

# BROADCASTPRO

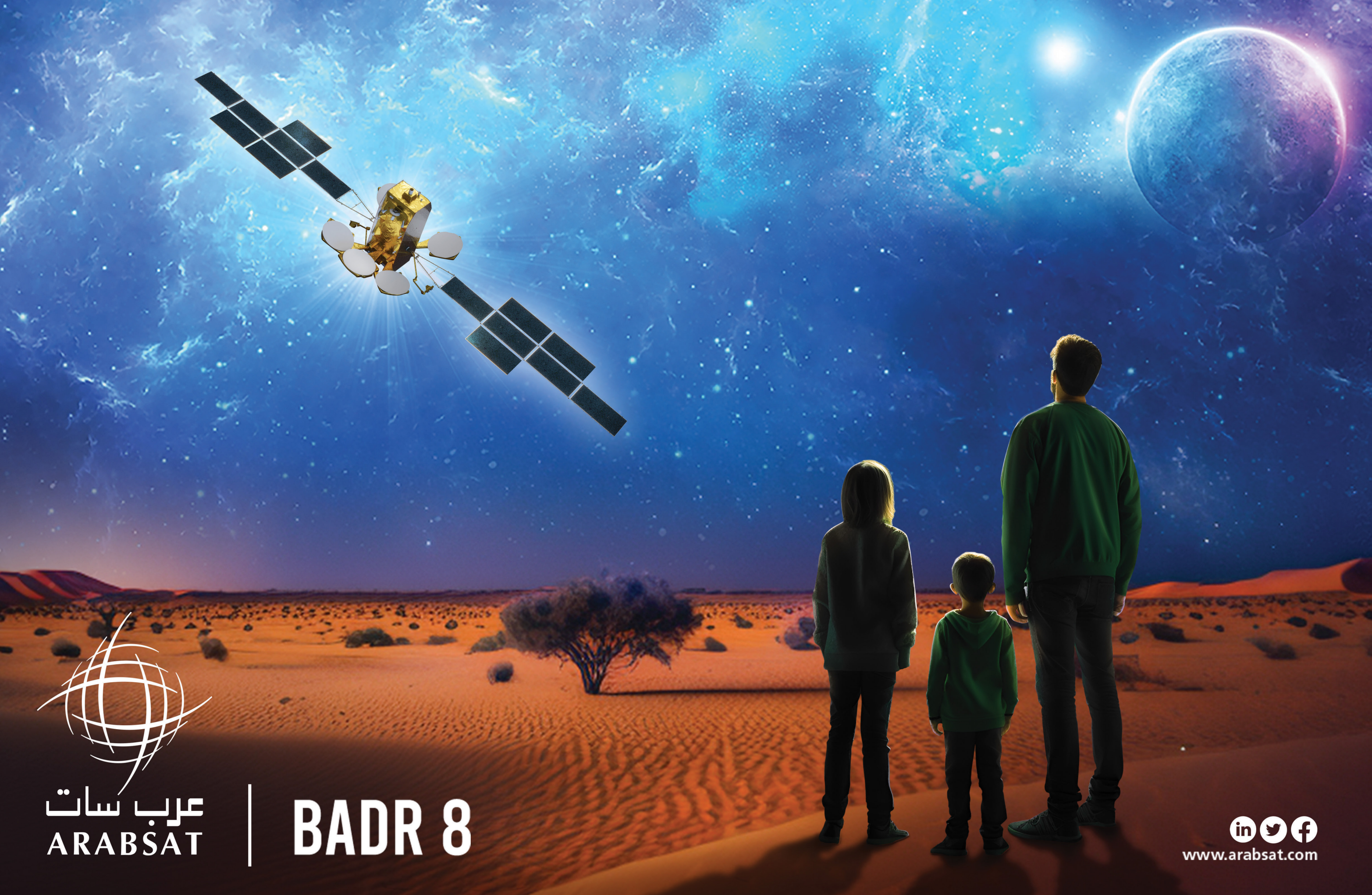
TECHNOLOGY INTELLIGENCE FOR TV, FILM AND RADIO

MIDDLE EAST

## CANNES TRIUMPH

Dubai filmmaker Shihan Shoukath strikes gold at Cannes World Film Festival with directorial debut *Deadline*





عرب سات  
ARABSAT

BADR 8



[www.arabsat.com](http://www.arabsat.com)

# BOLERO

THE STATE-OF-THE-ART  
WIRELESS INTERCOM SYSTEM  
FOR SAFE AND EFFICIENT  
FILM PRODUCTION



## ENHANCED WORKFLOWS FOR MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION

- Group conference & private chat
- Seamless integration with walkie talkie channels
- Superior coverage
- Direct integration with 3rd party systems
- Direct integration with production sound mixers

## BROADCASTPRO

**GROUP**  
**Managing Director**  
Raz Islam  
raz.islam@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 375 5471

**Managing Partner**  
Vijaya Cherian  
vijaya.cherian@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 375 5472

**Director of Finance & Business Operations**  
Shiyas Kareem  
shiyas.kareem@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 375 5474

**EDITORIAL**  
**Editor**  
Vijaya Cherian  
vijaya.cherian@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 55 105 3787

**Sub Editor**  
Aelred Doyle

**ADVERTISING**  
**Group Sales Director**  
Sandip Virk  
sandip.virk@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 50 929 1845  
+44 (0) 7516 993 862

**DESIGN**  
**Art Director**  
Simon Cobon

**Designer**  
Percival Manalaysay

**MARKETING & EVENTS**  
**Events Executive**  
Minara Salakhi  
minara.s@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 433 2856

**Social Media Executive**  
Dara Rashwan  
dara.rashwan@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 433 2856

**CIRCULATION & PRODUCTION**  
**Data & Production Manager**  
Phinson Mathew George  
phinson.george@cpitrademedia.com  
+971 (0) 4 375 5476

**DIGITAL SERVICES**  
Abdul Baeis  
Umair Khan

**FOUNDER**  
Dominic De Sousa (1959-2015)

Published by

## CPITRADEMEDIA

The publisher of this magazine has made every effort to ensure the content is accurate on the date of publication. The opinions and views expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect the publisher and editor. The published material, adverts, editorials and all other content are published in good faith. No part of this publication or any part of the contents thereof may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form without the permission of the publisher in writing. Publication licensed by Dubai Development Authority to CPI Trade Publishing FZ LLC. Printed by Printwell Printing Press LLC.

CPI Trade Media, PO Box 13700, Dubai, UAE.  
+971 4 375 5470 cpitrademedia.com

© Copyright 2023. All rights reserved.



# Welcome

**I had the pleasure of moderating a panel on AI at the BroadcastPro Tech Webinar last month, and it was an awesome experience. Besides our panellists, who had so much to share both on- and off-screen, our chat forum buzzed like it had never done on previous occasions.**

For a lot of broadcasters, AI is a god-send as it helps us keep pace with the demands of an insatiable viewing audience in various ways – by creating subtitles faster than humans would ever be able to do, metadata creation, censorship and so much else. One panellist said that it can even tailor movie trailers to each individual viewer's profile within seconds. The fact that AI can do things a lot faster and cheaper also means it is an easier and sometimes more efficient alternative to human resources.

On the chat forum, some attendees decried the use of AI, stating that it was taking away jobs. While some of that fear is warranted, especially within the digital archiving space with AI able to sift through reels of footage at a much faster pace than humanly possible, it also brings a lot of positive elements to the workspace, freeing up our time to do less mundane things.

All our panellists agreed that AI is here to stay and the faster

we reconcile ourselves to this fact, the easier it will be for us to then look at next steps. I am unable to do justice to the discussions we had at the webinar in this short space, so I urge you to visit our website and hear from the panellists how AI is affecting the Middle East media market and where it is headed.

One suggestion that came out of that discussion is that we start an AI group so that regional players can share their personal and professional experiences. BroadcastPro took that suggestion on board and created a group on LinkedIn called AI PRO for MENA broadcasters/OTT players. Please join us on the group. While we're on the topic of AI, you may want to know how Alaraby smashed the Turkish elections with their new platform.

I also want to draw your attention to our cover story this month, on a young filmmaker who has won several awards in the festival circuit for his directorial debut *Deadline*. There's so much more inside. Happy reading.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director



On this month's cover...

Shihan Shoukath, Dubai-based filmmaker.

Let's create a vibrant online broadcast community!

- ✕ @BroadcastProME
- f www.facebook.com/BroadcastProME
- in BroadcastProME

Subscribe online at:  
**BROADCASTPROME.COM**



reddot award  
winner

# BROADCASTPRO

SUMMIT & AWARDS 2023

bpsummitandawards.com



08 November 2023

## Welcome to the MENA region's leading industry conference and awards ceremony

Conference Venue : TBC  
Awards Venue : Ritz Carlton JBR

<p>KNOWLEDGE PARTNER</p>	<p>ASSOCIATE SPONSOR</p>	<p>ASSOCIATE SPONSOR</p>	<p>ASSOCIATE SPONSOR</p>	<p>SILVER SPONSOR</p>
<p>NETWORKING SPONSOR</p>	<p>NETWORKING SPONSOR</p>	<p>PRESENTED BY</p>	<p>PRESENTED BY</p>	

<p><b>Sponsorship</b></p> <p>Raz Islam +971 50 451 8213 raz.islam@cpitrademedia.com</p>	<p><b>Sponsorship</b></p> <p>Sandip Virk +971 50 929 1845 sandip.virk@cpitrademedia.com</p>	<p><b>Nominations</b></p> <p>Vijaya Cherian +971 55 105 3787 vijaya.cherian@cpitrademedia.com</p>
---	---	---

**Awards Nominate Now**  
Explore the Awards categories and nominate for free



**Summit Register Free Now**  
Register for Summit free for industry professionals



CPITRADEMEDIA

© 2023 CPI Trade Media. All rights reserved.

### Inside this issue

**06 NEWS**  
Abdulaziz Alshlahei to shoot *Hobal* in Neom; Koko Films launches in UAE; Houssam Al Khalid moves to Cleeng; Media Mania upgrades OB vans with Lawo; AIUla updates; and more

**16 IBC AWARDS SHORTLIST**  
The shortlist spotlights transformational technologies that are taking the industry in a new software- and services-led direction

**18 COVER – DEADLINE DISPLAYS RAW POWER**  
Shihan Shoukath talks about the role of Blackmagic in crafting his award-winning film, *Deadline*

**24 BRINGING FRENCH FLAIR TO MENA**  
Ahmed El Cheikh discusses France Médias Monde's ambitions in expanding audience and operations in the MENA region

**28 ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE**  
An astute engineer turned entrepreneur, Areej Itani's keen business acumen has helped her lead her company to success while propelling her own career

**32 REVOLUTIONISING ELECTION COVERAGE**  
Alaraby TV execs speak about working with a combination of AR, VR and data to create game-changing coverage during the recent Turkish elections

**36 GUEST COLUMN**  
Alfred Manasseh on the untapped potential of the metaverse in news production

# July-August 2023

<p><b>06 SAUDI FILMMAKER HEADS TO NEOM</b></p>	<p><b>14 PAPER EMPIRE COMES TO ALULA</b></p>
<p><b>18 DUBAI FILMMAKER DISPLAYS RAW BRILLIANCE IN DIRECTORIAL DEBUT</b></p>	
<p><b>24 FRANCE MÉDIAS MONDE IN MENA</b></p>	<p><b>28 SEIZING NEW OPPORTUNITIES</b></p>
<p><b>32 EXCELLENCE IN ELECTION COVERAGE</b></p>	<p><b>36 TAPPING INTO METAVERSE FOR NEWS</b></p>

# Saudi filmmaker Abdulaziz Alshlahei to shoot feature film *Hobal* in Neom

Saudi filmmaker Abdulaziz Alshlahei (*Zero Distance*) will shoot his next feature film, *Hobal*, in Neom in northwest Saudi Arabia this September, at Bajdah Studios and its sprawling epic landscapes. The film focuses on a Saudi family living in isolation in the early 1990s. Following their grandfather's strict instructions, they are not allowed to leave the desert. However, a series of events shakes the family's foundation and leads to a struggle between life and death. The film stars Mohammed Altoyan and Mishal Almutairi, along with an all-Saudi cast. Scriptwriter Mufarraj Al-Majfel was one of the winners and recipient of a fund award at the Saudi Film Commission's Daw Film Competition, an initiative



Abdulaziz Alshlahei will begin shooting this September

launched by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Culture in September 2019 to support Saudi film production and champion the next generation of filmmakers by establishing a sustainable funding programme to bring Saudi content to the screen and to wider audiences. The film will benefit from production support provided by Neom, which is assisting

with crew, location scouting, logistics and on-the-ground production expertise. The strategic location of Bajdah Studios offers producers the opportunity to shoot on location in the landscapes of Neom while being in close proximity to the state-of-the-art sound stages, complete with back-of-house facilities comprising make-up rooms, green rooms

and production offices. *Hobal* is the third feature from Alshlahei, with his second feature film, Saudi period drama *The Tambour of Retribution*, securing two awards at the Cairo Film Festival and being selected as the Saudi Arabian entry for Best International Feature Film at the 2022 Oscars. He said: "Since 2018, we have been thinking about unique locations to shoot our film. We decided on Neom, and specifically Bajdah, where the captivating landscapes will be an influential and integral part of the narrative. Our director of photography will use anamorphic lenses to do justice to this extraordinary and majestic destination and set a beautiful atmosphere for the film."



## Koko Films in UAE to offer technical services for productions

A brand-new technical services company for production has been launched in Dubai Production City by focus-puller and camera assistant Koko Boutchakjian (featured left) and his wife, Serine Gharibian. The couple also run Media Max FZ LLC, a rental services company which they co-founded in 2018. Koko Films is an extension of their first initiative. Boutchakjian, a

Lebanese national, has worked on more than a thousand big and small film projects across the UAE and the GCC, while Gharibian has been a marketing specialist in the UAE for the last 15 years and has helped organise several film and production-related activities, seminars and workshops, particularly in Dubai, during this period. The couple work with film industry suppliers, studios, and professional and experienced crew in the UAE, and can reportedly provide

all the technical services required for a production. Boutchakjian said: "Whether we are working on a commercial, short or corporate film, music video or other projects, with the help of our professional and dedicated team of technicians and our up-to-date equipment and resources we make sure our projects are expertly executed, delivered on schedule and within the budget of our clients, who are usually production houses and producers."

# TVU Networks and MEBS Trading to enhance MENA IP broadcasting

Cloud and IP-based live video solutions provider TVU Networks has signed a strategic partnership with MENA broadcast solutions provider MEBS Trading LLC. According to the deal, MEBS Trading LLC will serve as TVU Networks' exclusive MENA business partner, service centre and rental hub. By combining TVU Networks' IP broadcasting solutions with MEBS Trading LLC's extensive market knowledge and operational and logistic capabilities, this partnership aims to change the way media content is produced, delivered and managed across the region. MEBS, with its expansive

customer network, skilled engineering team and logistics prowess, is set to enhance TVU Networks' IP broadcasting footprint in the MENA region. It will also operate as a dedicated service centre, providing technical support, maintenance and training services for TVU Networks products. This ensures that MENA customers receive prompt assistance and expertise to maximise the performance and reliability of their broadcast solutions. Furthermore, MEBS will run TVU stock dedicated to the TVU Global Rental Programme as a MENA rental hub, offering TV channels, content creators and media

organisations access to TVU Networks' advanced IP broadcasting equipment on a rental basis. This will enable organisations to scale their operations efficiently and reduce capital expenditure and enable TVU customers to move around the globe without the hassle of carrying their equipment around. Hossam El-Moaz, GM of MEBS Trading LLC, said: "We are thrilled to partner with TVU Networks and represent them as their exclusive business partner, service centre and rental hub in the MENA region. This partnership allows us to offer our customers the most advanced IP broadcasting

solutions available, empowering them to stay at the forefront of media broadcasting technology." Rafael Castillo, Vice President and GM (EMEA and Latin America) of TVU Networks, added: "MEBS Trading LLC's strong market presence, operational excellence and commitment to customer success make them the perfect partner for TVU Networks in the MENA region. Through this collaboration, we aim to deliver unparalleled support, service and access to our cutting-edge IP broadcasting solutions to TV channels and media organisations in the region."

## Houssam Al Khaled moves to Cleeng

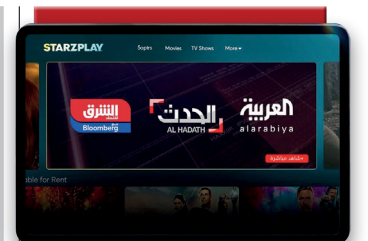
Cleeng, a SaaS platform specialising in subscriber retention management for the media & entertainment industry and serving brands such as the NFL, SBG and Optus Sport, has appointed Houssam Al Khaled as Customer Success Director, EMEA and APAC, to offer "exceptional experiences to its customers in the region". Al Khaled will be based in the UAE. According to a company statement, "The appointment is a strategic move to reinforce Cleeng's

customer-centric approach and aligns perfectly with the imminent launch/



Houssam Al Khaled.

revamp of a major OTT service in the region." Ragna Ghoreishi, VP of Customer Success, said: "Houssam joins us with an impressive background and an outstanding reputation in the OTT space. His expertise will be instrumental in driving our mission to optimise our subscriber retention management solutions, ensuring that our clients achieve their business goals, reducing churn while maximising the value of their partnership with Cleeng."



## StarzPlay adds three news channels

SVOD platform StarzPlay has added three MENA news channels to its line-up: Al Arabiya, Al Hadath and Asharq News. Earlier this year, the platform secured a landmark agreement with Sky News Arabia to broadcast its news content.

# Amman International Film Festival announces line-up for third edition

Amman International Film Festival (AIFF) has announced the line-up of its third edition, which is due to take place August 15-22 in Amman, Jordan. The programme includes additional activities specially designed for film industry experts, featuring the participation of directors, actors, international professionals and producers.

The selection comprises 56 films released in 2022 or 2023, encompassing a diverse range of Arab and international feature-length narratives, documentaries and short films from 19 countries. They will be presented to the public for the first time in Jordan, with 11 of them premiering exclusively in the Arab region and five having their world premieres. The festival is carefully curated after viewing hundreds of submissions, offering viewers



an opportunity to watch films which might not make it to commercial theatres in Jordan, and will open with Palestinian film *A Gaza Weekend*, directed by Basil Khalil.

Areeb Zuaier, AIFF Head of Programming, said: "We continue to celebrate the talent of debut creatives in the filmmaking sector. This year's selection promises a vibrant window that will transport our audience into enchanting realms of fresh imagination, with a captivating

blend of diverse narratives and innovative storytelling."

Films will compete for the prestigious Black Iris award, which is divided into four categories. Three of these sections, namely Best Arab Feature Narrative (eight films), Best Arab Feature Documentary (eight films) and Best Arab Short (18 films), are determined by juries. The Audience Award will be given to the winning film from the eight entries in the International

section. A new addition this year: Arab feature-length documentaries also compete for the FIPRESCI prize.

For the third consecutive year, the festival hosts the Franco-Arab Rendez-Vous, a non-competitive segment featuring seven feature films either of French origin or co-produced with France, as well as four short film winners from two Franco-Arab competitions conducted simultaneously in Jordan and France. And as a demonstration of the AIFF's commitment to promoting local talent, a dedicated section, Spotlight on Jordanian Short Films, will showcase films directed by seasoned filmmakers from Jordan.

Starting August 6, tickets can be bought online and from the Film Library of the Royal Film Commission – Jordan and Taj Cinemas.

## StarzPlay launches StarzPlay Store

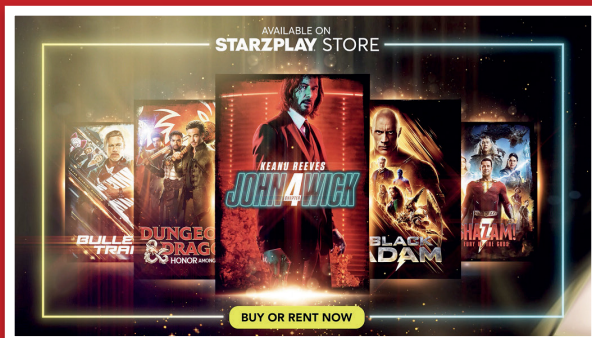
SVOD platform StarzPlay has launched StarzPlay Store, a subscription-free way to watch movies immediately after their theatrical run. With this new launch, users now have access to the newest releases at their convenience. Available on all devices equipped with the StarzPlay app, StarzPlay Store focuses on ease of use by offering tailored enhancements for smart TV browsing

and purchasing. These include frictionless QR code mobile payments, allowing

users to conclude their transactions on their mobile devices via a simple scan. The payment

integrations also extend to mobile devices via in-app purchases.

Rida Mourtada, Head of Product at StarzPlay, said: "Whether you want to rent or purchase, StarzPlay Store ensures you can enjoy premium movies on your own terms. We're continually refreshing the store to add the newest releases as soon as they become available and redefining how audiences experience movies."



## Introducing the world's most portable all-in-one television studio!

The new ATEM Television Studio HD is a professional live production switcher built into a broadcast control panel so it can be used for high end work while being extremely portable. You get a powerful switcher with 8 standards converted SDI inputs, 2 aux outputs, 4 chroma keyers, 2 downstream keyers, SuperSource, 2 media players and lots of transitions! There's even an ISO model that records all 8 inputs for editing!

### Easy to Use and Fast to Learn!

There's never been a switcher that's easier to use, as you simply press any of the program row buttons on the front panel to cut between video sources. You can select from exciting transitions such as dissolve, or more dramatic effects such as dip to color, DVE squeeze and DVE push. You can even add a DVE for picture in picture effects with customized graphics. Then you can live stream the results!

### Self Contained Broadcast Quality Switcher

ATEM Television Studio HD combines a switcher and control panel into the same unit, so it's extremely portable. The front panel includes buttons for selecting sources, triggering transitions and setting up video effects. You also get a built in t-bar for manual transition control! The front panel even has an innovative audio mixer control area with live metering on a dedicated LCD.

### Record to Internal Network Storage!

ATEM Television Studio HD8 ISO supports recording all video inputs to optional M.2 internal flash storage! The internal storage will then be available to share over the local Ethernet network so you get a whole post production workflow! This means people can work on post production tasks such as editing, color correction and graphics preparation while recording new live shows!

### Built In Fairlight Audio Mixer

With a built in Fairlight audio mixer, ATEM Television Studio HD makes it possible to do complex live sound mixing. The internal mixer features enough channels for all SDI inputs, as well as extra channels for the XLR, RCA and MADI inputs! Each input channel features the highest quality 6 band parametric EQ, compressor, limiter, expander and noise gate as well as level and pan controls.

**ATEM Television Studio HD**  
From US\$3,235



# OB specialist Media Mania chooses Lawo IP solutions for upgrading vans

Media Mania, a UAE production company specialising in OB van construction and broadcast services, has integrated the Lawo mc<sup>2</sup>56 MkIII audio production console, accompanied by Lawo stageboxes, into its ultra-high-definition (UHD) outside broadcast (OB) truck. Under the leadership of founder and CEO Roland Daou, it is reportedly one of the few entities in the MENA and Gulf region with the capabilities to design, coach build, install and operate its own OB vans: "We are committed to serving the broadcast and streaming sectors in the Gulf and MENA region, be it TV stations or private clients," said Daou.



Media Mania has installed the Lawo mc<sup>2</sup>56 MkIII audio production console in its OB vans.

In anticipation of the imminent transition to 4K high dynamic range (HDR) standards in the production world, the firm has developed and deployed 4K HDR OB vans and 4K portable production units

(PPU). Daou emphasised the essential attributes of stability, redundancy and reliability in OB van equipment, and the criticality of selecting reputable equipment manufacturers. Waddah Thabit, CTO

at Media Mania, lauded the mc<sup>2</sup>56 for its ability to enhance "workflow efficiency, increase productivity, and provide ergonomic and intuitive operation ... users can confidently operate the console even in high-pressure situations".

To further enhance workflow efficiency, users can seamlessly connect third-party devices directly to the console whenever monitoring, metering, headphones or command inputs are necessary. Additionally, the newly integrated Reveal Panel in the console's overbridge streamlines tasks such as identifying surround channels assigned to a fader in a 5.1 surround mix.

## Intigral collaborates with Bedaya TV in Saudi Arabia

Intigral has signed a strategic partnership with Bedaya TV, a socially-oriented Saudi Arabian channel dedicated to producing reality TV shows and promoting local content and talent. Through the partnership, Intigral emphasises its strategy to offer users more viewing options and make all their favourite content accessible through one easy-to-navigate platform. This collaboration builds upon Intigral's commitment to empowering local talent and developing the Saudi digital entertainment

sector. Leveraging its investment in strategic partnerships, Intigral harnesses the power of its aggregator platform, STC TV, to customise the viewing experience to match the individual preferences of each viewer. Intigral CEO Markus Golder said: "We are thrilled to collaborate with Bedaya TV in our shared mission to empower and promote Saudi talent and contribute to the growth of a sustainable and vibrant ecosystem for content creation in the Kingdom. This strategic

partnership resonates with our strategy and the exceptional value our platforms bring to all stakeholders, including our business partners and end users. Intigral strives to captivate and delight viewers with its top-tier offerings, providing businesses with comprehensive solutions to deliver unparalleled digital entertainment experiences to their customers. By seamlessly integrating our platforms' cutting-edge solutions and extensive content library, we empower businesses

to elevate customer engagement and foster growth within the rapidly evolving digital landscape." Bedaya TV Chairman Ibrahim Alshehri added: "Bedaya TV and Intigral are committed to empowering Saudi talent to indulge in captivating experiences that transcend boundaries and ignite their imaginations. Our objective is to deliver quality content that brings entertainment and joy to a wide-ranging audience. STC TV allows us to reach the most relevant segment of video streamers in KSA."

# Fanfix expands into MENA region

Fanfix has expanded in the MENA region's thriving creator economy to revolutionise the way content is created, consumed and monetised. This website lets creators connect with their fans through exclusive, behind-the-scenes content gated behind a paywall. They can also monetise their DMs with pay-per-message prices and virtual tip jars for posts by setting their own prices for exclusive feeds.

Through proactive content moderation and a community reporting system, Fanfix maintains an environment suitable for all ages and fosters inclusivity.

This ensures that creators thrive and users confidently engage and enjoy exclusive content by their favourite creators. Recognising the immense talent and potential of content creators in the region, Fanfix MENA is committed to providing them with the necessary tools and support to flourish in their content fields.

Launched by entrepreneurs Harry Gestetner and Simon Pompan and social media personality Cameron Dallas in Los Angeles, the platform has more than 7m creators globally. Ally Salama, Director of Fanfix MENA, said: "The creator economy is a \$250bn

market, with much of it still untapped. We are on the cusp of witnessing the most significant paradigm shift across the UAE and KSA within the MENA creator economy, as countries adopt innovative ways to harness the power of the Internet and community building over the next five years."

Fanfix uses a web-based application accessible across all browsers, supporting all types of content under 13+ content guidelines. To receive an invitation to join the platform, individuals must be over 18 years old and have a minimum of 10,000 followers across all

social media platforms. The application process happens through the Fanfix official website, which then goes through an internal review process. Upon approval by the Fanfix team, creators are contacted and, after verification, can begin publishing content and promoting their activated profile. Creators retain 80% of their earnings, while Fanfix holds 20% to cover operational expenses and maintain the platform's functionality. The platform also offers subscriber count and daily revenue insights to all creators, to better understand their audiences.



**Looking to revolutionize your media management and workflow?**

**Look no further than Broadcast Solutions!**

As an esteemed partner of EditShare, we enable our clients to seamlessly store, edit, and manage media on-premise and in the cloud with unparalleled scalability, intelligence, and collaboration.

**You want to know more?**

**Visit Broadcast Solutions at IBC Show 2023 / Stand 0.A01**

**Broadcast Solutions Middle East**  
info@broadcast-solutions.me



[www.broadcast-solutions.me](http://www.broadcast-solutions.me) / [www.editshare.com](http://www.editshare.com)

# Rami Mohsen moves to Sony Music Middle East as MD

Sony Music Middle East has appointed Rami Mohsen as its new Managing Director. Mohsen will oversee strategy and operations in one of the fastest-growing music markets in the world. This appointment comes after the MENA region posted the world's third-highest growth rate in 2022, with revenues from recorded music climbing 23.8% to \$94m, according to the IFPI 2023 Global Music Report. Globally, the market was valued at \$4.81bn in 2020 and is expected to reach \$7.26502bn by 2026 and grow at a CAGR of

7.1% during the forecast period (2021-2026). Mohsen began his career at Nogoum FM, where he quickly rose through the ranks to become the Network Director of Nogoum FM & Nogoum FMTV. During his tenure, Mohsen launched the NRP production unit, which allowed



in-house creation of content. The vertical integration of content production also led to the establishment of Nogoum Records, now recognised as one of the top music labels in the MENA region. Prior to joining Sony Music Middle East, he was Head of Music – Middle East, North Africa & South Asia Subset at Spotify.

## Jawwy TV now available to Jordan's Umniah Fiber customers

Intigral has teamed up with telco provider Umniah, a subsidiary of Beyon Group in Jordan, to bring its OTT aggregator platform Jawwy TV to viewers in the country. Umniah Fiber subscribers now have access to Jawwy TV's library of VOD titles and live channels through flexible bundles. Users can opt for one-month, three-month or 12-month access, with competitive prices.

Peter Mrkic, Chief Commercial Officer, Intigral, said: "This is Intigral's first bundling agreement in Jordan, and we are positive that offering Jawwy TV as part of Umniah's core services will bring Umniah's subscribers an unrivalled entertainment experience with a wide and diverse variety of content to choose from on Jawwy TV." Zaid Ibrahim, CCO, Umniah, added: "We are happy to collaborate with Jawwy and offer our Fiber subscribers additional services that meet their expectations. This collaboration will further enhance our subscribers' experience and drive our growth in the market."

# DICM to launch Producers Connect and Screening Stations at next edition

The Dubai International Content Market (DICM), which will take place November 22-23 at Madinat Jumeirah Conference Centre, has announced the launch of Producers Connect, a new initiative aimed at bringing together producers, streaming platforms and investors under one roof and providing them with an environment to exchange ideas, share projects and bring their creative visions to life.

Eng Anas Al Madani, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of INDEX Holding, said: "By providing a dedicated platform for professionals



A file photo of one of the past editions of DICM in Dubai.

to connect, exchange ideas and explore co-production opportunities, we are confident that Producers Connect will be a catalyst for transformative

partnerships and groundbreaking content."

Producers Connect will help participants get direct access to decision-makers and industry leaders,

who will provide insights, guidance and potential funding for their projects.

Screening Stations will be strategically placed around the exhibition, allowing exhibitors to showcase their content to all attendees at any time during the event. After attendees watch the content, they will fill out a short survey, leaving feedback for exhibitors. Screening Stations will include one TV and branding space for the company's logo and title posters. Trailers will be limited to five minutes or less, and up to five trailers can be pre-loaded.

## Nayla Al Khaja wraps up shoot of debut feature

Emirati filmmaker Nayla Al Khaja has wrapped on her debut feature film, *Three*, an independent feature shot in Thailand and the UAE over 24 days. This psychological horror film, directed and produced by Al Khaja and co-written by Ben Williams,

features British actor Jefferson Hall alongside a mainly Emirati cast. Currently in post-production, the film unfolds in the suburbs of a modern-day Middle Eastern city, where a young boy named Ahmed

begins exhibiting strange behaviour, eventually leading his mother, Maryam, to believe he is possessed. As the plot intensifies, Maryam races against time, seeking the help of a Western doctor, medical professionals and ultimately an infamous exorcist, all in an attempt to save her son.

Al Khaja said, "*Three* is a cross-cultural horror film that pulsates with the mesmerising rhythm of a foreign world."

The film is being billed as a milestone in the history of UAE Arab cinema for its storyline intertwining a Western character into a story with an Emirati family at its core.



At the shoot.

## Türk Telekom and ZTE launch Tivibu in Türkiye

Türk Telekom has launched next-generation TV platform Tivibu, based on its IPTV/OTT platform in Türkiye, in cooperation with ZTE Corporation and Netaş. It has completed the integration and docking of more than 10 third-party manufacturers, as well as the cutover of all platforms and set-top boxes, serving millions of users on the live network.

With Tivibu, Türk Telekom will continue to provide user-friendly features and richer content to its subscribers, while improving end-user satisfaction. It has also introduced a new channel named Tivilife, bringing

together new trends from entertainment to nature, travel to food and health to fashion, available exclusively on the platform.

Through Tivibu's new interface and advanced features, customers can seamlessly resume watching content that has been played and paused on multiple devices, including IPTV, web, smart TV, Apple TV, Android TV, smartphones and tablets. This cross-device functionality allows users to pick up where they left off and continue their viewing experience from any of these devices at their convenience.

By using ZTE's IPTV

infrastructure, known for its flexibility, and complementing it with Netaş' interface and application development, testing capabilities and installation services, Tivibu delivers an advanced viewing experience to subscribers. Tivibu has also actively introduced the Google ecosystem, opening up a new revenue model that brings more value-added business and more flexible operation means.

ZTE will keep working closely with Türk Telekom, focusing on video product technology evolution and business innovation to jointly accelerate the development of new video services.

## Marakez opens first Scene Cinemas in East Cairo's District Five

Real estate developer Marakez and Egyptian cinema operator Scene Cinemas have opened the first Scene Cinema branch in East Cairo, as part of the integrated community District Five. District Five's Scene Cinema will feature state-of-the-art facilities, such as Africa's first Cineplex with 4K laser projectors and an IMAX theatre. With 13 screens, four of them VIP premiere screens, it will offer a diverse selection of movies. District Five is Marakez's signature mixed-use project in the heart of East Cairo.



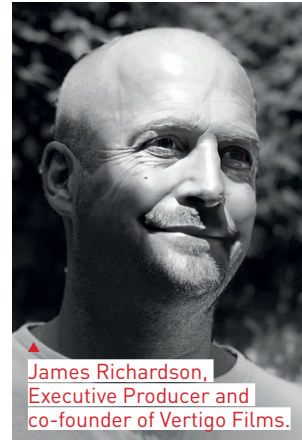
# Vertigo Films and Haifaa Al Mansour support AIUla Creates programme



Allan Niblo, Executive Producer and co-founder of Vertigo Films.



Jane Moore, Executive Producer and CEO of Vertigo Films.



James Richardson, Executive Producer and co-founder of Vertigo Films.

Film AIUla, the Royal Commission for AIUla's film agency, has launched the AIUla Creates short film competition, joined by London-based production company Vertigo Films (Monsters), Saudi filmmaker Haifaa Al Mansour (*The Perfect Candidate*) and internationally renowned director, producer, and actress Katie Holmes (*Rare Objects*). Vertigo Films and Film AIUla will helm the competition to support and establish three Saudi women directors in the international marketplace. The deadline for submissions is August 31.

AIUla Creates is a platform designed to nurture future generations of Saudi Arabian talent in the areas of film, the arts and fashion. Launching the second phase of the AIUla filmmaking mentoring programme, this initiative offers filmmakers the chance to receive mentorship from renowned industry experts and equips them with the necessary tools

to enhance their projects, ultimately contributing to the development of the film industry.

Aspiring Saudi women filmmakers may participate in the programme, aiming to collaborate with Vertigo Films, Haifaa Al Mansour, Katie Holmes and the Film AIUla team to produce a short film made in AIUla. Entrants of all levels of experience are encouraged to submit a

piece of audiovisual work they have directed alongside a synopsis of the short film they would like to develop. Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of industry experts comprising Vertigo Films, Film AIUla, Holmes and Al Mansour. They will assess the entries based on originality, creativity, thematic depth, character development and potential to engage and captivate audiences. A

shortlist of filmmakers will be invited to pitch directly to the panel before the final three filmmakers are selected.

To complete their 10-minute short films, the winning three filmmakers will receive a \$20,000 production grant, three months of mentoring and training, additional funding for treatment development, and on-the-ground support throughout the filmmaking process.

They will also be flown to London to learn about the international marketplace, meeting with key sales, distribution, post and VFX companies, and supported through submissions to local and international film festivals.

Charlene Deleon-Jones, Executive Director at Film AIUla, said: "As we continue to develop our AIUla Creates initiative and secure more incredible mentors like the trailblazing Haifaa Al Mansour, we are delighted to welcome



Left to right: Mila AlZahrani, Katie Holmes, Eva Herzigova and Charlene Deleon-Jones at a panel created by AIUla at the Cannes Film Festival.

Vertigo Films as a partner for the film phase of the programme. Their experience as producers and remarkable track record in discovering and supporting up-and-coming talent will be vital as we strive to provide a platform for the next generation of Saudi women filmmakers. We look forward to engaging with the submissions and seeing the phenomenal stories that are waiting to be told on the international stage."

Jane Moore, Executive Producer and CEO at Vertigo Films, added: "At Vertigo, we feel passionately about

empowering female creatives in our industry and the Film AIUla Creates programme presents a genuine opportunity to amplify the voices and artistic talents of Saudi female filmmakers on the global stage. By providing a platform for their unique perspectives and craft, we aim to develop their professional growth and nurture their creative identity. With young people of Saudi Arabia only recently experiencing cinema for the first time, it's exciting to be involved in AIUla's movement to become a

major film and TV hub and will be immensely rewarding to be part of the journey of the talented women selected for this programme and to see them flourish in the industry through their ambitious short films."

Haifaa Al Mansour added: "I am beyond thrilled to be working with AIUla Creates to help build and support the coming generation of filmmakers in my home country of Saudi Arabia. When I first started making films, the idea of working as a female Saudi director seemed outlandish. But I knew that

the world was curious to hear from us, to hear our side of the story, and those films from home would strike a chord with audiences around the world. Now, working on a programme like this to foster and support upcoming female artists in Saudi Arabia feels just as unbelievable. It is an incredible honour for me, and such a wonderful opportunity to meet so many other talented filmmakers. I am so excited to see the infrastructure of a cinematic industry being built here to help realise our creative visions and beyond."

## Season 3 of Paper Empire lands in AIUla

The full third season (10 episodes) of *Paper Empire* will be filmed in AIUla. This season of the action-drama series produced by Robert Gillings Productions, Tadross Media Group and Inner Circle Films will be based entirely in the region, with all ten episodes to shoot in the diverse locations and landscapes Film AIUla has to offer.

The show follows Laurence Finch (Robert Davi), who wants to be the world's financial saviour. In his attempt to create the singular dominant cryptocurrency, he develops an algorithm that inadvertently opens a digital black hole that he calls "digital limbo". Eventually, his attempt to merge all currencies and corner the world banks spirals out of control, bringing forth a financial armageddon. After his



The action-drama series is produced by Robert Gillings Productions, Tadross Media Group and Inner Circle Films.

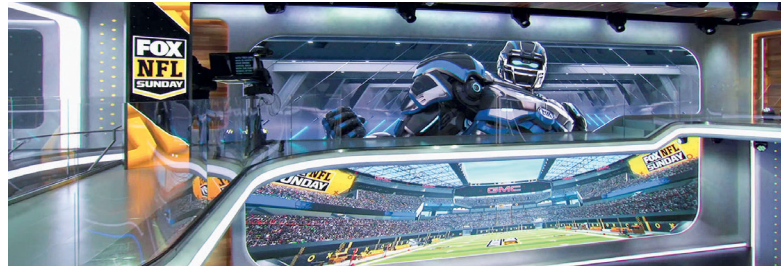
arrest, his technology is investigated by the CIA and the FBI, who uncover a web of deceit and corruption far beyond his actions. With the help of his inequitable team – banker (Wesley Snipes) and behind-the-scenes business and life partner (Denise Richards) – even in jail, Laurence continues to be the mastermind behind the global financial

conspiracy. As the investigation unfolds, the digital breadcrumbs lead to Swiss banker Oliver London (Kelsey Grammer). When the stakes get higher and the danger more intense, Laurence must make difficult choices and take bold action to stay one step ahead of his many enemies. With twists and turns at every

corner, *Paper Empire* is a thrilling universal roller coaster ride that keeps audiences on the edge of their seats until the end.

Robert Gillings, creator and director, remarked: "AIUla is called the world's masterpiece for a very good reason, and I spent days scouting its golden sands and sandstone arches, historic Old Town founded in 6 BC, the ancient Tombs of Hegra, a UNESCO site and the largest glass building in the world, the Maraya Concert Hall. I was impressed by the professionalism and hospitality provided and immediately inspired by the capabilities of Film AIUla." Film AIUla has hosted 754 production days since opening in 2020. Movies have included *Kandahar*, Iraq war story *Cherry* and Saudi feature film *Norah*.

# IBC2023 announces shortlists for Innovation and Social Impact Awards



IBC has revealed the shortlists for this year's Innovation and Social Impact Awards, which will take place during the event at RAI Amsterdam, September 15-18. The Innovation Awards recognise collaborative endeavours that result in the creation of innovative solutions addressing real-world challenges, while the Social Impact Awards acknowledge projects that tackle significant issues related to industry diversity, inclusivity and environmental concerns.

The Innovation Awards will be announced in a ceremony in IBC's Premier Lounge at 6pm CEST on Sunday, September 17. The Social Impact Awards, part of the IBC2023 Changemakers

Programme, will be held the same day at 5pm CEST in The Forum.

Fergal Ringrose, Chair of the 2023 IBC Innovation Awards Jury, said: "The standard of entries has been remarkably high across the three categories – Content Creation, Content Distribution and Content Everywhere. The global pandemic has acted as a major catalyst for innovation in the content and technology industry, with this year's finalists demonstrating many of the transformative new paths forward. All aspects of remote and sustainable operations have been accelerated, bringing an emphatic shift in emphasis from products and hardware to software and services. This shift is allied to the compelling

requirement for media companies to continuously anticipate and align with modern consumption habits."

This year's shortlisted projects in Content Creation include Fox Sports' live multi-camera extended reality (XR) set; RTVE Spain for Hiperia, its first audiovisual content created 100% by artificial intelligence; the BBC and partners for their pop-up 5G stand-alone non-public network for live broadcast contributions using shared spectrum, deployed for the coronation of King Charles III; Riot Games for its Remote Broadcast Centre, Project Stryker, powered by AWS; and Formula E for its onboard in-car broadcasting technology with Timeline Television and Domo Broadcast Systems.

In the Content Distribution category, the finalists are ITV UK for introducing AI-led automation of segmentation and QC workflows with Prime Focus Technologies; Cellcom Israel, which joined forces with Viaccess-Orca and Broadpeak to stream live sports with super-low latency; TelevisaUnivision for harnessing LTN live event versioning technology to deliver language-tailored live sports coverage on ViX; and Sky Group's cloud-native software playout platform for the origination of linear content TV channels across European territories.

The Content Everywhere shortlist consists of the Sport TV app, which captured a whole new level of audience engagement

for the Portuguese sports broadcaster; Sky Sports, which for the first time delivered full access to Formula 1 onboard cameras and launched a new Battle Channel; KAN, which changed the way Israel watched the World Cup and Eurovision with Sport BUFF real-time interactive engagement; and TNT Sports (formerly BT Sport), which looked to the cloud to create a significant broadcasting milestone for the UEFA Youth League.

The Social Impact Awards, introduced in 2019, have emerged as an IBC mainstay and in 2023 became part of the Changemakers programme, which focuses on initiatives aimed at making the industry more equitable, inclusive, accessible and green. There

are three categories, as well as a Special Award.

The Social Impact category consists of Afghanistan International Radio, a platform that has amplified the voices of Afghan women, sharing their stories; RTVE, which used AI to provide local election news coverage in nearly 5,000 small Spanish municipalities; Stellenbosch University and Intelsat, which are leveraging satellite technology to expand the reach and richness of higher education; and BBC Research & Development's Human Values project, which provides tools to understand how content affects users' wellbeing and values.

The Environment and Sustainability finalists are Iron Mountain Data Centres,

which are on the path to using 100% locally sourced clean electricity 100% of the time, to make their operations carbon-free; Seagate, which extended the life of more than 1m hard disk drives and solid state drives through its refurbishment and circularity programme in 2022; 4MOD's Life Cycle Assessment programme, which integrates LCA data-driven decisions into its operations, ensuring continual improvement in the environmental impacts of products and services; and Love Island's partnership with eBay, which inspired sustainable shopping among a huge audience.

The finalists for Diversity and Inclusion are the MAMA Youth Project, which supports motivated and under-

represented young adults into sustained employment in the media; SWI swissinfo.ch, which has introduced a data-driven process to evaluate the use of inclusive language in its multilingual digital newsroom; and ScreenCraft Works, a global community for under-represented film and TV professionals with cross-border mentorship at its heart.

The IBC Innovation Awards ceremony will also include recognition of the Best Technical Paper from IBC2023, as well as the presentation of a Special Award and the IBC International Honour for Excellence, which goes to an individual or organisation which has made an outstanding impact over an extended period of time.

INTRAPLEX<sup>®</sup>  
CODECS  
for Audio/Video/Data  
STL Transport

MAXIVA™ and  
FLEXIVA™  
TRANSMITTERS  
for TV and Radio

BROADCASTERS  
CHOOSE **GATESAIR**  
formerly  
Harris  
Broadcast

IBI IBC2023 Stand 8.C82  
gatesair.com

# FROM ROOKIE TO CANNES SENSATION: DUBAI FILMMAKER STRIKES GOLD

Shihan Shoukath, who made headlines with his directorial debut *Deadline* at various film festivals including Cannes, talks about the making of his short film and the role that Blackmagic RAW played in helping him craft an award-winning production

**“Filmmaking is in my DNA,” declares award-winning Dubai-based filmmaker Shihan Shoukath, though that may sound strange when you learn that he graduated with a degree in Engineering in 2016 and spent the following three years honing his software skills in Philadelphia.**

Thanks to the family business – Dubai photography and film production company Lensman Studios – and a father who provided camera work for the South Indian film industry throughout his youth, Shoukath was rarely far from a camera. He regularly immersed himself in filmmaking during his time in the US, even if only through low-budget experiments on his phone.

But eventually home and family beckoned, and Shoukath returned to Dubai, where he believes filmmaking remains relatively untapped, and launched Guerillaman Films. Alongside this, he also launched an extension to the family business with Lensman Express, a full-fledged equipment rental house and production agency that makes corporate videos and commercial video projects.

“Guerilla filmmaking, however, is something I have always enjoyed and wanted it to go under a separate banner. I love working with minimal equipment and crew so I thought, why not call it Guerrilla-something,” says the 28-year-old writer and director. The first big splash with Guerillaman Films has already sent out ripples far beyond its underground origins.

*Deadline* – shot in one night on a single camera, with a single actor (Shoukath’s brother Ishan) and the writer/director doubling up as cinematographer – is the story of a customer service agent in a rather unusual call centre who finds his shift progressing from bad to worse. It is less than eleven minutes long, but scripting, planning and post reportedly took months. The film has won awards at more than 20 film festivals so far. Its biggest win, however, was at Cannes World Film Festival’s annual gala awards this year in June, where Shoukath walked the red carpet with one of the event’s most coveted trophies – for Best Original Story – gleaming in his hand. And one can see why. With a rather unusual plot shrouded in mystery and fantasy, the narrative is gripping and holds your attention. You actually end up wanting more.

“Balancing fantasy and mystery with grounded storytelling is a delicate tightrope walk,” says Shoukath. “In *Deadline*, we aimed to create a cohesive narrative that seamlessly intertwined the fantastical elements with a grounded exploration of human emotions and experiences. By rooting the film’s emotional core in relatable characters and their personal journeys, we created a solid foundation that allowed the fantasy and mystery to enhance and deepen the thematic layers. It’s a delicate balance that requires careful attention to pacing, tone and character

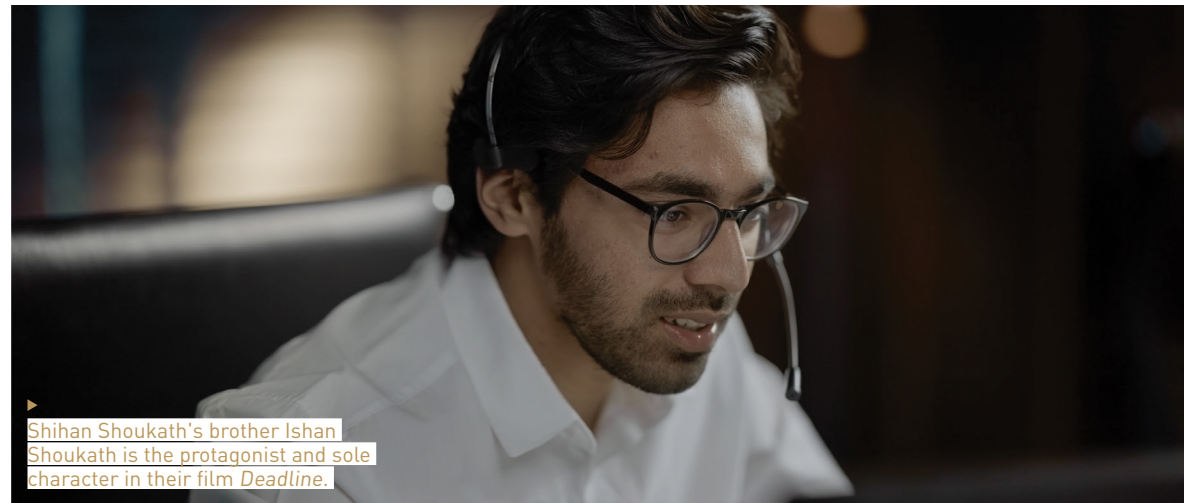


development, and I believe we achieved that in *Deadline*.”

With this short, the director has sought to explore themes around grief and personal identity “through a lens of introspection and empathy ... by delving into the experiences of the characters and their emotional journeys, we hoped to create a space for audiences to reflect on their own perceptions of loss, identity and the power of human connection. Ultimately, I hope viewers find solace, understanding and perhaps even a renewed sense of empathy towards others after watching *Deadline*.”

The title is a play on words that Shoukath came up with after consulting his followers on Instagram.

“I wanted to involve my audience in the creative decision-making for the film. I conducted a poll on my Instagram account, where my followers



**“Even with a bigger budget, bigger crew and more colour supervisors on board, we would still have chosen this camera because it can achieve pretty much whatever we want. It’s a true cinema-level camera”**

Shihan Shoukath, filmmaker

had the opportunity to suggest and vote for potential titles. After evaluating the responses, *Deadline* emerged as the clear favourite. The title perfectly encapsulates the central theme of the film, reflecting the high-stakes, time-sensitive narrative that unfolds within the story.”

The film had a successful festival run in 2022, raking in three awards – Best Original Story, Acting Debut and Director Short Film – at



the monthly Cannes World Film Festival. The success continued into 2023, with a US festival run bringing a limited cinema release in May, further festival screenings globally and a return to Cannes in June, this time to claim the Cannes World Film Festival’s annual prize for Best Original Story.

*Deadline* started off as a small concept with a rather humble distribution plan, explains Shoukath. “I initially wanted to make this for YouTube or Instagram, where I already have quite a large following. However, as we progressed through the production and saw the results, we realised the film’s potential for a broader audience. We decided to submit it to various renowned film festivals worldwide, including Cannes.”

Deviating from his previous shoots, Shihan invested in a Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 6K for this film. “Once I saw the results, especially while doing the post-production, I realised this is much bigger. Blackmagic has an outstanding presence in the UAE, and I am a huge Blackmagic fan. They have the perfect cinema camera, with great dynamic range and colour science.

“The False Colour feature particularly allowed us to accurately monitor exposure levels and ensure consistent and appropriate lighting throughout the film. This enabled us to maintain the desired tonal range and create visual contrasts that heightened the emotional impact of each scene. Additionally, the wide dynamic range provided by the Blackmagic gear allowed us to capture a broader range of highlight and shadow detail, resulting in visually stunning and immersive imagery which enhanced the narrative’s depth and atmosphere.”

Choosing the right camera was crucial, given the short shoot; there

was no room for error, as the lead was flying out of town the following day. “We did a lot of research before investing in the camera, because we didn’t have a big budget,” Shoukath says. “Given all the aspects – the camera size, the battery duration and its features – we felt this was the right one. Even with a bigger budget, bigger crew and more colour supervisors on board, we would still have chosen this camera because it can achieve

pretty much whatever we want. It’s a true cinema-level camera.”

Shooting on Blackmagic RAW had further advantages, as post and editing could be done on DaVinci Resolve Studio.

“That’s my directorial style; when I watch a movie, the first thing I notice is the colour,” reveals Shoukath. “It’s a personal preference; I’m sure other people look for other things. For me,





A proud moment for Dubai filmmaker Shihan Shoukath, who won Best Original Story for his directorial debut at Cannes this June.



I'm obsessed with colour, so that created the perfect trifecta: DaVinci Resolve, Blackmagic's camera and myself."

Deadline's shoot may have been a one-night affair, but Shoukath allowed himself a more leisurely post process – partly through necessity, as key crew were based abroad, including Italy-based colour supervisor Valerio Morini. Three to four months of video-conferenced editing, soundtracking, colour grading and post ensued, which Shoukath says was his favourite part of the whole production.

"The adaptability of Blackmagic gear, particularly the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 6K with DaVinci Resolve, greatly enhanced our post-production workflow for Deadline. The camera's ability to capture footage in Blackmagic RAW format ensured maximum flexibility and control during colour grading in DaVinci Resolve. This seamless integration allowed us to easily fine-tune the look and feel of the film, achieving the desired colour grading and overall visual aesthetic.

"Shooting in RAW especially allows you to change any aspect

of what you did on set, and that's my favourite part. I edited it 50/50 with my editor, and that's where the story is really told. The flexibility RAW affords in DaVinci means we could change the colour and the entire look and feel of the film with one small tweak. Give it an orangish or brick-brownish look, and it's a whole different movie. We played around with that until we ended up with what we have now.

"Essentially, the powerful tools and efficient workflow within DaVinci Resolve, combined with the native support for Blackmagic RAW, facilitated a streamlined and cohesive

**"The wide dynamic range provided by the Blackmagic gear allowed us to capture a broader range of highlight and shadow detail, resulting in visually stunning and immersive imagery which enhanced the narrative's depth and atmosphere"**

Shihan Shoukath, filmmaker

post-production process, saving time and preserving the integrity of the imagery we captured."

Following huge success at Cannes and in the festival circuit, Shoukath has embarked on a Malayalam feature film in his hometown of Kerala under a new company called Reel World Entertainment.

"It's in pre-production right now and we are set to commence shooting by the end of the year," he confides. "Honestly, it's all because of Deadline. Its success has been a transformative experience for us, allowing us to forge invaluable connections with producers from around the world. The festival run and the publicity it's been getting got my investors on board. I didn't even have to do all the usual background work. Now, with Reel World Entertainment, we hope to push the boundaries of South Indian cinema."

Shoukath's star is undoubtedly in the ascendant, and he's in no doubt whose equipment will be joining him on the journey to the big league: "Blackmagic is what I trust now. It's what I'm used to, and I have a very good grasp of that." The magic, it seems, lives on. **PRO**

Aputure®

SHAPE YOUR VISION



**INFINIBAR PB12**  
4-Foot RGBWW LED Pixel Bar

- 2000 to 10,000K; RGB Color Control
- CRI 96 | TLCI 98 | SSI 74 | TM-30 94
- Output: 617 Lux at 3.3' (120°, 7500K)
- 2 x 1/4-20" Threads, INFINIBAR Rail
- DMX, CRMX, and Sidus Link App Control

**INFINIBAR PB6**  
2-Foot RGBWW LED Pixel Bar

- 2000 to 10,000K; RGB Color Control
- CRI 96 | TLCI 98 | SSI 74 | TM-30 94
- Output: 328 Lux at 3.3' (120°, 6500K)
- 2 x 1/4-20" Threads, INFINIBAR Rail
- DMX, CRMX, and Sidus Link App Control

**INFINIBAR PB3**  
1-Foot RGBWW LED Pixel Bar

- 2000 to 10,000K; RGB Color Control
- CRI 96 | TLCI 98 | SSI 74 | TM-30 94
- Output: 145 Lux at 3.3' (120°, 6500K)
- 2 x 1/4-20" Threads, INFINIBAR Rail
- DMX, CRMX, and Sidus Link App Control

[www.amt.tv](http://www.amt.tv)



ADVANCED MEDIA  
Video • Photo • Broadcast • Cinema

Advanced Media Showroom  
Mezzanine, Galadari Building  
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, UAE



Ahmed El Cheikh.

# EXPLORING FRANCE MÉDIAS MONDE'S MIDDLE EAST QUEST

Ahmed El Cheikh, MENA Distribution and International Development Director at France Médias Monde, shares insights on the network's regional interests and audience expansion strategies in an interview with **BroadcastPro ME** on the sidelines of the ASBU festival in Tunis

**What is your role in the French-Arabic broadcasting space?**

I oversee the development and distribution of a group called France Médias Monde, which serves as the holding company for various entities. This group includes France 24, a TV and news channel broadcasting in English, French, Arabic and Spanish. We also have Radio France International RFI, broadcast in 18 languages, and Monte Carlo Doualiya, an Arabic-language radio station operating in 16 countries in the Arab world.

We recently participated in the ASBU Convention and Festival in Tunisia to give greater focus to our Arabic audiences, particularly in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. France 24, our news broadcaster, has a significant presence in these three countries, and we aim to increase our visibility here. Additionally, we are

interested in expanding our presence in the Middle East and ensuring that France 24 is easily available across all platforms.

**What do you offer Arabic audiences in terms of programming?**

France 24 has programmes specifically targeted at our Arabic-speaking viewers. We prioritise the Arab world with our 24-hour radio programming in Arabic through Monte Carlo Doualiya, which offers a mix of news, music and general entertainment. We also have a special focus on health-related content. We have a popular show hosted by one of our journalists, Sonitta Nader, which addresses health-related queries. It is particularly well-received during the evening commute.

**Do you have a revenue model?**

We are funded through VAT (value-added

tax) rather than a state budget, which makes us independent despite being a public broadcaster. Accuracy and the fight against fake news are central to our values, as the geopolitical landscape has undergone significant changes, necessitating caution in reporting news, especially in Africa and the Arab world.

But we don't have a revenue model. We are heavily focused on delivering accurate news, so there isn't a conventional business model for that. Our main goal is to reach as many viewers as possible. We rely on journalists worldwide to cover political issues and provide balanced perspectives. We host more than 60 guests every day across our three Paris-based channels. Each channel operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Our dedicated team of journalists ensures we find the right people for each show, emphasising the importance of this aspect.

**How do you view the evolving TV landscape in the GCC and the wider Arab region?**

We have seen a significant shift from traditional linear TV to emerging over-the-top (OTT) platforms. This technological change presents new challenges that we must address as a media network. For this, we have two main objectives in the region. Firstly, we want to ensure that France 24 is available on all platforms, including streaming. This will allow us to reach a wider audience and adapt to the changing media landscape. Secondly, we aim to increase our visibility in key countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, as well as the GCC. We are already well-established in the first group of countries, but we want to further solidify our position and offer more localised content.

In North Africa, our audience studies show that we reach people of 15 years and above,

but in the Levant and the Middle East, our audiences are in the age group of 45-55. We want to be able to change that. We are available free-to-air on all linear platforms.

France 24 Arabic has journalists in and from North Africa. That's why we are attractive to the audience there. And we have made our programmes with our audience in mind. The Arab world has a very young population, and we want to find a new way of telling news and stories, so they also come on board. So our focus is on strengthening our partnerships with local broadcasters, media organisations and production companies, to create content that resonates with the audience in each country.

**Do you have reporters in the GCC?**

This is something we lack. We are looking to source good journalists from Saudi Arabia, which is the main market, and from Yemen, Kuwait, the UAE and so on. They need to understand some French though, because they will be working out of our Paris office.

**What do you foresee as the biggest challenge for the network to expand?**

Funding. When you are well-funded, you can expand and open new offices,

**“Accuracy and the fight against fake news are central to our values, as the geopolitical landscape has undergone significant changes, necessitating caution in reporting news, especially in Africa and the Arab world”**

Ahmed El Cheikh, MENA Distribution and International Development Director, France Médias Monde

which we don't have in the GCC. We may have something there soon, but for now it is under wraps. We opened an office in Dakar, Africa, because in French-speaking Africa we have a strong presence. We opened an office in Bucharest to cover the Russian-Ukrainian situation. But the GCC has been a challenge. Another big challenge is our inability to reach more radio audiences due to the non-availability of DAB+. Most stations are still heavily reliant on FM, and that hasn't changed much.

**Do you have any audience statistics to share with us?**

Based on the studies we have done annually in six or seven countries in the Arab world, we have 20m viewers in the Arab world. For Monte Carlo, we have 9m listeners weekly in the Arab world.

**Which platforms are you currently available on?**

At present, we are available on satellite platforms in the UAE and are in discussions with streaming platforms like Shahid. We have also initiated discussions with StarzPlay, as our focus on expanding our presence on these platforms will be a key priority in the coming years.

**How do you address concerns about bias in news reporting?**

Bias is a significant concern in the media industry, and we take it very seriously. Our priority is to provide accurate and impartial news coverage. We have a team of experienced journalists from diverse backgrounds who strive to present balanced perspectives. We have editorial guidelines in place to ensure objectivity and fact-checking. Our journalists follow strict ethical standards and undergo regular training. Additionally, we have internal checks and balances to maintain the accuracy and integrity of our reporting. - Vijaya Cherian **PRO**

THE  
**ULTIMATE**  
AUDIO SOLUTION



FOR CONTENT CREATORS

**RØDECASTER PRO II**  
INTEGRATED AUDIO PRODUCTION STUDIO

**RØDE**

[www.amt.tv](http://www.amt.tv)



Advanced Media Showroom  
Mezzanine, Galadari Building  
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, UAE



Areej Itani is based in Turkey.

# TOTAL INSPIRATION

From startup hire to executive director overseeing five offices in four locations across the world, Areej Itani has come a long way. In an interview with **BroadcastPro ME**, she discusses her role at Total Media Cast and her journey to success

**In the rapidly evolving world of media and technology, Areej Itani, Executive Director at Total Media Cast, a media production and broadcasting company with offices spanning four continents, is testament to female empowerment and leadership today. We first met in Tunisia for the ASBU festival in a rather unconventional setting – a horse carriage used to transport guests from the Laico Tunis Hotel to the Cultural Centre next door.**

Itani and her team were at the festival to make new connections and network with MENA customers. As Executive Director, her role has changed considerably since she first began working with the company back in 2012, when it was just a startup in Lebanon. Today, she is second in command and reports directly to owner Isam Ayyad.

“My role is to understand client requirements and ensure that we fully address their business and technical needs,” says the Lebanese national, presently based in Total Media Cast’s Istanbul office. Itani holds a multi-faceted role that includes managing teams across all the regional and international offices, supervising projects in terms of strategy and execution, discussing budget and financial challenges, hiring new talent and addressing marketing opportunities to promote the company. That’s on the work front. At home, as a mother of three, her day begins at 6:30am with getting the children ready for school, ensuring breakfast is ready and packing lunchbags before heading to work.

Itani has had an interesting career journey that serves as an inspiration to women looking to pursue a career in engineering. Armed with a bachelor’s degree in Communications Engineering and a masters in Engineering Management, she initially freelanced for a production company, where she quickly moved up to the role of post-production supervisor.

Then in 2012 the new tech opportunity came up with Total Media Cast. Since then, she has witnessed remarkable growth in her career alongside the success of the company.

Starting with just four employees, the company now boasts a global team of 60 professionals and operates from five offices in Lebanon, Tunisia, Turkey, Brazil and the UK.

“When I was in university, there were ten of us women and around 100 men studying communication engineering,” says Itani. “Engineering was not on top of most women’s lists, but I was really interested in it. Today, the ability to oversee things on the tech as well as the management side is doubly rewarding.”

She says her tech background and innate entrepreneurial talent helped her to move up. “I was able to offer technical recommendations when clients presented challenges, so I became more important to the team. Along the way, my manager discovered that I was also good at managing the team. And wanting to hone that skill further, I went ahead and took a couple of online leadership certification courses from Harvard online. That gave me more leverage.”

### Venturing into New Territories

Total Media Cast’s foray into launching TV channels and studios has been one of its notable accomplishments. The company has worked with more than 13 clients to help launch its TV channels successfully, says Itani. She and her team have also worked with universities in Ramallah and Adis Ababa to put together specialised training studios for their media departments. “These studios help prep their students for future careers in the media industry, equipping them with practical skills and experiences.”

An ambitious company with a motivated leadership team, Total Media Cast has gradually expanded its services to remain competitive.

“We began with systems integration in broadcast, but when we saw that area of the market getting saturated with competitors we moved to a new line of business and added news-gathering coverage to our area of expertise. We were soon approached by regional news broadcasters to cover prominent global events such as elections and



sports tournaments. We recently covered the Turkish elections for several broadcasters. Likewise, during the World Cup we had a team in Doha to capture the action. We also had teams in all the participating countries, offering TV channels exclusive access to the fan zones and action on the ground,” says Itani.

**Embracing the Digital Era**

Recognising the shifting landscape of media and marketing, Itani says the company also saw opportunities to launch two other lines of business: selling satellite space and establishing a dedicated unit for digital marketing and media platforms. She has also often helped identify good business opportunities while adding value on the technical front. She supervises all technical projects, collaborating closely with Engineering Manager Ibrahim Bulbul to ensure optimal solutions for their clients.

**Building a Culture of Diversity and Empowerment**

Navigating a male-dominated executive landscape in the region

**“I have realised that people want to hear other and new points of view, because this will enrich a situation and we will get better results. So I urge women to speak up when they have an idea, even if it contradicts existing ideas”**

Areej Itani, Executive Director, Total Media Cast

has not been without its challenges, but Itani says maintaining a strictly professional approach and being results-driven has often shielded her from the negative impact of gender bias, in addition to the continuous support and trust of owner Isam Ayyad. While she acknowledges the occasional cultural challenges from colleagues and partners, she dismisses them as minor hurdles: “I am pretty much focused on addressing the

need of the client, and when you maintain that professional attitude and they see results, then that concern no longer exists.”

Although Itani is the only woman on the engineering side in her company, there are other women in senior roles at Total Media Cast. “We have at least 15 women in our company and they hold prominent roles in editorial, management, finance, HR and legal. We haven’t particularly looked at gender while hiring people. We just look at who is best for the job and hire them,” she says.

**What Lies Ahead?**

Itani says Total Media Cast is constantly looking to expand into new territories. One ambitious move was into Brazil.

“That’s an untapped market, but one where there’s a lot of opportunity to cover sport and economy. Some markets are saturated with competition, but others are open, and we are looking to enter such markets and carve a niche for ourselves. If you have the discipline and dedication, coupled with the desire to learn, and offer new services, there’s a lot we can do.” She adds that there’s a lot of potential in the market to expand in terms of services and solutions.

Her key advice to women? “Speak up.”

“Women are often hesitant to propose their ideas and thoughts. I have realised that people want to hear other and new points of view, because this will enrich a situation and we will get better results. So I urge women to speak up when they have an idea, even if it contradicts existing ideas.”

Itani attributes her achievements to being able to identify and seize business opportunities. As she looks to the future, she envisions expanding into new territories and carving out niches where opportunities abound. **PRO**



Total Media Cast has covered the World Cup in Qatar, the elections in Turkey and other important events for MENA broadcasters.

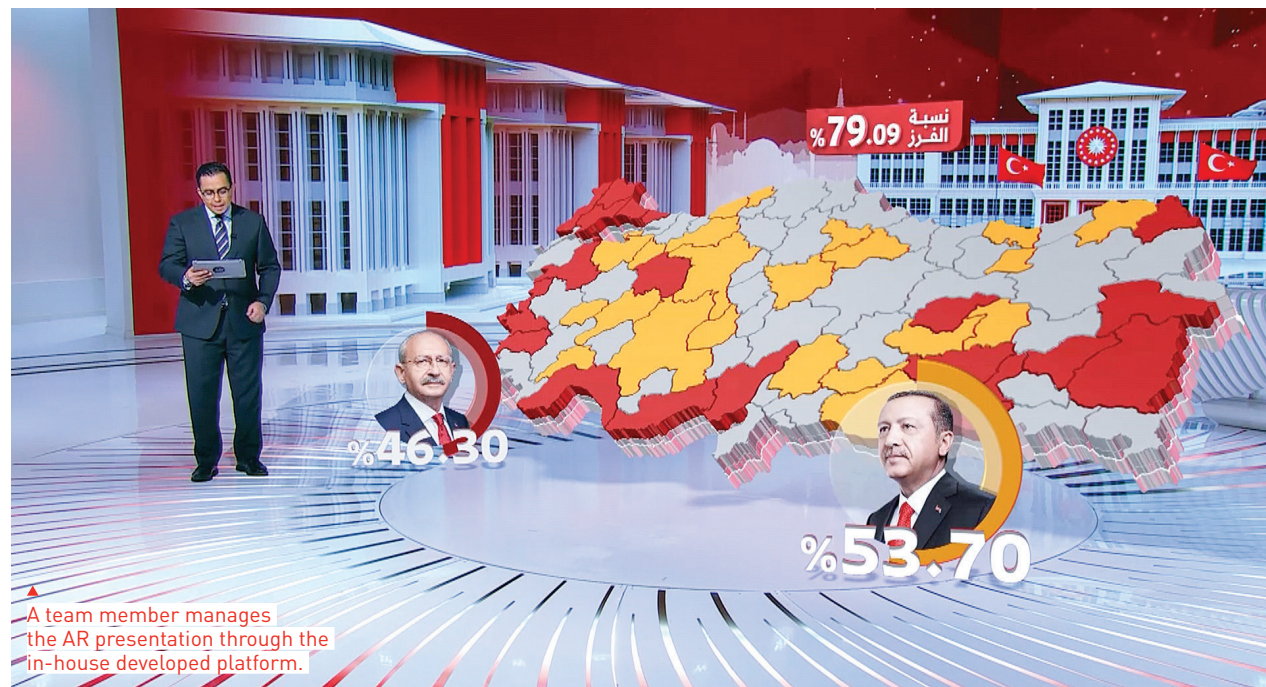


**IBC2023**

BACK AT THE  
RAI AMSTERDAM | 15-18 SEPTEMBER 2023

# ALARABY TV REVOLUTIONISES ELECTION COVERAGE

Qatari broadcaster Alaraby TV set a new benchmark in election coverage by developing a data platform in-house and innovatively combining AR, VR, and AI technologies to provide viewers with an immersive storytelling experience during the Turkish elections. Alaraby execs Rami Hosni and Ali Hussein share exclusive details with **Vijaya Cherian**



The Turkish election, a momentous event, warranted comprehensive and captivating coverage. Qatari news broadcaster Alaraby TV, which moved from its London operations to its Doha headquarters only a year ago, stepped up to its first big news challenge, combining cutting-edge technology with top-notch journalism to offer new analytical insights. Working behind the scenes were three departments: Technology & Operations, headed by Ali Hussein; Creative, managed by Rami Hosni, the network's Media & Creative Consultant; and Operations, stepping in for the last phase.

## Integrating AR and VR Technologies for Immersive Experiences

One of the standout features of Alaraby TV's election coverage was the seamless integration of AR and VR technologies. These powerful tools transported viewers directly into the heart of the Turkish election, allowing them to experience campaign rallies, speeches and debates as if they were physically present. "Our approach not only brought the election to life but also deepened the audience's understanding of the political landscape and the critical issues at stake," says Hosni, the creative brain behind the project.

## AI-Powered Visualisations and Graphics Enhance Storytelling

Alaraby TV harnessed the capabilities of AI to enrich its storytelling.

"We used AI-powered visualisations and graphics to present complex information in a more accessible and engaging manner, ensuring that audiences from diverse backgrounds could stay informed and involved in the electoral process," Hosni explains.

## Game-Changing Internal Data Platform

At the core of Alaraby TV's innovative coverage was its custom-built internal data platform, specifically developed for the Turkish election. "This advanced platform played a pivotal role in the production of their election programme, serving as a central hub for data from various sources, all linked to news templates inside Vizrt and Unreal," explains Hosni. "The user-friendly interface of the platform empowered journalists to seamlessly integrate data-driven narratives into their reporting and daily graphics, elevating the quality and depth of the coverage. An outstanding feature of the platform was its ability to control AR graphics directly on-air, offering journalists and presenters greater



"We used AI-powered visualisations and graphics to present complex information in a more accessible and engaging manner"

Rami Hosni, Media & Creative Consultant, Alaraby TV

flexibility in creating and interacting with the story as it unfolded."

## The Journey of Development

The journey of building the data platform and achieving seamless integration of AR and VR wasn't without its challenges. Ali Hussein, Director of Broadcast Operations & Visuals and one of the key figures behind the project, explains the various aspects. "The preparations began with the creation of special branding for the election coverage, which took over the main branding of the channel. The team then utilised Unreal Engine and Vizrt to build multiple packages for real-time production. Simultaneously, they embarked on developing the internal data platform, a remarkable achievement as such platforms are typically commercially acquired."

The platform's capabilities included historical election data, city information and automated vote counts. Its integration into Alaraby TV's newsroom system, graphics and other applications was a critical aspect that required intensive teamwork among the IT, broadcast and creative departments, and the integration of AR with the Electric Friends Camera towers for tracking further elevated it. The entire process took a month of dedicated effort, with the team working 16 to 17 hours a day to overcome any technical hurdles that arose.

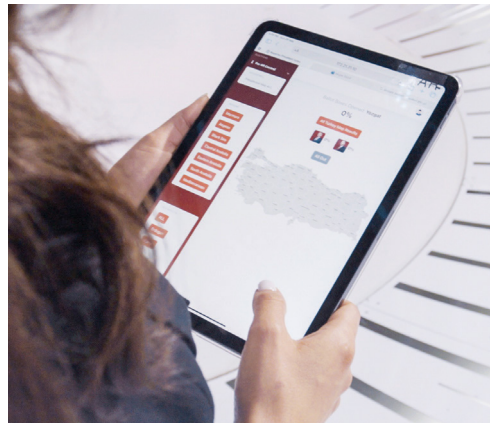
## Empowering Presenters and Delivering Seamless Coverage

The data platform's success lay in its ability to empower presenters with real-time data, enhancing





The Doha news team works on the in-house platform to manage the election coverage.



Alaraby studio in Doha.

their ability to craft engaging stories and on-the-fly analysis. The presenters in Istanbul and Doha could access updated numbers and breaking news through their iPads, facilitating smooth and accurate coverage. The platform's versatility enabled Alaraby TV to use it across various programmes, transforming the channel's branding with a few clicks during breaking news

**“We used these technologies to create explainers, showcase parliamentary procedures and vote alliances, and provide live map presentations as votes were tallied”**

Ali Hussein, Director of Broadcast Operations & Visuals, Alaraby TV

events. Integration with Avid, Vizrt and Imagine further streamlined the workflow through the NMOS protocol.

**Breaking Boundaries with AR and VR**

Despite initial concerns, Alaraby TV succeeded in integrating AR and VR flawlessly into its live coverage, using them to create explainers, showcase parliamentary procedures and vote alliances, and provide live map



presentations as votes were tallied. There were challenges, with technical bugs and a steep learning curve. “But the flexibility of HTML coding and the power of the 2110 IP protocol allowed us to overcome these obstacles quickly,” explains Hussein.

**A Pioneering Achievement**

Alaraby TV's groundbreaking election coverage is a testament to the power of innovation and the collaboration of talented teams. The combination of AR, VR, AI and a custom-built data platform opened new frontiers in election reporting, creating a truly immersive and engaging experience for viewers.

The success of this project has not only transformed the network's election coverage but also paved the way for the application of these technologies in future endeavours. This was Alaraby TV's first big project, and the teams were determined to push the boundaries of technology and storytelling, setting a new standard for the coverage of major regional events. **PRO**

DISCOVER ELASTICITY...

... WITH HOME APPS SERVER-BASED PROCESSING.



HOME  
CONNECTED.  
SECURED.  
MANAGED.  
**PROCESSED.**

.edge

Ultra-high Density SDI/IP Conversion & Easy SDI Router Replacement

- 25/100 GbE Interface
- 192 SDI I/O in 2 RU

lives @ HOME



HOME Apps

Server-based Processing

- Multiviewer
- UDX Conversion with HDR Processing
- Graphic Inserter
- Stream Transcoder





“Gradually, the metaverse is set to revolutionise advertising and is projected to generate an incredible \$1.53bn in revenue in 2023 alone”

# Tapping into the metaverse for news production

**The first fully electronic television system was invented almost a century ago, and it took the news industry ‘only’ 30 years to respond to the disruption. News production is heavily influenced by the available tools of the time, and when these tools change, the industry is slow to adapt.**

Today, news consumers demand interactivity and with the growing accessibility of metaverse technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR), the industry can leverage new opportunities. In fact, according to a report by Deloitte, the MENA region could potentially experience an additional GDP contribution of up to \$83bn per year by 2035 through the implementation of the metaverse.

### The Outlook for AR, VR and MR in News Production

The potential of the metaverse to revolutionise key sectors in the Middle East is immense. The region is already capitalising on this opportunity, with significant metaverse initiatives in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Notably, in July 2022 Dubai launched a Metaverse Strategy. The initiative aims to position Dubai as one of the world's leading metaverse economies by prioritising innovation in tourism, real estate, education, retail and government services. As MENA news organisations explore the possibilities of interactive experiences, riding this wave could transform the way news and media consumption are perceived.

The range of possibilities includes the creation of virtual newsrooms where viewers actively participate, explore different aspects of stories and even contribute to news production. This not only allows viewers to shape and personalise their news experience but also establishes a stronger connection with the information shared. A study conducted by Statista reveals a significant rise in digital news consumption in the EMEA region, with social media emerging as the main news source for over 50% of consumers in each surveyed country, alongside online newspapers, websites and apps.

### Opportunities and Challenges

The integration of the metaverse into news broadcasting presents both opportunities and challenges for the media industry. On the one hand, it opens new possibilities for transforming audience engagement and involvement in news production. On the other hand, there are valid concerns regarding data privacy, protection and security that cannot be overlooked. As the journey towards digital transformation progresses, ensuring security becomes a collective responsibility. According to the recent PwC Global Digital Trust Insights Survey, 4% of senior executives observe an increase in cyber breaches since 2020. However, it is encouraging to note that about 40% of forward-thinking companies affirm that their cybersecurity and privacy programmes have effectively mitigated the risks of data breaches.

Globally, the metaverse is set to

revolutionise advertising and is projected to generate an incredible \$1.53bn in revenue in 2023 alone. To harness this potential, media organisations may capitalise on virtual advertising spaces within immersive newsrooms. This not only means increased revenue but also paves the way for sponsorships, partnerships, co-branded virtual events and interactive sponsored content. Moreover, virtual environments within the metaverse hold immense potential for collaboration and training within news organisations. These virtual environments can accurately replicate real-life scenarios, enabling journalists to gain valuable hands-on experience in a risk-free setting.

### A Game-Changer for News Production and the Media Industry

Recent data from McKinsey Digital reveals that the MENA region has witnessed a rapid increase in digital adoption, with a substantial internet penetration rate. The level of digital adoption, encompassing both fully digital and remotely assisted processes, is 75-80%. This highlights a favourable environment for the acceptance of innovative technologies like the metaverse.

Advancements in the metaverse offer exciting possibilities for advanced interactive tools to engage with media and news consumers. For numerous companies, the real question is not whether they should engage in interactive experiences, but rather whether they can afford to miss out on the opportunity. **PRO**

Alfred Manasseh is co-founder and Chief Metaverse Officer at Shaffra

# TRUE INTEGRATION

**Zetta**  
Automation

**GSelector**  
Music Scheduling

**Revma**  
Streaming

**Aquira**  
Traffic

**RCSCloud**  
Peace-of-Mind

**RCS2GO**  
Mobile

**RCS**  
Sound Software



# KOMODO-X

**6K AT 80FPS & 4K AT 120FPS**

NEXT EVOLUTION OF THE KOMODO LINE WITH ALL-NEW 6K GLOBAL SHUTTER SENSOR AND ENHANCED FEATURES



**RED**  
PREMIUM DEALER

[www.amt.tv](http://www.amt.tv) ▶



Advanced Media Showroom  
Mezzanine, Galadari Building  
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, UAE