GAME OF DRONES

Hatim Saleh on why drone filming is scaling new heights
DIGITAL 6000

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Better performance, quicker setup, immediate operation in less space. Digital 6000, enabling more channels to operate in even the most challenging RF conditions. Intermodulation is completely eliminated by Digital 6000, ensuring that the expectations of audio professionals and business managers alike. Our new professional wireless series delivers reliable performance in even the most demanding situations, even the most challenging RF conditions. Intermodulation is completely eliminated by Digital 6000, enabling more channels to operate in less space. Digital 6000, ensuring that the expectations of audio professionals and business managers alike.

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Digital 6000 utilizes groundbreaking technology from our flagship Digital 9000. Dependability is guaranteed by our renowned Long Range transmission mode and proprietary audio codec. Digital integration is seamless with AES3 and optional Dante output. Monitoring and control of the two-channel receiver is at your fingertips, with an elegant, intuitive user interface.

On this month’s cover...

Harris Saik, founder of ChopperShoot.

Welcome

We do not live in a world of traditional TV viewing anymore nor cater to consumers who will lap up any content we send their way. It’s not enough to know this and talk about it extensively. It is really critical that our business models and strategies evolve to live this change if we are to make any dent at all in piracy.

BroadcastPro ME just concluded the second edition of the MENA Anti-Piracy Conference and in response to feedback from delegates, we brought a raft of new voices and perspectives to the panel discussions. While the odd sceptics may complain that they have heard it all before, the truth is that most others haven’t and if we are still stuck at square one, perhaps it’s important to hear some of it again and again until we set the wheels of change in motion.

One of the key points that came out of that discussion was that pirates are not just smart and continuously evolving, they actually seem to have a much better understanding of viewer needs than traditional players. As a result, they have packaged their products better with greater SEO ranking and discoverability on search engines. They are user-friendly and affordable, and consumers like to view their entertainment on those terms. What pirates can’t seem to guarantee is a reliable service. This is what legitimate services should pick on and in addition to offering packages at similar prices with double payment options, they should be able to ensure a consistent and reliable service.

While it’s very tempting to dwell more on the discussions from the broadcasters, the tech experts and the lawyers while it’s still fresh in my mind, I shall leave it for the June issue, which will cover the Anti-Piracy conference in more detail.

I’m sure all of you have already seen a great deal of press around new launches and acquisitions announced at NATS so I won’t discuss that in further detail.

As we go to press, however, I have just discovered that Abu Dhabi Media is getting ready to launch its first virtual news anchor. With every new technological innovation, a number of jobs in the newsroom seem to be taking a hit. Will news anchors be the next or will humans now evolve to hear some of it again and again until we set the wheels of change in motion.

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Sharjah Broadcasting Authority (SBA) has worked with Imagine Communications to deploy a disaster recovery (DR) solution at its backup centre in Al Thaid, UAE, using software-defined technology in a primarily IP-connected environment. The hybrid DR site will provide full cover for SBA’s four television channels, delivered by a primary playout system also implemented by Imagine.

Ensuring business continuity and protection of the broadcaster’s archive, the new system supports the expansion of operations, including additional channels designed to reach fresh audiences within the Emirate and the region. This expansion will depend upon smart, new functionality, delivered by software-defined networks.

“This project is a really important step in our migration path towards IP networks and virtualisation,” commented Aisha Alzareef, Broadcast Technology & Information Systems Director at SBA. “Collaborating with Imagine helps us ensure that our technical and operational teams understand the challenges of these new technologies. We have worked in close partnership with Imagine Communications since the foundation of our company 10 years ago, and with IP, we will be in a great position to prepare plans for future developments and the complete migration of our main playout centre.”

The key benefit of the DR playout system is in maintaining perfect synchronisation with the main site, with full content mirroring to allow seamless switchover in the event of any problems. To achieve this, the system is built on Imagine Communications’ Versio virtualised integrated playout solution, which is designed for geo-dispersed operations. The Versio software application runs on HP hardware, providing full automation and playout functionality, along with servers and content management, graphics, storage, master control switching – and management of the synchronisation and mirroring.

As this is a major step in SBA’s migration towards IP connectivity, the system also needs to support legacy SDI content. To achieve this, the architecture includes a Platinum VX router and the Selenio MCP processing platform to provide SD/HD conversion. Also supporting both connectivity systems is the EPIC MV multiviewer, which allows SBA to comprehensively monitor its entire operation. The system at SBA is controlled by Imagine’s Magellan SDN Orchestrator software control system, allowing it to easily manage and control its legacy infrastructure, while seamlessly incorporating next-gen technologies, switching and interworking between HD, Ultra HD and uncompressed real-time SMPTE ST 2110 streams.

“We are delighted to be continuing the journey with Sharjah Broadcasting Authority as they transition from their traditional playout facility towards the exploration of next-gen playout and networking technologies,” commented Anas Hantash, Head of Middle East and North Africa for Imagine Communications.

SBA’s DR centre went live in March 2019.
Alamiya recently invested heavily in Grass Valley kit to support a major upgrade of its entire fleet of 13 OB vans. The investment will enable Alamiya to future proof its end-to-end live production infrastructure so it can deliver 4K UHD productions of major sporting and live events.

Alamiya has deployed hundreds of LDX 88N series 4K/HD/SD cameras, including 24 LDX 96 High-Frame Rate HE/3G/4K UHD cameras, the K2 Dyno 91 replay system and four Karrera K-Frame Video Production Center switches with 3 & 5 M/E. Additionally, all of the related infrastructures, video routers and modular frames are based on Deniti solutions. The LDX 86N series camera support native 4K UHD (3840x2160) and native 3G/HD (1920x1080) image capture, using three 3840x2160p 4KXenium HAWK CMOS imagers with DPMUltra (dynamic pixel management) functionality, offering a great viewer experience for all Alamiya’s live productions. In addition, the LDX 86N provides the GV-musician upgrade path for the next level of functionality when production needs require it.

Alamiya inks deals with EVS, Canon and Vizrt at NAB

Sultan Al Muheisen, CEO of Alamiya, also signed three deals at NAB with EVS, Canon and Vizrt at each of the manufacturers’ booths. Alamiya will invest in EVS’ 4K/ UHD replay servers for their expandable functionality and high resolution. A second deal with Canon through local distributor Giocam will ensure that Alamiya brings the first of the manufacturer’s advanced 4K UHD portable zoom lenses to MENA.

Alamiya will also use Vizrt to provide a host of digital solutions including Viz AR/ VR 4K cameras, Viz Arena, Viz Libero and Viz Multiplay. The solutions will enable Alamiya to create mixed reality environments for its TV programmes as well as move into the AR/VR space.

MasterChef, the TV Experience restaurant launches in Dubai

The world’s first MasterChef, the TV Experience restaurant was launched in Dubai last month. The restaurant is the result of a landmark deal between Dubai property developer The First Group and Endemol Shine Group, producer and distributor of the MasterChef reality TV series. MasterChef achieved a Guinness World Record last year as the most successful film format. Elaborating, Frances Adams, Endemol Shine Group Director, Brand Strategy, said: “We have reached 60 territories and we are on air in 200 different markets. Basically, you can watch MasterChef on TV everywhere in the world except two countries – North Korea and Papua New Guinea. The two teams worked with 30 winners across three countries to create the initial menu for the restaurant. Diners wanting a slice of the TV experience can take part in the Mystery Box Challenge with a small twist, Duncan Fraser-Smith, VP of Food & Beverage for The First Group, revealed. “We will bring the mystery boxes to our diners with 10 ingredients in them and the diner may choose five. The chef will then have to cook a dish within 35 minutes, and there will be a clock ticking there for all to see. I believe this will genuinely create new memories for diners and help personalise their experience while also challenging our chefs to be creative.” The two teams are in talks with Fox to bring winning chefs from the MasterChef series to the restaurant, including champions from MasterChef Australia.

Next generation URSA Mini Pro with Super 35 4.6K HDR sensor, 15 stops of dynamic range and shooting up to 300 fps!

Introducing URSA Mini Pro 4.6K G2, a professional digital film camera that combines incredible 4.6K image quality with the features and controls of a traditional broadcast camera! The second generation URSA Mini Pro features fully redesigned electronics and a new Super 35mm 4.6K HDR image sensor that combine to give you much higher frame rate shooting.

You also get built in ND filters, an interchangeable lens mount, Blackmagic RAW support, and both dual CFast and SD UHS-II card recorders for capturing images at up to 300 frames per second! There’s even a USB-C expansion port that lets you record directly to flash drives or SSD disks for even longer recording times!

Learn more at www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae

*SRP excludes duties, shipping and sales tax.

Viewfinder, lens and accessories shown can be purchased separately.
Arabsat 6A successfully placed in 30.5 degrees East

Arabsat 6A, the latest of the company’s sixth-generation satellites, was successfully launched on SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy launch vehicle last month. The Arabsat 6A satellite, manufactured by Lockheed Martin, will be placed in the exclusive orbit of Arabsat 30.5 degrees East.

Khaled bin Ahmed Balkheyour, President & CEO of Arabsat, said: “We are thankful for the successful launch of the 6A satellite, as it was challenging for us and SpaceX because it is the largest and heaviest satellite lifted by SpaceX on the most powerful rocket in operation today. Falcon Heavy was designed specifically to launch such a load commercially. That is why this launch is considered a momentous leap in the field of commercial satellite manufacturing and launching.”

Arabsat 6A is a high-capacity telecommunications satellite that will deliver TV, radio, internet and mobile communications to customers in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and is the largest and most powerful commercial satellite built by Lockheed Martin.

Over the past two months – the launch of Arabsat 6A satellite at 30 degrees East for Hellas Sat, Arabsat’s subsidiary, last February and this success today – could not have been possible without the help of the young Arab engineers from Arabsat’s HQ and its two ground stations in Riyadh and Tunis, from where these satellites are operated and controlled.

We are thankful to the young engineers, who were fully involved in the design of these satellites and the supervision of the manufacturing stages,” added Balkheyour.

NMK launches dedicated fund for tech start-ups in AV

NMK Electronics has launched NMK Ventures, a new initiative aimed at funding technology startups in the music and AV industry. NMK CEO Alex Kemanes will head the initiative.

Speaking about the eligibility criteria for funding, Kemanes explained: “We have a dedicated fund for startup companies that are developing new technologies within the music and AV sector, and it is not limited to the Middle East. It could be a company in the region developing a product with the aim of taking it to other parts of the world. We would make a cash investment in return for equity.”

NMK Ventures will provide seed-stage funding of up to $100,000 to startups. The investment will be used to fund the development of technology, product and infrastructure.

NMK Ventures will focus on startups that are developing technology in the AV space, specifically in the areas of sound, video, AI, and virtual reality.

Nat Geo to document UAE’s space journey

National Geographic has announced a four-year partnership with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) to document the UAE’s journey into space. In a four-part documentary series, National Geographic will present to the world the UAE’s rising space ambitions and achievements. The National Geographic series will capture the development and historic launch of KhalifaSat, the first Emirati-developed satellite, travelling to Mars, as part of the Mars 2020 mission.

IndiaCast launches two channels on Ettisalat’s Life TV

IndiaCast has launched News18 Kerala and Colors Tamil on Ettisalat’s Life TV in the UAE. The channels will be available in the region on localised content.

Apple announces AppleTV+ streaming service

Apple is entering the streaming market with a new service called AppleTV+, which will feature the Hollywood elite across a lineup of new original TV shows. The streaming service will be launched in the UAE and will add to the fierce competition in the streaming segment.

Disney+ to launch at $6.99 per month

Disney will launch its streaming service, Disney+, in the UAE on November 12, at a price point of $6.99 per month, well below Netflix Inc.'s $12.99. This is Disney's first serious foray into the OTT space.

Viu to launch new original thriller series

Viu has announced its fifth Viu Original – Zefren, a crime thriller series based on the novel Hazak El Yom by Egyptian author Dr Ahmad Khalid Twaily. It follows the lives of a group of students who encounter a curse that takes the lives of the individuals around them. The curse follows a pattern determined by the victims’ zodiac sign.

The three-season series is written and conceptualised by Egyptian screenwriter Mohamed Al Motawwem, alongside his team – Meena Elram, Mohamed Hisham & CEO of Arabsat, said: “We are thankful for the successful launch of the 6A satellite, as it was challenging for us and SpaceX because it is the largest and heaviest satellite lifted by SpaceX on the most powerful rocket in operation today. Falcon Heavy was designed specifically to launch such a load commercially. That is why this launch is considered a momentous leap in the field of commercial satellite manufacturing and launching.”

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ConnecTechAsia gears up for innovation and networking in Singapore

With transformation at the top of their agenda, business leaders will meet at ConnecTechAsia in Singapore from 18-20 June 2019, to showcase and discover the latest technologies that promise to ready businesses for the future.

Among a congregation of 1,800 exhibitors and 200 thought leaders at the Summit, an estimated 40,000 attendees will be looking to truly transformative technologies and solutions to get an edge in automating business processes and exploring fresh revenue streams in this digital era. ConnecTechAsia comes out of the gate in 2019 as the region’s newly out of the gate in 2019 streams in this digital era. exploring fresh revenue business processes and to get an edge in automating technologies and solutions to truly transformative Summit, an estimated 40,000 business leaders will top of their agenda, with leading business practices and change the landscapes of cities, economies, business and media. The keynote by Harriet Green, CEO and Chairman of IBM Asia Pacific, will explore how the shift from digital experimentation to scale adoption of new technologies will fundamentally alter the value chains of entire industries and change the way we work and live. Key industry leaders at ConnecTechAsia2019 Summit will also include: • Dr Min Sun, Chief AI Scientist, Appier • Dr David Soldani, CTO, Huawei Australia • Jason Little, Chief Information Officer – SEA, Manulife • Ian Yip, Chief Technology Officer, McAfee Asia Pacific • Gustavo Fuchs, GM – Cloud & Solutions (Asia), Microsoft • Krishnan Ragopalan, Director of Payments APAC, Nettly • Seizo Oone, President of DoCoMo Technology and Chief Technology Architect, NTT DoCoMo • Andreas Spanner, Chief Architect (ANZ), Red Hat
Al Arabiya is changing how viewers consume news with its new Alarabiya 360 app. To be launched in 2019, the prototype was recently displayed at the Arab Media Forum. The main concept behind the app is the use of augmented reality to tell stories and create a world of interactivity for users.

Fadi Radi, Head of Creative at Al Arabiya Network, said: “This is a unique concept that has been used for the first time in news. The app will incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms to offer relevant information to viewers. The app has been developed in-house and uses ARKit technologies from Apple and Android.”

Explaining the working of the app, Radi added: “The app will show users relevant content on what Al Arabiya has covered on the subject or place they are exploring. The user will be able to watch related Al Arabiya videos covering the place. The application will give the user the same experience in showing augmented reality objects everywhere, using the same 3D objects as shown in Al Arabiya studios.”

The app is not yet available for download.

Front Row teams up with Cinema Akil to screen Leaving Neverland as part of Debatable debut

Romanian actor, writer and producer Robert Cristian Trif will play the prominent role of a farmer in A Tale of Shadows 2: Illusions, a film shot in key locations within the UAE. The film is a sequel to Director Tariq Al Kazim’s 2017 horror feature A Tale of Shadows. Production began last month in the UAE and is scheduled for release next year.

Advanced Media brings RED workshop to Dubai

Advanced Media will host a REDucation Workshop from June 26-28 in Dubai at AM Studio. The three-day course will be conducted by Steve Johnson, CEO at Futurist Digital Ltd, who instructs and manages multiple REDucation training events on behalf of US firm RED Digital Cinema. Registration is now open and attendees will receive a certificate of completion from RED Digital Cinema. REDucation is a fully immersive, hands-on, practical training course for RED DSMC2 cameras, including the Monstro 8K VV, Helium 8K S35, Gemini 5K S35, and DragonX 5K S35 systems, for both on-set and post-production practice.
New original Arabic-language drama series from Netflix

Netflix has announced a new Arabic-language original drama series, AlRawabi School for Girls, which will launch later this year. The show will be produced in cooperation with Jordanian media company Filmization. Written and directed by Jordanian director, writer and actress Tina Shomali, AlRawabi School for Girls tells the story of a girl who gets revenge on her bullies, only to find out that no one is all that bad in the first place. Commenting on the new series, Simran Sethi, Director of International Originals at Netflix, said: “We are extremely proud to partner with Tina again to produce what is essentially the first Middle Eastern young adult series that celebrates the role of women, not only on screen, but behind the scenes as well. The story brings a fresh perspective and Middle Eastern content, and we are absolutely excited to share Al Rawabi School for Girls with our global audiences in over 190 countries.”

Bitmovin powers OSN video streaming for WAVO

OSN has selected Bitmovin Encoding to offer video content to subscribers to its Wave video streaming service. The platform showcases rich content including live TV, shorts, feature films and the most talked-about series in English and Arabic.

Stefan Lederer, CEO at Bitmovin, said: “Consumers in the MENA region embrace online video early on and demand high-quality content that is available at any time and on any device. OSN has a track record of investing in innovative and creative technology to offer the most advanced, comfortable and affordable viewing experience to its subscribers. We are proud that OSN selected Bitmovin to help facilitate its media supply chain along with optimise content encoding to the highest standard.”

Saudi Arabia welcomes UK cinema chain

UK independent exhibitor Everyman & Co Light Cinemas has signed a deal to launch 15 sites in Saudi Arabia. The exhibitor has collaborated with London-based consultancy firm The Big Picture to create the sites, which will launch the cinemas in KSA. The Light Cinemas is the first UK exhibitor to obtain a licence to operate venues in Saudi Arabia, and one of only five companies to qualify for the Saudi government’s operating licence.

Jeddah to host 2020 International Red Sea Film Festival

The first edition of the International Red Sea Film Festival will be held on the Red Sea coast in 2020 with a focus on showcasing growing Saudi creative, new Arab film works and the latest trends in international cinema. Also created will be the Red Sea Film Facility as an incubator for local film projects, working on programmes for directors and producers, to support film projects through sponsorship at all stages of development, financing, production and distribution.

SEVEN announces new EVP for Strategy

Saudi Entertainment Ventures Company (SEVEN), fully owned by the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has announced the appointment of Jennifer Hanser as EVP, Strategy and Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A). Hanser will hold responsibility for ensuring SEVEN’s investments and project executions meet its vision of being a leader in Saudi Arabia’s burgeoning entertainment ecosystem, and helping to accelerate the rapid expansion of entertainment in the Kingdom.

Jennifer Hanser, EVP, Strategy and M&A,
SEVEN, added: “Jennifer joins us as we develop the most exciting, wide-ranging and ambitious plans for a new era in entertainment across the Kingdom. Her wide experience within well-known organisations – from Wall Street to Major League Baseball – gives her some powerful insights into modern business strategy.”

Qudurat Media gears up for business in Dubai

Qudurat Media, a Riyadh-headquartered media production house, has launched full-fledged operations in Dubai, effective March 2019. The operation is helmed by the media veteran and CEO Abdurahman Al Sahely, with well-known TV producer and presenter Mirna Mounzer recently appointed as Business Development Director.

Commenting on the opening of the new base, Al Sahely, who previously managed Saudi TV’s Ebbabiyaa channel before undertaking this challenge, noted: “Running operations from two prominent business hubs in the Gulf helps us understand our clients’ needs and their methodology of work perfectly well. In addition to the presence of a creative team from around the world, we also invest in young and well-known Emirati creative professionals who give our integrated production house a local finesse.”

Qudurat, whose main clients are Abu Dhabi Media, Dubai TV and Al Aan TV, added: “We are proud to extend our Saudi experience and add our UAE local touch to it.” Qudurat Media is based in Business Bay, Dubai.

Mounzer, who previously project managed several high-profile media productions in Saudi Arabia and hosted TV shows, added: “We are proud to extend our Saudi experience and add our UAE local touch to it.” Qudurat Media is based in Business Bay, Dubai.

MediaKind powers Vodafone Qatar

Vodafone Qatar has selected MediaKind to deliver MediaFirst, a next-generation cloud-based multiscreen TV platform service, to consumers in Qatar. The MediaFirst deployment will provide Vodafone Qatar with the capability and flexibility to launch new content and over existing IPTV or OTT devices. Deployment will commence in 2019. Damien Montessuit, Senior VP, EMEA, MediaKind, said: “Through the deployment of MediaFirst, we are strengthening our global leadership in delivering highly immersive, personalised TV experiences by providing Vodafone Qatar customers with access to rich, consistent viewing opportunities across any device, anywhere.”

BSS appointed Middle East distributor for ATOM cameras

Dream Chip Technologies GmbH (DCT) has appointed Dubai-based loading systems integrator and distributor BSS as the Middle East distributor for its ATOM cameras, effective March 20. The ATOM camera line is a range of extremely small full-HD cameras with dual 3G-SDI output and high-quality image performance.

Despite its small footprint, the ATOM camera features the smallest global shutter, high dynamic range and provides broadcast-quality output. We are pleased to represent Dream Chip in the region for these cameras and are sure there is a good market for them in this region.”

Stephane Ducou, Director of Sales, Broadcast Product Worldwide at DCT, added: “The reputation and technical know-how that BSS has shown for so many years are key assets to develop and promote our ATOM cameras range in this region.”
Ross Video has completed the acquisition of the Piero Sports Graphics business from UK firm Red Bee Media. The acquisition by Ross and divestment by Red Bee are complementary to each company’s strategic objectives, with the Piero products fitting into Ross Video’s sports solutions portfolio — adding advanced sports analysis graphics to the mix.

As part of the business transfer, all Piero employees have moved to Ross Video’s UK subsidiary (Ross Video UK) from Red Bee Media. Ross Video also announced at NAB the acquisition of Portalis, a Utah-based leader in Workstation Integration systems.

Vizrt has acquired Texas-based NewTek. The combined companies will drive the transition to IP video for live production with NDI and SMPTE 2110, with each serving different needs. The company will deliver flexible end-to-end workflows for all levels of production and software-based products and services for media, sports, entertainment, education, esports and enterprise.

Vizrt CEO Michael Hallén said: “Combining our organisations allows us to pursue our joint vision of software-based video production, leveraging the power and flexibility of computing and IT-based systems. The combined business will be well positioned to deliver turnkey systems to organisations that have ambitions of producing content for any output platform.”

The new company will put together the minds that invented the NDI protocol with those that invented template-driven real-time graphics. The company will be R&D-focused. Michael Hallén will lead the business, while Dr Andrew Cross, President & CTO of NewTek, will serve as President of R&D at the combined company.

Ross Video announces Piero Sports Graphics and Portalis acquisitions at NAB

Vizlink has appointed Ghassan Dadokh as MEA Regional Business Development Manager for its Military Government sectors. A statement on Vizlink’s LinkedIn account said: “Ghassan Dadokh comes to Vizlink after spending five years at MRT Corporation Jordan as a Business Development Manager for its Military Government sectors. His qualifications and experience leave us excited to welcome Ghassan to our team.”

Vizlink announces MEA hire

Media Links has strengthened its global sales team with the appointment of Al Nuñez as Senior VP of Sales, Americas & EMEA. He will oversee sales activities and teams in both regions. He will report to John Dale, Chairman, CEO and President of Global Media Links.

“Al Nuñez comes to Media Links after spending five years at MRT Corporation Jordan as a Business Development Manager for its Military Government sectors. His qualifications and experience leave us excited to welcome him to our team.”

Media Links appoints Al Nuñez

Vizrt acquires NewTek

New Global Sports unit at Vizrt

Vizrt has created a Global Sports unit to strengthen focus on sports. Dr Stephan W Stadler will head the unit as President. Global Sports will lead all business worldwide with sports broadcasters, sports teams and federations, esports and sports venues.
Sky News Arabia revamps content and tech at Abu Dhabi headquarters

Sky News Arabia has unveiled the biggest enhancements since the 2012 launch of the channel at its Abu Dhabi HQ with a brand new wing that includes two new studios equipped to support Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) productions. The announcement, made just before the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan, includes a new programming line-up, new presenters, state-of-the-art broadcast technology and a digital-first approach to content creation. The announcements follow the arrival of CEO Ammar Franqopoulos, who took charge November 2018 and CTO, David Clark, who assumed office March 2019.

Sky News Arabia will have new virtual news studios using the latest in VR and AR technology. These new shows will be launched using the new technologies including a daily sports show live from the AR set. This will be accompanied by renewed editorial content across TV and digital platforms including live coverage and programmes that cover current events and analysis, business, technology, lifestyle and sports. A new dedicated documentary unit will also bring viewers more investigative and informative stories from around the region.

Sky News Arabia’s Head of News, Hami Abuayyash, hailed the move as a “fantastic moment” in the history of the channel and its biggest-ever enhancement, leading the way for high quality storytelling and news broadcasting in an increasingly digital world. Abuayyash said: “We have raised the game for news broadcasters in the region, with new ways of showcasing our content that ensure we continue to serve our audiences in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as having a global outlook.”

Several new programmes have been announced including News Bazar at 6pm, a brand-new format for the Morning Show and an enhanced format for the Evening Show among others. Sky News Arabia’s sports programme Mala’eb will be broadcast from an AR studio daily using the latest in graphics technology. There will also be a new international news segment and an in-depth business bulletin.

Twitter expands video content in MENA with 16 media partnerships

Twitter has announced 16 new partners in the video content segment across sports, entertainment and news in the MENA region. The new partnerships and expansions of existing content deals allow Twitter to offer expanded content, helping it to connect better with valuable audiences during relevant and engaging cultural moments.

Twitter’s new partnerships span entertainment, sports and publishing genres; notably, the broadcast collaboration with Abu Dhabi Media, MBC Group and Dubai Media Incorporated will bring special Ramadan content for Twitter being produced, while a partnership with Quest Arabiya has been extended. The partnership with MBC Group includes highlights, background content and recaps of the top regional flagship shows, including The Voice, Arab Idol, Arabs Got Talent and Pup Chef, in addition to recaps of top Ramadan shows and regular programming in lifestyle and entertainment categories.

With Abu Dhabi Media, besides special Ramadan programming and other lifestyle content, the deal covers select sports programming content. The Dubai TV partnership will bring special Ramadan programming to Arabic-speaking audiences on Twitter as well as top entertainment shows on Twitter as well as top entertainment shows on Twitter, with exclusive content. The Middle East & North Africa (MENA) deal covers select sports programming content.

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Quest Arabiya to shut down on May 1, 2019

Abu Dhabi-based free-to-air channel Quest Arabiya, operated by Channel Ventures FZ LLC, will go off air effective May 1, 2019. Insiders sources have cited the lack of commercial viability as the key reason for shutting down the channel.
Today, the sky’s the limit when filming – literally. Once used only to capture wide-angle and establishing shots, aerial filming has grown into a dynamic industry. Contributing to the growing success of using drones for the entertainment and media industry is Hatim Saleh, founder of ChopperShoot, who has just wrapped up a sequence for a Pierce Brosnan film called The Misfits. The project was shot in Abu Dhabi and Saleh helped shoot the drone footage. Besides The Misfits, Saleh has also worked on other Hollywood and Bollywood biggies in the last year. His love for filming in the skies led him to start ChopperShoot in 2005 in Dubai.

Growing up in Dubai in a family that owned a video production company, he had early exposure to film-making. His family’s main business came from producing films related to the oil & gas industry, and it was while working for a similar project that Saleh identified his calling. “While flying in the helicopter to oil rigs for ground filming, I used to do some aerial filming before landing; it was during one of these projects that I saw an opportunity and decided to open a dedicated aerial filming company,” he shares.

“At ChopperShoot, we started by using RC helicopters for filming until 2007, and then switched to large-scale helicopters. Today we film with both drones and helicopters. Helicopter filming continues to be a large part of our business, but since 2014, when we trained in flying drones, our drone filming business has grown significantly year on year. We specialise in filming for broadcast of special events and sports, filming of television commercials, television series, feature films and tourism-related projects. We are fully equipped and experienced with large-scale broadcast events, with in-house crew, equipment and a dedicated permits department.”

Drones are redefining aerial filming by offering greater flexibility and control for the filmmaker to create breathtaking, awe-inspiring shots for features and films. Saleh, however, is quick to add that anyone trying to get into the drone industry must train and plan well while maintaining the highest standards of safety. “Just like any form of filmmaking, drone filming also requires years of experience to get that precision shot. Anyone can fly a drone, they are easy to fly, but to fly it with precision and provide the shot that the director wants, along with offering your individual input, can only be achieved with a lot of practice.”

Saleh stresses the importance of planning well before the shoot. “We plan our drone filming projects depending on the location and size of the area. We start by visiting the site and checking Google Earth to identify the finer aspects like exact location, angle, proximity to any potentially sensitive area and proximity to any airport, and direction of sunrise and sunset. Good planning and clear communication are very big factors to successfully shoot with a drone. We identify safe take-off and landing zones and ensure that the flight path is as per the safety regulations laid out by the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA).”

It is interesting to note that the UAE is among the very few countries to have laid down detailed guidelines to regulate the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) domain. For aerial filming enthusiasts, the authorities have a permit process in place. “Aerial filming required less paperwork 10 years ago, but now drone filming regulations in the UAE are streamlined. Considering how busy the airspace is, it is still fully supported by all federal and local civil aviation departments to accommodate drone flights safely,” explains Saleh.

The Dubai Film and TV Commission (DFTC) has laid out the following guidelines for drone filming in the UAE:

**GAME OF DRONES**

With drones lending a new direction to aerial filming, BroadcastPro ME catches up with Hatim Saleh of Dubai-based ChopperShoot to find out more about what it takes to get the best shots from the sky.
Almost every outdoor production uses drone shots now. The use of drones will increase in the coming years, says Saleh.

“Anyone can fly a drone, they are easy to fly, but to fly it with precision and provide the shot that the director wants, along with offering your individual input, can only be achieved with a lot of practice”

Hayim Saleh, founder of ChopperShoot
The industry is flooded with new cameras at the consumer level, but high-end equipment is not launched as often. If we see constant demand and major technical improvements in new gear, we invest in it right away. We also firmly believe that a less technically advanced camera in the hands of an experienced photographer will produce far superior results than a high-end camera in the hands of an amateur.

“We primarily use the RED Helium and Alexa Mini on the Freefly ALTA 8 for shooting footage for feature films and TV commercials.”

Hatim Saleh, founder of ChopperShoot

We are in this business because we have the knowledge, training and the passion to shoot from the sky, says Saleh.

The BFD S8 is especially registered and well-documented. In the meantime, ChopperShoot is continuously investing in new drones. A BFDF8 is a new addition to its inventory of two ALTA 8 drones, one ALTA 6, two M600 Pro and seven Inspire 2 systems, all registered and well-documented. The BFDF8 is especially significant, owing to its ability to carry up to 25lbs while remaining under 55lbs in total weight.

While availability of drones in the market has increased, Saleh has some criteria before investing in a drone. “We would consider investing in new equipment only if it has a big demand in this market or if it has obvious advanced features that will improve the overall filming experience and picture quality.

“We primarily use the RED Helium and Alexa Mini on the Freefly ALTA 8 for shooting footage for feature films and TV commercials.”

Hatim Saleh, founder of ChopperShoot

Drone filming is good for filming within close range and under 400ft. Compared to helicopter filming, drone filming is more flexible to reschedule, requires less logistics and planning, and is at least 70% cheaper. A drone shoot usually only requires a three-member team – a drone operator, a camera operator and a technician. Saleh can’t underestimate the importance of safety and maintenance enough. “We have a very strong technical team and we maintain our drones very well. Before every shoot, we have detailed safety checks. We operate like an aviation company when it comes to our pilots. Just like a pilot is expected to be well-versed before a flight, we ensure that the drone pilot is well-versed prior to any shoot.

“A drone can be quite stressful to fly. It needs a lot of concentration and control; otherwise it can fly off track. The time of the shoot also matters, especially in this region, where the temperature can really soar. There is always a possibility of getting fatigued by the sun. Just like an airline complies with the GCAA regulations, we comply with all GCAA regulations. In a recent GCAA audit, we topped the list. We have everything as per their expectations, as we maintain safety and incident records along with pilot and drone flight hours and equipment maintenance reports,” Saleh concludes.

The passion to shoot from the sky.

ChopperShoot uses the Freefly ALTA 8 to shoot footage for feature films and TV commercials.

Almost every outdoor production uses drone shots now. The use of drones will only increase in the coming years”

Hatim Saleh, Founder of ChopperShoot
Snapchat is taking its visuals to a new level with AR and a number of programmes and projects around it. In an exclusive conversation with BroadcastPro ME, Mike Evans, Software Engineering Manager at Snap Inc, talks about how Snap is helping companies leverage AR to augment their brands.

What are the various ways in which Snapchat is using augmented reality with its users and business partners? What are the most popular AR tools within the Snapchat portfolio today?

Snapchat is fundamentally different platform to anything else out there today. It has always opened to the camera, inviting people to express themselves, be creative and explore – and this positively impacts the engagement we see. We've long believed that augmented reality is a powerful tool for self-expression and communication. We're taking a step-by-step approach to innovating iteratively along this path, with real-world consumer experiences and insights taken into consideration alongside what our official partners – to create an AR experience. This is an easy way for them to dip their toes into the world of AR and experiment. We also have a Lens Creative Partners programme. These certified creators are experienced in developing quality AR and have completed a rigorous course about the development process, creative best practices, ad policies and buy models for sponsored AR Lenses on Snapchat. So essentially, advertisers and publishers have access to Lens Studio, allowing them to craft immersive stories for their customers through promoted ads or organically through Snapcodes. A great example on the publisher side is from the Economist, which brought its story about the future of food to life with an immersive AR experience on Snapchat that reached thousands of people.

What AR tools and capabilities does Snapchat offer creators in the Middle East today? How is this AR developer community evolving, and what volume of AR content is being created?

AR is becoming a larger part of advertisers’ media buying plans in MENA. A part of this increase is driven by an increase in flexibility for buying and creating AR Lenses for Snapchat. For us, it’s not about technology, but the experiences you can create. We made the deliberate decision to invest early in making AR technology accessible to all, and our growing creator community is validating this decision. We're at the beginning of a very exciting shift in computing – in the future, computing will be overlaid on the world around us, not constrained to a screen in our hand. It’s very early days for AR as an industry, but we’re excited by the acceleration we see in the industry today.

Our creation platform, Lens Studio, is our AR creation tool where people can make, publish and share AR experiences. A more recent addition is Snap Camera, which is our new desktop app for Lenses that we released in October 2018. Snapchat camera, providing a platform for creators to build AR experiences, and investing in future hardware that will transcend the smartphone.

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Our creation platform, Lens Studio, is our AR creation tool where people can make, publish and share AR experiences. A more recent addition is Snap Camera, which is our new desktop app for Lenses that we released in October 2018. Snapchat offers AR experiences that you can create on platforms like yours? Our full suite of AR creation and consumption tools are available: Lens Studio on the creation side and Snapchat and Snap Camera on the consumption side. We see a lot of activity from Lens creators in the Middle East. While we don’t share specific numbers by region, over 300,000 Lenses have been submitted via Lens Studio, which have been viewed more than 35 billion times, and the Middle East is certainly a region where Snapchat is very popular. Several of our Official Lens Creators are in or from the Middle East – one example is Georgio Copter from Lebanon, who was Snapchat Artist of the Year from the
first annual Ghosties Awards, and also Othman Abdullah Akhodair from Saudi Arabia, who recreates 3D models from photos of Saudi treasures for the tourist mission in the UK. Othman realised how incredible Lens Studio could be when he garnered 20,000 views for a single Lens in one day while showcasing his work in Dubai. We also have the likes of Ahmed Ali and Mohammed Al Janer, two very high profile Lens Creators operating from the region.

Do you have any figures that show how AR features and tools are driving deeper engagement between media owners and audiences? Media owners across the world have seen great engagement with their audiences. A great example is LADbible Group in the UK, which recently partnered with the world’s biggest illegal wildlife trade conference to drive mass awareness through immersive storytelling on Snapchat. Extract allowed users to playfully immerse themselves in the powerful experience of becoming an elephant in AR. However, there was a provocative twist, the elephant’s tusks begin to disappear and the user is confronted with the realisation that one of the world’s most iconic species is under serious threat of extinction. It was viewed over 80,000 times.

“We’re at the beginning of a very exciting shift in computing – in the future, computing will be overlaid on the world around us, not constrained to a screen in our hand”

Mike Evans, Software Engineering Manager, Snap Inc

Another example is from one of Germany’s biggest publishers, Bild. They created a ‘Valentinstag’ Lens which had more than 80,000 views in Germany.

What technology powers Snapchat’s AR efforts?

In terms of design, Lens Studio is very similar to the creation tools that our own Lens designers use. For the end user, however, using AR is as simple as selecting the Lens you want from either the carousel or Lens Explorer (a tool that allows users to find and play with Community Lenses). Snapchat opens up to the camera, so Snapchat is designed to make it incredibly straightforward to engage with AR – so much so that over 70% of our daily active users play with or view Lenses every day.

What are Snapchat’s plans to upscale AR to drive more business, especially in MENA?

AR is becoming a larger part of advertisers’ media buying plans in MENA. A part of this increase is driven by an increase in flexibility for buying and creating AR Lenses for Snapchat. For Lens creation, Snapchat recently announced the launch of dozens of certified Lens Creative Partners globally, some of whom I referenced earlier. On the buying side, Snapchat released the ability for advertisers to buy AR directly through self-service tools, making AR just as easy and efficient to promote as a regular video ad.

Is your AR feature available to Middle East users at present? When launching Lens Studio in 2017, it was open to everyone. In the beginning, however, those who were not a Snapchat partner or an agency could only create World Lenses (digital objects around you). Last year, we made Snapchat even more creator-friendly with the ability for anyone to make their own Face Lenses in Lens Studio. We also unveiled seven new templates in Lens Studio to support creators to build digital masks, and there are now 30 templates in total. Lens Studio now enables any user – professional or not – to create AR objects that are static or animated, 2D or 3D, and responsive when users interact with them through their phone screens.- Vijaya Cherian
Total cost of ownership
Keep in mind total costs: facilities, power, cooling, leased lines to storage, the space your kit occupies. Most people, when they think about cloud, only compare storage costs; they don’t really compare the IT overheads. The backbone of cloud value is really high-scale automation and top-tier security – what is that worth to you?
Recently, an Imagine customer told us that they had analysed their network and found that 80% of their equipment only runs 20% of the time – four-fifths of the network only working one-fifth of the time. If you think that power and cooling is 30% of your operational overhead, that is a lot of money you could transfer to more creative tasks.

What should you put in the cloud? Anything up to and including scheduled playout. Anything to do with the distribution of scale. If you are playing out a channel, then cloud should be at the top of your list. If, however, you are involved in live production, then cloud probably isn’t the right fit today. We have done proofs of concept of live production in the cloud, but it tends to be very application-specific.
It is often said that cloud is for peaky demand, but how many broadcast companies actually have peaks in their internal processes? They tend to do the same thing day in, day out. Except for specific, large-scale events, they are not really changing scope. The only peaks for a typical broadcaster might be when a new set of stations or a library is acquired.

For me, the issue is the inverse of peak: services that you only run occasionally, and you ask yourself whether it’s really worth owning the equipment for that. Why am I giving space, power and cooling to something I only use three times a week? Better to put it in the cloud.

Microservices
We are all aware that the cloud depends on virtualisation, but we also need to be aware that cloud providers are primarily serving IT customers and do not really provide specific functionality for media organisations. You cannot forbid desktop playout to the cloud.

Across the IT industry, the virtualisation trend depends on microservices, and the media industry has to follow suit. This is about getting an optimised deployment plan based around a technology set that is lighter weight and more agile than traditional software. We see more and more broadcasters coming up to speed on microservices, what the design philosophy is and what it can do for them. We are seeing more articles in the press about this, but there is still a way to go on both the education and the adoption side.

We are now getting customers who have their heads wrapped around the notion not only of microservices, but also of the opportunity is to bring those same efficiencies to the computer itself.

The modern take on hybrid systems mean microservices can run on any standard COTS platform: in a dedicated appliance, in the machine room, in a corporate data centre or in the cloud. Marketing people always then add that your system could run in a hybrid of multiple locations.

The modern error correction is the notion of edge computing. What we are really saying is that there is a role for cloud and there is a role for other things that don’t fit in the cloud, whether they are too small, too specific or the performance just doesn’t fit right.

We have major broadcast customers who have part of the content chain in the studio in downtown Manhattan and part in a cloud data centre elsewhere. There is an appropriateness to each, so it is about locality: the things that can be put in the cloud probably belong in the cloud. This sort of hybrid solution is practical.

With an increase in education and awareness of real cloud technologies such as microservices, and an increase in the number of deployments, there is a next-step requirement from the industry to agree on how all these systems are going to inter-operate.

We’ve done that for the network with the Alliance for IP Media Solutions (AIMS) and with SMPTE ST 2110, but the opportunity is to bring those same efficiencies to the computer itself.

There are ongoing efforts in SMPTE with the microservices standard, and there are other efforts in other professional bodies. The modern broadcaster develops their own platform, but at some point we have to get to a place when we can connect services. As computers get faster, the natural evolution for interconnectivity is to do it inside the computer, not in a network – do it in memory.

“Must ask yourself the two questions: am I able to guarantee the safety and integrity of my content on my own; and is it more efficient to put those assets into a storage pool in the cloud?”

Brick Eksten, CTO Playout and Networking, Imagine Communications.
The Arabian Gulf Cup (AG Cup) concluded in March with Shabab Al Ahli beating Al Wahda in the final, played at the Hazza Bin Zayed (HBZ) Stadium in Al Ain. To capture the emotion on the field for football fans, the Pro League Committee (PLC) applied the latest technologies in sports broadcast for these matches. The tournament started in August last year and a total of 45 matches were played.

“The Arabian Gulf Cup final match has become a testing ground for us to trial new technologies. In 2017, we introduced tracking and heat maps statistics as well as video assistant referee (VAR); in 2018, we introduced virtual reality (VR); and now in 2019, we offered augmented reality (AR) graphics elements and player point of view (POV) replay technology,” explains Ammar Hina, Director of Broadcast & TV Production at PLC.

“This is the match that gets maximum viewership every year, so we tend to put all the spice into this match and manage it end to end. We are the central team that manages this. We got really good feedback about the Cup in the past and wanted to test something new like the Sponix point of view technology, and AR graphics in cooperation with wTVision. We also added extra cameras to get new angles and capture more visuals from the field to give the fans a better experience.”

HBZ Stadium also provided the Hutaaf service, an initiative that helps visually impaired fans listen to audio commentary through special radios.

PLC worked with Abu Dhabi’s Live HD for both host broadcast and TV production services, to ensure coverage that would appeal to both TV and digital audiences. It worked with Mediapro to provide AR coverage. The TV production unit used three additional ENGI cameras to capture otherwise unseen moments in the dressing rooms, including the bus arrival of teams at the stadium and fan reactions to key moments.

Another new feature this year was the player POV. Provided by Sponix, which specialises in POV technologies, this was tested for the first time worldwide during the AG Cup final.

“This technology offers TV viewers the players’ POV during key moments in the match, we saw it during Shabab Al Ahli’s first goal. This technology can also give the viewers the referee’s point of view and show his position and view for penalties, red cards and other sensitive decisions,” says Hina.

“Player POV is a new technology that is usually used for replays during the match and the post-match analytic studio tool and rich social media element, where we zoom into a portion of the match from the player’s angle and see the goals.

“Both these points of view are prominent in football. All crucial decisions are based on these, and for the first time we could bring this to our TV audiences. This is a software-based technology from Sponix, which has a presence in Dubai. This is the first time ever that they have showcased it live. We are working with them.

“The Pro League Committee is well-known for experimenting with the latest technological innovations in broadcast at the Arabian Gulf Cup. This year, it introduced AR and a new player point of view.
PROSPORT

Last year, the Pro League Committee made headlines when it introduced the VR Seat Experience.

To produce the VR element for this match, PLC used a set of five cameras – a fixed 360 camera, two fixed 180 cameras and two movable 360 cameras. Match highlights were shared online via the free Etisalat VR app.

Speaking about the planning that went into these matches, Hina says: “VR was used for telecasting the match in a completely different way. It required another whole set-up and team. To make the AR elements a success, we had to undergo months of planning. The initial plan was to launch AR during the Super Cup, but it required a lot more testing, so we waited another five months and did this for the final AFC Cup match. We tested VR last year for these matches with a team of six people. It was quite challenging initially, and we worked with two other teams before finally settling on a third team – and we have gone with them this year as well.”

PLC also tested AR technology for the first time during the final. This came from wTVision, which provided the tracking system statistics as well as the graphics. Information displayed included heat maps for player movements, speed, passes played, head-to-head player comparison and other live statistics.

“For AR segments, we had a total of three people and another three for tracking purposes. The rest of the match production required close to 60 people”

Ammar Hina, Director of Broadcast & TV Production, PLC

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"Everybody has a story to tell," commented NAB President and CEO Gordon Smith, as he delivered the annual NAB State of the Industry address during the 2019 NAB Show. Smith spoke about the array of exhibits "that are telling the innovation story of the media and entertainment industry through product displays", referring to solutions within artificial intelligence, cloud computing, next-gen wireless, exports and connected cars, among others.

He said of broadcasting: “This vital lifeline is the electronic thread that keeps every community together, informed and safe… Indeed, here at the show the story of broadcasting is on full display, and it is a story rich in innovation, inspiration and imagination.”

He spoke of why the US is pushing next-generation television, also known as ATSC 3.0. “This enables TV stations to deliver their programming over the air not only to new TVs, but also to next-gen enabled tablets and cell phones without using your cellular network. So you can watch your shows and local news on the go without using all of your data. The benefits of next-gen TV include 4K UHD video, immersive, theatre-like sound, interactive applications and mobility.

“The next-gen TV attachment with this phone lets me watch my favourite stations anywhere I am. With this device, I am connected to a lifetime that can warn me of an impending storm and other emergencies with targeted public warnings that are interactive and mobile.”

He went on to add, however, that while the little attachment works for now, the community hopes eventually to see “a chip built into mobile devices to give consumers this technology”.

“In fact, we may be on the cusp of a new era of manufacturing that should and could bring broadcast reception in devices. But to date, manufacturers, Apple being one, refuse to enable broadcast chips in their devices.”

He quoted US Senator Elizabeth Warren to decry how some big companies have “bulldozed competition, used our private information for profit and tilted the playing field against everyone else.”

With the threat these companies pose to local entities, he called upon lawmakers to modernise outdated broadcast regulations so that everyone can compete on a level playing field.

Rohde & Schwarz offers MaaS solutions for OTT

Rohde & Schwarz launched R&S PRISMON.cloud, a cloud-based A/V OTT monitoring solution that end users can deploy quickly without dedicated hardware. The set-up wizard takes only minutes to add new virtual sensors at different locations and connect them to the dashboard anytime.

A live multiview function, automated analysis of A/V error data and error assignment in real-time make it possible to permanently measure the GoS, store it in a cloud and visualise it in a timeline format on a web interface. In combination with the widely used on-premises R&S PRISMON monitoring solution, analyses from physical and virtual sensors can be displayed on a single dashboard. End-to-end analyses quickly and easily reveal errors such as deterioration of video or audio quality, or poor CDN performance as a cause of churn – with just one tool.

R&S PRISMON.cloud is available in three service packages: silver, gold and soon platinum.

Riedel unveils Artist 1024

Thomas Riedel, President and CEO of Riedel Communications, unveiled the new Artist-1024 node, an addition to the Artist intercom ecosystem, at NAB. With higher port densities and full SMPTE 2110-30/31 (AES67) compliance, Artist-1024 is the next evolutionary step in the Artist intercom ecosystem.

This addition introduces a range of technical innovations centred on software-definable universal interface cards (UIC). This new interface card combines networking, mixing and management, and can be configured to act as an AES67 or MADI subscriber card, or as an Artist fibre/router/processor card.

Blackmagic Design puts 8K in focus with new launches

Blackmagic Design introduced a new range of 8K products and major updates within DaVinci Resolve 16 at NAB. The new ATEM Constellation 8K is a high-end live production switcher with 8K capability and is available immediately worldwide for $19,995.

The new ATEM Constellation 8K is an ultra HD live production switcher with four M/E, 40 x 12G-SDI inputs, 24 x 12G-SDI aux outputs, 4 DVEs, 16 keyers, four media players, four multiiners, and two SuperSource and standards conversion on every SDI input. When switched to 8K, all these features make a powerful 8K switcher.

ATEM Constellation 8K features a compact 2RU rack mount design with a built-in control panel. The switcher operation of the switcher, critical during set-up or for emergency use. Also included is a large LCD as well as the 2016 switcher features. The ATEM Constellation 8K also features a new interface allowing the switching of inputs using the click of a button in the control panel.

This new interface card combines networking, mixing and management, and can be configured to act as an AES67 or MADI subscriber card, or as an Artist fibre/router/processor card.

With a built-in control panel, customers can take full control of ATEM Constellation at any time. Customers are empowered by both PGM/PVW and tenth-style operation. The buttons are the same premium type used on liquid-sized panels, and allow control of transitions, overlaps, downstream media players and audio tracks. The LCD menu also allow access to every single operational feature of the switcher.

Also announced were the new HyperDeck Extreme 8K HDR, the Teranex Mini SDI to HDMI 8K HDR, DaVinci Resolve 16, Fusion 16 Studio, the Blackmagic MultiDock 10G and a new Pocket Camera Battery Grip.

Riedel said: “System compatibility and the sustainability of client investments are important to us. The Artist-1024 node will suit new clients looking for a comprehensive and future-ready system today as well as those who have supported us for years and are now ready to take the step to 8K infrastructures.”

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The new ATEM Constellation 8K is an ultra HD live production switcher with four M/E, 40 x 12G-SDI inputs, 24 x 12G-SDI aux outputs, 4 DVEs, 16 keyers, four media players, four multiiners, and two SuperSource and standards conversion on every SDI input. When switched to 8K, all these features make a powerful 8K switcher.

ATEM Constellation 8K features a compact 2RU rack mount design with a built-in control panel. The switcher operation of the switcher, critical during set-up or for emergency use. Also included is a large LCD as well as the 2016 switcher features. The ATEM Constellation 8K also features a new interface allowing the switching of inputs using the click of a button in the control panel.

This new interface card combines networking, mixing and management, and can be configured to act as an AES67 or MADI subscriber card, or as an Artist fibre/router/processor card.

With a built-in control panel, customers can take full control of ATEM Constellation at any time. Customers are empowered by both PGM/PVW and tenth-style operation. The buttons are the same premium type used on liquid-sized panels, and allow control of transitions, overlaps, downstream media players and audio tracks. The LCD menu also allow access to every single operational feature of the switcher.

Also announced were the new HyperDeck Extreme 8K HDR, the Teranex Mini SDI to HDMI 8K HDR, DaVinci Resolve 16, Fusion 16 Studio, the Blackmagic MultiDock 10G and a new Pocket Camera Battery Grip.

Riedel said: “System compatibility and the sustainability of client investments are important to us. The Artist-1024 node will suit new clients looking for a comprehensive and future-ready system today as well as those who have supported us for years and are now ready to take the step to 8K infrastructures.”

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Shure unveils new products at NAB 

Shure announced the launch of TwinPlex, the company’s new line of premium subminature (5mm) omnidirectional lavalier and headset microphones. Designed to stand up to the toughest conditions, TwinPlex provides natural audio at both high and low frequencies when professional vocal performance is a must. The new patent pending capsule technology promises best-in-class sound in an easy-to-conceal package, ideal for quick costume changes or discreetly placed under wardrobe with no impact on sound quality. Developed with input from leading audio professionals, TwinPlex supports the diverse needs of theatre, broadcast, film and television, and corporate presentations to produce high-quality audio production and-tilt head with an option to add a ceiling-mounted dolly system. SkyDolly is fully compatible with all Furio heads and can be added to Ross Robotics solutions under SmartGel or OverDrive control.

Ross Video launches Furio SkyDolly at NAB

Ross Video has expanded its suite of camera motion systems with the addition of the Furio SkyDolly. SkyDolly is a ceiling-mounted version of the Furio family of camera robotics and features all characteristics of Furio, while also addressing the challenges specific to ceiling-mounted dolly systems. Furio SkyDolly has been designed with safety as a priority – the fully captive dolly cannot be detached and comes with safety tethers for the payload and head. The three-wheel design enlarged wheelbase (60% wider and 40% longer than other Furio solutions) and raised centre of mass ensure shake-free operation, even at high speeds, promising solid stability for heavy payloads in modern broadcast studio settings.

Fujifilm zooms in on new lenses at NAB

Fujifilm showcased several new lenses at NAB, but the highlight was the 8K lens series and the UA series of broadcast lenses, which support 4K cameras equipped with a 2/3-inch sensor. On show was the FUJINON UA64×9 S portable 4K zoom lens for broadcast application equipped with a 4K+ zoom, the world’s highest magnification broadcast portable lens for 4K video production, and the FUJINON UA107×6.6 zoom lens, which features 107x zoom and is designed for shooting events, such as sports and concerts.

MediaKind and Google Cloud team up

MediaKind has partnered with Google Cloud to enable MediaKind’s entire portfolio of solutions to operate on Google Cloud Platform (GCP). MediaKind customers can leverage and benefit from Google Cloud’s ecosystem of services to provide the most comprehensive and scalable video delivery platforms and solutions to operate on Google Cloud's ecosystem of services to provide the most comprehensive and scalable video delivery platforms and solutions. More robotics from Vinten

Vinten introduced its all-new FH-155 robotic pan-and-tilt head designed to support heavy payloads in modern broadcast studio settings. With a maximum payload capacity of 70kg (155 pounds), the FH-155 combines sophisticated software and mechanical engineering to enable exceptionally accurate, smooth and quiet movements.

Fujifilm also showcased several new lenses at NAB, which support 4K cameras equipped with a 2/3-inch sensor. On show was the FUJINON UA64×9 S portable 4K zoom lens for broadcast application equipped with a 4K+ zoom, the world’s highest magnification broadcast portable lens for 4K video production, and the FUJINON UA107×6.6 zoom lens, which features 107x zoom and is designed for shooting events, such as sports and concerts.

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Creative Call

Nicole Hendrix shares the art of creating the perfect pitch and the power of crowdfunding in the MENA market

A four-time Emmy-winning producer and five-time PromaxBDA Gold award-winner, Nicole Hendrix hosted two workshops addressing advertising, film and storytelling at the 10th Creative Festival in Dubai last month. One was on ‘Storytelling for a brand’, and focused on using storytelling along with data to create a 360-degree marketing campaign. The other workshop spoke about ‘Pitching and how to sell your idea to various audiences’. She shared advice for filmmakers and creative professionals on how to gain more visibility for their work and create a brand name for themselves.

In a world clamouring for attention, pitches can be tricky. How can content creators, especially MENA filmmakers, create the perfect pitch? I find that using relevant research and data as part of the foundation of a creative pitch enables your audience to understand how you arrived at your idea and why your idea is the perfect solution for X. Doing your homework and coming prepared with examples of what you’re hoping to achieve are other key components that help tip the balance in your favour.

How can content creators sell without compromising on creativity and freedom of expression? Sometimes, having completely unrestricted parameters for creation can be copying. Having unlimited possibilities can keep you from even picking up a pen, because you don’t know where to start. Having a strict set of rules to abide by, and then figuring out what is the most creative and impactful way to communicate within these rules, can be a fun game that mentally stimulates you and keeps you up to date with the trends in your craft.

How is pitching an idea in the Middle East different from elsewhere in the world? From my research, advertising rules on accuracy and positivity are stricter [here] than in the US. These rules coincide with my personal philosophy and pitching strategy, as I tend to rely on facts and solutions. Social media is also a heavy focus, so a plan for social engagement to me would be a key component to a pitch’s success rate.

How can content creators factor in the commercial aspect of their work right from the inception of an idea? Are there any definite steps to follow? What should be their strategy? The idea needs to be a great, creative idea. Period. Once that idea has been formed and scripted, an edit pass on the idea for opportunities for partnerships, product placements, merchandising, tax credits, track, etc should absolutely be done, to help investors/clients see that there are multiple revenue opportunities available to support the great creative idea.

How can crowdfunding changing the commercial landscape for content creators? Crowdfunding is a beautiful thing for content creators. Even if a campaign isn’t 100% successful, being able to show that there is an audience or a market for an idea is very valuable. Failure is only failure if you didn’t learn and adapt from what happened. I found several inspiring projects on Zoomaal – from a mompreneur out of Lebanon whose start-up provides sliced, chopped and dried ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables, to a deaf-mute interactive communication product out of Jordan. From a content creator standpoint, it does seem that musicians seem to have a higher success rate from my research on this platform, but there are some beautiful short films and documentaries that have been successfully funded as well.

With data bringing in revenue for many players today, how can content creators use it to their advantage? Content creators should be looking at what is out there similar to their idea. If their product is similar to X but with a unique Y twist, they should be researching how much revenue X made and be incorporating that into their pitch (along with why Y makes it a better idea). Looking at user behaviour data and trends over time can give you valuable insight into who your audience is and how to tailor your product or messaging to increase your success and growth. From a software standpoint, anything that has a data visualisation feature – so you can easily incorporate images into your pitches or reports – is worth it.

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RED’s latest camera BRAIN® – DSMC2® – delivers up to 8K resolution and is capable of data write speeds of 300 MB/s. It can also simultaneously record in REDCODE RAW and Apple ProRes or Avid DNxHR/HD and comes in a lightweight modular design that can be configured however its user needs. It is offered with four incredible sensor options — DRAGON-X™ 5K S35, GEMINI® 5K S35, HELIUM® 8K S35 and MONSTRO® 8K VV and utilizes RED’s latest Image Processing Pipeline (IPP2) for a completely overhauled and enhanced workflow experience. The DSMC2® ecosystem also offers features like cable-free peripherals, integrated media bay and wireless control.