Zahra Zayat on how great content, in-house technology and a flexible business model are driving YuppTV’s subscriptions
Early this year, we made a conscious decision to ferret out women leaders in media from across the Middle East and Africa and write their stories. Only when we made this conscious search did we start discovering a lot of hidden talent out there. In fact, some of these talented people had been in our own backyard, and we hadn’t met them until now.

This issue is testimony to that search. We highlight three outstanding women in MENA media, operating in three different spaces. Zahra Zayat, who heads YuppTV, a relatively new entrant in the MENA OTT space targeting South Asians; Egyptian filmmaker Nada Riyadh, who had to temporarily fold up her film project due to resistance, but held on to her dream and eventually made it to Cannes; and Pauline Hunter, Senior Manager EPG Broadcast Systems at OSN, one of a handful of female engineers we have come across in the industry. In fact, Pauline is the first female engineer we have interviewed in BroadcastPro Middle East.

The IBC issue is always one of our most celebrated annual editions, and while the region is in holiday mode during the July-August season, the BroadcastPro team works doubly hard to scan the market and bring you exclusive news of installations, initiatives and productions you won’t read about anywhere else. While it’s difficult to mention all of them here, I’m proud to say that we have a number of stories from Egypt this time, from how the country pulled off the coverage of the Africa Cup of Nations tournament this summer — with 4K production to boot — to the innovative Deaf Film Lab initiative, which empowers deaf Egyptian youth to make films, and a report on how Egyptian cinema can potentially rise to its former glory again.

We have always had a strong tech line-up and this issue packs a punch with reviews of new products from industry professionals; discussions from the market on esports, cloud, AR and VR, as well as some of the new launches we will see in Amsterdam. The BroadcastPro team will be there, armed with one of our best issues ever. We hope you enjoy reading it. See you at the show.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director
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NEW LAUNCHES AT IBC2019
Twofour54, MBC and Image Nation partner to bring first Arabic-language soap opera

Twofour54 Abu Dhabi, MBC Studios and Image Nation Abu Dhabi have entered into an agreement to produce Inheritance, the world’s first Arabic-language soap opera. Under the agreement, a dedicated studio will be built for the show in Abu Dhabi. Twofour54 will invest directly in the production, and MBC will benefit from the Abu Dhabi Film Commission’s 30% rebate on production spending in the emirate. Both parties will work closely with Image Nation Abu Dhabi on talent and script development for the project. The soap opera is slated to shoot for more than 250 days and the production team estimate the show will generate over 200 jobs in the first year alone. HE Maryam Eid AlMheiri, Vice Chair of twofour54, said: “Partnering with MBC Studios and Image Nation to produce the world’s first Arab soap opera is a landmark moment in the Arab entertainment industry. The creation of Inheritance is an indication of our region’s rapidly growing media and entertainment industry and will serve as a catalyst to inspire the next generation of storytellers to create more original Arabic content.” Ben Ross, Chief Content Officer of Image Nation Abu Dhabi, added: “This major production demonstrates the scale and ambition that Abu Dhabi’s entertainment industry has achieved.”

Saudi cinema chain opens 15-screen complex in Jeddah

Saudi cinema chain Muvi Cinemas will open multiplexes at four Arabian Centres malls in KSA by the end of 2019, following a deal with the mall operator. The first 15-screen complex will open at the Mall of Arabia in Jeddah in the coming weeks, followed by launches at Nakheel Mall in Dammam, Mall of Doha in Al Hamra Mall in Riyadh and the new boulevard mall complex U-Walk scheduled to open in the capital later this year. Arabian Centres will expand its partnership with Muvi Cinemas and launch an additional 10 malls, bringing cinemas to eight Saudi cities over the next 24 months through 250 screens.

Times Network launches two new channels on du TV

Times Network, part of one of India’s largest media conglomerates, The Times Group, has launched Times Now World and Mirror NOW in the Middle East on du TV, a digital entertainment offering delivered by UAE telecom operator du. This foray into the Middle East further strengthens the footprint of the network’s existing offering in the region with TIMES NOW, ET NOW and Zoom. Commenting on the new launches, Jagdish Mulchandani, CDO & Executive President, Times Network, said: “Our alliance with du to launch Times Now World and Mirror NOW is both exciting and enriching. We have successfully secured a premium position in the market with our existing content offerings, and I am confident that our latest additions will provide a complete bouquet of news and entertainment to the discerning taste of the Indian diaspora in this region.”

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WarnerMedia promotes Giorgio Stock to President of EMEA and APAC

Giorgio Stock, previously President, EMEA at Turner, has now been appointed President of WarnerMedia Entertainment Networks, Distribution and Advertising Sales, EMEA and APAC. In his new role, he takes responsibility for all entertainment networks, distribution of all networks, advertising sales and the kids networks operations for EMEA and APAC.

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MediaPro expands inventory with Robe

Middle East rental and production company MediaPro has announced a massive investment in Robe moving lights. Sales and Marketing Manager at MediaPro, commented that a major factor that led to the rental house’s investment in Robe moving lights earlier this year was reliability. When it came to deciding about expanding the moving light inventory at their Dubai HQ, the vital parameters included engineering quality and versatile features, as well as an increasing demand from international lighting designers requesting Robe products on their specs, he said.

This led to the purchase of 86 x Spider LED wash beams, 76 x MegaPoints and three RoboSpot systems complete with the BMFL FollowSpot LT (long throw) fixture with integral camera, which has been especially designed for large arenas and stadiums. These are the first of these special BMFL FollowSpots in the UAE.

“Lighting designers (LDs) and productions are constantly asking for Robe lights, and we want to give our customers the best and most flexible options to realise their shows,” Nair added. Having its own stock of new Robe products, MediaPro hopes to substantially save on cross rentals. “When LDs know we can offer Robe for moving lights, they are satisfied, especially for concert and TV studio work – where they like the brightness, and for TV – the low noise levels,” explained Nair. MediaPro often advises on an event’s lighting design and work, in collaboration with independent artists and LDs. Recent events featuring Robe include the 2019 Dubai Jazz Festival, where MediaPro created the production design, and Virgin Radio’s RedPostDXB 2019, featuring a lighting design collaboration between its own Harold Fernandez and Miguel Galvao from Done Events.

Protec Dubai invests in Robe

The Dubai branch of event technical and staging solutions provider Protec Group has enhanced its existing portfolio of Rebe solutions with a range of new fixtures including BMFL, XF Washes, Pointes, MegaPoints, Spikes and RoboSpot systems. This has been spearheaded by Protec Head of Lighting Aaron Russ, winner of the 2019 TPMEA Award for Lighting Designer of the Year. An accomplished production lighting designer, Russ often collaborates with a team of designers to creatively light up event spaces varying from intimate shows to stadium spectacles.

Speaking about the Robe solutions, Russ said: “They work really well, especially outdoors in adverse weather conditions – in fact, I’ve never had to send a Robe fixture back to be repaired. They are really tough and, believe me, we’ve beaten them up enough times in terms of harsh operating environments!” Russ added that the products are well designed and engineered to make life easy for crews, who greatly appreciate the fact that they are not "needy lights". From a design perspective, Aaron said the optics are "impressive"; he likes flat beam field, the gobo selection and the fact that they make good workhorse lights for both theatre and rock ‘n’ roll. He cited the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the President’s Cup Football at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain as a good example, where he positioned 24 x BMFLs on one of the balcony handrails at the top of the seating bleachers, shooting a long way down to the field of play. “They were completely still – rock solid – which was noticeable compared to some of the other lights on the job!” he confirmed.

In addition to these creative advantages of using the Robe units, he also commented on the great service and support from Robe Middle East, headed by Elie Battah.
PRONEWS

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has partnered with Viacom International Media Networks (VIMN) to bring the Nickelodeon Kids’ Choice Awards and The World of Nickelodeon to the UAE capital for the next five years.

The first Nickelodeon KA Abu Dhabi will be staged on September 20, 2019 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre. It will feature a line-up of international and regional performers, as well as Nickelodeon’s trademark green slime, while at the same time giving young fans a chance to vote for their favourite artists. HRH Sheik Hamed bin Zayed, Undersecretary of DCT Abu Dhabi, said: “An event of this stature fits perfectly with our mandate to provide the best entertainment and activations for all sectors of society, and we are looking forward to seeing overseas visitor numbers increase because of securing this event for Abu Dhabi for the next five years.”

Raffaele Annecchini, President of Southern and Western Europe, Middle East and Africa for VIMN, added: “This partnership with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi is a milestone for us, which further strengthens our leadership position within the media sector in the Middle East. Viacom has invested significantly in this key region, expanding our brand portfolio in recent years. We will now bring the first of our globally recognised tent-pole events to the MENA region, and we want to continue growing this important area of business.”

MBC Group announces Creative Communities Collaboration

Since 2016, MBC Group has partnered with a private media school, several leading Hollywood executives and showrunners to organise entertainment industry gatherings and professional exchange programmes on the role of media in promoting tolerance through storytelling in the Arab world. One outcome of this process has been the Middle East Media Initiative (MEMI), a State Department-funded professional training programme produced by USC aimed at increasing the capacity and standards of the Arab world’s creative talents and their original storytelling.

Ali Jaber, MBC Group TV Director, said: “We believe in the power of positive storytelling and the effect it has on communities in the Arab world. Through the Creative Communities Collaboration, we aspire to provide new opportunities for inspirational stories to come to life via the medium of television.”

Elizabeth M. Daley, Dean of the USC School of Cinematic Arts, added: “Our joint initiatives focus on bringing cultures together. Our specialised workshops focus on finding the common ground in what unites us, sharing best practices, values and mutual understanding between both communities. We look forward to working with MBC Group on the new Creative Communities Collaboration.”

MBC Group has launched Creative Communities Collaboration (CCC), a public-private association of global media and entertainment executives to strengthen ties and partnerships between the MENA region and the Hollywood entertainment industry.

Last month, CCC members met at an exclusive event held in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles during which 17 Arab television writers and producers graduated from specialised workshops at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinematic Arts.

The new ATEM Constellation 8K is an Ultra HD live production switcher with so many features, you can combine them to make a powerful 8K switcher! You get 4 M/E, 40 x 12G-SDI inputs, 4 x 12G-SDI aux outputs, 4 DVEs, 16 Keys, 4 media players, 4 multi viewers, 2 SuperSource and standards conversion on every SDI input! Then you can combine everything for a powerful 8K switcher!

Introducing ATEM Constellation 8K!

The next generation 8K switcher with 8K DVE, 8K SuperSource, 8K chroma key and 8K MultiView!

Full Resolution 8K DVE

ATEM Constellation features 4 independent Ultra HD DVEs that all work together as a single full resolution 8K DVE when you switch to 8K formats. The DVE lets you create picture in picture effects with customizable 3D borders, shadows and lighting. DVEs can also be used to create amazing DVE transitions with squeeze, push and swoosh effects for adding excitement to your programming.

Professional Fairlight Audio Mixer

With a built-in Fairlight audio mixer, the ATEM Constellation makes it possible to do complex live sound mixing. You get 16 audio mixers in a live production switcher! Each input features 6 band parametric EQ, compressor, limiter, expander, noise gate and pan. Plus you can mix with an external Mackie compatible control or full Fairlight Audio Console.

Includes 8K Multiview with Audio Meters

The built-in multiview lets you view multiple sources in a single monitor. You get 4 independent multiview outputs that can each be individually customized or transformed into a single full resolution 8K multiview when you switch to 8K. Each multiview can be set to 4, 7, 10, 13 or 16 simultaneous views. Each view also has on-screen status including a customisable, VU meters and tally.

Learn more at www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae

*SM excludes duties, shipping and sales tax.
PRONEWS

October 2019
www.broadcastprome.com

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German wireless LED lighting specialist Astera has appointed UAE distributor NMK Electronics to distribute its products in the GCC region. This agreement will complement NMK’s growing lighting division.

Astera’s range of entertainment and architectural LED lighting has been used to illuminate numerous high-profile and world-class events. The Astera الشعب is also a key feature of the brand, offering quick, intuitive, advanced and straightforward control over multiple fixtures.

“Having simple and powerful control of complex lighting programmes and effects, coupled with the portability of Astera, means that lighting designers can focus on being creative without worrying about potential limitations like cables and rigging,” commented Darren Caithness, Lighting Business Manager – NMK Electronics.

Following an expo in Dubai earlier this year, Astera Sales & Marketing Director Sebastian Bückle was impressed with the drive and knowledge of the players, people and companies. “There is a lot of activity in the GCC and it is a vibrant market with huge potential for Astera, so we look forward to a busy, positive and productive long-term working relationship with NMK,” he said.

NMK Electronics to represent Astera in GCC

Nat Geo Abu Dhabi launches Egypt Specials series

National Geographic Abu Dhabi launched an Egypt Specials series last month, which explores the lost treasures, mysteries, stories and artefacts of Pharaonic Egypt.

The four-hour series features and artefacts of Pharaonic Egypt. lost treasures, mysteries, stories and artefacts of Pharaonic Egypt. lost treasures, mysteries, stories and artefacts of Pharaonic Egypt. lost treasures, mysteries, stories and artefacts of Pharaonic Egypt.

Nat Geo Abu Dhabi launches Egypt Specials series

Weyyak becomes SVOD-only service outside MENA

Iflix exits Middle East

Iflix has closed operations in the Middle East after entering the region two years ago in partnership with data services operator Zain. “Iflix and its partner Zain are working together to complete the wind-down of the operations in the Middle East, to allow iflix to focus on its core markets in Southeast Asia,” the company told BroadcastPro ME.

News of the pull-out surfaced shortly after Iflix announced that it had completed its latest round of funding for more than $50m by bringing in major institutional investor Fidelity alongside strategic shareholders Heartst, Sky and EMC, and said it was looking at a possible IPO.

Iflix, which launched in Malaysia and the Philippines in 2015, set up Dubai-based Iflix Arabia in 2017 and rolled out the service in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt and Sudan. Though SVOD services in the Middle East are growing, analysts say top-tier services such as Starz Play, which is now the Middle East market leader ahead of Netflix and Shahid Plus, are getting more traction than lower-cost operations like Iflix, which targeted a more down-market customer base that is being eroded by increased piracy.

Additionally, there will be a diverse collection of premium Arabic-language, Bollywood and Turkish-language content available to subscribers as an exclusive addition.

La Liga 2019/2020 season returns with 4K and VAR

La Liga is back for the 2019/2020 season with some of the world’s best football players, including Lionel Messi, Sergio Ramos and Joao Felix, and the most advanced broadcast technology. Eleven La Liga stadiums boast state-of-the-art aerial cameras and eight off-360-degree replays, while 4K cinematic production is now a permanent feature of broadcasts. According to La Liga, the last season reached more than 2.7bn fans globally. This season will see the return of VAR, following a highly successful first season in which the league says the correct decision rate in disputed incidents rose from 91.5% to 96.92%.

La Liga 2019/20 is available to MENA viewers on beIN Sports.

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Weyyak becomes SVOD-only service outside MENA

Zee Entertainment’s Arabic VOD streaming application, Weyyak, previously an AVOD service, has been relaunched as a paid subscription service for all users outside MENA. In MENA, viewers may choose between a free AVOD option or a paid, ad-free SVOD option. The latter will cost $1.5 weekly and $5 monthly.

The new paid service, which comes in the form of premium monthly or weekly subscription plans, provides ad-free, uninterrupted entertainment. Additionally, there will be a diverse collection of premium Arabic-language, Bollywood and Turkish-language content available to subscribers as an exclusive addition.

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Advanced Media strengthens presence in KSA with launch of first showroom

UAE-based professional broadcast, video and photography equipment distributor Advanced Media made its first foray into Saudi Arabia with the launch of its showroom at Coral Centre, Al Taawon, Riyadh, last month. The 240sqm showroom will include equipment suited for videography, photography and cinematography.

Alaa Al Rantisi, Managing Director at Advanced Media, said: “We are focused on fulfilling all our customers’ needs by offering a complete range of solutions from brands like Sony, RED, Zeiss, Dji, Kino Flo, Hasegawa, Profoto, Manfrotto, SWIT and Nill. We will also have demo equipment on hand for customers. Eventually, our target is to be the biggest professional store in the area. Hence, having stock from all the available brands is essential for us.”

He added that Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 programme has created “a huge demand and a wide range of opportunities for equipment supply and support”.

“We are looking to be an effective part of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative that the leaders in the Kingdom have announced. This will require a well-equipped media store to supply customers’ needs in the field. Our existing customers also asked for us to be there. As a result, we have decided to be close to the Saudi community and extend our successful experience in Dubai. The Saudi Service Centre will also be geared to address any services issues customers face, he added. “We have well-trained engineers. Our service centre in Saudi will have a well-stocked inventory of oft-required spare parts. If they need more support, our Dubai Service Centre will step in. The aim is for the Saudi centre to also become an authorised service centre for most of our main brands.”

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The showroom will have 12 experienced sales, marketing and service staff.

Samir Ibrahim, Branch Partner and Manager, said: “We will focus on both retail and distribution, and already have a team in place to take on turnkey projects. Our objective is to be recognised in the market for our technical knowledge, customer service and as a destination for high-end equipment. We want to create the first all-in-one pro shop in Saudi Arabia for videographers, photographers and cinematographers, offering the best equipment advice.”
Son-Mother set for world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival

Son-Mother (Pesar Madar), a collaborative film – produced by CEO of Dubai-based distributor Advanced Media and Czech company Europe Middle East, Kavesh Panam, renowned filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof and Farzad Pak – will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, taking place from September 5-15. The story centres around the struggles of a mother and son, and is a telling comment on how families of the Middle East, Kaveh Farnam, renowned filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, taking place from September 5-15. The story centres around the struggles of a mother and son, and is a telling comment on how families around the world are affected by tragic events. Religion and tradition play a big role in that, with people being very orthodox about them. In Son-Mother, I deal with the question of what each of us is able to do in order to stay away from tragedy.” Farnam also co-produced A Man Of Integrity, directed by Rasoulof. The film was a winner in the Un Certain Regard category at the Cannes Film Festival 2017.

Kuwait Football Association signs up Mediapro as VAR provider for football

The Kuwait Football Association (KFA) has signed a two-year agreement with Mediapro Middle East that will see the Spanish company implement Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology for all the football competitions organised by the sports body, including its most prestigious competition, the VFA Premier League. Mediapro will also provide training courses for the referees in the country for the next two years, with hands-on practical use of the tool, as part of this agreement. The agreement was signed by KFA Chairman Sheikh Al Yousuf Al Sabah and Omar Pleite Guerra, GM of Mediapro Middle East.

Nebras Films invests in Baselight grading

Nebras Films, a one-stop production and post house based in Riyadh, recently deployed a Baselight TWO grading suite with the latest v5 software, equipped with a Blackboard 2 control panel from FilmLight. The facility is equipped with equipment to support an entire production workflow, from ABRI Alexa cameras and motion capture camera rigid to a well networked post-production facility, for seamless workflows from editorial through VFX to finishing on Baselight.

The post-production centre is linked throughout using ContentAgent, which allows virtually instantaneous sharing of workflows between suites. This allows editors to work at lower resolutions, and lets the finishing artist in Baselight pick up the cut and the VFX and conform the project in ICHDIF. The complete infrastructure has been built with HDR in mind from the start. Given the unforgiving light in the desert, the ability to build latitude into a shot and create and refine looks in Baselight without losing detail is an important benefit. “Unlike Europe and the US, where the media industry has existed for decades with post-production processes which were once cumbersome, the industry here leap-frogged all that evolution and allowed us to create a completely timeless, non-linear world,” said Cian Patrick McLysaght, Post Production Supervisor at Nebras Films.

“That reinforces an expectation of immediacy which is pervasive in the industry here – that things should happen instantly. Baselight plays into this demand. It is the right system where speed is a prerequisite, and clients can see the processes taking place via an approachable UI. Baselight was integrated into our workflow pretty quickly.”

The latest release of Baselight v5, used at Nebras Films, helps streamline time-consuming workflows both within the colour grading suite and in collaboration with editing and VFX.

The post-production installation was completed by UK reseller Aqsaar 24 and Nebras Films, helps streamline time-consuming workflows both within the colour grading suite and in collaboration with editing and VFX.

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EFP and Arab Cinema Centre announce first Arab Critics’ Award for European films

The Arab Cinema Centre has joined hands with European Film Promotion to launch a new award for European cinema, The Arab Critics’ Award for European films will see a jury of 30 renowned Arab film critics, put forward by the ACC, select the best European film from nominations by the European national film institutions that make up the EFP’s membership. The inaugural award will be announced at the 2019 Cairo International Film Festival in November.

BFrago expands Middle East and Asia presence

Bango, a mobile commerce company, has opened a 2bn subscriber market opportunity by launching new OTT partnerships that will reach subscribers across pre-paid mobile, fixed-line, broadband and cable TV platforms. The new partnerships will enable subscribers in the UAE, India, Spain, Singapore, the Philippines and New Zealand to access streaming media subscription services as part of their existing plans, enabled by Bango Resale technology.

Anil Malhotra, Chief Marketing Officer at Bango, said: “Bango Resale technology supports a wide range of different offers through multiple channels, enabling leading OTT partners to easily open up new markets in addition to mobile, acquiring customers quickly and at very low cost. Providing bundled media packages acquires millions of new customers, creating valuable, recurring revenue streams for OTT players, and at the same time provides all-important market differentiation and loyalty for the channel partners that promote the bundles.

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SONYLIV'S GCC JOURNEY

Indian premium video-on-demand service SonyLiv made its first foray outside its home country to launch in the Middle East. In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, Uday Sodhi, Business Head-Digital, Sony Pictures Networks India, tells us about the streaming service’s plans for the region.

SonyLiv boasts more than 70 popular shows and 1,500 movies (including Hollywood hits) from Sony Pictures India’s content library. It features programming tailor-made for the South Asian diaspora in the region with content in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu with English subtitles. Popular shows include titles such as The Kapil Sharma Show, Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah, Patiala Babes, Ladies Special, and Super Dancer amongst others.

What is your growth plan for the Middle East?
We’ve currently rolled out SonyLiv in six countries – the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Our objective is to offer a large variety of content for South Asians. We’ve started out with Hindi-language shows and will gradually add linear channels on the service, as well as other language content. We’re still at a very early stage of launch and will evaluate our data to see what kind of consumer traction we get and what kind of content consumers are looking for. Based on our findings, we will expand our service offerings.

Why the Middle East?
The Middle East has a high concentration of South Asians and we’re one of the best providers of tailor-made content for this audience segment. Therefore, we decided to start with this market first. After this, we hope to look at Southeast Asia and Europe.

What did your market research show you?
Our service on YouTube indicated significant consumption of our content in the Middle East from people of South Asian origin. We already have our television channels in the Middle East, and this helped us in terms of a strategy. With over 450m unique mobile subscribers, the Middle East has one of the highest number of YouTube consumers in the world.

We already have several OTT players in this market – have you made a late entry?
There’s always an advantage in coming in late. You learn from the mistakes that the others have made, and you bring in the best experience for the users. We are well prepared and confident of our positioning in this market.

How is your service different from other streaming platforms?
Our content is not available on any other platform. Shows like Taarak Mehta and Kapil Sharma are unique to our platform. We will also be adding a lot of original content for Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bengali audiences, and are investing a lot in content catering to different Indian communities. Besides Hindi, we think we will have a significant advantage in multilingual content. We expect more consumption on this front. In fact, each of these local languages are representative of very large language communities, and each of these communities is a business by itself. We want to look at these as independent categories and build content for each of these markets.

Tell us more about your investment plans.
Digital is our priority at Sony Pictures right now and we want to build this business strategically. So we are in an investment phase at present to grow worldwide. We plan to invest in niche markets in terms of content. Our aim is to create content for global consumption by South Asians. So, for example, if we create content for the Tamil-language speaking audience, then whether they reside in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the US, the UK or India, the same content will work across. What this means for us is that the more markets we manage to get a foothold in, the better our monetisation. Therefore, we will be investing in content that appeals to audiences across India. Additionally, our platform is going to be ad-free but subscription-based.

“We will be adding a lot of original content for Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and Bengali audiences, and are investing a lot in content catering to different Indian communities”
Uday Sodhi, Business Head-Digital, Sony Pictures Networks India

We think that consumers will be willing to pay subscription for access to high-quality content – especially since the content that we’re bringing in is going to be engaging and entertaining content.

Can you share some figures about your uptake in the Indian market?
In India, we have around 70-80m active monthly users. This makes us the second most popular platform in India. On the Google app store, we crossed the 100m download mark recently, which puts us in the same bracket as the top apps within the subcontinent. From that perspective, we’re among the biggest players in India. We intend to bring some big shows to the screen in the coming months, like Amitabh Bachchan’s Kaun Banega Crorepati. Our original slate will span four languages to start with.

“We hear you already have a few original productions in the pipeline? Yes indeed. We will start rolling out original content sometime in September. Right now, we just want to get the service out there, stabilise all our content and get the service available across the Middle East, establish the price points and partnerships. And once that is done, we’ll start rolling out some flagship content. As for our originals, some of them are ready to be unveiled while a lot of shows are still in the pipeline.”
How did you come to take on your current role as Head of MENA at YuppTV?
YuppTV was just launching in the Middle East and I had a catch-up over coffee with our CEO Uday Reddy, who was connecting on a flight through Dubai after a friend had introduced us. Having worked at OSN, I knew the gaps of the existing propositions in the market and knew exactly how to target the audience in each of the Middle East countries. We saw an opportunity here, where over 50% of the population is South Asian. I was reluctant initially to take on the role as I didn’t speak any of the languages, but the thought of building something up from scratch was exciting, and I am so glad that I did. And now I have picked up a great deal of Hindi along the way.

What have been some of your achievements at YuppTV?
At YuppTV, we work in a start-up culture, so I basically do things from A to Z with the help and support of our extremely qualified teams. Since our launch in MENA, we have successfully tied up with more than 12 telcos in the UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, the most recent being with Batelco in Bahrain. We have also strengthened our presence in the traditional retail market with the likes of Lulu and Carrefour, and we have expanded into the dealer distribution network, selling traditional TV through our box strategy and by offering vouchers. We have also strengthened our investment in data analysis and marketing tools to target the relevant base better and achieve higher conversion.

To what do you owe the success of YuppTV?
People, people, people, culture, leadership, technology and localisation. We are blessed with a qualified, energetic and young team who operate with a start-up mentality, so we are all on the move, juggling different things all the time. Technology, speed and agility are our core strengths; I am truly impressed with how fast our teams can deliver on technology and products.

Being an OTT platform, we target different age groups, with the majority of our target market being in the age group between 24 and 50. As an OTT and e-commerce platform, YuppTV has made sure it is available on all possible platforms and devices around the world, from Android to Apple phones and devices, Xbox, PlayStation, Humax, Amazon, Roku, Nexus… you name it.

What is YuppTV's objective, and how have you gone about achieving it?
Our objective is to become the only home for South Asian entertainment and to ensure that we combine the best content, technology, partnerships and marketing to reach that goal. YuppTV is a one-stop shop for subscribers who want to view everything they want on one platform. Our YuppTV offering has
Our subscriber base has doubled every six months. Our content consumption per user has hit 4.5 hours per day, with over 40% of the engagement coming from non-premium channels.

Zahra Zayat, VP and Head of MENA, YuppTV

In terms of technology, we continue to invest in and adopt new technologies such as our new 4K hybrid OTT box, in addition to the catch-up service on linear channels and download feature for on-demand movies that allows offline viewing. We also prioritise continuous investment in data science to refine both our product and our content.

Which countries is YuppTV available in at present, and what are your expansion plans?

YuppTV’s largest market is in the US, while our fastest growing market is the Middle East. We also have a big presence in the UK, Australia, India, Pakistan, New Zealand and Europe. We will continue to expand into Africa, offering the South Asian channels and movies subtitled in English or local languages.

Our catch-up service offers subscribers seven days of catch-up TV, so we have seen a growing appetite for this content among South Asians and local Arabs. All our original programming content and selective list of movies and TV shows are subtitled in English. As we launched in the MENA region, we have seen a growing appetite among the local Arabs, and for that we have subtitled some of the Bollywood content in Arabic.

Our app downloads in the MENA region have doubled compared to last year, hitting 1.4m downloads with the majority being on smart TV and mobile. Digging deeper into the trend by country, we have seen that the platform engagement on the web is as strong as smart TV in the UAE, whereas mobile and smart TV remain dominant by far in KSA, Kuwait and the rest of the Middle East.

We have also seen that the choice of content (whether it’s comedy, romance or action) differs significantly within the South Asian segments. Some seem to prefer exaggerated and far from reality action, whereas others who prefer a combo of action, romance and comedy.

Today, we run four of our own channels, with our latest Telugu production, Luv Story, hitting 36m views in just two weeks.

Zahra Zayat, VP and Head of MENA, YuppTV

“Today, we run four of our own channels, with our latest Telugu production, Luv Story, hitting 36m views in just two weeks.”

We will continue to expand into new markets while trying to localise the service as much as possible. For example, we run an ad-supported service in some markets but a subscription-based service in the Middle East and the US.

Any recent deals you can talk about?

We have done a few consolidations lately, one of which was the acquisition of Lebara Play in the UK, and the other one is yet to be finalised in the Middle East.

Did the closure of Pehla help your subscriber numbers?

Yes, we saw an immediate spike in the numbers after July 15, and our direct new subs have been doubling every day since then. We have boosted our marketing campaigns to raise brand awareness in the region. This is the first time we have seen a significant growth during the summer season in the UAE, KSA, Kuwait and Qatar.

How do you address digital piracy?

We try to monitor our service through digital watermarking to block illegal streaming services. We also work with the regulatory bodies across different countries to educate them about the impact of content piracy in the region, which has exceeded $750m.

I believe you have shifted to Dubai Studio City?

Yes, we have just moved from Media City to Studio City. Our Dubai office runs all Middle-East operations and focuses on business development, sales, marketing, strategic partnerships and content. All back-office support and technology innovation is based out of our office in Hyderabad, India. Today, YuppTV has more than 700 employees with the majority based in India.

What are your analytics showing you?

Our subscriber base has doubled every six months. Our content consumption per user has hit 4.5 hours per day, with over 40% of the engagement coming from non-premium channels. The engagement on our catch-up service is 50% higher than on the live linear channels, so we decided to give our subscribers seven days of catch-up TV.

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I hear you also sell your technology to other operators? That’s right. Our platform is developed in-house by our team in India. YuppTV now sublicenses its platform separately, and a few telcos and operators in Sri Lanka and Singapore have bought our platform and white labelled it.

What is the big challenge you see in the OTT industry?

Customers will follow the content they see in the OTT industry.
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building the service in the market from scratch. And for that, we operate like a start-up. It is hectic but so rewarding.

What sparked your interest in this field?
The media business is so dynamic and creative. As you get into the areas of content acquisition and production, subscriber management, retention, churn and engagement, marketing, way to market – each one of those requires so much industry knowledge and you keep on learning something new every day. I am a strong believer that OTT services are e-commerce providers, and I am looking forward to launching the next Amazon through Yupp!

Do you see gender parity in the industry?
I believe that a woman has to be doubly qualified and very strong to be able to grow in this industry. This is the reality of the region, and I have faced this throughout my career. However, this is changing now and there is a wider acceptance of women leaders.

What are the biggest factors that hinder women from entering the OTT and telecom industry?
This is related to culture, as women working in media is still seen as taboo in some parts of the Arab world. The other part is that these industries are demanding, and unfortunately a lot of women have had to let go of their careers after they have kids. This is a right that a woman should not be denied. I remember I attended a meeting one week after giving birth, because I wanted to reflect the image of a woman who can run a family and a business at the same time.

What steps should firms take to decrease the gender gap in the broadcast industry?
We still see women being asked at interviews about their plans to have more kids, or their flexibility with travel, as these factors determine their eligibility. Even during layoffs, women get laid off first because of the perception that the male is the provider. In meetings, a woman sometimes needs to speak in a louder pitch or voice to be heard. Companies should eliminate gender preferences in certain jobs. Companies in the public sector especially should start offering equal benefits to women, such as schooling, housing and insurance. The UAE government has implemented some great initiatives in recent years, where women have representation in the government.

What message do you have for women aspiring to working in media?
There is nothing more difficult than running a house, a family and kids. Women are born leaders and they are naturally empowered; they just need to see the opportunity better. Having women leaders is a must now, and companies have realised that. I encourage all women to have their own identity and be proud of their achievements. Our achievements in the workspace are what make our kids future leaders. This industry is amazing, but it needs more women.
Dubai producer Kinjal Tanna took on an extreme challenge: filming wing walking at 1,500ft at 300km/h, to test the power of Vatika Naturals styling gel. Tanna tells Rachel Dawson how he managed to overcome unforeseeable challenges and made the cut.

How do you break away from all the clichéd men’s hair gel ads on television that portray the same old script? Is there a way to redefine a narrative that has been told to death in various permutations?

Dubai-based producer and CEO of KKDD Kinjal Tanna was recently tasked with such questions when given a brief by his client, Dabur Vatika, to create an action-packed sequence to market its Vatika Naturals styling gel. The idea was not to add to the existing stereotypes surrounding men’s hair gel; instead, the client suggested wing walking, the act of moving along the wings of an airplane during flight, sometimes transferring between planes. It originated as a daredevil stunt in the aerial barnstorming shows of the 1920s and became the subject of several Hollywood movies.

“The key category driver of a gel category is ‘hold’, and Vatika gel decided to go big on that. We wanted to communicate to gel users that Vatika gel gives you the best hold ever, no matter what. We created a series of Vatika Extreme Challenges where we tested hair styled with Vatika gel under extreme conditions,” says Prateek Jagann, Senior Product Manager, Dabur International.

“To test the hair gel, we began with a Ferrari at 120km/h challenge, followed by a skydive at 270km/h challenge. For the third edition, we wanted to surpass the 270km/h barrier and do something which has never been tried before by any hair product; hence we decided to go for wing walking and showed that with Vatika gel – your hair remains intact even when you stand on top of a plane travelling at 300km/h.”

“Once we were airborne, we had to get the shots in the best possible manner considering we had a cameraman who was strapped in with limited viewing and movement.”

Kinjal Tanna, CEO, KKDD

The ad went viral on social media, attracting 12m views, 21m impressions, 300,000 likes, 40% View Through Rate (industry avg 27%) and 15% SER (industry avg 1%).

AeroSuperBatics in the UK.

“They had a strong team with a proven safety record. Their airplanes, which we flew, were Boeing-Stearmans built in the 1940s; we actually executed stunts in a 75-year-old aircraft and we shot at Rendcomb World War 1 airfield, which was operational from 1910 to 1919.”

Directing the ad demanded high energy for the extremely intense weather conditions. A lot depended on the wind and weather on the day, Tanna says, which added to the uncertainty factor.

“We had to have a trained professional who was willing to endure the whole day being mounted on top of a plane.”

He explains: “My approach was very simple, I put together a wishlist of aerial stunts and shots I wanted to see in this video. We then discussed this with Martyn Carrington, Chief Pilot from AeroSuperBatics, and we got onboard aerial shoot specialists Glenn Stanley, Billy Lipsett and Colin Norwood from YDM Aviation, who primarily work on a lot of air shows, which showcase military manoeuvres.”

After finalising several shots, briefing the stuntman was crucial, and the team mounted GoPros on the aircraft to capture all the action. Tanna explains that the schedule was equally challenging in terms of capturing the right shots at the right time.

“Each flight duration lasted 15 minutes, which meant we were under a lot of pressure to deliver. After each flight, we would go through all the footage captured on the GoPros as well as the on-ground cameras to get an idea of the range of shots, to determine if there was scope to improve.”

In order to capture the best images, the shoot employed six types of cameras – two Canon 5D
“One of the biggest challenges was to ensure both pilots were in sync when it came to speed, since to get the shot the camera plane had to be a step ahead and know exactly which shot we were taking next, and sometimes we had to get a bit higher or lower to get our shots.”

The team selected the best shots from seven hours of footage; post-production entailed the Apple Final Cut for editing, Da Vinci Resolve Studio 16 for grading and Avid Pro Tools Ultimate 2018. This phase took a week. “It was imperative that we incorporate all the shots which guaranteed the wow effect. On the editing table, we had to ensure the shots gave us a literal adrenalin rush, which was the desired effect of speed. This is what we wanted to showcase,” explains Tanna.

“We then got prepared for the weather conditions, among other things. Technically we shot at Rendcomb World War 1 airfield, which was in a 75-year-old aircraft, whereas our camera plane was fitted in a 1,500ft airfield, which was operational from 1916 to 1919,” says Tanna.

“I told the camera team to visualise that although both the planes were one of the most challenging stunts to execute. Equally hard was shooting the side barrel roll, says Tanna. A barrel roll is an aerial manoeuvre in which an airplane makes a complete rotation on both its longitudinal and lateral axes, causing it to follow a helical path, approximately maintaining its original direction. Another challenge was technical in nature. ‘We discovered that although both the planes we used were the same in configurations, they had slightly different engine configurations. The fact that our Hero plane had a man on top with a pilot in the cockpit, whereas our camera plane had two people seated in the cockpit, would have an adverse effect on the weight of the plane and how the winds would affect this shot,’ Tanna explains.

We actually executed stunts in a 75-year-old aircraft, and we shot at Rendcomb World War 1 airfield, which was operational from 1916 to 1919”

Norwood from YDM Aviation had the task of handling this, since it was important to coordinate with ground and air. “We had to know at all time where the planes would be and both pilots needed to keep their distance from each other,” explains Tanna. “Once we were airborne, we had to get the shots in the best possible manner considering we had a cameraman who was strapped in with limited viewing and movement. ‘It was paramount to ensure that the lens sizes didn’t add weight to the camera, mainly because while shooting at those speeds it’s very difficult for the camera to be in focus at all points. Eventually we did a total of four flights, two with one aircraft and two solo flights.’

Executing a simultaneous 360-degree aerial manoeuvre on two planes was one of the most challenging stunts to execute. Similarly hard was shooting the side barrel roll, says Tanna.”

“We also had a lot of support for pre-production from Sanjeev Palma, my Associate Producer, and both of our editors – Pinkesh Surtani on post and Ranjeet Raju on sound design and mixing.”

Dabur’s Senior Product Manager Jugran adds: “We shot in some extreme conditions with freezing temperature and high wind speed, but all thanks to the KKDD team and especially Kinjal Tanna for executing this ad.”

“The ad has accumulated 12m views, 21m impressions, 308,000 likes, 60% VTR (industry average is 27%) and 15% SER (industry average is 1%).”

“The efforts of the team did pay off in a successful shoot. The Vatika Wing Walking Challenge has garnered 1,523,898 views on YouTube in less than two months.”

“Proceeding from the safety point of view, we took rigorous training to ensure the team was prepared for the challenges we would face during the shoot. We also had support from the Air Traffic Control, who provided us with all the necessary information about the weather conditions.”

“For the third edition, we wanted to surpass the 270km/h barrier and do something which has never been tried before by any hair product, hence we decided to go for wing walking”

Prateek Jugran, Senior Product Manager, Dabur International

The producer credits the success of the shoot to the support of Dabur Vatika and his team. “Our production team comprised eight members: four from Aerohyperbatics UK – Martyn Carrington, David Barrell, Kieran Pobjoy and Jemma Craigie; Ryan, our stuntman; and the camera team from YDM Aviation – Glenn Stanley, Billy Lipsitt and Colin Norwood.

“In the third edition, for the first time, we created a 180-degree aerial move. It was a control roll, wherein both the planes move in a 180-degree arc, so that there is no confusion in the angle of the shot. The Vatika Wing Walking Challenge has garnered 1,523,898 views on YouTube in less than two months.

“The ad campaign has also received a lot of appreciation from the consumers. We were able to create a unique campaign which resonated with the consumers and helped us achieve our goal.”

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The Egyptian movie industry was born in the first wave of cinema at the end of the 19th century. The first silent Egyptian film was produced in the beginning of 1896, and a full-length feature was released in 1927. Egypt’s geographical location played a key role in ensuring that Cairo remained a hub for the movie industry, and it continued to evolve and flourish.

Cairo and Alexandria were two Mediterranean cultural melting pots, among the few cities in the region considered cities of enlightenment. The openness of Egyptian society at the time led to the acquisition of art, artistic education and skills, as well as the development of a movie-making culture.

The golden era of Egypt’s movie industry lasted from the 1940s to the 1960s, when Egyptian productions mimicked Hollywood movies. In fact, if you mute and watch Egyptian movies from the golden era, they look like their Hollywood counterparts. It was the era of well-known directors Youssef Chahine and Niazy Mostafa, and actors like Omar El-Sharif.

Egyptian films like Shabab Emra’a, El Leila el Akhaira and El Arad, Chahine and Niazy Mostafa, era of well-known directors Youssef Chahine and Niazy Mostafa, and actors like Omar El-Sharif.

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The Passage – renewed hope for the Egyptian movie industry in 2019

The Passage, one of the biggest Egyptian movie productions to date, has been enjoyed by both young and old in the Arab world, raking in cash since it launched in theatres in early June. Made for $4.2m, it has already generated more than $3.3m at the box office, bringing hope to Egypt’s movie industry. Directed by Sherif Arafa and produced by Hisham Abdel Khaliq, The Passage stars superstar Ahmed Ezz, alongside Tunisian actress Hend Sabri and Jordanian actor Eyad Nassar, among others. It addresses the period after the Six-Day War with Israel in 1967, known as the Setback in some Egyptian history books, and the subsequent War of Attrition, which continued until 1970. It challenges the definition of the war as a defeat for Egypt. According to the movie, the military defeat was an institutional failure, not a failure of the army or the people. Set in 1967, it particularly focuses on a special army operation that was concluded with huge success, raising the morale of Egyptian society at a time of loss caused by war. Over the last 15 years, Egyptians have abandoned poorly developed local movies and plots, in favour of Hollywood productions. The Passage, however, shines a light on Egyptian cinema and is testimony to the huge potential for high-quality productions in the country. It reflects a new vision and direction for content while using all the local resources of talent. There are many reasons for the smashing success of The Passage. The film spans 50 years, making it easy for all generations, including teens, to identify with it. It stirs emotion around the victories and losses of war, fanning the flames of national pride with high craftsmanship.

The movie reminds me of the movie Dunkirk (2017), directed by Christopher Nolan. Both films showcase war with a powerful intensity while also celebrating heroism. For the last 40 years, the Egyptian movie industry has not succeeded in bringing history and war together as it does in this mega production. The Passage has helped the Egyptian movie industry regain the respect of both older and younger generations. The unprecedented family consensus on The Passage is remarkable, and its timing is also significant, given the political events in Egypt of the last few years. The movie is a big thank-you note to the army and all fallen heroes.

Rasha Shokr is a writer, film critic and vlogger based in Egypt.
Deaf Film Lab, an innovative initiative in Egypt, is inspiring deaf youth to take up filmmaking. In an interview with Rachel Dawson, founder Waguih El Laqany shares how the initiative is pushing the envelope for inclusivity in cinema.

"I could never imagine that deaf people could shoot films," says nineteen-year-old Islam Ahmed, who chanced upon a workshop designed for the deaf in his hometown of Alexandria in Egypt early this year.

Ahmed, who works at a restaurant and has always been passionate about street photography, is one of the young people who have learnt the entire gamut of filmmaking, from filming and colour grading to editing, at Deaf Film Lab – a non-profit initiative founded in 2018 by Waguih El Laqany from filming and colour grading to editing, at Deaf Film Lab – a non-profit initiative founded in 2018 by Waguih El Laqany.

At the workshop, I learned everything about filmmaking, so when I joined the Lab, I started to learn professional photography and editing, and now I can shoot films on my own," says Ahmed.

El Laqany says the initiative aims to enable aspiring deaf filmmakers to use film as a medium to communicate with society, as a tool to express their ideas, dreams and visions.

He is a co-founder of Cinema Everywhere, an initiative that seeks to expand cinemas in Egypt, and the inspiration came to him after a special screening of silent films.

"We screened films without dialogue at deaf associations, organisations and independent gatherings.

"Then, as part of a screening programme I'd conducted with the American Embassy in Cairo, we translated four short films of the American Film Showcase into Arabic sign language through C Film Translation Centre, another initiative of Cinema Everywhere."

The films were screened at several Egyptian governorates and got a lot of attention in the deaf community.

"We conducted a simple training project in 2017 to measure the extent of a deaf individual's ability to learn visual arts, by providing them with cinematography training through a project called A Look at the City. This was a training workshop on photography and lectures on human relations in the city, resulting in an exhibition at the Goethe Institute in the winter of 2017; this project encouraged me to think about implementing the Deaf Film Lab initiative," Laqany explains.

"At the film screenings we conducted throughout the years, many deaf people made it clear that they wanted to learn and study filmmaking, so when I saw the impressive results of the photography workshop, I learned more about the difficulties they face and tried to address those challenges when I launched Deaf Film Lab.

The Lab has birthed several film projects, such as The Game, written and directed by Fatma Belal, with Islam Ahmed as the DOP.

The film follows a group of deaf people in a park who play a game only they understand. Other youngsters join in, while two passers-by watch but fail to comprehend. The Game conveys a larger message that deaf people are misunderstood.

El Laqany says the initiative aims to enable deaf individuals to enter mainstream cinema as trained professionals.

The goal is to create an environment conducive to learning filmmaking, and to this end, the Lab oversees everything from the training of deaf filmmakers right up to marketing, distribution and special film screenings.

Attendees study various elements of filmmaking, including screenplay writing, framing elements, cinematography, directing and film editing with Adobe Premiere, with all workshop content translated and interpreted into sign language by Egyptian interpreters. This is all done within a span of 144 hours, over the course of 24 sessions.

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Belal says: “When I first joined the Lab, I found it hard to learn filmmaking, but gradually I began to understand and love it. I learned how to write a screenplay; how to direct, shoot and edit a film. I learned the basics of principal roles in filmmaking, such as the cinematographer, the editor and the first assistant director. I specialised in scriptwriting and directing.

I wrote the screenplay of my film and directed it. The film is about a game that only deaf people play.
"It’s a great and joyful game, all the deaf like and play it – I learned it from my deaf friends. I conceptualised a film on this because it was a real-life experience for me. Whenever I saw a normal person watching us play that game, they always had many questions and didn’t understand how it’s played or why we enjoy it. So I wanted to put the skills I learned at the workshop into use by making a film to convey to people who can hear that being deaf doesn’t imply being disabled. “One day I aspire to be a professional filmmaker and hope to teach the art of movie-making to youngsters.”

While aiming to inspire and empower more young minds like Ahmed and Belal, Laqany says the Lab will also be supporting the deaf in a bigger way. “Deaf Film Lab is planning to have a permanent training centre fully equipped with training equipment and data visualisation tools, and a number of deaf trainees in previous rounds will become trainers in the next round. They will also take part in the coordination of the training and production projects. We also plan to implement a more advanced training for attendees who have already specialised in the first workshop in film directing, editing, screenplay or cinematography. We plan to widen the scope of Deaf Film Lab not only in Egypt, but to include the rest of the Arab region. In addition, we aim to create the first feature-length film that is produced 100% by deaf people behind and in front of the camera, starting from the ideation right through to writing, directing, editing and post-production. “This way, we hope to integrate more deaf filmmakers into the Arab filmmaking market,” Laqany notes.

Waguih El Laqany aims to widen the reach of the Lab to other Arab countries. Waguih El Laqany, Founder, The Deaf Film Lab

Deaf Film Lab plans to open a permanent training centre in the coming months, with previous trainees serving as instructors.
The move towards a multi-codec world

The launch of AV1 has been one of the industry’s hottest topics, due to the promise of being able to process UHD much faster than any other solution on the market. It’s also royalty-free, effectively levelling the playing field for innovation and allowing more agile players to compete with industry giants. AV1 is likely to be rolled out for premium VoD services first, enabling providers to spread the cost of computer resources while the wider market begins mass adoption of the codec, over time. We expect that 2019 will accelerate the trend towards a multi-codec world as all content providers select the best solution for different scenarios. This bandwidth-saving technology will benefit TV service providers by enabling a player to detect what the most efficient codec is on any browser or platform. AV1, h.264, H.265, VP9, VVC and AV1 have all been designed to suit a specific environment or type of content. By encoding videos into multiple codecs and configuring a player to make informed decisions about which files to stream and to whom, operators can deliver the highest picture quality on existing bandwidth. For streaming service providers, the most readily available solution for delivering high-definition TV, film, sport and documentary content in a region with chronically low bandwidth is the deployment of next-generation cloud technologies such as per-title encoding. For streaming service providers in the region by adjusting an encoding configuration to optimise a specific video asset

Gerald Zankl, Director of Business Development, Bitmovin

colour at a low complexity level, which can be compressed much more efficiently than more detailed scenes in blockbuster movies or high-quality nature documentaries. Per-title encoding relies on performing a complexity analysis on each title before the encoding process begins. That complexity score is used to adjust the bitrate ladder by sending a new encoding profile to the encoder. The result: each video in a library is encoded in a way that best suits the content – minimising the bitrate where appropriate and greatly reducing bandwidth usage.

Quality as high as the eye can see

One of the biggest challenges facing the Middle East is low-bandwidth constraints. This can be overcome by delivering streams in the highest quality that can be perceived by the human eye. Technologies like per-scene adaptation leverage the fact that the human eye is unable to register a lot of the information delivered in a video stream. In most videos, many scenes can be streamed at a lower bitrate without the viewer noticing. Per-scene adaptation involves supplementing the adaptation logic that governs viewer behaviour with an additional stream of quality metadata containing information about the visual complexity of a particular segment in the video. In an adaptive streaming scenario with a standard configuration, the player attempts to download a video file that fits the screen on which it is playing. A player configured for per-scene adaptation is alerted to the fact that an upcoming segment can be played at a lower bitrate without any noticeable loss of quality. The player then adjusts itself accordingly to reduce the bandwidth consumption in some cases by 30% or more.

The quality metadata required to control this process is generated by running an analysis on each video as it is encoded, using a variety of perceptual quality measurements, meaning the encoding process is optimised for the human eye. This metadata is included in the adaptive package and streams to the player in a similar way to subtitles and closed captions.

Future-proofing OTT

Eventually, the Middle East will have demonstrated access to much faster mobile networks, and I welcome that when it comes. But by then more people will be consuming even more content at higher resolutions, and we will find ourselves in the same position if content is not being managed and distributed in the most efficient way possible. At CES and NAB this year, 8K cameras, devices and complementary technologies were increasingly prevalent. When they become mainstream, the need for multi-codec streaming, per-title encoding and per-scene adaptation will become even more critical, even on 5G networks that come close to achieving the speed and bandwidth availability promises being made right now.

Gerald Zankl is Director of Business Development at Bitmovin.
FORGING A NEW PATH AT FIFTY

ASBU celebrated its 50th anniversary this year at the Arab Radio and TV Festival in Tunis, with events planned throughout the year to commemorate the occasion. In an exclusive chat with BroadcastPro ME, ASBU Director General Abdelrahim Suleiman shares some of the organisation’s recent milestones and its technical strategy for the year ahead.

Congratulations on ASBU’s 50th anniversary. How was this edition of the event different from previous years? Indeed, it was a fabulous reunion that brought to Tunis all the people who made a difference in ASBU’s history—former employees, professional partners, political figures, artists and various colleagues from around the world. This was ASBU’s way of saying thank you.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary (1969-2019) was launched during the Arab Radio and TV Festival (June 27-30), but will continue all year long. Several events and actions were undertaken and will be organised. They mainly include the production of a video documentary on ASBU’s achievements and the difficulties it had to face during half a century, a book on ASBU’s history, a document exhibition inaugurated during the Festival, and several workshops, seminars and meetings to highlight, discuss and assess what ASBU has achieved or failed to achieve, the challenges ahead, and the programmes and the future orientations in which it is engaged. A number of professional training sessions are also scheduled to take place in different Arab countries.

How has OTT been received in this market, and is ASBU looking closely at this segment? ASBU OTT services have been provided on an international level through an agreement with GLArab, which is available on www.glarab.com. This service may be received on IP receivers, mobile and fixed PC services. Approximately 47 Arab TV stations are broadcast on the platform. Our audience time has grown over the years to around 2.5m viewing hours, where the majority of audience is in North America, besides Australia and East Asia. On a regional level, our members are starting small networks over the internet, while others are looking into a more cost-effective solution over HbbTV 1.5. The latter requires the availability of smart TVs or IP set-top boxes.

Who were the big winners at the Festival this year? For the second year in a row, the...
Festival’s organising committee has chosen to entrust the arbitration of its competitions to an independent jury made up of Arab experts in various fields of radio and TV content production. The impact on the results was enormous. Competitors were mostly happy with the award distribution, a wide variety of programmes and TV and radio channels won the prizes, most sub-regions in the MENA area and abroad (China, BBC) were present on the podium, and the award distribution ceremony was enthusiastic. The award-winning programme themes mostly focused on TICs and science, new media and awareness-raising content.

You implemented the cloud last year. How has that evolved, and how has MENOS Plus been updated to improve service for members? MENOS Plus has evolved in a way that allows ASBU to cut its operational costs considerably and utilise its spectrum resources efficiently. At the same time, our members enjoy HD quality and lower latency contribution. ASBU is looking to upgrade its radio exchange network.

“Our audience time has grown over the years to around 2.5m viewing hours, where the majority of audience is in North America, besides Australia and East Asia”
Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General, ASBU

In parallel, ASBU has started its cloud services deployment in order to meet the immediate needs of its members for fast and unmanaged internet-based contribution, with free access anywhere, anytime, while building a future-proof IP platform. There are, however, some challenges to securing the most feasible economical solution, as we have to meet more demands with the same or even sometimes lesser cost. ASBU is providing the service smoothly where about 10% of the news exchange takes place on this platform, although we are slowly widening our reach globally.

What new technical improvements and strategic plans do you have for ASBU? ASBU is facing real challenges with introducing new services and technology to our members. IP, UHDTV and HDR, as well as accessibility for all members, are on the cards. Artificial intelligence for more personalised content is also on the top of the agenda. ASBU has moved one step forward in producing a guideline to introduce Access service, so as to incentivise our members to serve all of the citizens. As part of this, we are also looking to use a unified artificial intelligence platform to allow speech to text and text to speech, so that our members can depend on the automation process for creating accessible content with minimal human intervention for creating the final product, thus reducing the production cost. Similarly, we are producing guidelines to introduce new IP-based live production in our members’ area.

What courses is the ASBU academy offering, and how do they help the community? Since its launch in April 2017, the ASBU Media Training Academy has worked on two parallel axes to achieve its objectives. It first focused on designing a comprehensive strategy to improve the academy’s performance, finalise its departments and enhance its impact, by pursuing academic methods based on the needs defined by member organisations, to keep abreast of the technological challenges in the fields of digital media, and to maintain and improve their role in the media landscape. Secondly, the academy has designed a comprehensive training programme based on the most up-to-date training curricula and partnering with prestigious international training organisations. We have completed 63 training sessions so far, including decentralised courses from the annual programmes and on-demand, on-site courses to support corporations that lack financial resources. 847 trainees from 28 countries and 76 corporations participated in these sessions. Most training courses use an interactive method that integrates both theoretical and practical content, as well as the latest technology and equipment.

“It was a fabulous reunion that brought to Tunis all the people who made a difference in ASBU’s history”

Abdelrahim Suleiman, Director General, ASBU

What is the Chinese connection? China seems to have a big presence at the Festival every year. Yes, we have had Chinese participation for the fourth year in a row at the Arab Radio and TV Festival with a large dedicated pavilion, and this represents one of the event’s key highlights. We are all aware of how active the Chinese audiovisual industry is throughout the world. At ASBU, we would like to play a leading role in channelling the overall cooperation between China and the Arab region in the field of radio and TV. Several cooperation texts have been signed by ASBU and various Chinese institutions, including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China’s International TV Corporation. ASBU also participated in the 2018 Belt & Road Media Community Summit Forum, held on September 14-15, 2018 in China. The Chinese pavilion attracts scores of interested Arab visitors, including radio and TV officials, production companies, representatives, professionals and experts. Several joint ventures and cooperation projects were finalised during these visits.

When is the next Festival scheduled to be held? The next edition will be held in mid-June 2020 at the City of Culture in Tunis.
Egyptian director Nada Riyadh’s film Fakh (The Trap) premiered in the short film category at the 58th Semaine de la Critique during the Cannes Film Festival 2019 in May, and received a lot of attention as a German-Egyptian co-production challenging societal norms. It features a deteriorating relationship between a man and a woman, while exploring the human psyche from a female perspective.

While Riyadh’s film did manage to make it to Cannes, the journey itself involved more hurdles than she had imagined, she says. Halfway through the film, production had to be stopped due to what the filmmaker calls “resistance”.

“This film is an Egyptian-German co-production, which affected the filming a lot. When we started pre-production, we did not realise that having a mixed team of Egyptians and non-Egyptians would be problematic on a subject as taboo as domestic violence in Egypt.

“People were already wary, and even more because it was an international co-production. When we started filming, the lead actress and some of the crew members decided to withdraw from the film halfway through the filming. Even the set was ransacked, and we had to stop everything after spending 70% of the budget. The rental houses that loaned us the cameras and additional equipment decided to retract all leased facilities as well.”

The team eventually regrouped, recast and adopted a new strategy to shoot a second time with a new lead actress. “Reshooting meant starting from scratch. I’d say we had a paramount financial situation to budget the second shoot schedule. But then we kind of developed a plan B to make this film in a way we believe in.”

Riyadh highlights the support received from producers Eva Schellenbeck and Ayman El Amir, and says the topic of her film was a little unconventional and that because it dealt with a sensitive issue like abusive relationships, it challenged norms.

“Conservatives were not pleased with the film’s storyline and tried their best to create hurdles for the production. The industry is also not very welcoming of women directors. They are more used to films told from a dominant male gaze.”

The Egyptian-German co-production was a result of the Robert Bosch film grant that Riyadh won in 2017 at the Berlin Film Festival. This one-year annual development programme offered by Robert Bosch, extends compensation through various levels of development, and The Trap went through a series of phases before it was made into a film. “Together with our German counterparts, we decided on the best plan to go on a three year period to make this film. One year was spent developing a strategy and how to finance the project.”

To ensure the quality of her film was not undermined, Riyadh chose to shoot on the Blackmagic URSA Mini Pro 4.6K camera and a Zeiss high-speed lens set. Distribution was managed by Italian sales agent Lights On.

“Another year we kind of spent trying to fix the location. Because it was set in such a difficult location, we spent a lot of time allocating production modules.”

At the Cannes Critics’ Week Competition in May, six of the 10 selected projects were directed by women. Among them was Egyptian director Nada Riyadh’s film The Trap, which sparked controversy for its bold storyline but won critical acclaim. Riyadh shares the highlights of her filmmaking experience with Rachel Dawson.
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Women in the broadcast industry are under-represented. This can be traced to either not being given the same exposure as their male counterparts, or not being encouraged to pursue technical careers.

Compared to MENA, there are signs of positive change in the UK based on Ofcom’s 2018 Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Television report, which examined the representation of women across the five major broadcasters – the BBC, Channel 4, ITV, Sky and Vacom (which owns Channel 5) – in the UK and found that overall, women in the TV industry (46%) are represented broadly in line with the UK’s working population (47%).

While there is a small increase in women at senior levels, Sky employs fewer women (38%) as a proportion of its workforce than the other broadcasters. The proportion of women at senior management level across the industry has increased from 38% to 41%. Vacom and ITV have the highest proportion of women in senior management positions at 40%, while Sky has the lowest at 38%.

Men continue to dominate technology and engineering roles, with only 25% of these jobs held by women. Women are also under-represented to a lesser extent in creative and content production roles (41%). Still, these numbers are much higher in the UK than in MENA.

In the MENA region, women engineers in broadcast are a minority. We caught up with Pauline Hunter, Senior Manager, EPG Broadcast Management Systems at OSN, to learn more about her experience working in a male-dominated industry.

Undertaking the role of a broadcast systems engineer is an experience unlike any other, and because of its highly technical nature, most women don’t discover it, says Hunter. “It’s not one of those traditional jobs like a doctor or a lawyer, so I don’t think you’ll ever hear someone in school say they want to be in broadcast IT or broadcast engineering.”

She explains that only when more women are encouraged to undertake technical roles can the possibility of seeing a balance in the gender scale be realised.

“This is one of those fields you come across by accident, so what you find is people working on the business side who kind of fall into it. I’m from an IT background and ended up specialising in broadcast systems.”

Hunter works at OSN’s Broadcast Engineering department, where she looks after two distinct areas – the Channel Management/Broadcast Management systems and the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG), which she heads. She is also in charge of ensuring proper metadata for content.

“The CMS is used in many areas of the business, and it follows the life cycle of a programme from when we acquire it to when it is transmitted. So, effectively the planning and scheduling for linear and non-linear media are done via the CMS, and it interfaces with the media management systems and the EPG systems. So there’s a lot of interfaces that we need to look after from all the life cycle stages of that programme,” she explains.

“Once the content is acquired, it goes through the media workflow. All that information needs to be recorded in the system so people know the duration of a show, and then it needs to go through compliance checks. The planners and schedulers create an EPG for it and then they send a playlist of transmission for when it can be played out. We support the business from a technical point of view. We have to make sure that data is enriched to ensure greater content visibility and discoverability for the viewer.”

Of course, none of this is without its challenges, says Hunter. “At OSN, the CMS hadn’t been upgraded for eight years, so effectively the upgrade meant scaling the system up 60 versions, and that was quite challenging. Together with my team, we managed this upgrade with no hiccups. From a customer-facing EPG perspective, the challenge is to ensure that the EPG for OSN’s 22 channels is correct, up-to-date and fresh. Our goal is to make sure the guide is informative, it tells them enough to pull them to the programme.”

Since the UAE country is so multicultural, it’s imperative for TV to reflect that in terms of serving audiences with
Prior to her role at OSN, Hunter has undertaken roles in broadcast technology at Sky, where she was Head of Support of Broadcast Applications. She then worked at Fox Kids until it was acquired by Disney. Hunter spent approximately 12 years at Disney, where she oversaw the Broadcast systems for EMNA. Hunter admits she never thought she’d be a broadcast engineer in college. Her education did not determine her venture into the broadcast industry.

“I studied Part and Energy at Leeds University. I wanted to be a reservoir engineer. In 1989, when I finished my undergrad degree, I was working for the local authorities on energy projects. After that, I did something completely different and worked for a branch of the Chamber of Commerce. There I was helping women set up businesses, particularly from ethnic-minority backgrounds in the UK.”

Following this, Jobs included a venture into medical software, where she was part of the Patients Not Paper campaign in the UK, a national service looking to reduce paperwork. She worked alongside a team that tried to build software that linked hospitals to doctors electronically. Then there was a change in government and the project came to a halt.

In 1997, Hunter bagged a role at Sky – “my first role in broadcast” – as Head of Support of Broadcast Applications, responsible for affiliate channels such as Fox Kids, National Geographic, and Nickelodeon, all joint ventures at the time.

“This was my official introduction to the broadcast industry. Sky is an excellent place to work. It was innovative and in a lot of ways set the benchmarks in terms of their projects.”

Hunter eventually took a position at Fox Kids, later acquired by Disney, and stayed there for twelve years until she moved to OSN. She has worked with both large and medium-sized media corporations, and says both come with challenges and benefits. She describes a bigger conglomerate as a huge wheel that picks up pace as it moves. “With bigger budgets, you get to do so much. The projects are bigger. But with OSN and Fox Kids, the challenge is to see how the mega guys are doing at the same time frames. I must admit those smaller companies manage to keep up, to find innovative ways to achieve the same without the bigger budgets. They become slicker to cut through the chase.”

Hunter has been at the helm of the Broadcast Engineering department for the last two years. Key achievements include several successful channel migrations. “One major difference that I’ve witnessed with the pay-TV market in the Middle East, in comparison with Europe, is the importance given to TV ratings. In Europe, advertising and ratings are considered paramount to decision-making, whereas it doesn’t seem to be as much in the MENA region, mainly because it’s so difficult to aggregate those, and again because of the diversity – it’s very hard to pinpoint the trends in terms of what people are watching.”

She adds that the cost of data is still considerable here, and as a result people consume data very differently while they consume. OSN itself has been a leader in implementing technologies whether it has to do with cloud, machine learning or AI and Hunter is part of a team that drives innovation in the network. “I’m very interested in what other companies are doing and why they’re doing it. This is because eventually you want your company to be able to have an edge, and if you’re behind with technology, you can never be the innovator nor can you be the first. That means you’re playing catch-up always. At OSN, we want to be at the forefront of technology, we believe that we lead. Therefore there’s been a lot of investment into technology, to ensure we don’t just keep up but set the trend. We’re working on our system to make it more efficient; our systems are sorted in terms of supporting the linear business, but the OTT, non-linear business also requires some attention so that we can support that team and have a better turnaround. You want your systems to be cleverer so that you’re just verifying what the systems can do.”

In keeping with OSN’s innovative streak, Hunter reveals that an AI component is in the offing. “We will hopefully be working with people who develop AI or bring that into practice. I’m looking at systems that employ AI components to take our OTT element forward.”

OSN is presently looking to consolidate its content offerings, making them cleaner for customers so that they can easily identify and choose the content they want to access. “We’re constantly on the frontlines of change.”

“At OSN, the CMS hadn’t been upgraded for eight years, so effectively the upgrade meant scaling the system up 60 versions and that was quite challenging.”

Pauline Hunter, Senior Manager, EPG Broadcast Management Systems, OSN

“I’m looking at systems that employ AI components, to take our OTT element forward”

Pauline Hunter, Senior Manager, EPG Broadcast Management Systems, OSN

of things, and I think that’s what I enjoy the most – to be able to innovate and create with the ever-changing trends of technology. That is the most rewarding aspect of my job,” she says, adding that OSN has played a key role. “OSN tries to recruit the best person for the role, and by ensuring that, it ends up with diversity. When I look around, I see everyone from everywhere, men and women at all levels. I feel it looks for talent and makes sure that the right people are available for the roles.”

Hunter heads a team of seven women and two men, and is confident in her leadership. “I try to lead by example and not just dictate terms. What you don’t want to be is a woman leader who tries to emulate men, you want to make sure that you’re capable of showing the attributes of being a woman, rather than pretending that you’re a male leader. I feel this is something women leaders do; they become very hard and that restricts diversity in leadership.”

“I think everybody has a viewpoint, and I think you need to make sure you bring that feminine viewpoint to the role, because otherwise it’s not authentic. I think women have a bigger picture approach, we’re able to consider more. I feel that men are more direct, they know what they want and why they want it. Women do the same, but they can consider more, and therefore compromise more, based on those considerations.”

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Axient Digital was several years in the making before its release late last year, with Dubai rental house SLS Productions investing in the region’s first Axient ADX system. In an exclusive for BroadcastPro ME, Dan Dignan, Head of Audio at SLS Productions, gives us his verdict on the wireless system that we have used on every major event we have done in the last nine months.

The key selling point of the ADX series is the redundancy it offers. When your AD4Q receivers are networked with an AX7000 spectrum manager and an AD610 showlink access point, you can create a system with your microphones and belt-packs that allows you to set multiple back-up frequencies. The AD610 monitors the room you are in, and if a conflict arises for any reason, the system will automatically switch (if set to) both the transmitter and the receiver’s frequency, with almost no noticeable audible switchover – certainly not one that will be noticed by your audience.

This really appealed to me due to the region we are in and the lack of communication between clients and suppliers on certain high-end events. We often have all sorts of new frequencies in use. The AD610 monitors the room you are in, and if a conflict arises for any reason, the system will automatically switch (if set to) both the transmitter and the receiver’s frequency, with almost no noticeable audible switchover – certainly not one that will be noticed by your audience.

With the rate of growth in Saudi Arabia, SLS is dealing with international artists so regularly now that my purchase decisions have become heavily rider-driven. The 2018/19 season has seen the exponential growth of the Saudi Arabian market. SLS Productions, with its partners at 360 Productions, has been at the forefront, catering to many of the country’s first and largest events. From corporate events talking about future cities and Vision 2030 to international artists playing all over the country, Axient Digital has been used at all these events – and 96% of the time, along with PSM1000 and the P10+ IEM system, this has been the rider’s choice product.

With the rate of growth in Saudi Arabia, SLS is dealing with international artists so regularly now that my purchase decisions have become heavily rider-driven, and there isn’t another wireless product more rider-friendly on the market. I am impressed with how Shure has managed to fit onto the back of the AD4Q with analogue, AES and Dante options. We often run Dante and analogue, allowing the use of all four channels with a secondary source.

With Dante running over our Luminex network, we have the option of taking the lines into a different rack than the analogue lines. Over the past few months, our ADX system has been used by the likes of Mariah Carey, Pitbull, Shunick Paul, Deadmau5, Tiesto, Martin Garrix, Marshmello, Tyga and Rick Ross, as well as Arab superstars like Balqees and Amr Diab.

Another impressive feature of the Axient system is Quadversity. This allows me to have four antennas per AD4Q. This does limit the number of channels on the receiver
As we continue to expand over the coming years with Saudi Arabia and Dubai Expo 2020, Axient Digital will be the only wireless microphone product I purchase with SLS. That is the biggest accolade I can give.

**PR REVIEW**

to two, and you do need to have an appropriate distribution amplifier if you want to use more than two channels, but in certain scenarios it proves extremely useful:

One case study is when we used Quadversity back in February, to great effect. Local property developer Menasa was announcing a new large construction project at its City Walk complex and needed coverage of about 1km of roadway for a Brazilian-style carnival where instruments needed to be picked up on the move. Our solution was to use four professional wireless HA 8090 helical antennas, placed fairly centrally and high in all directions of the crossroads – the centre point of the carinal. We had also purchased a professional wireless quad-44 antenna distro, which allowed us to have eight channels of Quadversity with four AD4Q in our rack.

I was astounded by the results. The belt-packs were set to high power, our reasonably sizable inventory.

“**When your AD4Q receivers are networked with an AX7600 spectrum manager** and an AD610 showlink access point, you can create a system with your microphones and belt-packs that allows you to set multiple back-up frequencies”

Dan Dignan, Head of Audio, SLS Productions

but I was nearly 300m away from the antennas and still had clean signal.

I love future applications with SLS and Quadversity, and we are currently looking at options of RF over fibre for sporting events where we need full RF coverage over stadia. We will run antennas long distances from the racks over fibre and place them in corners for effective coverage. This will complete our current plans with wireless microphone systems, unless an event comes in where we need to increase the obvious clip-on point or pocket, always handy to have a mini without the obvious clip-on point or pocket, especially with the KSM8 on top. The chrome option is a flashier look in the world

**“We aren’t as challenged for spectrum space in the Middle East as in other parts of the world, but the high-density feature certainly allows for a squeezing of this, which I am sure will happen in time.**

Dan Dignan, Head of Audio, SLS Productions

as in other parts of the world, but the high-density feature certainly allows for a squeezing of this, which I am sure will happen in time. Also, the bandwidth Axient has access to is certainly helpful in the matter of the future.

Another feature I haven’t used yet but am sure I will soon is the encryption option you can place on the transmitted digital data. I see this as a valuable item for events that require an element of confidentiality and security, such as government discussions.

Lastly, I see the need for frequency diversity in large corporate events and those that require sensitive handling. This doubles up the belt-packs needed but allows a redundancy to a secondary pack carrying the same signal if there is a transmitter failure. I believe the ADX2SPD is coming out in the region shortly, with two transmitters on a single handheld. I like this feature, as people often tend to hold the transmitter at the bottom, which can cause issues.

A secondary transmitter near the top of the transmitter solves this.

It’s hard to find flaws in the system. If I was to mention one, it’s that the mini belt-pack doesn’t have a TA4 connector. I understand why – there simply isn’t room for it. But it restricts its use, so correctly or is on a mic stand. No microphone likes being cupped, and the KSM8 is no exception. It’s hard to find flaws in the system.
The age-old practice of cinematography consists of the craft and practice of creating visuals that result in storytelling, and the unfolding of the evolution from film to digital has led to experimentation and excitement. In order to roll with the punches, this evolution has led manufacturers to set their sights on quality, resolution and picture quality.

This review is not a comparative study of ‘what’s better’, rather, I treat the new URSA the same I would any other camera. Pick it up, throw a lens on, slam a battery on the back, aim it in the right direction and play. Put it on a set of heads and legs, push the depth of field, slide through the frame, pull focus and see the peaking, see the detail and push the camera some more – in natural light and in a studio.

For those of you who require super technical specs, the information is out there. The 15 stops of dynamic range, no need to transcode, a 4.6K sensor with an HDR image sensor… this is all a good start.

Then the question is: does it feel like a Super 35?

My background as a technical director turned action director has its merits here. My love of post-production and storytelling means I scrutinise camera choice as I have done on my previous feature films. The love of picture, texture, dimension, framing and more comes into play when tasked with testing new gear.

Let’s start with what I like. The PL mount is easy to operate and if you slide a lens in, the clamping is both accurate and sturdy. I love the weight of the camera, and Blackmagic Design’s choice of body materials seems accurate. The options for mounting all forms of peripherals make the camera very likable on first viewing. The buttons are easy to access and understand, and the interactive LCD screen is very responsive. From the front, the camera has a very space-age look, but the side view could potentially have gained from consultation with an industrial designer, as it is a little cumbersome and, although well balanced, looks bulky.

The following features got me very excited, because planning all steps of your workflow is necessary. Imagine being able to plug in a USB-c SSD HD with zero regard to transcoding or transferring the copious amounts of footage captured, coupled with the ability to load your own LUTs – scrubbing through your choices, because it probably took a long time for you to prepare the .CUBE files. Select the look; light it accordingly and enjoy the shoot. It all just works and is simple; you can edit on the same HD footage you recorded too.

The recording card options are a dream; never having to concern yourself over stopping to record is a great feature. This rarely happens in my world as a filmmaker – I guess the ‘over shooting is a sign of a bad director’ mantra will always steer my thought process when it comes to planning and blocking.

Each individual has an opinion, a specialised idea of what makes a camera better, good, acceptable and worthy of choice for a production, a shoot or a run-and-gun guerrilla episode. For me, the viewfinder is a little too inconsequential and the small LCD screen that pops out takes me back to the Handycam days. I want my monitor on top, big, with explicit, vivid and incremental options. Here, while it is bright and clear, a larger version would still be incredible.

The built-in ND option, although quick and simple to use, is not a feature I appreciate, especially since I love the
“The love of picture, texture, dimension, framing and more comes into play when tasked with testing new gear”

Jac Mulder, Filmmaker

I went with a Lutify grade. The look I loved was this Heulandite Log file. I stopped at that look and loved it instantly. But what surprised me was the next step – all the noise was gone. I pushed the levels, tweaked the blacks, and I have to confess that noise in the blacks was not an issue. This allowed me to focus on the roll-off, the blending, the softening and sharpening. A power window was created; this process is more for isolating specific areas and truly making beauty shots shine.

I was immensely impressed with the speed the .BRAW file tracked at – my masking window blasted through the image almost as fast as it played in real time. This was exciting for me, as I usually use 8K footage to grade. It was a delight – quick and accurate, the two things that are important when grading.

The G2 does slot in higher than I expected, above broadcast and close to independent level, and is most certainly playful enough to push boundaries”

Jac Mulder, Filmmaker

The URSA G2, you’re not a videographer anymore; it’s a DSLR where a little record button on the side makes you think you’re a cinematographer. With the URSA G2, you’re not one step closer to film; you’re there.
EGYPT SCORES WITH AFCON 2019

This year, the African Cup of Nations in Egypt made history with special 4K coverage of 10 of its 52 matches, based on a 24-camera set-up. In an exclusive interview with Vijaya Cherian, Egyptian systems integrator Technology KAR explains how it pulled this off within a very tight timeframe.

The 2019 CAF Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON 2019) was the biggest football event ever held on the African continent, and required a lot of meticulous planning, infrastructure deployment, and production and transmission expertise to ensure seamless live production and transmission for television. Although initially scheduled to be hosted in Cameroon, delays in infrastructure delivery resulted in the tournament being shifted to Egypt at the last minute. It was successfully hosted and televised from June 21 to July 19, with 52 matches taking place in the cities of Cairo, Suez, Ismailia and Alexandria.

Egypt is no stranger to AFCON. The country also hosted the Cup in 1959, 1974, 1998 and 2006, and has won the tournament seven times, more than any other country. One of the big aspects of any sporting event today is sophisticated TV delivery, and AFCON was no exception. The Egyptian government bodies – the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and the Technical Research Department (TRD) – involved wanted to raise the profile of the 2019 event. To that effect, they mandated that the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as some of the matches in Cairo – the main site – be produced and broadcast in 4K for the first time in the history of AFCON.

Egyptian systems integrator Technology KAR was tasked to be the main service provider for TV production, and to select international partners to help bring the best viewing experience to football fans. “Technology KAR has been working on a number of government and national television projects, as well as projects within the private sector. We have installed and implemented many TV studios, playout centres and end-to-end TV station projects in Egypt, so we were a natural fit to run this project,” explains Khaled Raouf, Chairman, Technology KAR.

The systems integrator roped in sports production specialist Mediapro Middle...
East to undertake the production of the event, and chose Globecast for transmission. Globecast had provided a range of services for several previous editions of the tournament.

“The TRD were charged with supervising the whole project in terms of the technical infrastructure and producing the sport for TV,” clarifies Raouf. “They in turn requested that we go beyond the traditional CAF requirement for HD production and broadcast and include 4K TV production of the games in the main tournament stadium, and broadcast the opening and final games in 4K.”

There were several mandates for this event from different bodies, some of them firsts. For example, the opening match and the final were broadcast in 4K using HEVC encoding. “The CAF, for instance, stipulated the need for 1+1 redundant satellites and a minimum of six HD OB vans,” explains Osama Kotb, Sales and Business Development Director, Technology KAR.

The tournament took place in six stadiums in four cities – three in Cairo and one each in Alexandria, Suez and Ismailia – so Technology KAR had its work cut out for it. TV production, after all, was a massive chunk of the project. The company worked with local entities whom TRD engaged to lay out the infrastructure, including Masreq Egypt for power and Egypt’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology – through its TE Data & Telecom Egypt companies – for the telco infrastructure.

“After signing the contract, we had to work with the other integrators to ensure that the production and broadcast infrastructure in all the venues, including the broadcast cameras network, the power network and telecoms infrastructure, were all in place. We had to ensure that they were compliant with the TV production specs given to us. The TRD assisted with supervising and guiding all integrations working on the project,” explains Ayman El Rouby, Project Manager at Technology KAR.

The systems integrator was also responsible for ensuring that Mediapro and Globecast met the requirements stipulated by the sports bodies.

“We were not just looking for someone who could provide the equipment, but also someone who could bring their expertise to the event”

Osama Kotb, Sales and Business Development, Technology KAR

Mediapro brought five HD OB vans and one 4K truck to cover the tournament. The 4K truck was stationed at Cairo International Stadium.

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It provided the entire logistical expertise and liaison with the LOC for the international companies that came on-site, adds El Rouby. Spanish company Mediapro, which had worked on several previous editions of AFCON, was already familiar with the scope of work and brought in six OBs from Turkey, Spain, France and Italy to be stationed in Egypt for the duration of the event. It also brought 500 people from the Americas, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, Lebanon, Palestine, Cairo and the UAE to work on event coverage, with 80 to 100 crew dedicated to each match. "Mediapro is involved in television production services and sport events around the world, and they were our choice because they possess one of the largest fleets of HD and 4K mobile units in the world, fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology to meet the production needs. They also have a vast roster of technical and operational crew for their OB vans and cameras. We were not just looking for someone who could provide the equipment, but also someone who could bring their expertise to the event. We evaluated many companies and then went with Mediapro Middle East. Besides, they have experience covering many of the AFCON tournaments, including the one in Gabon, so they were a natural choice," explains Kotb.

Mediapro came armed with five large HD OB vans and one 4K OB van; the latter was used to cover matches in Cairo. Six full production crews were on different sites to cover the events. A 24-camera set-up including four super slow-motion cameras, two ultra slow-motion cameras and three MiniCams were part of the inventory. "42 matches were produced in high definition, while 10 matches, including the opening and final matches, were produced and broadcast in 4K," explains Hosam Kandil, Technical Manager at Technology KAR. To give an idea of the scale of the project, Omar Pleite Guerra, GM of Mediapro Middle East, says: "Each OB van required a team of around 50 people for just operations. These included the ENG crew, the graphics experts, tracking specialists and camera operators especially for the Skycams, which were provided for all the matches in the Cairo stadiums. We provided three Skycams for these stadiums. We also produced the silhouettes for all the African team players and had 15 ENG systems working on-site. If you include the logistics team, the drivers and the producers, each match required around 80 to 100 people."

One interesting addition from Mediapro was a flying camera system based on four stabilised axes, with the camera head passively stabilised by gyroscopes and actively stabilised...
Mediapro Middle East employed more than 100 people on site for the tournament with 80 to 100 people covering each match.

sites, with 15 producers working on planning, booking and coordination. Mediapro also set up a temporary office to coordinate logistics, freight, transport, flight booking and so on. Several entities were involved in the project at different levels. Lagardère Sports, the sports and entertainment agency subsidiary of Lagardère Group, was responsible for handling the event’s rights management with the broadcasters, as well as providing satellite distribution of the multilateral feed and unilateral feeds for all 52 matches. Globecast helped distribute feeds signal to Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and North and South America. Terrestrial broadcasting for the whole tournament in Egypt was managed by Lagardère Sports and Egypt’s LOC.

The matches were free to watch in HD in Egypt on Time Sports, a new channel owned by Egyptian Media and transmitted through ERTU’s recently upgraded terrestrial transmission network. Time Sports launched with the broadcast of AFCON and is now a regular sports channel. It operates on ERTU’s terrestrial network in Egypt and as a satellite channel on Nilesat. Outside the country, the event was available through rights owner beIN Sports for the MENA region – it featured the 4K matches on its dedicated 4K channel. Globecast also sent 4K to its centre in France, from where the 4K signal was distributed across multiple platforms including VOD, IPTV and cable TV. Globecast, which has a longstanding relationship with CAF, provided a range of services for the tournament, including contribution, distribution, and VOD content preparation and storage. It worked closely with local partner and satellite service provider IRS MEDIA to provide for the six stadiums. Iris Media provided SNGs as well as additional technical support, and played a key role on the project. At each stadium, Globecast supplied two flyaway SNGs. The

by electronic IMU devices. The maximum speed for this is 10m/s, with six function controls: pan, tilt, Dutch roll, zoom, focus and iris. Perhaps the biggest challenge was time. With the contract not awarded until February 2019, the Technology KAR team had to move quickly to ensure that the sites and venues had the infrastructure to host the games. Technology KAR and Mediapro worked on OB van production plans for the match venues. There were periodic inspections of the venues, the OB vans and the TV compound set-up to review further requirements such as camera platforms, commentator positions, cabling and broadcast infrastructure. “Egypt took the role of hosting this tournament only in February, so aligning all of this production with Mediapro and inspecting all the OB vans took a lot of time. We did all this with our own local team,” explains Kandil. “In addition, a lot of redundancy and back-up needed to be prepared in advance.”

For Mediapro, the bigger challenge was the location of the stadiums. Crew had to be based in Alexandria, Cairo, Suez and Ismailia, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between Suez and Ismailia, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome, as travel between them would have been cumbersome.

“After signing the contract, we had to work with the other integrators to ensure that the production and broadcast infrastructure in all the venues, including the broadcast camera networks, the power network and telecoms infrastructure, were all in place”

Ayman El Rouby, Project Manager at Technology KAR

“Needless to say, the project went smoothly and the systems integrator is now working closely with TRD to supply state-of-the-art 4K OB vans for similar events in the future.”

“We have worked with the Egyptian government for several years and have the experience to undertake big turnkey projects. The new contract we have taken up will ensure that Egypt will soon have its own 4K OB vans,” concludes Raouf, promising to keep BroadcastPro in the loop.
In the countless discussions held about the cloud, no broadcaster has ever questioned its power to streamline efficiency or be cost-effective. Perhaps the bigger question for most is even more fundamental. Where do we begin, and what areas of the workflow do we surrender to the cloud first? In this edition, we speak to a selection of solution providers in various parts of the chain about where broadcasters stand in terms of cloud deployment, where it is already prevalent, upcoming trends and the solutions they offer within the chain.

The Zixi Enabled Network (ZEN) provides unprecedented interoperability across more than 100+ partners and OEMs. Zixi is integrated into 90% of industry components for encoding, decoding, processing, and managing content to enable live broadcast-quality video delivery over IP, secure, at low-latency, over any distance.

Improving the quality of experience (QoE) and fast deployment is critical to driving revenue from your content. Zixi software delivers the highest quality video over IP for top media, broadcast, and service companies. Zixi and ZEN Master provide a scalable set of software tools to easily, quickly and cost-effectively interconnect the world’s leading media companies, their cloud and service providers, and thousands of edge devices around the world.

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Every media and entertainment company is moving to virtualised deployments, with the ability to spin up and down infrastructure as necessary across multi-cloud environments, ready to deliver across public and private networks and to multiple CDNs. The cloud is being used by media companies to eliminate the need to move assets between locations, as well as to organise seamless internal and external workflows, complete with robust network security, data encryption and access management. These deployments allow the use of AI and the monitoring of video quality for possible degradation, which enables instantaneous troubleshooting to provide the very best quality of viewer experience.

OTT especially is a CDN-driven delivery, and the cloud has allowed virtualised computing and distribution. These master control broadcast workflows must be translated into virtualised cloud deployments, so that content owners can much more easily customise and distribute their programmatic content to multiple delivery partners. As the next generation of consumers move to mobile, social media and apps, the broadcast industry has to adapt in order to maintain revenue streams from legacy cable and satellite packages. More than 50% of broadcasters, including about 30% in Tier 1, have deployed or are proactively developing cloud strategies, and 70% should have production workflows by the end of 2019. The choice doesn’t have to be either cloud or on-premises; in some cases, the best solution is a combination of both. The challenge is selecting the right vendors and services that will maximise ROI from a cloud budget.

Media and entertainment companies already understand the migration of content, computing and storage. As they think about linear and OTT, one of the big challenges is live transcoding – delivery to any device anywhere in different bitrates and protocols simultaneously, which is very very difficult. Another big challenge is implementing cloud in the skill sets within an organisation, where technical and operational rationalisation of IP and broadcast has to occur. This is murky because the lines of master control and digital are now blurred. It is difficult as complex end-to-end supply chains to adopt and apply diverse solutions from a variety of vendors that meet information security, broadcast quality and uptime requirements. They are also having the same kind of technical challenges in other verticals. How do you tie together disparate databases? How do you deliver programming at the least expense while opening yourself up to as many new revenue streams as possible?

The key hurdle to address today is orchestration and monitoring. In order to scale distribution across hundreds or even thousands of channels, the streams must sit on a management abstraction layer that offers a control plane for the platform. Zixi’s ZEN Master control layer is a cloud product where distributors can move from a point-to-point or point-to-multipoint distribution scenario, to a full end-to-end workflow with the quality that the industry demands. With the control plane, you can view hundreds of inputs and outputs, control pieces of the supply chain, monitor video at the ingest point, view thumbnail sketches, perform CPU analysis and receive notifications based on system performance levels. The master control system can handle acquisition, origination in the cloud and delivery to a CDN.

We are witnessing several trends today. The industry continues to rapidly consolidate and streamline with mergers like Disney-Fox, AT&T-Time Warner, Comcast-Sky and Discovery-Scopus Interactive, and this will likely continue into 2020. The adoption of IP workflows, led by satellite replacement as a primary use case, is accelerating and will continue as N0 and low-latency satellite internet use becomes more pervasive, with more and more multi-cloud and multi-CDN deployments.

Already, content creators are increasingly taking advantage of virtualised infrastructure, the open internet, flexible cost and software platforms to customise and deliver content in a very quick, robust and secure manner. They are achieving broadcast levels of quality using pure internet and IT sets of tools and infrastructures. Zixi touches all points of the end-to-end workflow from origination to delivery with the Zixi platform, and the Zixi control plane (ZEN Master) can manage, configure and orchestrate the entire supply chain with maximum flexibility, allowing media houses to strategically evolve their cloud strategies. With the better quality and more immersive nature of 4K/8K video, bandwidth and bitrate demands will become larger and larger and will require protection as well.

We have seen statistics that state the worldwide market is growing at a rate of about 23% a year – over £20bn in 2019, £24bn in 2020 and £24bn in 2021. The top five countries in terms of preparedness are Japan, Australia, Germany, the US and France. Our customers are deploying global systems across infrastructures in all regions of the world.

Eric Bolton, VP of Business Development, Zixi

Pro Cloud
The biggest challenge for media houses today is the economics. Things like egress fees can be astronomical. That is leading to the trend of hybrid cloud, multi-cloud environments and leverage tools to maintain flexibility to adapt to new services and changes in cloud pricing. Cloud requires a new set of skills. With the trend being towards hybrid cloud, IT teams now have to maintain a wider variety of skills to keep their own private clouds up and running and leverage public cloud services. The cloud brings a lot of benefits, but without the right tools it can also add complexity. The positive news is that cloud is very competitive. Amazon, Microsoft and Google are all investing heavily in their cloud services, and that means rapid innovation. The big three are also investing in media, adding media-specific services and, in some cases, offering favourable pricing to large media companies. Signiant plays a big role in cloud-native SaaS. Our SaaS business grew by 40% in 2018, so I’d say the cloud is essential to our business.

At IBC, we will showcase Signiant Jet, a brand-new cloud-native SaaS solution for automated high-speed transfers of large data sets between locations around the globe. Built on Signiant’s SaaS platform, it promises enterprise-grade capabilities to small and mid-sized organisations with multiple locations, or that regularly exchange large data sets with partners, customers and suppliers.

Jon Finegold, Chief Marketing Officer, Signiant

The move to IP video transport, along with IT-centric video products that use networks to communicate and interact, has increased adoption of cloud technologies. Simultaneously, AI implementations using aspects such as machine learning to engage the robust computing power of the cloud have sprung up, linking the two trends. For OTT, cloud-based CDNs distribute large numbers of media streams all over the world. Cloud-based closed captioning services that use speech-to-text AI are also very common in this space. Many parts of MENA rely on satellite and cellular distribution, and any movement to increased IP media transport will require a matching rise in cloud connectivity for wide-area distribution.

Broadcasters have just begun to use the potential of the cloud, with less than 25% penetration overall. Closed captioning, asset management and archiving are areas where broadcasters are now increasing their use of the cloud. However, they usually need some level of on-premise functionality. AI for image and facial recognition that automatically generates metadata is another area where broadcasters can leverage the power of the cloud. Generally, broadcasters are comfortable with local cloud solutions and understand that virtualising much of their software applications pays big dividends. Using the cloud to stream video for delivery, approval workflows and internet file sharing services are the areas seeing increased adoption rates. Moving high-bandwidth video streams and large files up and down from the cloud is a big problem for even the developed world. Using high-quality and efficient compression, software-defined networks and network accelerators, along with ever improving internet infrastructure, is the key.

While IT professionals have a solid understanding of legacy network parameters, they can be reluctant to embrace the new requirements of adding media to the mix. Conversely, some media organisations struggle with transitioning from SDI infrastructures they have come to rely on. As many of the obstacles to cloud services are being solved, you may start to see large-scale live production in the cloud, giving broadcasters the ability to expand and contract production assets with their changing business needs, and to have staff in different geographic locations collaborate remotely.

NewTek is at the forefront of this transition to IP-based video production and IT-based media solutions. We continue to produce streaming, network storage, internet video calling and production systems that use some aspects of cloud functionality for pre-production, live production and post-production workflows.

Brian Olson, VP of Product Management, NewTek

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The first generation of cloud adoption started with a few pioneers building their own workflows that used the cloud predominantly as a discrete function – for example, transcoding or playout – but use cases have evolved to become more end-to-end. In the early days, the challenge was mostly around getting legacy applications to interface with cloud elements, resulting in a lot of blood, sweat and tears! For many early adopters within broadcasters and media companies, this was a huge learning experience.

Modern platforms are now much more service-led, with a full stack offering that is not just an alternative to on-premise or in-house options but, in many ways, a more compelling solution in terms of flexibility and global scale.

Perhaps the most significant pain point left intractable. Cloud platforms are maturing fast, and the last hurdle can sometimes be deciding to make a big shift toward the cloud. As more and more media and entertainment businesses take advantage of the cloud, the use cases and benefits become ever more apparent. Cloud platforms are by their nature more flexible than solutions based on proprietary hardware platforms. Use cases where the ability to scale up computing, storage and network connectivity are where cloud computing can really show its strengths.

This is most evident in tasks related to processing and distributing UPT content to an increasingly global audience. Another area of strength is content aggregation, especially as content starts to straddle multiple formats such as gaming, video and VR/AR (plus as yet undiscovered hybrids). The ability to scale up resources, for example in support of a major sporting event, is an incredibly powerful capability and a natural strength of cloud-based platforms.

One of the biggest challenges facing media and entertainment businesses is delivering content to a global audience. By 2022, video will account for 82% of all consumer traffic. The sheer amount of video traffic and consumer demand for high-quality streams means media companies can no longer rely on a single CDN to deliver content to a global audience.

Verizon Media has taken a multi-CDN approach. By spreading traffic over more than one CDN, broadcasters are protected against slowdowns and downtime; if one provider’s network experiences an outage, traffic can be routed through another network. Also, harnessing servers in more geographic locations guarantees that content loads as fast as possible, regardless of the end user’s location or device. As more content owners start to adopt a multi-CDN approach, consumers around the world will be able to enjoy the best-quality streams with minimal latency.

Another trend we have seen is the growing number of partnerships between service providers. We’re pre-integrating selected third-party technologies to make it simpler for broadcasters and content owners to deliver cutting-edge viewing experiences to consumers. We recently announced a partnership with Microsoft Azure that will see Azure Media Services, Microsoft AI and Microsoft machine learning technology integrated with the Verizon Media Platform. We also announced key partnerships with THEO Technologies and IRIS.TV, helping us bring great playback capabilities and personalised services to every viewer on any device.

Verizon Media’s Smartplay technology

Verizon Media’s Smartplay technology will be showcased at IBC.

This technology gives advertisers the ability to create fully tailored advertising experiences for every viewer, and is one example of how the integration of partner technologies will enhance the Verizon Media Platform. The company’s new partnerships will enhance Smartplay’s capabilities by enabling metadata enrichment and content recommendation to deliver a highly personalised online experience for every viewer on any device, thereby enabling truly smart TV experiences.

World’s largest radio deployments rely on NauteL

FM
NauteL’s impressive N+1 systems provide high levels of redundancy that is both automated and cost effective.

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Power savings, outstanding reliability and world-class customer service were key to NauteL’s 2 Megawatt NX2000 system selection at Europe’s most powerful MW station.

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Neil Gardner, Global Product Manager, Vinten Robotics & Automation

VR and AR requires more precision. Manufacturers may use a positional acquisition system that relies on a sensor scanner that constantly scans the studio for targets and then triangulates the pedestal’s exact location.

In another approach, a tracking camera references small, star-like reflectors on the ceiling to determine the pedestal’s exact location. This provides an absolute reference that is drift-free and removes the need for ongoing calibration in any number of studios. The tracking camera can be fitted to the top of the studio camera, but a more robust approach is to integrate the tracking camera within the robotic head; removing extra cables and equipment from the main camera package.

Complex curves
Not every studio floor is suitable for robotic pedestals, perhaps because of an uneven surface. Not every studio floor is suitable for robotic pedestals, perhaps because of an uneven surface. In another approach, a tracking camera can be fitted to the top of the studio camera, but a more robust approach is to integrate the tracking camera within the robotic head; removing extra cables and equipment from the main camera package.

Precision is key
While encoders and floor targeting solutions that can easily adapt and provide high degrees of accuracy for the VR/AR engine will enable broadcasters to create fresh, engaging content and help them to grow their distinct brand identities; and viewers will be dazzled by stunning, hyper-realistic AR elements that bring them into the story in powerful and engaging ways.

Neil Gardner, Global Product Manager for Vinten Robotics & Automation
Esports is a billion-dollar industry and is growing rapidly, with tournaments and leagues increasing their presence across the globe. As the industry continues to grow, it’s important that media companies have a grasp on the challenges and opportunities of covering them. Broadcasters are faced with many production challenges delivering live esports events, including replicating the truly immersive experience for viewers at home.

For instance, creating a cohesive broadcast is difficult with so many cameras covering the players and the action inside the arena, as well as the fast-paced in-game signals. Producers need to be able to switch between the live in-game action and the real-world players as well as provide in-game replays – crucial to production as they help bring live storytelling to life for audiences and fans, making them feel like they’re a part of the game. Also, despite the pressures and technical challenges of bridging the gaming and broadcast worlds, the expectation from a predominantly tech-savvy audience is that quality will be high. When we look at technologies, slow-motion replay is an obvious requirement.

One solution that’s ideal for first-person shooter games is to add an observer PC into the game, which acts as a camera. Feeds from these are recorded in the PC’s native 120Hz, ingested by the EVS server and slowed down to the broadcast-standard 60Hz, creating a native 50% replay. This is an industry first in-game replay, designed by leading esports producer ESL. ESL has been using EVS technology as the backbone of its live production infrastructure for the past four years. Together, we’ve put together a live video workflow that uses cutting-edge production technology in a way that delivers the most engaging content while being perfectly adapted to the unique needs of the esports world. It provides in-game replays that create the immersive experience demanded by viewers, creating output similar to what would be delivered to fans watching any football or basketball game.

TDs use a single EVS Evis switcher to cut together content for the live programme and to trigger the delivery of in-game content across the screens showing the action to fans within the venue. The software-defined architecture of the switcher provides producers with unprecedented creative capabilities and is easily adaptable to the complex, multi-layered nature of esports productions. A producer can instantly split up traditional MGs into sections, meaning that the esports assigned buttons controlling the views of one team can be placed in one quadrant, while the corresponding sources for the other team are in another quadrant. This has been a game-changer for fast-paced and complex live esports events.

Esports has a dedicated social media fan base through platforms such as Twitch and YouTube, making it crucial to have an implemented workflow to facilitate the creation of social content, as much as possible. EVS’ MultiReview application provides a synchronous view of all feeds ingested by the servers, allowing a production team to select and quickly turn around key moments during an esports show. The team can then distribute the created clips instantly onto ESL’s different social channels, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitch, using the new digital publishing add-on of the IPDirector, EVS’ live PAM system.

Sébastien VERLAINE – Marketing & Communications Manager, EVS

The global esports market will exceed $1.6bn by 2021, according to Newzoo, a global major in games and esports analytics.
Esports companies are very interesting to work with because they don’t generally see themselves as broadcasters – they’re content creators who are completely agnostic when it comes to the delivery mechanism. They share the same goal as traditional broadcasters in the sense that they want their content to be as engaging as possible, but their language and expertise are both very different from the more traditional ‘television’ customers we have historically served. Our goal as a manufacturer must be to help esports producers use our solutions efficiently and effectively; the ability to configure and control systems through customizable touchscreen panels has been a very important development, because it enables operators and technical directors who don’t have a broadcast engineering background to quickly build up their skills and master broadcast workflows.

Additionally, we’ve seen many esports companies embracing visually creative technologies such as virtual studio and augmented reality technologies, because of the possibilities that both offer. I’ve also seen esports producers incorporating large LED walls or unusually shaped displays into their studio coverage, and that obviously requires products that can accurately render graphics across different canvas sizes.

More generally, esports is becoming an increasingly competitive market segment. It’s a business in flux because it is still getting to grips with what its audience wants and likes, and the production models will look quite different in five years’ time. That may mean an expansion of the existing in-house capabilities or may involve specialist third-party production companies handling a variety of different esports events. Either way, the amount of content is only going to increase and that means even more business, creative and technical challenges to be solved.

Stuart Russell, Senior Communications Manager, Ross Video

Many vendors will be able to draw on their experience of working in traditional sports, remote and live production environments. Esports has much in common with mainstream live sports productions; both require a mix of live-action commentary, close-ups and interviews with players and live replays. However, there are crucial differences. Esports is a spectacle with its roots in the online world and a truly global fan base. In 2018, four of the world’s biggest esports events accumulated 190.1m hours of live streams (NewZoo). Therefore, a key requirement of esports productions is flexible technologies that can scale to meet individual requirements. The hugely dynamic nature of esports, and the diversity of competition size and formats – which range from events such as BlizzCon that attract around 10m online viewers to small local events targeting a few hundred fans – mean production workflows have to quickly scale up or down as needed. Agile solutions that can adapt to the requirements of headline tournaments, leagues and venues are of critical importance.

Another requirement of mainstream sports is to provide consumers with stunning quality images; this is also true for esports fans. As viewers expect more high-quality, richly immersive video experiences, the pressure is on esports companies to meet increasingly complex production requirements and deliver best-in-class images. Vendors such as Grass Valley that have been enabling live sports coverage for decades can help revolutionise the esports production environment, optimising it to meet the insatiable consumer appetite for live sporting content.

Robert Erickson, Advanced Technology Director, Grass Valley

Two Satellites, One Hotspot
Delivering high quality premium content with expanded capacity at 25.5°/26°E
Space to deliver your vision

Es’hailSat’s high powered satellites provide the key infrastructure to media networks and broadcasters to distribute services such as linear TV, video on demand, high definition TV and 4K TV across the region.

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13 – 17 September 2019

www.eshailsat.qa
We hear you have recently renewed your agreement with the RAI, which means IBC will continue to be held in Amsterdam? Yes, we have signed a new three-year contract with RAI Amsterdam and its partners, and I am very pleased we have. I am all too aware that there is pressure to consider other venues, and I would like to assure everyone we take this matter seriously, continually monitoring our options. But RAI, and the city of Amsterdam, remains the right venue for IBC. The RAI allows us to stage the entire event under one roof, with spaces that are flexible enough as our requirements change, and which have the functionality we require. In Amsterdam, we have a host city that is committed to media and technology, and which works well with us to meet all our requirements. It is well connected by air, sea and train, and provides us with a friendly, welcoming environment which people enjoy visiting.

Our new agreement allows us to look to the future to continue to provide for the needs of our delegates, visitors, exhibitors and sponsors, reflecting developments in the industry and maintaining our position as the one global meeting point for the industry.

We hear the conference and exhibition dates have been aligned this year? Yes, we have brought the IBC conference and exhibition back into alignment, instead of starting and finishing the conference a day earlier. This means that our invitation-only conference sessions will take place on Thursday (12 September), with a day earlier. This means that our invitation-only conference sessions will take place on Thursday (12 September), and Friday is set aside for the IBC Executive Forums. So as well as conference sessions – which include the participation of the players emerging from the world of esports like Garena, Twitch, Riot and Blizzworld, as well as developers like EA Sports – we will host a live demonstration. Two professional teams from ESL along with Lagardère and EVS.

The IBC Esports Showcase is a new venture supported by market leader ESL along with Lagardère and EVS. We hear the conference and exhibition dates have been aligned this year? That's right. We have brought the IBC conference and exhibition back into alignment, instead of starting and finishing the conference a day earlier. That means that our invitation-only Executive Forums will take place on Thursday (12 September), and Friday is set aside for the IBC Executive Forums. So as well as conference sessions – which include the participation of the players emerging from the world of esports like Garena, Twitch, Riot and Blizzworld, as well as developers like EA Sports – we will host a live demonstration. Two professional teams from ESL along with Lagardère and EVS.

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One of the sea changes in our industry over the last decade or so is that we used to be in the broadcasting business, whereas technology defined what we can do. Today, we are in the media business, and audiences are demanding the technological solutions that will connect them to the content they want, on the device they want, when and where they want to see it.

To meet this torrent of consumption, media businesses can only make a fair return on their investment. Monetisation is the final part of the chain. Media businesses can only create, curate and deliver content if they enjoy it, whether they know about it or not. Monetisation is the final part of the chain. Media businesses can only make a fair return on their investment.

What are the top things to do at IBC2019?

This year, we have a great programme of keynote presentations in the conference, including leaders like Cécile Frot-Coutaz, Head of YouTube EMEA; Arnaud de Puyfontaine, Chairman of Vivendi; and Max Amordeluso, EU Lead Evangelist, Amazon Alexa. We are bringing back the IBC Global Gamechangers Stage again this year. This hosts the biggest luminaries, creative, technical, news and future-facing talent making waves around the world, to talk about what is going to change the game for us in the media industry. Already signed up to speak are Gary Shapiro, President and CEO of the Consumer Technology Association, Jane Tutton, CEO of All Media, and Lisa Opie, Managing Director, UK Production, BBC Studios.

Don’t miss our US exhibition halls, the Awards Ceremony on Sunday night, as well as our movies and screenings. This year, attendees also have the chance to see a complete battle-strenth episode from the final series of Game of Thrones on the giant screen in the Auditorium in 4K and HDR. And there is so much more!

How do you ensure the content stays fresh year on year?

IBC’s in-house content team works with a carefully selected group of industry leaders, the Content Security Forum. Chairing the group this year is Claire Haggats. The CSF meets monthly to discuss the key issues around the industry and how IBC should be covering it. So the CSF does not just bring topics to the table, it brings solutions, as well as some impressive address books to ensure we get the best possible speakers and panellists.

And finally, tell us more about the Executive Forums.

Our three Executive Forums are invitation-only events aimed at a C-level audience. In the Leaders’ Forum, the Cyber Security Forum and the Telco and Media Innovation Forum, we bring together the most influential and visionary people at the top of the industry, giving them an opportunity behind closed doors – to talk about the strategic issues facing us.

Audiences and revenues, looking at how brands can lead to new models of advertising.

The lounge talks programme – more informal chats about key topics – will be back too, looking at topics which are harder to fit into the formal programme. That includes corporate social responsibility and inclusion.

What technical trends do you expect to see at IBC2019?

One of the sea changes in our industry over the last decade or so is that we used to be in the broadcasting business, whereas technology defined what we can do. Today, we are in the media business, and audiences are demanding the technological solutions that will connect them to the content they want, on the device they want, when and where they want to see it.

To meet this torrent of consumption, media producers and distributors have to find innovative, practical and secure means of monetising their offerings. They have to find innovative, practical and secure means of monetising their offerings. To meet this torrent of consumption, media businesses can only make a fair return on their investment. Monetisation is the final part of the chain. Media businesses can only create, curate and deliver content if they enjoy it, whether they know about it or not. Monetisation is the final part of the chain. Media businesses can only make a fair return on their investment.

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Robe will illuminate IBC2019 with bright beams

Robe will light up IBC with the T1 Wash, the latest fixture in Robe’s T1 LED series of products specifically designed for theatre, television and touring. Like its T1 Profile and T1 PS counterparts, a closed optical system prevents dust and dirt. CMY colour control and data switch filters include a selection of pre-programmed colours accessible via the next-generation RCC (Robe Colour Calibration) algorithm, and 3700K to 8000K CCT control.

The product meets the needs of theatrical lighting via the new L3 Low Light Linear dimming system. For television, there’s a green channel, while the implementation of Qosiris flicker-free source management will ensure that the T1 range is a source for all vision systems, including HD and UHD cameras.

The product features a +/-90° rotate-able individually controlled internal barndoor system. The zoom range is 7°-50°, with a beam shaper tool and a graduated scrim with 187° rotation.

Stand 12.B64

A stellar showcase from ARRI at IBC2019

ARRI will be showcasing the latest version of its Stellar lighting control app, the final link in a complete ecosystem of advanced lighting control products from ARRI.

The SkyPanel features Art-Net, sACN, DMX and DIP implementations for a wide range of control options. Combined with SkyLink, a large rig of SkyPanels can be controlled wirelessly. Stellar brings all these pieces together with intuitive control that works with the SkyLink, SkyPanel and L-Series hardware, creating a complex lighting network that is easy to manage.

With Stellar, it is possible to switch between control modes so that a colour can be chosen with an interface best suited for that mode. Stellar can import a lighting plot image so that fixtures can be laid out in a two-dimensional space.

Stand 12.F21

Cyainless maintains control with Cy-Stem

Cyainless will demo its 4K media-over-IP gateway.

The new Cy-Stem 4K media-over-IP gateway is a professional-grade 4K, 8 channel video and additional signals solution such as intercom, return-videos feeds to be re-merged between the CCU-420 and a local IP network hub along a single optical cable. It preserves all features of the Cy-Stem gateway without requiring multiple SDI cables, enabling low-latency control. Uncompressed video can be transmitted via an optical interface using either one 25GbE or two 10GbE SFP modules. Redundancy can be implemented using 4K media-over IP gateway modules.

Stand 12.D31

InSync goes live with FrameFormer at IBC2019

InSync will launch FrameFormer Live, a real-time software motion compensated standards conversion using CPU-only architecture.

It is a professional-grade software standards conversion solution that offers live, real-time conversion of SD, HD and 3G centred on CPU-only processing with cross-platform support. The software can run in any IT environment, on premise or in the cloud, and can be accessed as a standalone app or as an integrated service. FrameFormer Live gives users the complete freedom to choose which server to run their conversion on or, in the case of cloud-based deployments, the flexibility to scale the service up or down with the ready provision of CPU-only compute resources.

Stand 2.A64

Telestream OptiQ promises better monitoring

Telestream will introduce its high-performance OptiQ service at IBC.

OptiQ Monitor creates efficiencies in capital and operational expenditure whilst assuring Quality of Service and Quality of Experience for broadcasters, service providers and network operators worldwide.

OptiQ Monitor targets customers that have put in place the infrastructure required to support their live and streaming channels but have no monitoring infrastructure, especially post-CDN.

OptiQ Monitor enables users to integrate a high-level of video monitoring without needing to modify anything in their delivery chain. Building on this through OptiQ Channel, Telestream can provide all the packaging, encoding, ingest and automation infrastructure that helps customers build live channels. A key feature of the OptiQ framework is the ability to deploy Telestream technology in any public cloud data center.

Stand 7.C14, 7.C16
AJA Video Systems will showcase the KUMO 3232-120 compact router, featuring 32x 12G-SDI inputs and 32x 12G-SDI outputs in a portable 2RU profile for flexible and cost-efficient 12G-SDI routing. Designed for use in broadcast, production and ProAV environments, it supports large-format resolutions, high frame rates and deep colour formats. The KUMO 3232-120 compact router reduces cable runs when transporting 4K/ultra HD over SDI. KUMO 3232-120 offers network-based and physical control and mirrors the form of AJA’s production-proven KUMO 3232 routers, with the additional benefit of a new USB port for configuring IP addresses via AJA’s eMini-Setup software. For emerging 8K workflows, KUMO 3232-120 is also equipped for multi-port gang-routing.

ChyronHego will showcase CAMIO, an all-software solution for multiplatform news content creation and delivery. The CAMIO Universe drives template-based, unified news workflows and places scalable storytelling tools at producers’ fingertips. At the heart of the CAMIO ecosystem is ChyronHego’s CAMIO graphic asset management system. At IBC2019, ChyronHego will highlight CAMIO’s flexibility for news producers. CAMIO 4.7 includes new features for the CAMIO interface, such as the ability to save items, swap templates and create streaming proxies.

CrewCom is a new wireless intercom system from Pliant Technologies. The newly released CrewCom firmware update includes numerous system improvements as well as the incorporation of new Oceania 900MHz models. CrewCom is based on a technology platform that offers the wireless user counts, range and scalability for a range of broadcast, live sound, installation and industrial projects. CrewCom wireless products offer the ability to easily put dependable RF coverage where needed, while employing a consistent user interface throughout the system. This enables the system to adapt to the RF challenges facing production and industry professionals. Unlike a matrix-based architecture, CrewCom is based on a decentralised network platform that puts system resources where they are needed.

ChyronHego’s CAMIO performance at IBC

Camio now delivers enhanced support for playout using PRIME Graphics, the company’s graphics platform. The CAMIO interface includes new PRIME features such as XMP, autofill, layers and GTC movies, and the CAMIO Rundown now enables PRIME Graphics scene playout on screens of all sizes and shapes, including studio walls.

Pliant Technologies to focus on CrewCom

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Bridge Technologies boasts bigger stand at IBC

At IBC2019, Bridge Technologies will have its largest stand to date in the main entrance of Hall 1. The stand will feature demonstrations of NOMAD, a portable all-in-one monitoring and analysis solution. The larger stand area provides Bridge Technologies with the opportunity to showcase its end-to-end monitoring and analysis solutions. The firm will be discussing with visitors the success of its VB330 network probe with its support for Remote PHY/L2TP. This makes the VB330 suitable for unpacking and monitoring multicasts targeted towards remote PHY CCAP nodes. Thus, this is a suitable probe for cable operators looking to maximise the quality of experience they offer customers.

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Marshall Electronics will present four new POV cameras at IBC, representing the next evolution in its HD camera solutions and a new offering for UHD and 4K workflows. The upgraded camera line incorporates larger sensors, upgraded processors and improved industrial design. POV camera users will notice a step up in colour and clarity, and low noise output.

OnLoops generates live viewer participation

OnLoops has released an S6i second screen platform that helps in targeting, engaging and involving the viewers of a live show. Recently, OnLoops enabled Play Sports channel to involve viewer participation in live broadcasts, with the use of simple steps. In less than a month, it was able to start the integrated campaign. After the first steps of integration, OnLoops provided on-site client training. The on-premises app application collected all incoming votes from the OnLoops viewer interface and forwarded the aggregated data to the graphics engine (Vizrt). This resulted in displayed real-time updated live 3D icons [enabled by Boost Graphics and Vizrt] on screen.

Fujifilm enables premium 4K video production

Fujifilm has added the portable lenses "FUJINON UA18X7.6BERD" (hereinafter "UA18x7.6") to the UA Series of 4K-compatible broadcast lenses which will be on display at their booth. The UA18x7.6 and UA23x7.6 are 4K-compatible broadcast lenses with compact design and advanced portability. The use of optical technology promises to deliver image resolving power and rich tonal gradation. Both have versatile focal lengths, with the UA18x7.6 covering focal lengths from 7.6mm to 137mm (18x zoom), and the UA23x7.6 covering focal lengths from 7.6mm to 175mm (23x zoom). Fujifilm will launch the UA18x7.6 this month and the UA23x7.6 in October of this year.

Vizrt and NewTek to present first joint stand at IBC

Following the acquisition of NewTek by Vizrt earlier this year, IBC2019 will play host to this newly combined group’s first joint presentation. The acquisition, which is five months old, brought together two major companies in IP-based, software-defined visual storytelling. NewTek, Vizrt and partners will be using NDI, the most widely used IP video standard throughout all the exhibition halls at IBC. Vizrt will be presenting the latest updates to its core platforms and product ranges, including the Viz Engine 6 being launched at IBC2019, following a preview at NAB. The Vizrt Stage will also premiere a range of disruptive thought leadership presentations, as well as fresh content for the renowned feature presentations. This includes the Big AR Sports Show, which will show audiences how Vizrt Sports software can be used for easy-to-use AR, play analysis and monetisation of sports and live event content.

Vionlabs builds AI content discovery platform

Vionlabs has developed an AI-powered content discovery platform which analyzes video in detail and combines this with the viewer’s watch history. The AI engine learns what matters and how changes in these fingerprints translate to the content viewers enjoy. The company has trained an AI engine to analyze a viewer’s watch history. Finally, AI has an Al engine that takes the outputs of the other AI engines to provide the content discovery platform. The content discovery results produced by the Vionlabs platform are available through a cloud-based SaaS model, integrated with the operator’s back office systems. The Vionlabs platform is already deployed and is generating uplifts in VOD buy-rates and viewer engagement for its operator customers.

GatesAir ascends to new heights with Intraplex

GatesAir has added a new application to its Intraplex Ascent transport platform, which will be unveiled at IBC2019. The application’s video support also brings Ascent into the television market, with a value proposition for national broadcasters feeding many destinations. Ascent will now provide transparent support for any real-time IP-based broadcast video protocol, with applicability to ATSC 3.0 and DVB-T/T2. Designed for centralised control and maximum interconnectivity, Ascent is compliant with the AES67 standard, today’s leading AoIP networking solutions at most Intraplex audio over IP codecs. At IBC2019, GatesAir will demonstrate how the Ascent SRT Gateway supports encrypted transport of video content in both point-to-point and point-to-multipoint configurations.

Tedial gets into the game with Smartlive

The latest version of the Tedial Smartlive solution includes a number of multi-genre configuration, which allow users to generate automatic highlights or auto-clipping for any genre of sport quickly. Visitors will see an increase in the number of highlights that Smartlive can generate automatically due to the significant expansion of sports genres. This is a key addition to the solution’s fast-growing capabilities. In addition, Tedial and Tedial’s Evolution NAM now include a new module that allows all types of content to be published to any social network in just one click. Enabled by the system’s ability to create social publishing campaigns directly inside the MAM, content includes clips, highlights and historical media.

A BBright UHD-channel media platform at IBC

BBright has announced that its new UHD-channel media platform is now available for use cases such as ultra-HD channel playout or video production servers installed in OB vans, studios and master control rooms. The UHD-channel can be controlled by the operator with compatible nine-pin remotes or its web GUI for simple selectable actions. For playout, UHD-channel playout is typically triggered by an external automation, using WSCD or RSTI AP protocols. The UHD-channel supports the Quad 3-SEI standard for inputs and outputs, as well as its ST-2110 broadcast over IP format through a 256’s network interface. Live input and file playout can be represented with graphical channel branding as well, such as the frame rate converter. Secondary video output also provides preview features for low ULR production.
Quicklink adds life in real time with commentator

IP solutions provider Quicklink has announced that it will display its remote IP commentary solution at IBC.

The remote commentary solution enables the addition of audio commentary to production in real time, incorporating ultra-low latency audio from any location with an internet connection. It has already been adopted by Fox Sports, Fox Bull Media House, Swisscom and several football clubs.

The remote commentator can view HD-quality high-motion video content in a standard web browser and have commentary inserted as the live audio track in the studio. This solution can achieve the same quality of audio as using traditional ISDN or any voice-over-IP only system.

At IBC 2019, Quicklink will display its remote IP commentary solution. The company will showcase its remote IP commentary solution at Stand 3.B61.

Facilis Hub for demanding media workflows

Facilis will debut its Facilis HUB shared storage system. Built as an entirely new platform, Facilis HUB represents the evolution of the Facilis shared file system, with the block-level virtualisation and multi-connectivity performance required for demanding media production workflows.

Additionally, version 7.2 of the Facilis system software and FastTracker 3.0 are now available and included in all HUB systems.

The company will preview HUB version 8. Scheduled to ship in late 2019, it will include new methods of data protection including software-defined multi-disk parity, hybrid performance management, advanced volume spanning capabilities and portable drive groups.

Facilis HUB version 8 is available for any HUB or TerraBlock system under a valid support contract at the time of release.

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Additionally, version 7.2 of the Facilis system software and FastTracker 3.0 are now available and included in all HUB systems.

The company will preview HUB version 8. Scheduled to ship in late 2019, it will include new methods of data protection including software-defined multi-disk parity, hybrid performance management, advanced volume spanning capabilities and portable drive groups.

Facilis HUB version 8 is available for any HUB or TerraBlock system under a valid support contract at the time of release.

More thunder from ATTO technology

ATTO Technology will showcase its ATTO 360 tuning, monitoring and analytics software, a tool for Ethernet network optimisation designed for creative professionals who want to unlock the potential of ATTO FastFrame and ThunderLink adapters.

ATTO FastFrame NICs are available in single-, dual- and quad-port configurations. FastFrame has been proven to deliver high-performance I/O connectivity and lossless Ethernet support, for improved iSCSI block storage access and optimal network traffic.

ATTO FastFrame NICs make it possible to set up virtual networks across a campus or a data centre. Using optical fibre and a transceiver (SFP+), Ethernet packets can now travel up to 400m without sacrificing speed and data quality.

Stand 7.A26

Quantum F-Series offers support for 4K and 8K

Quantum will debut the Quantum F-Series, a highly available NVMe storage array for editing, rendering and processing video content and other large unstructured datasets.

Designed for performance, availability and reliability, it uses NVMe flash drives for ultra-fast reads and writes — up to five times faster than traditional flash-storage/networking systems. To deliver real-time editing and rendering of 4K and 8K quicker than all other previous competitive solutions.

Using cutting-edge RDMA networking technology, the F-Series delivers consistent low-latency performance over IP networks, eliminating the need for expensive, complex fibre channel SANs. Any studio, post house or broadcaster working with high-res content at high frame rates and looking to move from fibre channel to IP-based infrastructures will want to learn more about the F-Series.

Stand 7.B07

Stand 7.B48

Stand 7.A26

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Pixit Media bridges workflows with PixStor

Pixit Media, a data solutions provider, will unveil new features on its PixStor storage platform.

PixStor provides a scalable environment that sits across and controls all commodity hardware, apps and systems in a workflow. It provides a unified view of all data in the global namespace – be that on-premise, multi-site or in the cloud – with consistent guaranteed performance at point of use for all types of workflow.

Visitors to IBC will see PixStor in action across a range of broadcast, post-production and VFX workflows based on recent customer use cases, delivering efficiencies from ingest, processing, storing and production to archive.

The live demo will connect the company’s booth in Hall 7 to the Pixit Media Lab in High Wycombe in the UK, where a complete real-world production environment has been created, featuring a full complement of technologies including NetApp E-series storage and Mellanox networking.

VSN and Object Matrix deliver MatrixStore

Object Matrix and VSN will display MatrixStore, a storage solution recently integrated with VSN’s media management and workflow automation platform. VSNExplorer – a modular and easily integrated platform designed to meet content management demands in the broadcast industry – MatrixStore is a media-focused hybrid cloud solution built on object storage technologies from Object Matrix. It allows media companies to keep content secure, while ensuring easy access and discoverability. Together, using the MatrixStore Samba interface, VSNExplorer MAM can scan and use MatrixStore vaults for content preservation and storage. This joint solution has already been implemented for a customer in South America that needed to securely manage and store all its media files.

Stand 6.C30

Ross Video creates a smart intuitive SmartShell

New from Ross Video for IBC2019 is version 5 of the SmartShell robotics control system, which will include the new MotionDirector firmware update for all Furio robotics products.

SmartShell is an intuitive control system that combines a touchscreen interface with an joystick control panel, enabling customers to operate their Ross robotic systems through a single control platform using a centralised Ethernet-based architecture.

Version 5 of SmartShell contains MotionDirector, a new motion control algorithm that combines a touchscreen interface with an joystick control panel, enabling customers to operate their Ross robotic systems through a single control platform using a centralised Ethernet-based architecture.

VSNExplorer – a modular and easily integrated platform designed to meet content management demands in the broadcast industry – MatrixStore is a media-focused hybrid cloud solution built on object storage technologies from Object Matrix. It allows media companies to keep content secure, while ensuring easy access and discoverability. Together, using the MatrixStore Samba interface, VSNExplorer MAM can scan and use MatrixStore vaults for content preservation and storage. This joint solution has already been implemented for a customer in South America that needed to securely manage and store all its media files.

Stand 6.C30

Rohde & Schwarz makes the case for 5G at IBC2019

Rohde & Schwarz will present what it calls the world’s first complete 5G broadcast transmission solution. This consists of the core network functionality provided by the new R&S BSCC broadcast service and control centre and R&S Tx9 transmitters, which support FeMBMS.

This solution covers all entities from the content provider to the consumer and is fully compliant with 3GPP release 14, and enables broadcasters to contribute their assets for distribution of video to 5G networks in downlink-only mode. This provides the high-quality levels known from HDTV broadcasting, live content, spectrum efficiency and wide coverage.

Stand 7.B21

See it differently.
Archive footage is hugely important in the world of broadcasting, allowing producers to build previous events and interviews into new programming to create a more compelling story.

In the build-up to any Grand Prix, for instance, broadcasters often use historic content from previous Formula One events to add to the excitement, create a narrative, provide context and, sometimes, to ensure the programme is long enough to fill the time allocated to it. However, there are challenges when trying to access archive footage saved in different places across disparate systems, or just being unable to find it.

The challenges of historic content

With so much new content created daily, the quantity of archive material held by broadcasters is only increasing. While they may be able to overcome the issue of storing that footage, finding it again presents a whole new series of problems. This is worse when broadcasters have facilities across multiple locations, making storing and sharing content among themselves and with other organisations, as well as with numerous users, a problem.

Databases or file-sharing platforms are frequently ineffective systems to locate content, where content is located with them. So how can broadcasters overcome these issues and calm the headache caused by the storage of archive footage?

Finding a solution

The answer lies in a robust cloud-based solution that ensures digital assets are not only protected but also reusable for the future. While this will require a small initial investment of time and money to implement, it is a low-risk, high-reward approach that will allow broadcasters to safely store, search and share content internally, and has the potential to provide significant benefits.

The best cloud-based SaaS solutions are built to scale as the situation demands. This eliminates broadcasters having to take on expensive capacity management fees during quieter periods, but can easily cope with peaks in demand too, as costs are based on usage and consumption. On-premise installations can also be scaled, but they involve capital expenditure that cannot be scaled back when demand returns to normal levels.

However, even in cases such as this where the amount being stored only ever goes up, there are real savings to be made. For instance, if a broadcaster needs 1,000 times the equipment, the cost is four times the initial equipment cost. If it needs 1,000 times the equipment, the cost is four times the initial equipment cost. If it takes X hours with on-premise equipment and needs to be done twice as fast, twice as much equipment is required. But if it’s urgent and needs to be completed 1,000 times faster, the user needs 1,000 times the equipment, which isn’t going to be possible.

However, in the cloud, 1,000 times the processing power can be gained at the click of a button, and assuming the user only needs it for the duration of the task, it will only pay 1,000 times more for the duration, one thousandth of the fee it would otherwise be. It’s therefore not only scalable, but also highly economical.

Cloud infrastructure vendors and cloud-based SaaS platforms can take care of everything, from hygiene factors such as stable power and physical security, to hardware maintenance, patching and software security.

Additionally, implementing a video management platform presents the opportunity to monetise content. A wealth of programmes or footage stored online creates the potential for VOD services. The BBC, for example, added a ‘From the Archive’ section to its BBC iPlayer on-demand service. Although most broadcasters don’t have an extensive back catalogue like the BBC, moving to a single digitised catalogue of content allows them to create platforms showcasing their content on a smaller scale and therefore create new revenue streams.

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Cloud – Our best bet for archive footage

“...ensures digital assets are not only protected but also reusable for the future”

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Tim Jobling is CTO of Imagen.

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