugee children stop motion animation techniques.

A total of 34 films had their Middle East premiere at the festival. The films were screened at Al Jawaher Reception & Convention Centre and Zero 6 Mall, Al Majaz Waterfront, Al Zora and Last Exit in Al Khabaneej, Dubai.

The Giraffe a feature film that was shot in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany was among the films screened on the first day.

On Disney's 90th anniversary the festival conducted two Disney-related sessions. One session was ‘Disney’s A Wrinkle in Time’ workshop with Sebastian Reichhold, Effects Technical Director at One of Us; the second was a panel discussion with Brian Ferguson, an animator at DePauw University in the US, titled ‘Disney Between Past and Present’.

Lending star power to the festival were Indian film actress Karishma Kapoor and 15-year-old American Indian child actor Neel Sethi who shot to fame with his portrayal of Mowgli.

An elaborate awards ceremony was organised to recognise all winning films at SICFF 2018, as well as the 40 participating filmmakers, jury members, child jurors, workshop trainers, sponsors, partner organisations (UNHCR, UNICEF and Beyond Organisation), and volunteers that contributed to the event’s success.

Jury members, including a 35-member child jury were felicitated. Sheikha Jawaher bint Abdullah Al-Mansour from Saudi Arabia, Jacir from Palestine, Haifaa Lotfy, Mai Masri and Annemarie Egyptians Hala Khalil and Hala Arab female directors, including Nujoom Al-Ghanem from the UAE, Sofia Djama from Algeria and Kaouther Ben Hania from Tunisia, Al-Mansour from Saudi Arabia, Jacir from Palestine, Haifaa Lotfy, Mai Masri and Annemarie Egyptians Hala Khalil and Hala Arab female directors, including Nujoom Al-Ghanem.

The festival will continue in Al-Dira, Dibba Al Hosn, Kalba, Al Dhaid, Al Madam, Al Hamriyah and Al Khorfakkan, Dibba Al Hosin, Kala, Al Dhaid, Al Madam, Al Hamriyah and Al Khorfakkan, Dibba Al Hosin, Kalba, Al Dhaid, Al Madam, Al Hamriyah and Al Khorfakkan.


Organisation), and volunteers that contributed to the event’s success.

Cairo Film Festival to honour female Arab directors

In its 60th anniversary, the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) has announced a special Arab Female Directors’ section. This showcase will celebrate eight Arab female directors, including Egyptians Haia Khalil and Haia Luthy, Mai Maati and Annemarie Jacir from Palestine, Haifaa Al-Mansour from Saudi Arabia, Kasdha Biss Hania from Tunisia, Sofi Djema from Algeria and Nujoom Al-Ghanem from the UAE.

MBC Group launches Farsi channel on Yahsat

MBC Group launched MBC Persia, a family entertainment channel catering to the Farsi-speaking community in the MENA region, on Yahsat last month. It features a wide variety of international programming dubbed or subtitled in Farsi, including global films, television series and other entertainment shows. Meanwhile, to coincide with its launch on Yahsat, MBC Persia is reportedly working on the production of its own exclusive original programming, to expand on its portfolio of engaging content.

Carthage Film Fest announces film grants

The Carthage Film Festival Journées cinématographiques de Carthage, or JCCJ, taking place in Tunis November 3-10, has shortlisted 11 African and Arabic films as part of the Takmil workshop that grants post-production funds. To be held on November 5, 6 and 7, the workshop, whose name is Arabic for ‘finish’, offers a platform for African and Arabic films in post-production to be evaluated by an international jury of cinema professionals. Projects selected include films and documentaries from Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Rwanda.

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Inaugural MENA Cinema Forum hosts 500 delegates

The inaugural two-day MENA Cinema Forum, the first-ever business conference of its kind for the regional market, was held at Grand Hyatt Hotel in Dubai last month. More than 45 speakers discussed cinema-related issues in front of an audience of 500 delegates from 45 countries. The number of cinema screens is set to jump 38.4% from 1,300 at present. to 1,800 in the MENA region in the next three to five years, up from 1,000 at present.

The keynote panel discussed the economic impact of the growing cinema market in the MENA region and the effect of the Saudi cinema market across the region, among other topics. Panellists included Mohammad Al Hashemi of Majid Al Futtaim Cinemas, Arturo Guillen of ComScore, Abdalrahman Almamzin of Mykro Animation Studio and Amer Bin Ahmed of KSA, the main sponsor of the event.

Commenting on the industry, Leila Masumaei, MD of GM Events, said: “The additional cinema screens will help the entertainment market to grow faster, as additional capacities will be high enough to meet the growing demand expected to come from the Saudi Arabian market."

Turner picks up Polly Pocket for Middle East

DHX Media and Mattel’s new animated children’s series Polly Pocket has been picked up by 16 broadcasters across the globe. Turner has picked up the series for Italy, the Middle East, Turkey and Greece. Other broadcasters include Suli AIfrica, which has picked up the series for 22 Francophone countries across the continent.

IndiaCast restructures; regional heads move to new roles

IndiaCast, the domestic, international and digital distribution arm of Viacom18 and TV18, has rejigged its revenue management structure. Sachin Gokhale, previously responsible for developing the North American region, will now assume the new role of heading IndiaCast, the Middle East. DICM and Dubai International Film and TV Commission (DFTC) have announced a strategic media partnership to support the content industry in the UAE and the Middle East. DICM is set to take place December 9-10 at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel Conference Centre.

The event will reportedly bring together content from Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and East Africa, and is set to welcome more than 350 buyers representing TV stations, OTT platforms, mobile operators and in-flight entertainment.

Alamiya broadcasts KSA’s first professional boxing event in Jeddah

Saudi Arabian production house, Alamiya, broadcast the Kingdom’s first professional boxing event to more than 40 broadcasters, including MBC, KSA Sports and ESPN. Part of the World Boxing Super Series, the Muhammad Ali Trophy was held at King Abdullah Sports City Hall in Jeddah last month.

The event was organised by the General Sport Authority following an agreement signed between HE Turki Al-Sheikh and an official from Comosa AG in London last year. The company provided integrated coverage along with two SNGs and a fully-crewed OB truck for the event. Alamiya also provided a Jimmy Jibe crane, an ultra-motion LDX 96 camera, 13 HD Grass Valley cameras, a robotic camera and five EVS XTi replay systems.

DFTC ties with Dubai Content Market

Dubai Film and TV Commission (DFTC) and Dubai International Content Market (DICM) have announced a strategic media partnership to support the content industry in the UAE and the Middle East. DICM is set to take place December 9-10 at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel Conference Centre.

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Eitsalat demos 5G impact on video at ITEX

Eitsalat showed live download speed comparison between 4G and 5G live networks, giving visitors a chance to experience the download time difference between the two technologies by downloading a 4K HD movie/video using 4G and 5G simultaneously. The video (more than 1GB) download time reportedly took 13 seconds using 5G and approximately two minutes using 4G.

Eitsalat also announced a major milestone with Expo 2020 Dubai becoming the first commercial customer in the MEAS region to access 5G services.

Fox Networks Group appoints new agency

Fox Networks Group (FNG) Middle East has appointed Value Branded Content (VBC) as its new advertising sales representative agency for the National Geographic Abu Dhabi and National Geographic Kids Abu Dhabi channels in the region. The appointment of VBC follows a regional review over the last few months and will cover the entire Middle East and North Africa region.

Facebook to revive The Real World on Watch

Facebook is partnering with MTV Studios to relaunch The Real World on its Watch tab. The news was announced at MIPICOM in Cannes. Matthew Henick, Facebook Head of Content Strategy, said in a statement: “The Real World made history as the world’s first original reality show and trailblazing social experiment – and we’re thrilled to reboot the show for today’s audiences – representing and amplifying the real life, real people, real places and real social tensions of each country.”

TwoFour54 marks 10-year anniversary

Abu Dhabi media zone TwoFour54, founded in October 2008, is marking its 10th anniversary. It is home to a mix of international brands including CNN, Red Bee Ericsson and Ubisoft, as well as local and regional companies such as Alrythma, Lamra, and more than 580 freelancers.

In the last five years alone, more than 60 productions from Hollywood, Bollywood and the Arab world have been shot in the emirate. TwoFour54 recently allowed dubbing to enable more small businesses to work from home.

TCM rebrands for younger audiences

Turner MENA has announced a new brand and programming transformation for TCM (Turner Classic Movies) in the Middle East, to increase its appeal among a wider audience. TCM has now acquired a new on-screen look, documentaries about movies, and more original and recent movies spanning comedies, drama, action thrillers, and science fiction. Titles include The Last of the Mohicans, Snatch, Finding Neverland, Gladiador, Westworld and Ben-Hur.

United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS) conducted an ARRI Stellar Lighting Control Workshop

The workshop focused on how to network ARRI Skypanel and L-Series lights and use the Stellar control app for intelligent wireless control on set. In attendance were lighting and broadcast professionals from the UAE.
Regional industry welcomes Amazon Edge launch in UAE

Amazon Web Services, Inc. (AWS) has launched two Amazon CloudFront Edge locations in the UAE. Located in Dubai and Fujairah, the new Edge locations reportedly bring a suite of benefits provided by Amazon CloudFront, including integration with computer and security services such as AWS Shield and AWS Web Application Firewall (WAF). Amazon CloudFront uses a global network of 138 Points of Presence (including 127 Edge Locations and 11 Regional Edge Caches) in 63 cities across 29 countries. Dubai broadcaster MBC Group, a key user of AWS services, welcomed the launch.

Adrian Bloom, Senior Manager Online Platforms, MBC Group, commented: “We have been using AWS extensively for our digital properties, including SHAKIIH.net, MBC.net and GOBOLIC, MBC’s video on demand service for kids. With the availability of these local Amazon CloudFront locations, we acquire better ways to manage our costs and gain a tremendous amount of flexibility.”

Also welcoming the launch of AWS Edge locations in UAE was music platform Anghami, which hosts a repository of more than 26 million songs. Elie Habib, Anghami co-founder and CTO, said of the launch: “We are very excited by the opportunities that the new AWS Edge locations will bring to our service, particularly being able to cope with dramatic peaks in traffic. For example, we see peaks of usage at night, in the morning, and especially when new music is released, which can mean a 100% increase in traffic. Having a local Edge location allows us to Lambda@Edge cope with these fluctuations.”

In addition to the new Amazon CloudFront Edge locations, AWS also launched AWS Direct Connect in Dubai. Customers can connect to all their AWS resources in any global AWS region and transfer business-critical data directly between their premises and AWS.

Huawei and Mediapro partner to provide AR and VR over 5G networks

Huawei and Barcelona-based multimedia communications company Mediapro have signed an MoU to collaborate in the distribution of VR and AR over 5G networks. This took place last month at the Middle East Huawei 5G Ecosystem Conference in Dubai, on Huawei Innovation Day during GITEX. 5G will provide a platform for VR and AR to live stream media through Huawei’s media cloud application, which has reportedly been deployed by more than 140 million subscribers worldwide.

Habib, Anghami co-founder and CTO, said of the launch: “We are very excited by the opportunities that the new AWS Edge locations will bring to our service, particularly being able to cope with dramatic peaks in traffic. For example, we see peaks of usage at night, in the morning, and especially when new music is released, which can mean a 100% increase in traffic. Having a local Edge location allows us to Lambda@Edge cope with these fluctuations.”

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Huawei’s regional sales director for the Middle East, added: “Huawei’s research and development into 5G technology is driven by our vision to bring digital to every person, data and organization, for a fully connected and intelligent world.”

The 5G Ecosystem Conference promotes a 5G ecosystem in the Middle East by bringing together operators, regulatory agencies, industry leaders and other stakeholders to discuss 5G from a business, policy, and industry perspective.

Spacetoon TV inks deal with Egyptian agency

Spacetoon TV channel, a subsidiary of Global New Media Group (GNUM), has partnered with Scene, an Egyptian advertising agency, to manage Spacetoon advertising sales in Egypt. This is in conjunction with new agreements between Spacetoon and companies such as Bandia, Sanrio and SEGA, for new animation series such as DreamWorks, Hello Kitty and Sonic.

African’s AMC launches production hub

African Movie Channel (AMC) has launched a production division, AMC Original Productions (AMCODP) to develop and produce original movies and TV series. The UK company, with offices in London and Lagos, hosts Hollywood films across three channels – African Movie Channel (AMC), AMC Series and Nolly Africa. AMCODP will reportedly focus on African storytelling from home-grown talent. AMC is currently collaborating with Nigerian producers to add around 20 movie titles to its library by the end of 2018.

mena.tv Arabic pavilion debuts at MIPCOM 2018

Nine producers from the Arab world joined forces with mena.tv Content Hub to create a MENA pavilion at MIPCOM 2018. The pavilion was located alongside the MIPCOM Pavilion and will run from 13th to 16th November 2018.

In other news, Dubai International Content Market has partnered with mena.tv Content Hub to deliver a content marketplace in Dubai. The event will take place on December 9-10 in Dubai.

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African Movie Channel (AMC) has launched a production division, AMC Original Productions (AMCODP) to develop and produce original movies and TV series. The UK company, with offices in London and Lagos, hosts Hollywood films across three channels – African Movie Channel (AMC), AMC Series and Nolly Africa. AMCODP will reportedly focus on African storytelling from home-grown talent. AMC is currently collaborating with Nigerian producers to add around 20 movie titles to its library by the end of 2018.

mena.tv Arabic pavilion debuts at MIPCOM 2018

Nine producers from the Arab world joined forces with mena.tv Content Hub to create a MENA pavilion at MIPCOM 2018. The pavilion was located alongside the MIPCOM Pavilion and will run from 13th to 16th November 2018. The pavilion was located alongside the MIPCOM Pavilion and will run from 13th to 16th November 2018.

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CREATING STUDIO SPACE AT ATLAS TELEVISION

With comparable studio spaces in Dubai infamous for sound issues, the new studio at Atlas Television’s boutique office has soundproofing at the heart of its construction.

Dubai-based equipment and crew rental company Atlas Television has built a studio for video and still photography within its offices in Dubai Studio City. The facility, which opened last month, has reportedly been built to fill a gap in Dubai for an affordable, high-quality studio space for mid- and small-size projects. The purpose-built 1,850sqft studio has three infinity curve walls, all over nine metres in length, adjoining the equipment rental facility and office of Atlas Television in Dubai Studio City.

Commenting on the new studio, broadcast veteran and owner of Atlas Television, Cal Barton says: “The new studio was set up in response to requests from our existing clients, who approach us regularly for crew and kit. We saw the opportunity when the office space adjoining our existing work space opened up. That meant we could move our equipment hire stock out of the studio space we’d been using as a warehouse.”

Underlining the advantages of creating a studio in a purpose-built space, Barton elaborates: “The boutique offices in Dubai Studio City have those spaces with very high ceilings, low-noise air conditioning and robust power supply, making it easy for us to convert the space back into a studio. You can record sound with the air conditioning on, you could turn the air conditioning off as well and the place will stay cool because it is well insulated. These are unlike the studios you see elsewhere in Dubai that are converted warehouses and are not adequately soundproofed.”

Barton’s team worked on the space in stages, starting with the construction of the infinity curve walls. He explains: “For the infinity curve walls, we used a contractor approved by TECOM that has built such walls in other studios. The walls give both photographers and videographers flexibility with what they want to shoot, and it helps with post-production as well.”

“The lighting grid was standard, and for the sound baffling drapes, we worked with a company that stocks them and has a track record of installing them in other spaces. The drapes along the lighting grid and around the periphery of the studio offer sound baffling and considerably reduce echo.”

The new studio is generating income for clients in the UK, US and elsewhere – where we would shoot a segment of their show in Dubai.”

Barton has also set up adjacent production facilities allowing clients to watch proceedings in the studio from outside, and a Green Room for makeup. He also reveals that the company has approached Dubai Studio City to widen the doors by one metre, to be able to fit super cars into the studio.

As always, clients can hire our camera, lighting, sound and mixing equipment that are all available on-site, along with experienced crew. Most of our clients are production companies with corporate clients. We do broadcast work for clients in the UK, US and

“We saw a gap in the market for an affordable, high-quality studio that is soundproof”

Cal Barton, owner, Atlas Television saw a gap in the market for an affordable, high-quality studio that is soundproof. In addition, you would not need generators with 71kW of power available. In contrast, in warehouses-turned-studios you would need generators, especially given the requirements for lighting equipment.

On the features of the new studio space, Barton says: “We have white, black and green backgrounds all available, so there is generally no need for any additional painting. As always, clients can hire our camera, lighting, sound and mixing equipment that are all available on-site, along with experienced crew. Most of our clients are production companies with corporate clients. We do broadcast work for clients in the UK, US and
Khulud Abu Homos and Mustafa Alaidaroos have joined forces to develop regional talent and create socially relevant content.

Rough market statistics indicate that 60% of the students that join media programmes in Middle East universities today are female, and yet we see fewer than 2% of them in the media or agencies, reckons Khulud Abu Homos, CEO and co-founder of Arab Format Lab, who is in that miniscule percentage.

Abu Homos left the comfort of a corporate media job three years ago to pursue a more challenging calling when she launched Arab Format Lab with business partner and Chief Operating Officer Mustafa Alaidaroos, a prominent Saudi producer. Their vision was to create socially relevant programmes that were entertaining and worthy of export to international markets, while simultaneously ensuring that they identified and engaged with new talent in the region.

Although this may not have sounded like a commercially viable vision at the time of launch, with three pilots to be filmed by the end of this year and a fourth in pre-production, as well as several initiatives across the region, the duo may have pulled off the first part of a very tough journey. Perhaps what has propelled them forward is that the team has first looked to create Arabic adaptations of established, strong, well-scripted and award-winning international formats.

“Our weak point in this region has been content,” explains Alaidaroos. “So we decided to work with scriptwriters, and we started with formats because there is already a strong and good script that we can adapt in the Arab world. Our ultimate target, of course, is to make a format ourselves so that we can export that to international media.”

But how did their paths cross?

Abu Homos met Alaidaroos six years ago at the screening of the pilot for his docu-drama series Salem, when she was working for OSN as Senior VP of Programming responsible for acquiring Arabic content. In the following four years, Alaidaroos successfully produced 120 episodes of Salem, which ran for four years on eight Arabic channels including the MBC and OSN bouquets.

“I was impressed with the outstanding production quality and the out-of-the-box concept of Salem, which was essentially an inspirational journey across various countries and cultures and their definition of peace,” recalls Abu Homos. “Mustafa and I discovered then that we were both passionate about talent development and socially relevant content. One year after I created Arab Format lab, we decided to put our strengths together.”

Alaidaroos’ journey has all the makings of a film. A Saudi national, he graduated with a degree in medicine from Sharjah University back in 2005. But with no desire to spend the rest of his life in a hospital, he decided to follow his personal passion of making films.

*Salem was an inspirational social experiment
and it appealed to our audience here. When I met with Khulud, I had already worked on several series, TVOs, and wanted to move to the next level. She also wanted to focus on social relevance but wanted to work with Hollywood studios and other international names, so we could link our production here with the rest of the world, especially in Saudi Arabia. I knew then that I had found the right business partner to take that dream forward,” he explains.

“Also perfect timing because Saudi Arabia has taken this big step in media and cinema with the 2030 Vision. In the next five years, I think Saudi Arabia will be the number one here for content and I want to contribute to that future.”

Arab Format Lab first made headlines with its debut series Red Band Society, an Arabic adaptation at this stage, secured the Rose d’Or Award. The adaptation shows the lives of children and teenagers from different social backgrounds, united by their challenges but also their optimism. The first season was shot in Egypt, and the team is now looking to film the second anywhere in the Arab world, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE the primary choices.

Arab Format Lab has also been actively involved in workshops, roadshows and other initiatives aimed at discovering new talent. In March this year, it launched the Arab Format Accelerator with DISCOP Dubai, inviting regional talent to pitch original ideas to senior executives driving the TV business across the Middle East. 20 up-and-coming creators and established producers pitched original ideas—at least 80% of them from Saudi Arabia, reveals Abu Homos.

As a result, the team began to focus more of its initiatives on the Kingdom and launched the Saudi Format Lab in late June. It has now brought nine Saudi start-up media companies and young talents from Riyadh and Jeddah under one umbrella for content development and audio-visual production. With so many creative talents working across different parts of the region, the company has now gathered enough steam to produce its four projects. Interestingly, all four demonstrate how content can keep in mind the cultural sensitivities of a region, while also being entertaining.

Parenthood, the first of these pilots, is the team’s first Saudi comedy drama studio format. “Parenthood is a Universal Studios format produced in association with Universal Studios, and will be shot in Saudi Arabia. The story talks about an extended family who discover in the first episode that one child in the family is autistic. What follows is a dialogue between different generations and the challenges that parents face when dealing with autism. We will do a pilot before the end of the year,” says Alaidaroos.

Hollywood producer James Kramer worked with our writers’ room in Jeddah to develop the Saudi adaptation of this series, combining his international experience as a Hollywood writer and producer with their young creative writing talent and knowledge of Saudi society,” adds Abu Homos.

The second pilot, Mokhtar, also being filmed this year—in Medina, Cairo and Italy—is produced in conjunction with an Italian production house. Alaidaroos, the man behind this production, explains the connection.

“The protagonist is a PhD student who has a lot of questions about religion. He approaches a scholar, a Saudi national, Mustafa Alaidaroos, to help him. We have found that we work well together, but we are different in personal background. He is a professional who knows how to manage a business, to open a driving school. With women now permitted to drive, he persuades his wife, who cannot drive and does not know how to manage a business, to open a driving school. His main aim is to control the business through his wife, but she surprises him with her entrepreneurial skills. Together with her team of pan-Arab female teachers, she learns how to drive and becomes a better manager than him. On the non-scripted side, Arab Format Lab is working on the Arabic adaptation of an Emmy-winning format from Warner called Sorry About That, which also recently secured the Rose d’Or Award.

“We started with formats because there is already a strong and good script that we can adapt in the Arab world. Our ultimate target, of course, is to make a format ourselves” Mustafa Alaidaroos, Chief Operating Officer, Arab Format Lab, who advises him to go on a journey of self-discovery, and is challenged to live another person’s life to find the answers to his questions. So the protagonist heads to Italy, where he lives with a family. What ensues is a long romantic drama and a dialogue between cultures and religions. This is the first mixed production we are undertaking, but again the concept hasn’t been tackled in this manner, essentially, Mokhtar is a discussion between various religions cloaked in the guise of entertainment.”

A third pilot to be shot this year, Dagget Biri (Car Honk), is a Saudi comedy original being developed in-house. It revolves around a Saudi businessman who runs a driving school. With women now permitted to drive, he persuades his wife, who cannot drive and does not know how to manage a business, to open a driving school. His main aim is to control the business through his wife, but she surprises him with her entrepreneurial skills. Together with her team of pan-Arab female teachers, she learns how to drive and becomes a better manager than him. On the non-scripted side, Arab Format Lab is working on the Arabic adaptation of an Emmy-winning format from Warner called Sorry About That, which also recently secured the Rose d’Or Award.

“I can’t say too much about the Arabic adaptation at this stage, except that this is a new trend in talent shows and we believe this will really be successful,” Abu Homos says, cautious not to reveal too much.
“We are just in the pre-production phase. It’s a Belgian format and has done extremely well in all the markets it has debuted in.”

While the first three pilots are being shot in Saudi Arabia, the last will be shot across different MENA countries, with three episodes in the UAE, three in KSA, three in Egypt and two in Jordan. Unlike most talent shows, where people assemble in one country to participate, Sony about That will take the moving studio approach, with studios rented in different counties and dressed in identical fashion.

With four projects in the bag, Abu Homos has one main concern – pilots. “Most broadcasters in the Arab world do not invest in pilots,” she laments. In essence, a pilot becomes the yardstick to determine the pulse and reception of a programme with an audience. “Internationaly, you submit a screenplay together with the treatment. If the broadcaster likes the screenplay, they will invest in a pilot and once they see how the reception is, they will commission the programme. Here in our market, there is no clear commissioning process and many broadcasters request pilots. This is a big investment for small production companies and hinders new talent and small creative companies, and contracts often go to big companies. The only way to break this cycle may be if broadcasters announce a clear commissioning process that allows fair opportunities to new talents,” she says.

Arab Format Lab is changing that with a two-pronged approach. For the first prong, it continuously strives to convince regional broadcasters that investing or co-investing in a pilot is better than commissioning a show based on what they see on paper. “It’s better to spend a few hundred thousand [dollars] on a pilot and make a decision based on audience reception, than pay millions for an entire series that you have only read about on paper.”

The second prong is to organise an annual screening of pilots in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, inviting broadcasters, advertisers, prospective investors and media partners. Although this is customary in most international markets, it has not yet been attempted in this region.

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“I think that is how it is done in international markets. If a pilot is picked up, it naturally becomes episode one of a series,” says Abu Homos.

“It is important to invest in pilots. They always cost more because they are initially a one-off show, but it’s better to invest in a pilot than a whole series. Once a show is picked up, the investor will get a proportional share of overall distribution revenue because we aim to give a percentage of the revenues earned from a show back to the investor.”

Arab Format Lab hopes to have these screenings in September in the UAE, though the inaugural edition for 2018 will be later in the year. “Hosting such a screening is one of the primary ways to make sure new companies and writers gain the visibility they need,” says Abu Homos.

In the meantime, Arab Format Lab has already announced the Emirates Entertainment Experience initiative along with Sharjah Media City (Shams), to inspire Emirati talent to spread their wings here. “This is a digital platform where cinema meets TV meets social media. It is a crowd-sourcing platform where we invite people of different skills like acting, directing, lighting, sound design, set design, and they will be led by a dream team of nine inspirational figures like an iconic director, producer, musician and so on,” explains Abu Homos.

“We will start with giving the platform five minutes of a movie, and in every phase – which is every four weeks – we will ask the audience to propose the next ten minutes of the movie. This will happen over a period of 36 months, when we will assess the script and ask them to make their own version of the movie. By next September, we will have a user-generated Emirati movie, and on the platform you will have various versions of the same. “Master classes will be conducted every four weeks live on social media. The best way of training talent is on an actual project. If they are doing a movie and we are assessing their scripts and what they are doing, we will be able to direct them and train them. This...
is our commitment to genuine

talent development and training.

“The platform itself is designed
to connect you with others in your
vicinity. For instance, when you
enter your profile, location and
skills, the system will propose
people with the other specialties
that are near to you geographically.

We will have awards at the end of
the project for best direction, best
acting, best production and so
on. Essentially, we are creating a
pool of new talent in the region.”

A soft launch of the platform is
expected later this month. Arab
Format Lab has also put forward
a proposal in the emirate to make
this entertainment experience
part of the graduation project
for Arab universities, so that
they genuinely benefit from it.

For anyone who thinks the
duo may have had it easy, Abu
Homos points out that she did
26 pitches for one project before
it received a positive response.

While these projects are both a
passion and a commercial dream,
revenue is only trickling in.

“Quality doesn’t come
cheap. You want to be able
to benchmark yourself
against international
standards and that requires
significant investment”

Khulud Abu Homos, CEO and
co-founder, Arab Format Lab

for the rights. When the deal didn’t
go through, I had to bear the financial
brunt and it really impacts your
morale. The biggest challenge last
year was the continuous changes to
management structure across most
broadcasters and media companies
in the Middle East,” she points out.

But if there have been setbacks,
the team has also seen rewards,
with their initiatives in Saudi Arabia,
Egypt, the UAE and Lebanon gaining
momentum and nurturing young
talent. One big win, Alaidaroos
says, has been the ability to
identify a lot of women writers in
the region, particularly in Saudi
Arabia, through their writers’ labs.

“We have more women than
men in our team of scriptwriters in
Saudi Arabia and they are headed
by a woman,” he points out.

In the meantime, Abu Homos
says gender disparity has never
stopped her from ambitiously moving
forward to achieve her dreams.

Some women see themselves as
victims within the work environment.
It starts with ourselves; I don’t
say it’s easy. I was and am always
surrounded by men, but it has
never stopped me from pushing
forward to achieve everything I
have wanted to achieve. You need
to have the perseverance to match
your ambition. Like they say: ‘If you
want more, you need to be willing
to do more.’” — Vijaya Cherian

“The timing has been perfect, says the team at Arab
Format Lab, because Saudi Arabia has taken a big
step in media and cinema with Vision 2030.

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SPECS | S35 | U35 | FF/VV
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Focal Range | 24-290mm | 26-320mm | 36-435mm
Aperture | T2.8 | T3.1 | 74.2
Image Circle | 31.1mm | 34.6mm | 46.3mm
Weight | 12.6kg / 27.7lbs | 12.75kg/28.1lbs | 12.75kg/28.1lbs

www.amt.tv
in5 Media in Dubai Production City is a creative hub offering media enthusiasts, freelancers and entrepreneurs the labs, studios and creative workspaces to build skill-sets and drive innovation in the region. in5 has partnered with UTURN, a leading Arabic entertainment network on YouTube and other social media platforms, to offer guidance, industry training and workshops focused on technical skills and digital content development. We take you on a photo-tour of the facility.

The voice recording studios are equipped with the Apple iMac, the Presonus Studio Live 16.0.2 audio mixer, the Tascam SS-CDR20 and MH-8 and the Sennheiser MK 4.

The facility boasts multiple green rooms to shoot sequences with special effects.

The main production studio coupled with the mini studio offer space for video production. The studio is fitted with soundproofed walls and other equipment for production purposes. Cameras available include the Sony A7s, Fujifilm X-T3 and Fujifilm X-H1.

Students, entrepreneurs and start-ups, and media content creators such as sound engineers, musicians and scriptwriters, can use this equipment to develop their ideas and produce engaging content.

A 28-seat, purpose-built screening room offers an engaging cinema-like experience to view finished work.

The editing suites include 10 Apple iMacs and two Sony LMD-A170 LC monitors, as well as the Adobe Premiere editing platform.

The lounge area is customisable for medium to large meetings, workshops and presentations.
The video game Unreal was first released by Epic Games in 1998 to rave reviews. Reviewers described the single-player experience as a way of bringing the excitement of gaming into the real world. The Unreal Engine was also released, providing a platform for developers to create immersive virtual environments.

Today, its fourth iteration is being used to bring the same level of realism to virtual sets and augmented reality. Avid, Ross Video, and Zero Density are among the companies that have adopted Unreal technology to enhance the visual quality of broadcasts. Avid added support for Epic Unreal in September 2017 and announced it for the first time at IBC2017. Ray Thompson, Director of Broadcast and Media Solutions Marketing at Avid, explains that Unreal technology is being used to render realistic graphics in real-time for virtual sets.

Canadian firm Ross Video has been active in virtual studio and AR technologies for a number of years. Gideon Ferber, Director of Virtual Solutions, recalls the early forays into virtual sets as less than pleasing, noting that previous technologies caused surfaces and textures to look too shiny or plasticky. Incorporating Unreal into Frontier has given them photo-realistic results that are very natural, allowing them to render graphics in a much more believable manner.

Turkish firm Zero Density was one of the early adopters of Unreal Engine technology in 2014, following a vigorous search for the right game engine that fits their vision and product. Aydemir Sahin, VP of Product and Support, explains that the photo-realistic rendering capabilities of Unreal Engine enhance its solution, allowing Zero Density to provide a built-in keying technology and compositing tools for broadcasters, such as Fox Sports, Ziggo Sport, and Canadian broadcaster TFO.

Conceding that almost every company offering virtual studio solutions in this industry has now integrated Unreal into its products, Ferber of Ross Video highlights the aspects that differentiate their solution: “At Ross, we believe that where the engines are all the same, configuration and control therefore become critically important, and that’s where we can add value.” We have a product for virtual studio control called UX that’s highly flexible and customisable, with an easy-to-use intuitive touchscreen graphical user interface. It comes installed on a touchscreen PC and can handle camera calibration.
PROtech

While reiterating that the design team needs to learn Unreal, Ferber of Ross highlights the many user-friendly options for operators: “From an operator perspective, Frontier (which obviously includes Unreal) can be controlled by something called UX that can manage every element of pre-production and calibration, as well as on-air production. That said, it’s worth mentioning that users can also manage on-air production using an open-platform control solution we offer called Dashboard. When broadcasters decide to move to a virtual studio set-up from a physical studio, we’re obviously on hand to help with training and commissioning, and we’ll very often help run the first few productions to make sure customers are happy and comfortable with the system.”

On future trends, Thompson of Avid highlights cloud and 5G as drivers: “Cloud-based end-to-end workflows can take advantage of enhanced rendering techniques to enable news, sports, weather and live production in a single- or multi-cloud environment. As 5G becomes more widespread and devices that support 5G become more widely available, the increasing use of AR in news, sports, weather and live entertainment will immerse viewers in any environment, to provide a new level of storytelling not yet realised on traditional OTA and even digital platforms.”

Urging the broadcast industry to ride the wave of innovation, Sahin of Zero Density says: “There is enough evidence in the industry that game-engines have started replacing graphics-related engines. The vast potential of utilising this ecosystem of game-engines will revolutionise broadcasting.”

While he sees technology becoming more powerful and graphics even better, Ferber of Ross sounds a cautionary note: “Good content has to serve the consumer. I think well-designed graphics can be powerful complements to the storytelling, but they shouldn’t dominate or distract from the core content, and they rarely work well if the core content is weak. Complexity for the sake of it is never helpful.” - Supriya Srinivas

“We believe that where the engines are all the same, configuration and control therefore become critically important, and that’s where we really add value”

Gideon Ferber, Director of Virtual Solutions, Ross Video

Scene manipulation, media replacement, event triggering, animation control and robotic camera movement control.” Highlighting the uniqueness of Unreal brings, Thompson says: “Avid runs Unreal on its Maestro l Engine hardware (as well as our legacy HDVG hardware), with the ability to run the Maestro l Render Engine at the same time as running the Epic Unreal Engine, which means you can deliver a virtual set and data-driven AR graphics in real-time at the same time. It’s unique to the Avid implementation of Unreal.”

Underscoring early adoption, Sahin of Zero Density says: “Zero Density’s Reality Engine is on-air since 2016. We have developed real-time node-based computer on top of Unreal Engine, which enables post-production-style visual effects in the domain of live video production. The main differentiation is that our solution is not an integration with legacy systems, which is the most popular way of using UE in the industry. We provide an Unreal Engine native solution and develop graphics engines into broadcast systems, it is a collaborative process to ensure that aspects such as camera trackers work with the systems in place. We ask solutions providers how simple it is for the crew to use their systems.”

Sahin of Zero Density clarifies that there are multiple user profiles. “As we are Unreal Engine native solution providers, content developers must be knowledgeable on how to utilise Unreal Engine. On the other hand, the end user (TV channels, for instance) does not need specific UE skills to execute productions.”

On the need for training, Thompson of Avid says: “Users need to learn how to use Maestro l Designer in order to author the graphics or work with a graphics production company to produce these graphics. In either case, once the elements are created, users can run Unreal Engine on the same hardware platform (Maestro l Engine) as the Maestro render engine, which supports video and graphics elements all delivered in real-time.”

“We incorporated Unreal Engine technology first in 2014, following a vigorous search for the right game engine that fits our vision and product”

Aydemir Sahin, VP of Product and Support, Zero Density
The progress report presented at the MENA Broadcast Satellite Anti-piracy Coalition meeting, held in Amsterdam during IBC 2018, indicates growing collaboration between governments, regulators, industry and advertisers.

A total of 242 channels have been taken off-air across MENA from 2014 to 2018, 47 so far in 2018 alone. Of the 47, 39 were Arabic channels and eight were Western. These figures were presented at the MENA Broadcast Satellite Anti-piracy Coalition meeting, held in Amsterdam on the sidelines of IBC 2018.

In April 2018, when the coalition met in Dubai, some of the television channels illegally broadcasting Western and Arabic content were named. They included Top Movies on Yahsat and HOGAR, Misr Elbalad and Josat on Eutelsat, all of which were broadcasting foreign content. In terms of illegal Arabic channels, those shut down recently include Egypt Life, 2M Comedy and 2M Film on Yahsat, as well as A Cinema, Wave Cinema, Egypt Life, Mior Al Balad, Beirut Cinema, Cinema B, T-Film, T-Cinema, T-Taxi and T-Comedy on Eutelsat Moon.

With regard to digital content, the coalition had earlier revealed that there were 2.71bn downloads of pirated content in 2017 alone. In this context, action in terms of taking down websites dramatically increased between Q2 2017 and Q2 2018.

The figures for 2018 indicate robust collaboration between coalition members and enforcement agencies across MENA. Enforcement action from January 1 to September 3, 2018, saw 124 Arabic titles. Similarly, 80,000 infringements were reported and removed for 278 Western titles. Recognizing that everyone trying to deliver quality content to the public is threatened by the inundation of ISD boxes and apps from commercial piracy syndicates, more than 20 ISDs were monitored, with eight disrupted, and at least 32 apps were monitored, with 17 disrupted by OSN teams.

Individual members of the coalition have demonstrated creativity in fighting piracy, recognizing the social and cultural mindsets that need to be shifted as much as enforcing the letter of the law. In October 2017, OSN and Dubai Customs launched a content protection virtual reality (VR) game at KidZania Dubai, to boost awareness of the threats of content theft. The 60-second game, Copycat Combat, is aimed at children between the ages of five and 12, to raise awareness of the importance of protecting IPR.

The figures for 2018 indicate robust collaboration between coalition members and enforcement agencies across MENA. Enforcement action from January 1 to September 3, 2018, saw 124 Arabic titles. Similarly, 80,000 infringements were reported and removed for 278 Western titles.
Arabia topping the list with a total of 84 raids in which 102,471 STBs were confiscated. 54 raids were conducted by the General Commission for Audiovisual Media (GCAM) and 30 raids by the Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MOCI). The UAE, Egypt and Bahrain followed with 60, 27 and 21 raids respectively.

The raids, conducted by local authorities, yielded wildly varying results. The 60 raids in the UAE, for instance, saw just 186 STBs confiscated, whereas the 23 raids in Egypt yielded 5,019 STBs. Across MENA, countrywide breakdown for online action showed the UAE, Kuwait and KSA blocking reported websites. Action from Kuwait was the most encouraging, with 79 out of 82 reported websites blocked. Close cooperation with local authorities in Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt is ongoing.

With OBN online, the range of action taken highlights the role of multiple governments, regulatory authorities and telcos. For instance, the MK Pro IPTV box, popular with expatriates in the UAE, had streaming blocked by a leading UAE telco operator for a few days in August 2018.

Additionally, the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) in Kuwait has instructed telcos to block 77 pirated websites this year. Similarly, 29 websites have been reported to Jordan’s Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), with the assurance that they will be blocked in the coming days.

Apart from regulation, a workshop on fighting piracy which was hosted by Jordan’s National Library in July 2018 was attended by the customs and cyber crime units. As a result, a laboratory was set up for the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry. A meeting was held with the head of the legislative committee of the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT). When it was clarified that website blocking requires court orders, the coalition started to work with relevant officials to process the blocking requests.

The coalition was set up in 2014, bringing together major broadcast satellite providers (Eutelsat, Arabsat, Nilesat, Noosat, GafiSat, Viasat, JIN, EchoSat, AMC), content production, distribution and telecommunications companies (MBC, ONN, Rotana, ART, CNK, du, Etisalat, Mediagates, BeIN, My HD, Paramount, Rádió, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros., Universal, Front Row, WKE, Sound and Light and Cinema Company, the International Advertising Association, Cedars Art, Eagle Films, Almassa Art Production, the Egyptian Chamber of Cinema Industry, Media Production City, Mior International Films, Spot 2000, the MPA), and anti-piracy firms (AAA, Mass, TMI) to fight the battle against piracy.

One of the key topics of discussion at the coalition was BeoutQ, which is currently considered the largest piracy operation in the region. beIN Media Group, a member of the coalition, alleged that another member was involved in the piracy and was severely impacting its revenues. With a key principle of the coalition being that members will support each other’s requests to take down pirate channels or services should there be sufficient proof, the coalition is reported to have agreed to draft a letter to the accused member with the aim of finding out more.

The next meeting will be hosted by NIBC Studios in London in January 2019.

The charter for the MENA Broadcast Satellite Anti-piracy Coalition

- Broadcasters and distributors make reasonable endeavours to establish the ownership of intellectual property and pay the owners for the use of the intellectual property
- Advertisers ensure their advertising appears on broadcast channels that respect the ownership of intellectual property
- Satellite operators write contracts that set out clear obligations on their clients to respect property rights and to provide clear and unequivocal proof of intellectual property rights upon request
- Studios and distributors protect their intellectual property by helping to clearly identify ownership quickly and clearly when requested by coalition members battling pirates, by notifying relevant industry players of property rights abuse and pursuing legal action against pirates where possible.
- Subject to applicable laws, companies endeavour not to sell to, buy from, or otherwise deal with companies or individuals identified by the coalition as committing wilful acts of piracy
- We do not rely solely upon judgments in local courts in order to take action against piracy. As established and international companies, we take responsibility for who we do business with and how we do business. We look to established international norms, and the actions and behaviour of the established legitimate market players including studios, major distributors and broadcasters to help us identify acts of piracy and pirate operations. Members agree that all actions they undertake with respect to or in the furtherance of this Code of Conduct must be in accordance with the law of Commerce and Industry.
Cloud technology is maturing. In the broadcast industry, this has paved the way for SaaS models to be deployed on a wider scale for media processing. Today’s SaaS supports the entire workflow chain, from ingest to playout and delivery, enabling operators to quickly and easily deploy new channels. This is especially advantageous in the OTT environment, where technologies, formats and devices are rapidly changing. With a cloud-native media processing and delivery approach, broadcasters can be more agile, scalable and efficient, delivering exceptional quality of experience (QoE) to subscribers, up to UHD HDR, with low latency across all screens. Let’s look into the key benefits of using SaaS for media processing, highlighting the value of intelligent function integration, pre-integrated ecosystems and new business model opportunities, such as teleport as a service.

Key benefits of SaaS
For broadcasters looking to increase business agility, SaaS is the way to go. Generally, in the broadcast market, workflow changes happen slowly. With a cloud-native service, operators can launch new services in a matter of hours as opposed to weeks or months.

SaaS is also more scalable. Broadcasters can turn channels and services on and off almost instantaneously, which is perfect for supporting event or sports channels with a limited air time. As consumer demand changes, computer resources can be adjusted to address peaks and dips in viewership.

SaaS is also cost-effective. Rather than making a significant up-front investment in equipment, broadcasters can pay for resources as they grow. There are no hidden charges or surprises. What’s especially amazing is that broadcasters can deliver amazing video quality with SaaS, up to UHHD HDR, at low bitrates, with low latency. SaaS that supports a wide range of formats, codecs and encoding schemes, including next-generation specifications such as the Common Media Application Format (CMAF), is particularly well-suited to delivering OTT video with the same latency as broadcast.

SaaS with intelligent function integration
While early SaaS offerings were focused on specific media processing functions, market expectations are now migrating toward workflow-centric SaaS. Operators regularly face big decisions such as infrastructure renewal cycles. The ability to know whether they will be able to handle their workflow is driving the adoption of SaaS. As the functional scope of SaaS expands, in many cases the full on-premises media processing platform can be moved to the cloud without having to maintain a cumbersome hybrid architecture. In fact, once a functional layer of support is reached, some operators realise there is no point trying to keep some elements of media processing on-premise. This is one of the reasons why SaaS with intelligent function integration is gaining increased attention and is unique compared with other workflow-centric SaaS. Operators can also launch a white-label service offering to other business partners.

Ecosystem integration
While certain workflows, such as linear video transcoding, are relatively static and self-defined, others require a certain level of integration. Typical examples include non-linear OTT delivery applications, which require a tight integration with content protection (i.e., DRM), content management systems (CMS) and cloud storage, among other services. Similarly, SaaS that supports dynamic ad insertion (DAI) requires interfacing to upper layer control plane components, such as ad decision services. From this standpoint, the value of SaaS also lies in its level of integration. Managing comprehensive workflows and delivering broadcast-grade video quality with high availability using SaaS has become a game changer. Handling live and file-based ingest and playout with multi-layered graphics, transcoding, packaging, encryption, storage, origin and delivery from the same SaaS – this is not only a possibility, it is a real-world solution already being used by major broadcasters and media service providers.

“The full on-premises media processing platform can be moved to the cloud without having to maintain a cumbersome hybrid architecture” Olivier Karra, Director for OTT & IPTV solutions, Harmonic

From a business agility standpoint, media companies can use SaaS to expand their traditional service offering offering overnight. For example, service providers can leverage the channel origination capabilities of SaaS to create additional self-branded offerings on top of their standard package. In addition, they can also launch a white-label service offering to other business partners.

“From a business agility standpoint, media companies can use SaaS to expand their traditional service offering offering overnight.”

Business model consistency
By taking advantage of ecosystem components through open APIs, certain integration points depend on constantly evolving protocols (e.g., CMAF and HTTP/2 chunking for low latency, VAST for DAI). Choosing SaaS that stays up to date with these new protocols is important.

Conclusion
Cloud technology, specifically SaaS for media processing, is changing the face of OTT, broadcast and next-generation video delivery, enabling media companies to be more agile and adaptive to changing requirements. Broadcasters and service providers can dramatically speed up the time to market for new services, lower their media processing and delivery costs, and deliver better video quality on every screen. This is particularly well-suited to the OTT, broadcast and next-generation video delivery requirements. Broadcasters and service providers can dramatically speed up the time to market for new services, lower their media processing and delivery costs, and deliver better video quality on every screen.
Ahmad Ghossein’s first feature film, All This Victory, is as much about the July 2006 war and a universal human story as it is about a Middle East film that has won a significant award at Europe’s oldest film festival.

In a small village in southern Lebanon, during the last days of the July War of 2006, five people try to escape the bombing: a young woman with her older husband, two old men, and Marwan, a young man recently arrived from Beirut who is looking for his father. They decide to hide in the basement, but Israeli soldiers enter the house above them. They are trapped in their location and by their own fears, and the situation soon spirals out of control.

Ahmad Ghossein’s first feature-length film, All This Victory is inspired by a true story of two men trapped in their home during the war. His “obsession” with the story has personal moorings as well. His mother’s home was destroyed in that war and the protagonist’s quest for his father mirrors his own generation growing up with ‘missing’ fathers working outside Lebanon. However, as a filmmaker and visual artist who has had art installations exhibited in major galleries around the world, the drama unfolding in a single room must also have been a compelling draw.

It is debatable whether Ghossein found it more difficult to maintain continuity with five actors over 26 days of intense shooting, than to endure the long years it has taken his film to finally see the light of day. When Broadcastpro ME spoke to the filmmaker after his film won the Czech Republic’s Karlovy Vary ‘Work in Progress’ award, there was little doubt what he found more invigorating.

“I enjoy directing actors,” he says. “As a director, my challenge during the shoot was to keep actors in the same frame of mind. We had conducted a lot of workshops, and while rehearsing we allowed for improvisation, which helps because the movie is not dialogue-heavy. The shots that had the five actors in the frame were particularly difficult, since they were not shot in sequence. For 10 whole days, they also had to be wet and covered in dust, and if the shots had to be repeated, the process would have to be redone. My actors were extremely patient and professional.”

With production companies such as Abbout Productions working with not just commercial but independent films, and private investors willing to fund films, Ahmad Ghossein is optimistic about the Lebanese film industry.

“It is primarily a human story and the enemy on the floor above could be anyone.”

Ahmad Ghossein, Scriptwriter and Director for All This Victory
Chakerdjian, co-founders of Ginger Brunel Productions, were line producers for All This Victory. On choosing the company, Myriam says: “Abla and Lara had worked on The Insult. We knew we were in good hands when they were on the set every day ensuring the director had everything he needed. While we are closely involved in pre- and post-production, the actual shoot is a time when the director needs to have space with his creative process.” Equipped with ARRI Alexa camera and ARRI FLEX hand grip, and Cooke S4 lenses, the filmmaker embarked on a challenging shoot. “The ceiling of the room where most of the shoot took place was low, so all the light had to come in from the sides. I worked with the art director to create a certain look before the soldiers come in and a different look after they enter. The
PROPRODUCTION
shortlisted for the prestigious Venice
duo to laud the film. The film was also
reportedly applied) approached the
shortlisted films (from hundreds that
representatives of the twenty
announced, jury members and
get delusional, imagining there are
the first floor. The third clip depicts
the enemy soldiers have barged into
moment the civilians realise that
The second scene depicts the
he discovers his house destroyed.
"The first footage we showed depicts
Karlovy Vary. Myriam elaborates:
"This year was the first time
that Karlovy Vary included
films from the Middle East,
so winning was huge for the
Lebanese film industry as well"
Myriam Sassine, Producer, All This Victory
and co-owner of Abbout Productions
than 2,200 industry professionals
in attendance at the 2018 edition.
"The final ambition for the film,
and for any independent filmmaker, is
to be accepted in an A-grade
festival – Venice, Berlin, Cannes –
and to be distributed worldwide," says Ghossein. "We are also
hoping for a wider commercial release in
Lebanon and the region. It is a pity
that the Dubai International Film
Festival has been cancelled, it was
an excellent regional platform."
On the film industry in Lebanon,
Ghossein sounds an optimistic note:
"I believe the industry is transforming
in Lebanon, and Abbout Productions
has played a critical role in that
process. Earlier, we had individuals
outside of Egypt trying to make a
difference. Today, we have production
companies that are looking not
just at commercial films, but also
independent films like mine. Their
vision is to have Lebanese cinema on
the map. While it has always been
difficult for Arab films to get funding,
we now have private investors in the
fury, which makes a big difference."
No stranger to the big stage,
Ghossein has seen his works (shorts
and video installations) exhibited
with not too much dialogue,
and co-owner of Abbout Productions
no stranger to the big stage,
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YahClick launches in Zimbabwe

YahClick, the broadband service of UAE global satellite operator Yahsat, has launched in Zimbabwe. The service was unveiled in Harare, where the company also announced its partnership with official service partner Utande, a subsidiary of Dendumante Investments. With YahClick, Zimbabwe’s broadband users will have access to affordable, uninterrupted, high-speed broadband connectivity.

Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered from economic losses in recent years due to frequent internet blackouts that directly affect fixed wireless and mobile internet connectivity. Underdeveloped ICT infrastructure is among the factors that influence economic growth by two percentage points every year, while cutting business productivity across the continent by as much as 40%. To Zimbabwe, the ICT sector has been underserved for many years due to several challenges. In urban areas, access to reliable internet services is expensive, while internet penetration remains at approximately 31%. YahClick uses Ka-band powered by HTS spot beam technology to deliver high-performance satellite broadband services via smaller dishes. This significantly reduces the CAPEX required to build satellite-based connectivity infrastructure, enabling YahClick to elevate the digital offering in Zimbabwe and support the country in unlocking its full economic and social potential.

“Yahsat is the first operator to introduce Ka-band satellite broadband in Africa, and we aim to continuously increase YahClick’s adoption across the continent. We strongly believe that high-speed, reliable broadband connectivity is one of the key facilitators of economic and social progress for African nations,” commented Farhad Khan, Chief Commercial Officer, Yahsat.

YahClick is ideally placed to bring the transformational benefits of reliable, always-on broadband within reach of all businesses and communities to help advance the country’s ICT sector. We are excited with the prospect of playing a role in empowering the country socially and economically and look forward to doing so with our local service partner Dendumante,” he added.

The Zimbabwe launch follows the successful rollout of YahClick in Ghana, the DRC, Ivory Coast and Cameroon in September, after also arriving in Burundi earlier this year.

“YahClick’s technology through Ka-band works seamlessly across all levels of the telecommunications infrastructure,” commented Dendumante CEO Never Ncube. “By introducing YahClick, with its exceptional track record on the continent, Utande is playing its part in spreading dependable internet connectivity further across the country.”

Intelsat invests in AMN to connect ultra-rural sub-Saharan Africa

Intelsat has made a strategic investment in Mobile Networks (AMN). The investment will help accelerate the deployment of mobile connectivity to underserved communities across multiple countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Given the economic and geographic complexities of operating in sub-Saharan Africa, many mobile network operators (MNOs) face barriers when trying to deploy their networks to these areas. AMN provides MNOs with a network-as-a-service (NAS) solution in which AMN builds, funds and operates the ultra-rural network for the operators.

As a result, African mobile operators will be able to extend their coverage with minimal OPEX and CAPEX risk, enabling them to grow their subscriber and revenue base and better serve their customers.

At the core of AMN’s solution is a low-cost, small-cell solution powered by a highly reliable solar-based system which can be rapidly deployed and installed in less than six hours. As part of the long-term agreement, Intelsat will leverage the power, performance and efficiencies generated by Intelsat’s next-generation Intelsat EpicNG high-throughput satellites (HTSs), as well as the 25 Intelsat satellites covering the continent to provide the optimal balance between coverage and high throughput for the enabled sites.

Once installed, the sites will connect over the Intelsat fleet to the core of the mobile network connectivity ecosystem. Intelsat manages mobile services such as GSM voice, SMS and GPRS/EDGE packet data, with the ability to upgrade the base stations to 3G and 4G as data demands allow.

“The high performance, redundancy and flexibility of Intelsat’s satellite fleet over Africa made them an ideal partner for us,” said Michael Darcy, AMN’s CEO. “Intelsat shares our view that mobile coverage is not speaking a pale language in the world and as such invested in AMN’s vision of installing a cell in an African village. Together, we can accelerate the deployment of mobile connectivity and work to ensure that communities, wherever they are located, have equal access to connectivity, sustainable and affordable broadband connectivity.”
First UAE satellite built by Emirati engineers launches successfully

**Satellite Launch**

KhalifaSat, the first satellite designed, tested and manufactured in the UAE by Emirati engineers, was launched successfully from Japan in what is considered a significant milestone in the country’s space programme. The UAE leadership called the launch “an unprecedented achievement” for the UAE as the country heads in a month’s time to celebrate its 47th National Day on 2 December. Sheikh Hazza bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council took to LinkedIn and other social platforms to load the work of the Emirati engineering team and called the launch “a true reflection of the aspirations of our youth and our nation.”

**Newtec tests modems successfully with Telesat’s first LEO satellite**

Newtec’s modems have become the first to be successfully test-launched over the air on Telesat’s inaugural LEO satellite. With the LEO constellation, Newtec hopes to revolutionise broadband communications around the world. Testing of the Ka-band payload is ongoing and Newtec’s technology is being used to demonstrate different service scenarios. The latest trials saw test user traffic successfully pass over the satellite via Newtec modems, showing that flawless operation without packet loss can be achieved on LEO constellations.

The UAE is now working towards sending its first Emirati astronaut to the International Space Station next year.

**IRG rebrands as Satcoms Innovation Group**

As part of its efforts to include all aspects of the satellite communications industry, the Interference Reduction Group (IRG) has rebranded as the Satcoms Innovation Group (SIG). SIG aims to promote innovation in the satellite communications industry, to improve operational efficiency, reduce the risk of service-impacting events and improve quality of service. A significant part of the commit remains innovation to minimise satellite interference, through both prevention and quicker resolution. It also now covers other areas where innovation can improve performance and make the industry more competitive.

**Q-KON expands broadband connectivity in Africa with Intelsat**

AfroMEX, an independent African channel network, content distributor and producer which owns and operates more than 200 television channels across the continent, and new high-throughput satellites, has launched PREMIUM.

Q-KON is well known for its Hollywood catalogue and ties with prominent West African producers. We are confident that localisation, coupled with our fresh international rights, will provide the kind of content blend that modern West African audiences demand.

AfricableXP is a differentiated content package for Nigeria and the rest of Africa, offering more choice for viewers, said Clint Brown, Vice President of Sales, Market Development, Africa for SES Video. "New initiatives like this, which focus on delivering local and international content that is attractive for the end consumer and is offered in high picture quality, will further develop our consumer choice in Nigeria.”

**CHANNEL LAUNCH**

AfricableXP, an independent African channel network, content distributor and producer which owns and operates more than 200 television channels across the continent, and new high-throughput satellites, has launched PREMIUM. FREE, a bouquet of 13 channels delivered using LEO satellites at 28.2 degrees East.

By choosing to work with PREMIUM, FREE offers our channels full regional coverage for multilingual content packages like Hausa, with offers, always at a price point that can’t be beaten.”

**Nigerian network uses SES to launch new FTA bouquet**

In addition to hosting those TV channels on the ASTRA 2G satellite, SES media subsidiary MX1 is providing necessary ground services such as uplinking, encoding, playout servers and ad-insertion.

The "Nigerian FTA market in particular offers great opportunities for growth, and we are proud to have engaged with PREMIUM, FREE to deliver a differentiated content package for Nigerians and offer more choice for "viewers,” said Clint Brown, Vice President of Sales, Market Development, Africa for SES Video. "New initiatives like this, which focus on delivering local and international content that is attractive for the end consumer and is offered in high picture quality, will further develop consumer choice in Nigeria.”

**BROADBAND**

AfricaXP will incorporate services from Intelsat 33e, one of Intelsat’s next-generation high-throughput satellites, and use IntelsatOne Flex for Enterprise, a managed wholesale service that removes the complexities and improves the economics of network expansion. Intelsat and Q-KON will partner on marketing the new services, while Q-KON will work with small regional and wireless ISPs and field partners for the installation and support of end-user equipment. IntelsatOne Flex for Enterprise enables Q-KON to demonstrate the efficacy and robustness of its network and offer customised services. This model enables Q-KON’s partners to differentiate their services and value propositions to meet the varied needs of end users. In addition, it will enable Q-KON to close the business case and enable network expansion in regions previously uneconomical to serve, while maintaining full control of its network.
Verifying your views with Triveni Digital

IHSE debuts two-port KVM switching solution

Ross unveils EVO Signature Series solution

Fujinon enhances convertible Cabrio

Zegami’s visual exploration platform launched

JVC has launched the latest member of its StreamScope product line, the StreamScope XM Verifier. Billed as an entry-level device, the StreamScope XM Verifier offers a comprehensive view of their software visualisation tool Verifier is a Windows-based software visualisation tool that allows station engineers and field staff to get a direct response to customer input and toolset as being highly cost-effective, these bundles provide turnkey microphone/ headphone solutions for all aspects of content creation. Two bundles feature USB outputs to directly connect with computers, while two feature AUX outputs for flexibility to connect with professional mixers or digital interfaces. All bundles feature a microphone with mount, ATH-M20x Professional Monitor headphones and a new custom boom arm with desk mount. The boom arms are pre-threaded with the appropriate USB or XLR microphone cable compatible with the included microphone, for a sleek, clutter-free appearance.

IPV and ROOT6 technology automate workflows

Sound solutions from Audio-Technica

Verifying your views with Triveni Digital

IHSE debuts two-port KVM switching solution

Ross unveils EVO Signature Series solution

Fujinon enhances convertible Cabrio

Zegami’s visual exploration platform launched

Media technology specialist IPV has partnered with ROOT6 Technology to automate workflows. The patented Media technology solutions for more demanding storage node. It includes input and output to unlock faster workflow management tool. The API integration is an example, the release stated. The API integration helps consolidate workflow processes by letting users complete multiple tasks at once. This lets editors make the best use of Curator by focusing on the creative elements of their projects. Curator works with ROOT6 Technology’s Caregiver to enable editors to automatically select and preview clips, add in- and out-points, and add custom metadata where required.

Audio-Technica is offering four new bundles that cater to content creators, including podcasters, videographers, live-streamers and YouTubers. Developed in direct response to customer input and toolset as being highly cost-effective, these bundles provide turnkey microphone/ headphone solutions for all aspects of content creation. Two bundles feature USB outputs to directly connect with computers, while two feature AUX outputs for flexibility to connect with professional mixers or digital interfaces. All bundles feature a microphone with mount, ATH-M20x Professional Monitor headphones and a new custom boom arm with desk mount. The boom arms are pre-threaded with the appropriate USB or XLR microphone cable compatible with the included microphone, for a sleek, clutter-free appearance.

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IHSE debuts two-port KVM switching solution

Ross unveils EVO Signature Series solution

Fujinon enhances convertible Cabrio

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has been ever present in the technical departments of leading companies since it became a sensation in the '90s. It's important to know that the function of AI that offers the best results is known as machine learning. Machine learning is the ability of computer systems to constantly learn by themselves. The only two things missing are data and computational capacity.

The importance of data and the power of calculation are fundamental to understanding the success of AI in the previous twenty years. This allows us not only to obtain information from users who make use of online platforms, but also to know the nature of their experience, the problems they experience and the navigation they perform on their devices, in order to build 360-degree, engaging end-user experiences.

Intelligent anomaly detection
Data allows us to find common patterns that trigger an action – such as user churn – or in the detection of anomalies, which occur when a particular behaviour is not within the expected pattern.

Precisely segmented content recommendation
Moreover, recommendation systems can be built to detect correlations between users (user-based recommendations) or use a person’s own previous experience to offer content (content-based recommendations).

Churn detection and prediction
The detection and prevention of user churn is the number one concern of video services, as it directly affects their income. For this, it is interesting to identify the main causes or influencers for churn, such as poor streaming quality, inefficient customer service, an unappealing content catalogue, unrelated content recommendations, advertising overload and unfriendly UI. It is also possible to predict and identify users at risk of unsubscribing from a video platform by analysing their behaviour and frequency of visits and then comparing it with the previous behaviours of users who left the platform.

Neural networks solve these types of problems and they do a very good job in pattern detection. For an isolated set of data, for example a single visualisation, one would advise using a simple neural network. For a sequence of events, one would opt for an RNN (recurrent neural network) which has a temporary memory of past events, such as a user’s visiting pattern.

Intelligent alert system
Anomaly detection services allow content and technical teams to detect when any of the quality metrics are not in their confidence values and which combination of dimensions is causing such failure.

For example, if a particular combination of city and CDN gets a local buffer value that is too high, the confidence values for each metric and dimension cannot be fixed – they are variable in time and the system must adapt (note that a constant problem is not an anomaly). In addition, each possible combination must be treated independently. So-called autoencoders are a type of neural network proving to be very useful in solving these problems, despite existing for a different purpose. They consist of two parts: the first stage of coding and the second stage of decoding. When encoding and decoding ‘normal’ values, the result is the same, but when an anomaly is introduced, the decoding varies with respect to the initial input. There we have an alert.

The future
The market trend is towards incorporating artificial intelligence in more areas of the business, creating automatic marketing campaigns customised for each user, or even models that regulate traffic on platforms so that errors and waiting times are reduced. Exciting new AI applications are to follow in the video sphere, and anyone with a video service will experience them.

Marc Valdivia is a Data Engineer at NPAW (Nice People At Work).
From a Single Channel Playout Server to a Multi Channel Turnkey Broadcast Centre

**CloudAir** Next Generation Ecosystem for IP Channel Playout
This highly innovative Cloud Solution is all about speed of channel set up and management, with unlimited scalability, affordability and easy to use.

**PlayBox Neo** Channel-in-a-Box & Workflow platform
A powerful evolutionary new version with plenty of new features, ensuring you will continue to enjoy using the world's best-selling playout & channel branding product line.