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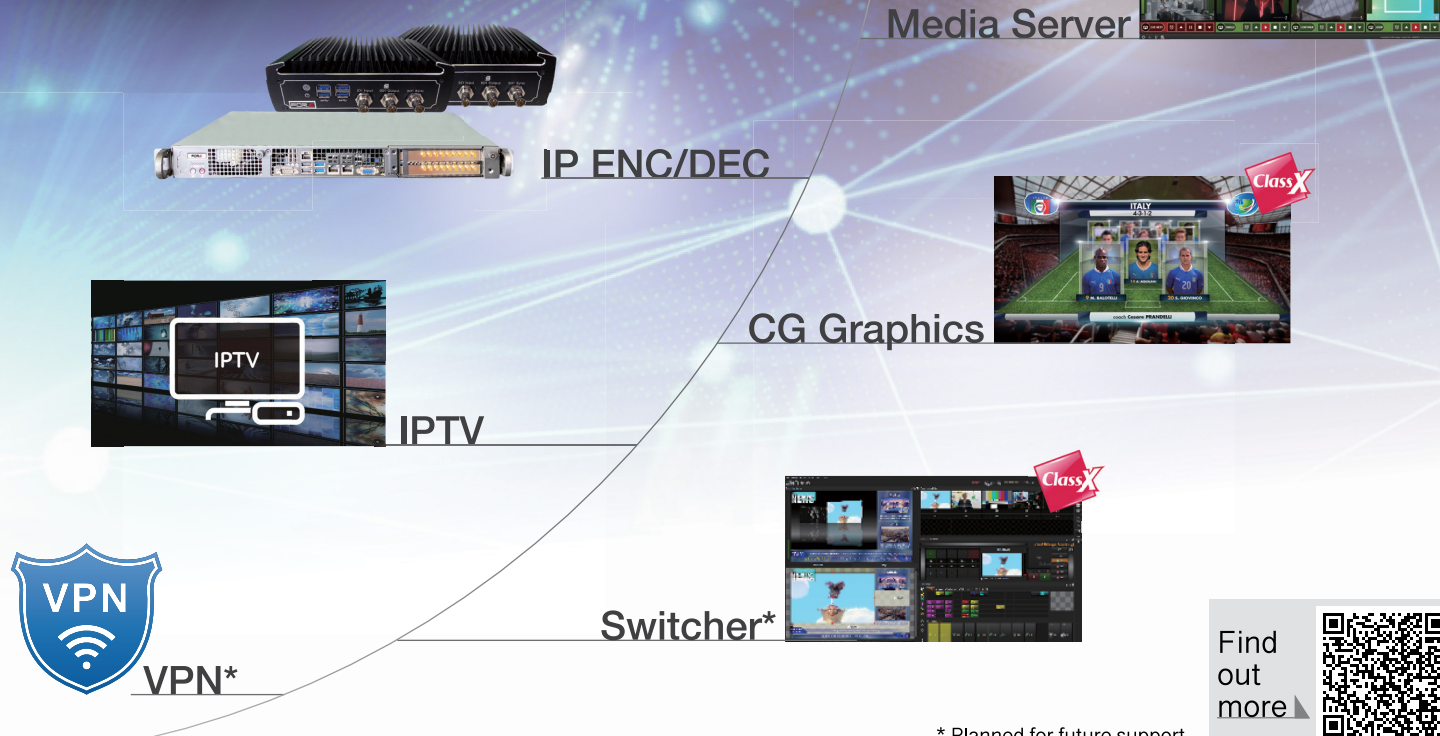


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## Welcome

**Etisalat by e& has announced that it will not be carrying the beIN channels on its platform as of June 1, 2023. Back in June 2018, we ran into a similar situation when beIN suddenly went off-air on the du platform in the UAE.**

There were rumours back then that negotiations regarding pricing had fallen through and du would not be able to carry the beIN channels anymore. Fortunately, it was reinstated after further talks. I guess we are in a similar situation now, where the two parties have hit a financial roadblock.

No doubt, BeIN holds the rights to a lot of premium sports content and clearly has paid a fortune for them, but any carrier negotiations have to be commercially viable for all parties. What is beIN's best bet in the UAE if carriers refuse to pay the asking price?

Is beIN hedging that people will go to its streaming service TOD? Can it really see its revenues go up if it goes direct to consumer (D2C) and will it be able to secure the volumes that its UAE telco partners already have?

In the meantime, operators and platforms in the UAE have started to get creative and collaborate on

sports rights. Elife and StarzPlay, for instance, have been strategically snapping up the rights to important games and its recent acquisition of the IPL cricket rights was a massive coup, not to mention Series A. Rumour has it that beIN has been hiking its prices each year and UAE entities are reluctant to invest in deals that do not make commercial sense.

So, as we go to press, we are at a critical juncture and it will be interesting to see how things pan out, especially since the bein-du contract is said to be up for renewal later this month!

In the meantime, I am delighted to announce that the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer awards last month were a huge hit with 180-plus attendees, and we hope to attract bigger numbers next year. CABSAT was just as remarkable with an impressive conference and lots of first-time international exhibitors. We have it all covered in this edition. Happy reading.

*Vijaya Cherian*

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director



On this month's cover...

The winners of the inaugural edition of the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards.

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# BeIN and Google Cloud join forces to drive digital transformation in MENA

BeIN Media Group and Google Cloud have collaborated to drive the digital transformation of Qatar's media and broadcast industry. The affiliate agreement extends the Qatar Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and Google Cloud framework agreement for cloud computing services, allowing all government entities to use Google Cloud's computing services and digital transformation solutions, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to better serve Qatari citizens.

The collaboration was announced as part of Google Cloud's Doha cloud region launch in the presence of Israel Esteban, Chief Technology Officer, BeIN Media Group, and Anthony Cirot, Vice President EMEA South,



From left: Israel Esteban, CTO, BeIN Media Group and Anthony Cirot, VP EMEA South, Google Cloud.

Google Cloud. It involves exploring opportunities to accelerate the group's digital transformation using Google Cloud's suite of data analytics and machine learning services. This will enable a deeper understanding of its customers' needs and interests, to deliver more personalised and relevant experiences across its

services and platforms.

CTO Israel Esteban said: "BeIN has been an early adopter of advanced technologies that have enabled us to deepen fan and audience engagement with personalised, connected and immersive experiences. Our alliance with Google Cloud is a new milestone in BeIN's digital transformation journey that will enhance our business processes and guide our strategies, in parallel to ensuring BeIN's audiences around the world are provided with the latest in innovative experiences."

Google and BeIN started collaborating in 2022 when the group's flagship sports channel, BeIN Sports, announced that it would share highlights from more than 50 matches from major global sports leagues, end-of-season games and sports content on YouTube.

## Google Cloud and Quickplay tie to boost MENA streaming

The two companies are building on a shared history of cloud innovation to bring to market regionally optimised solutions that leverage Google Cloud's new Middle East regional data centre in Qatar. Quickplay's research and development team has been using Google Cloud products and tools to enable the delivery of personalised FAST services, real-time data and recommendations, and low-latency video.



From left: Grace Kuo and Khalid Sweidan with another team member at the inauguration of the office.

## ROE Visual launches office and demo centre in Dubai

ROE Visual launched its subsidiary office in Dubai's DMCC Free Zone last month.

The new office features a comprehensive demo space with LED products for various applications from AV integration, broadcast and live events.

Grace Kuo, ROE Sales Director, said: "We are delighted to be celebrating our expansion in the Middle East and are grateful for

the trust and support our customers and partners have extended. This expansion is set to further solidify our global presence and continued growth for many years to come."

ROE Visual ME has close ties to its Shenzhen-headquartered facility, enabling access to the company's product range as well as consulting and technical engineering

support. The team is focused on the verticals of live events, film and broadcast, and AV integration, drawing on local demand.

"It's an exciting time to be advancing in the MEA market," stated Khalid Sweidan, Vice President of Sales for MEA. "My objective is to provide our local clients with assistance and support to the highest possible degree."

# Online video advertising revenue to reach \$2.3bn by 2027 in MENA: Omdia

The MENA region's online video advertising market is predicted to reach \$2.3bn by 2027, according to a report from Omdia. SVOD subscriptions reached 11.1m at the end of 2022, and more than 2m new subscriptions are expected this year.

Commenting on the findings of the report, Rua Agute, Omdia's Senior Research Director for Media & Entertainment, said: "MENA is generating worldwide interest in the online advertising market thanks to the immense growth potential linked to the UAE and Saudi Arabia. With

more than half of online video advertising revenues expected from TikTok, Meta and YouTube, online video players must integrate social video into their video strategies. It is important to note that this growth is the free video space and will not be to the detriment of the online video subscription market, which is on track to reach \$1.5bn in 2027, representing 54% growth."

The leading player is the Arabic video-on-demand service Shahid VIP, with 2.7m subscriptions. In second place is StarzPlay Arabia with 2.1m subscriptions and

Netflix is in third place with less than 2m subscriptions.

Shahid holds the largest catalogue of Arabic content in the region, offering popular original shows such as Al Thaman and Stiletto and coverage of the Saudi Pro League. There are also plans to launch more than 20 new free ad-supported television (FAST) channels.

StarzPlay Arabia saw its numbers increase to 2.1m subscriptions, driven by subscribers to its premium football and cricket content because of telco partnership deals.

Netflix has continued to invest in original content in the Middle East, but the scale and scope of its content is limited. The success of *Dubai Bling* should lead to more investment in Middle East-focused unscripted content in the region. The streaming service has also amended its pricing strategy between the Gulf and North African countries to make it more accessible to low-income countries in the region.

Omdia forecasts that SVOD and telco partnerships will play a significant role in the growth of online video services in the MENA region.

## Al Aan TV manages news production workflow with VSN



At the Al Aan facility.

Al Aan TV has deployed VSN's media solutions to control and manage its news production workflow. The broadcaster was looking for a MAM and PAM solution that could orchestrate the workflow of its news production while also being compatible with

its existing systems such as AVID iNews, Telestream's transcoding engines and the SGL archiving system.

VSNE Explorer serves as the central orchestration platform with its MAM and PAM modules, and the VSN NewsConnect plug-in integrated with Avid iNews.

With this, Al Aan TV has also integrated the automation of content distribution to platforms and social networks into its workflow. Parallel to this process, VSNLivecom takes care of the in-studio playout, which works via integration with the NRCS system and the rest of Al Aan TV's news production systems.

VSN's solution catered to Al Aan TV's requirements on flexibility, remote working and cost-effectiveness. As a result, Al Aan TV also incorporated a MAM system that allows greater flexibility and integration with third-party systems and offers more cost-effective solutions as well as expanded support services.

## Mediability announces Dubai office

Systems integrator Mediability has opened an office in Dubai to support the MENA region with its engineering-driven business model. Mediability's approach combines IP, cloud, software and middleware technologies into a hybrid solution enabling agile broadcast technology stack deployment. The company boasts a team of professionals with extensive experience in broadcast engineering, IP, cloud, software and middleware technologies.



# Rwanda's Radio O onboards Lawo to modernise production



▲ At the Radio O office.

Kigali-based Radio O, the on-air institution of the Authentic Church denomination, has implemented the Lawo RĒLAY solution for the modern production of its programmes for its community. The set-up will turn its facilities into a fully equipped radio broadcast centre with an innovative distributed approach.

Operating out of a 5,000-person capacity building, the worship centre aims to broadcast its message of its services to listeners across the region through additional programmes. After evaluating all options, the team chose Lawo software

and standard PC hardware to build its radio station, working with local system integrator Mediacity Ads Ltd.

Rutabara Jean de Dieu, Director of Radio O and TV O, said: "We are excited to work with Lawo to offer our on-air talents a more flexible and scalable solution that allows them to curate more content, without having to worry about technical inefficiencies. We noticed the Lawo trend in Kigali among the big players and immediately contacted Mediacity to onboard us. This decision follows our overall strategy of modernising our broadcast and production

workflows and migrating to a purely IP-based solution to be able to do more with less technical clutter."

Without a central equipment room, this project follows a novel distributed approach, explained Mediacity's Jesse Kiyingi Maxella, Director, and Fred Martin Kiwalabye, IT Media Systems Specialist. "Different buildings will host standard PC technology and conventional IT infrastructure to route signals from an analogue mixing console used at the church's front-of-house via Lawo's virtual patch bay to Lawo's RĒLAY VRX mixing software. This virtual patch bay provides audio outputs with different sound processing options, all routed via an Ethernet cable.

"With this, we can offer our customers a solution that can be quickly deployed to address new opportunities in digital and outdoor broadcast content while reducing the overall infrastructure cost."

## RTS Intercom Systems appoints new MEA sales manager

Bosch division Building Technologies has appointed Azzam Salahat as the new Sales Manager for RTS Intercom Systems in the Middle East and Africa (MEA). His MEA remit is to drive sales growth, strengthen existing partnerships, identify new business opportunities and

expand RTS' presence. Salahat began his professional journey as a systems engineer and has since developed his expertise in project planning and technical customer support. Salahat is based in Dubai. Prior to this, he worked with INC Systems Integrations.



▲ Azzam Salahat.

## Intelsat powers VideoNow in Africa with Babeleye

Intelsat has selected Babeleye, a global player in content metadata for video platforms, to supply metadata to power VideoNow in Africa. VideoNow by Intelsat, in conjunction with EasyBroadcast, is a service for viewers looking for FTA content on DTH platforms. Viewers can discover new content specific to their interests with this.

The service was previously launched in America and has now been extended to sub-Saharan Africa via Intelsat 20, a multicultural and ethnic-content neighbourhood. Babeleye worked hard to bring the many stakeholders and broadcasters from the African continent to adhere to a unified process and an efficient workflow for raw information aggregation.

Lasse Schmidt, Sales Director at Babeleye, said: "We are excited that Intelsat is using Babeleye to manage the metadata lifecycle on its VideoNow app and website. In a market with such peculiarities, creating and uniforming the metadata is key to a successful user experience."



# 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



Learn more at [www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae](http://www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae)

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# OSN rolls out new Android receiver powered by Tata Elxsi

Tata Elxsi and OSN have collaborated to develop OSNtv, an all-in-one product that will bring together OSN exclusive and curated live TV channels, streaming as well as free-to-air entertainment across a single Android device. The OSNtv box is powered by Tata Elxsi's AndroidTV solution suite, which includes a custom operator-tier launcher, OTA and iCX. Tata Elxsi's customised OTA (over-the-air) platform helps deliver seamless software updates for an enhanced customer experience, while the iCX (intelligent CX) platform offers intelligent monitoring, real-time diagnostics and troubleshooting.

Devrim Malak, SVP of Strategy at OSN, said: "The OSNtv box is a convenient, one-stop solution for entertainment aggregation that simplifies content discovery



and provides an enhanced family viewing experience along with parental controls based on customer needs. Tata Elxsi's Android TV expertise, along with their ready-to-deploy suite of solutions, enabled a faster launch of OSNtv box."

Tarun Joshi, GM & Head of Google Technologies at Tata Elxsi, added: "With its Android TV Centre of Excellence

(CoE), Tata Elxsi brings deep expertise in TV platforms and engineering. This programme brings together design and development for hardware, software, in-house solutions, as well as innovations such as content search and discovery, and programming managed to allow OSN to launch their product in a record time of six months, giving OSN a future-proof platform for

continued innovation at scale."

The product has now evolved into a plug-and-play device with no installation, and can be used by all connected households in the region with or without a dish. The OSNtv user experience also gets an upgrade, applicable to new and current subscribers. Users can now take control of live TV, offering instant rewind, pause and restart functionalities.

OSN's streaming platform OSN+ is integrated from the interface and allows users access to the content when they are on the go, or to use on additional devices at home. Additionally, the product has optimised the look and feel of the platform, with an enhanced UX/UI to encourage discoverability and the introduction of new curated channels that bring premium content from Hollywood and beyond.

# Abu Dhabi Media and NOA ink deal to digitise archives



AV digitising and archiving specialist NOA GmbH has signed a major contract with state broadcaster Abu Dhabi Media. This is the second major deal for NOA in the UAE. It has partnered with systems integrator Broadcast Solutions Middle East to manage the project, which includes delivering and installing a comprehensive audio and video archive workflow system in Abu Dhabi and Dubai for digitising the organisation's entire radio and television archive, which includes 153,000 audio tapes and 340,000 hours of video.

As part of the agreement, a scalable jobDB workflow management system will

be installed as a basis for the facility, comprising 16 channels of audio ingest with NOARecord and N7000c audio hardware units on four ingest places, as well as 32 channels of video ingest with NOA FrameLector, five BarcodeStation custom script creation stations, five UniversalDialoger scanners and five full-scale MediaButler transcoding processors. In addition, the package includes a carrier positioning system for the required multi-site logistic realisation.

Jean-Christophe Kummer, Managing Partner, NOA, said: "This project is the largest archive transfer technology installation to take place

in the Middle East. ADM decided to approach this task with a CAPEX investment in mind, not as an outsourced service, since they have all gear, expertise and staff in-house and wanted to maintain control of the assets from a legal point of view. In addition, ADM is relying on us to manage the logistics of all carriers between the archive in Abu Dhabi and the ingest facility in Dubai. We are thrilled to continue our global expansion with this prestigious project and are confident we can assist the organisation in streamlining its large-scale digitisation process with our reliable tracking and quality ingest systems."

## ROAA Media Ventures joins forces with Saudi entities to establish film fund

ROAA Media Ventures has announced an agreement with Saudi Cultural Development Fund and MEFIC Capital to establish a Film Investment Fund for the Kingdom. The \$100m Film Investment Fund is the first capital injection initiative to be revealed under the Saudi Cultural Development Fund's Investment Track, part of its recently launched Film Sector Financing Programme. The Fund will help stimulate investments in film projects, companies and media infrastructure, and support the growth of talent.

ROAA Media Ventures will be the Technical Partner of the Fund. It will help facilitate connections between international partners and local opportunities for filming, investment or co-funding. It will provide investment evaluation and management-related services to the Film Investment Fund's manager as well as technical and business assistance to the Fund's portfolio companies, projects and assets.

## Red Sea Souk invites film submissions

The Red Sea Souk, a Red Sea International Film Festival market initiative, has announced the call for submission for Project Market and WIP Showcase for its 2023 edition taking place at the Ritz-Carlton in Jeddah, from December 2-5 alongside the film festival. The Red Sea Souk aims to support the co-production and distribution of films and the discovery of new talent.

The submission is open from June 12 to August 18. The call is reserved solely for projects and films by directors of Arab or African nationality/origin. The Project Market will present a selection of 10 to 12 projects in development or in production. The WIP Showcase will present a selection of five to six films in post-production.

All selected film teams (director and producer) will

benefit from an invitation to attend and present their projects/films at the Red Sea Souk; specific workshops; official project and film-in-progress presentations to a high-level international industry audience; and one-to-one meeting sessions.

All selected projects of films in the Project Market will compete for three jury-granted awards offered by the Red Sea

Fund: the Development Award (\$35,000 cash prize), Special Mention Award (\$25,000 cash prize) and Production Award (\$100,000 cash prize).

All selected films in post-production (WIP) will compete for two jury-granted awards offered by the Red Sea Fund: the Post-Production Award (\$30,000 cash prize) and Special Mention Award (\$10,000 cash prize).

## Ithra announces new film fund initiative at Cannes 2023

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) has launched a new film fund that aims to attract international filmmakers to shoot fully-financed movies in the kingdom. The announcement was made

at Cannes Film Festival by Majed Z. Samman, Head of Performing Arts & Cinema at Ithra. Under the initiative, Ithra Film Productions aims to commission and fund up to five films annually.

This is Ithra's first open call for film proposals and the deadline for submissions is August 4. A panel of distinguished Arab filmmakers will select the final projects to receive funding.



# Image Nation AD and Faraway Road Productions announce TV Writers' Lab

Image Nation Abu Dhabi has partnered with Candle Media's Faraway Road Productions, creators of the Netflix series *Fauda* and *Hit & Run*, to launch TV Writers' Lab, a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the UAE and Israel to support emerging TV writers from the region. The TV Writers' Lab aims to develop TV series and progress them into the international arena while nourishing new voices with the best



of mentors, guest speakers and international creators. The programme will select up to 12 candidates from the UAE and Israel to participate

in a four-month programme comprising two in-person workshops in Abu Dhabi, as well as monthly online mentoring and feedback sessions. Throughout the programme, which includes two workshops in Abu Dhabi in October 2023 and March 2024, the writers selected will develop their proposals, pilot episodes and pitch presentations. Ben Ross, Chief Content Officer at Image Nation Abu Dhabi, said: "This new

writers' lab strengthens our programming, offering four months of dedicated feedback, mentoring and industry insights – an invaluable experience for anyone hoping to break into entertainment. The creative industries are also a vital channel for cultural exchange, so we are particularly looking forward to partnering with Faraway Road Productions." Applications are now open for aspiring TV writers who reside in the UAE and Israel.

# MBC Loud FM launches in Saudi Arabia

MBC Group has announced the launch of MBC Loud FM, a brand-new radio station designed for English-speaking and international music fans in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It follows a contemporary hit radio (CHR) format that is expected to "bring new energy and new voices to radio in KSA and beyond", the broadcaster said. Waleed bin Ibrahim Al Ibrahim, Chairman of MBC Group, said: "With MBC Loud FM, our goal is to reach a diverse audience throughout the country. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the



Ziad Hamza, Group Director of Audio, Radio & Music at MBC Group.



Sam Barnett, MBC Group CEO.

Kingdom's objectives in the upcoming phase, contributing to the nation's ambitions in the development and

growth in the entertainment and media industry." Featuring fresh on-air talent from the Kingdom,

MBC Loud FM will be anchored by a breakfast team. Local shows will be supplemented with world-syndicated programming including *On Air* with Ryan Seacrest, as well as uninterrupted music sets from some of the globe's best-known DJs. Executing the brand strategy is Tarek Majdalani, who joins MBC Loud FM as Station Manager. He will also lead in developing MBC Loud FM's brand strategy, profiling and positioning, ensuring that the station provides its audience with an exceptional listening experience.

## StarzPlay records 70% increase in viewership during Ramadan

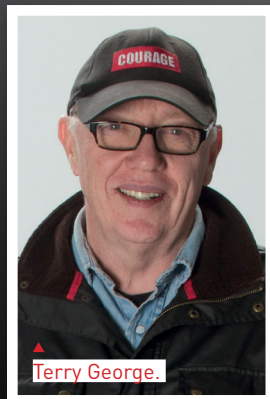
StarzPlay has reported a growth of nearly 70% increase in viewership users across the GCC markets compared to Ramadan 2022, according to a recent viewership analysis by the SVOD platform. The UAE had the largest increase in viewership, a 62% increase in unique users in 2023, while the rest of the GCC

recorded nearly a 60% increase in unique users. StarzPlay also had more than 50% increase in new sign-ups compared to Ramadan 2022. In the MENA region, Ramadan has typically seen increased TV consumption and a shift in viewership towards Arabic content. This year recorded a similar trend.



## Terry George gears up to shoot action-thriller *Riverman* in Neom

Screenwriter and director Terry George has geared up to shoot his next project, *Riverman*, in the epic landscape of Neom in northwest Saudi Arabia and the UK. The production will be led by Future Artists Entertainment under Matt Williams, with Camilla Storey of TMS Productions and acclaimed producer Mark Foligno of Limelight CTL. Williams said: "*Riverman* is an action-packed movie that explores ideas of heroism, corruption and temptation within the dark and dangerous world of arms dealing and warfare. This is a powerful film and with George at the



Terry George.

helm, we're very excited to bring it to life." George added: "*Riverman* is a powerful, highly dramatic war story. I am excited to be directing this great project in Neom." Casting has begun, with principal photography set for January 2024.

## Intigral selects Pebble for new headend facility

Pebble will design, supply and build new playout solutions for Intigral's new headend facility. The facility will combine Pebble Automation, Integrated Channel and Pebble Remote for multichannel ingest, content management and playout. At the core of the new system is Pebble's scalable software-defined Integrated Channel. This provides audio, video and graphics functionality in

a compact, cost-effective format to Intigral. The solutions incorporate the latest NDI standard inputs and outputs for video and audio monitoring. Multiple HD and SD feeds will ingest directly into shared storage for live recording and playout. Enterprise-level automation ensures continuity on-air. Delivery of this solution is scheduled for later this year. Eyad Al Dwaik,

Director of Engineering Operations at Intigral, said: "Intigral is dedicated to delivering exceptional digital entertainment experiences and seeks to proactively innovate to continue to thrive in this space. Working with Pebble has empowered us to enhance our home-grown channel generation capabilities and create high-value experiences for our audiences across the region."

## OTTer and SAWA launch FAST platform in MENA

OTTer MENA, a joint venture between OTTer Inc and SAWA Rights Management, has launched TarfeehTV, the first FAST dedicated platform for the MENA region, which will be live on all CTVs and mobile devices. It will include linear FAST streaming TV channels in English, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and other regional languages, reflecting the Middle East demographic. OTTer, a Dubai-based OTT & FAST Channels provider, and SAWA Rights Management will power the service and monetise exclusively all the channels' inventories coming from different broadcasters and local media companies.

## OSN and AFAC launch Writers' Room programme

OSN and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) have partnered to launch Writers' Room, a mentorship programme designed to foster the development of stories in the Arab region. It offers an opportunity for series creators in the Arab region to showcase their talents and pitch their projects for potential development and distribution on OSN's platform. Applications are open until July 7.



# CABSAT 2023 concludes, highlights trends in media and satellite markets



The 29th edition of CABSAT 2023, which concluded on May 18, showcased emerging trends and technologies in the broadcast and satellite industry and facilitated thought-provoking discussions and hands-on demonstrations. The three-day exhibition was a significant platform for numerous exhibitors from across the globe to present innovative solutions and forge alliances to grow their business in the region. During the event, several announcements, partnerships and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between various organisations exhibiting at the show.

CABSAT brought together international industry leaders alongside regional government and business stakeholders for three days of business networking, knowledge sharing and innovation discovery. Exhibiting

companies included Neom, Beijing Municipal Radio and Television Bureau, Vectracom archives solutions from France, Kenya Television Network, Akratek Elektronik San Türkiye, Canadian media technology company Grass Valley and multinational Hitachi.

In addition to the Glambot camera, known for its precision-focus videos from Hollywood red carpets, dual-camera VR, a virtual production studio created in collaboration with PIXOJAM, the latest use of artificial intelligence (AI), and multi-dimensional editing technologies were on display.

Marta Olender of Moviebird International commented: "We are delighted to have participated in CABSAT 2023, a significant event for the broadcast, satellite, content creation, digital media and entertainment industries.

Through this event, we showcased our range of advanced solutions which included cutting-edge, high-tech telescopic camera cranes for film and television production. Our advanced solutions enable a convenient and creative filmmaking process, significantly assisting film producers and camera operators across the globe. The event further served as a platform for us to explore avenues for collaboration with a number of companies from throughout the region."

Andrew Bear, Head of Video Protection Business at Verimatrix, stated: "CABSAT 2023 provided an opportunity for us to highlight our cutting-edge anti-piracy and cybersecurity solutions that help prevent large-scale content theft and safeguard the digital media landscape. Our solutions aim to address concerns surrounding video piracy, cyberattacks and enterprise threats,

which continue to grow significantly both regionally and globally. By participating in the event, we aimed at assisting our partners in expanding quickly in the regional markets, protecting important revenue streams and achieving new clients."

Hamid Rahmani, Managing Director of Broadcast Hightech Systems (BHS), commented: "At the CABSAT 2023, we exhibited our innovative ideas and solutions that are aimed at advancing the broadcasting and telecommunication industries. By offering cost-effective services of the highest standard and quality, we strive to assist people in communicating effectively and efficiently. In keeping with our goal to deliver swift and efficient connectivity, we are committed to providing superior and reliable satellite solutions."

The Content Congress discussed the numerous challenges in producing high-quality content and ways to overcome them; meanwhile, the SatExpo Summit highlighted the significance of various ground-breaking technologies such as AI and automation to improve and promote sustainable space operations. The NextGen Content Screening event exhibited the latest MEA content offerings in scripted and non-scripted formats across various genres including anime, drama, kids, sports, comedy, action, mystery and thriller.

## Co-production salon sparks collaboration between MENA media entities

Dubai content consultancy HConsult successfully concluded the second edition of the co-production salon in collaboration with CABSAT at the Dubai World Trade Centre last week. The salon, founded and run by Heba Korayem, aims to encourage investment in long-form entertainment content to and from the MENA region, including series and films, through collaborative efforts between the largest regional and international media entities.

One of the key highlights of the event was an exclusive presentation by Korayem, who shared valuable data about the MENA region's Ramadan peak TV month, estimated to be worth \$500m.

Speaking about the salon, Tony Saab, SVP of Content and Strategic Partnerships at StarzPlay, said: "The co-production salon is an initiative needed as an industry. Since the companies chosen to participate are pre-filtered through a set of criteria, it was easier for us to find relevant potential partners in content."

The salon attracted



participation from several prominent companies, including several major Arabic production houses from Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. All the major regional streaming platforms, such as Shahid, StarzPlay, OSN and Jawwy (Saudi Telecom), were also present. Additionally, major international companies such as Paramount, Entertainment Studios from the US, Greenstone from New Zealand, Zee Entertainment from India and Yandex from Russia were present, demonstrating global interest in the initiative.

Elena Brodskaya, Head of International Content Strategy at Yandex, a MENA

entertainment super app and one of the leading platforms in the CIS region, remarked: "For Yandex, as a newcomer to the market, attending the co-production salon at CABSAT was helpful. Meeting with the best-in-class producers, top managers of the leading streaming services and creators in one place is the best way to get a deep dive into the market, learn the latest local trends and make invaluable professional connections."

William Page, Chief Strategy Officer of 1001, the fastest-growing VOD platform in Iraq, said: "Our participation in this workshop was heavily centred on identifying content partners that align with our mission

and our viewers' needs. The selection of companies at the co-production salon precisely mirrored our requirements, positioning us on the right track towards achieving our objective of building robust partnerships and further accelerating our growth."

The salon facilitated more than 240 high-quality meetings, encouraging discussions on co-funding and rights sharing.

Korayem added: "We've counted over 240 meetings taking place, and from our previous experience, due to the quality of pre-arranged meetings, the ratio is that one deal is closed for every five to six meetings held; so we're anticipating around 40 deals to be announced over the coming year. We're talking huge partnership deals, not the straightforward acquisition-type announcements that happen at content markets. The salon has helped create an environment of collaboration, innovation and investment in the MENA entertainment industry, paving the way for new ventures and partnerships."



## First edition of Integrate ME 2023 successful

Integrate Middle East, a new event for the pro AV integration value chain, concluded alongside CABSAT. Among the live and interactive demonstrations was a 3D digital experience on a 100sqm LED digital wall and an experiential interaction opportunity with a 90sqm screen, both

constructed by Absen. Other features on the show floor included pro AV displays, including the Interactive Learning Zone; Multi-Conference Demo Arena; Smart Home Simulator; Digital Signage, Education Technologies; Command and Control Rooms; and Live Event Solutions. Many of the 70-plus

founder exhibitors expressed their intent to return for the 2024 edition of Integrate Middle East, with increased stand space to further demonstrate how their products and solutions can add value to a wide variety of industries and benefit from the knowledge-sharing opportunities offered at the Integrate ME Summit.



# ENTER THE ARCHIVES: WHERE THE PAST MEETS THE FUTURE



Investing in and opening up footage archives can be commercially and creatively lucrative for content owners. At a time when countries across the Middle East are becoming more prominent on the world stage, now is the perfect opportunity to commercialise undervalued collections, says **Luke Smedley**, Head of Orchard Clips

**When the world entered lockdown in early 2020, it was a chance for everyone to stop and take stock. Organisations that had previously been copiously creating new content, be they ad agencies, broadcasters or brands, suddenly found they were unable to shoot. But they discovered something valuable that had been there all along: archives. Whether from their own collections or from commercial agencies, creatives found that they could repurpose old content, often with great results.**

Archival footage has many benefits over shooting new. The most obvious is that it's generally much cheaper than getting a crew together and doing either a location or studio shoot. It is also significantly faster to acquire – you can go onto the website of one of the major stock footage houses, find the shot you are after, pay with a credit card, and have it in your edit in minutes. There's also some content that cannot be recreated, from yesterday's news to sports and entertainment footage. Much factual storytelling relies on footage of events to tell the story. Using archival footage also constrains creators. Creative agencies and advertisers are increasingly using archival footage to promote brands in novel and exciting ways.

There are clear benefits to using archival footage, but where should



A juvenile Arabian sand gazelle, part of the footage Orchard Clips has of the Middle East.

content creators source it from? The first source is from the companies' own archives. It stands to reason that the most relevant selection of content is from the company itself. However, access is dependent on the company having a strong archiving practice. In recent years, with the growth of cloud storage and online media asset management (MAM) systems, it has never been easier to archive content. However, it does require investment from the company and someone to manage the process, ensuring that anything that is archived is easily found and can be accessed.

Beyond internal archives, there are commercial archives and stock footage businesses. More generic stock footage is available on a royalty-free basis, where you can pay once and then use it repeatedly in any context you like. Whereas editorial and premium footage is available as 'rights managed', meaning that you purchase a licence for use in a specific context. Licence fees paid are based on three main factors: the platform(s) that the footage will be used on, for example, free TV, SVOD or even out of a home; the territory

where the footage will be shown; and the duration of the licence.

The archive footage market is dominated by major players like Getty Images, Adobe Stock and Shutterstock. Beyond these are several mid-size archives and many niche collections. Most commercial archives have their own collections and manage the licensing for a variety of content owners.

MENA is poorly represented within the archive footage market. There are a couple of smaller collections that focus on royalty-free stock footage. Editorial and rights-managed footage is much less accessible and is mostly available from the international news agencies: Associated Press, Reuters and AFP. This means that much of the footage on the market has an international slant and focuses on major news stories, and often it's not good news. There is a definite lack of authentic local footage showing the reality and everyday lives of people in the region. This is certainly a problem, as it limits the ability to tell authentic stories at a time when there is more interest in MENA than ever.

There is no shortage of production taking place and footage being shot across MENA. So why is it so hard to access? There are a few key reasons why editorial archive footage from the region is hard to find. Firstly, archiving has historically not been seen as a priority and indeed not really understood, often thought of as just a case of putting a tape on a shelf, or more recently a video file on a server.

Archiving is much more than this.



Two women working at a washing machine factory in Ma'an, Jordan.



Having good-quality metadata is imperative for a thriving archive. It's important to document the 'what', 'where', 'when', 'who' and 'why' for all footage. Crucially, where footage going into a production can come from a variety of sources, with numerous copyright owners, it is important to log this information to maintain the integrity of the archive. There are some amazing AI tools available that can help with detailing the 'what' and even, using facial recognition, the 'who', but contextual information needs to be added manually.

There are certainly some organisations working to best practices and with expertise in archiving. These are principally the large broadcasters such as Al Arabiya, which has amassed an archive of over 35,000 hours. However, the region suffers from a lack of strength in depth and smaller organisations and companies lack the expertise in archive management.

To paraphrase a proverb, the best time to start archiving was 20 years ago, the second-best time is today. Those companies without an established archiving strategy should work to establish one – in short order they will start to see the rewards. They can go directly to MAM vendors, who will integrate tools into their workflows, or they can work with consultants and archive management companies to take ownership of their archiving practices and manage them on the company's behalf. Due to a lack of local expertise, these often come from Europe or the US and perhaps lack local knowledge and cultural sensitivities.

Despite there being several well-managed and comprehensive archives within the region, it's still hard to obtain content from them. Most archives are focused on internal usage, making content available for their own productions, to save money and time. They don't look towards the global archive footage market.



**“To paraphrase a proverb, the best time to start archiving was 20 years ago, the second-best time is today”**

Luke Smedley, Head of Orchard Clips

In some ways, this is not surprising. Archive footage sales can be a slog. It requires a great deal of effort put into building your web storefront, sales outreach, marketing and PR to be able to build up market share. You also need to make a lot of sales to bring in significant revenue. However, if you can overcome these obstacles, it can be a lucrative market. Often, the best way of doing so is by partnering with an established archive sales company. They can take your content, make it sales-ready, and then manage the entire sales and marketing process, splitting the sales revenue with you.

Another reason content owners don't open up their archives to external customers is a perceived lack of control. There is concern, particularly within the editorial space, that footage could be used out of context and in a way that could be critical of or besmirch the content owners, governments or other institutions. There is a certain amount of truth to this. But contracts between commercial archives and their customers generally include clauses preventing usage that defames,

libels, slanders or brings the owner into disrepute. Instances where these are contravened are actually very rare in real life. And, at the end of the day, the content owner has the right to refuse to license the footage to the customer.

It's not surprising that there are so few MENA-focused archive footage collections in the market. However, for any organisation that wants to enter the business, there are great opportunities. Within the region, there is continued expansion in the media landscape. SVOD and FAST channels are proliferating and becoming everyday platforms for consumers. With the growth of TikTok and other social media platforms pivoting towards video, there is a huge appetite for footage for both editorial usage and for brands and advertisers. The rest of the world is also taking more interest in the region and wanting to tell stories from and about MENA.

The Middle Eastern powers are becoming more confident and powerful on the world stage. From politics to science to art to sport, there is interest in what is happening in the region. Headline-grabbing events and projects such as the World Cup and Vision 2030 are making international audiences take note, and they are looking beyond the headlines and exploring the nuances and fascinating stories ready to be told. All of this requires footage and, for those content owners that make their own footage available, there is the opportunity to be at the centre of a very profitable market.

In conclusion, commercialising archive footage is a challenge. But for those organisations that are up for the challenge, whether on their own or in partnership with established archives, the rewards can be considerable. **PRO**

Luke Smedley is an expert archivist with nearly 20 years of experience in the commercialisation of film and video collections.

# TILTA

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# CELEBRATING SIGNATURE PRODUCTS

The manufacturers at the frontline of the broadcast sector were honoured at the inaugural edition of the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards, held at Conrad Dubai on May 17, 2023

The inaugural edition of the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards concluded with 16 of the industry's leading game-changers being honoured at an awards gala. These awards celebrate the manufacturers and solution providers whose equipment and services lead the way – whose out-of-the-box innovations deliver critical commercial 'edge', day in and day out.

The awards, which follow the Business Activity Model (BAM), honour the achievements of the pace-setters who have created a generational reset across the industry as a whole in the last several years.

The diversity of the categories was aimed at ensuring that both major brands and those that have contributed to technical advances and prowess within the industry had an equal opportunity to compete for an award.

The winners of these all-new BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards were decided by online voting in each category.

This event is brought to you by BroadcastPro Middle East, the brand that has for more than a decade been at

the forefront of communicating key changes in the sector, lobbying for change and best practices and consistently raising the benchmark for the regional sector and beyond.

Majed Al Suwaidi, Senior Vice President of Dubai Media City, Dubai Studio City and Dubai Production City, graced the occasion as chief guest. We extend our gratitude to Hasan Sayed Hasan, MD of Master Media, for helping us put together these awards. A special word of thanks to all our sponsors and to everyone who participated in the nominations and the evening gala.

Vijaya Cherian, Editor of BroadcastPro ME, elaborated on the new launch: "We're thrilled to present the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards, part of our dedication to fostering growth and innovation in the industry. We have always strived to communicate crucial developments, champion better practices and set new standards for the region. With this event, we're excited to continue our mission and bring together manufacturers and industry leaders for an evening of celebration and networking during CABSAT."

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BEST IN AUDIO PRODUCTION

## Shure (AD600 Axient Digital Spectrum Manager)

The product that received the most votes in this category was the Shure AD600 Axient Digital Spectrum Manager, a powerful tool for managing frequency coordination in different applications including broadcast, location sound, touring, theatres and houses of worship. It delivers real-time, wide-band spectrum scanning and monitoring from 174 MHz to 2.0 GHz, spectrum analysis and frequency coordination in a single rack unit. From left: Moswain Welsh Antao, Product Marketing Manager; Marwan Nasr, Senior Marketing Manager; and Cyril Matar, Sales Manager ME of Shure, with the award.



BEST IN CONNECTIVITY SOLUTIONS

## Atomos (Shogun CONNECT)

The audience has spoken and Shogun CONNECT was chosen. It combines portable monitoring and professional RAW recording with support for integrated and cloud-based workflows. It transforms professional cinema, mirrorless and DSLR cameras into fully connected devices and supports a range of advanced cloud-based workflows. It records in several professional formats including Apple ProRes RAW, Apple ProRes, Avid DNxHD/HR and HEVC, and includes full support for Atomos Cloud Studio. Pictured with the award are Pooyan Farnam and Ragheed Alrantisi, Sales Manager from Advanced Media, distributors for Atomos in the region.



BEST IN BROADCAST PLAYOUT

## Imagine Communications (Imagine Aviator)

Imagine Aviator was the winning entry in this category. This cloud-native platform enables broadcasters to easily plan, make and monetise premium-quality, ad-supported linear and connected TV (CTV) content from a single, unified platform. Functionality is precisely tailored to any business requirement, from the most sophisticated live channels with real-time branding to more streamlined thematic channels or regional variants. Pictured with the award are Mathias Eckert (left), SVP & GM EMEA/APAC; and Anas Hantash, Regional Director, MENA & South Asia, Imagine Communications.



BEST IN CONTENT MANAGEMENT

## White Peaks Solutions (FAULIO)

The audience favourite in this category was Faulio, proudly developed in the Middle East and deployed both regionally and globally. With multiple modules for content exploration, this headless and scalable content management system supports various genres, collections, archives, sports and customisations. With this solution, one can easily transition between different business models such as FVOD, AVOD, SVOD and TVOD with hybrid options. Pictured with the award is CEO Salloum El Dahdaah in the centre, with the White Peaks Solutions team.



BEST IN CLOUD COMPUTE

## Fonn Group AS (Mimir)

Mimir was crowned champion in this category. This video collaboration and production tool for professionals runs in the cloud. It integrates with a wide range of AI technologies for automatic metadata enrichment. Since its launch, the team has released 300+ product features, making it one of the most comprehensive native-cloud video collaboration tools in the market, with tight integrations to the Adobe and Avid platforms for editors and a cloud newsroom tool for storytellers and journalists. Pictured with the award from left are Bard Hansen, VP of Marketing, 7Mountains, and Vegard Elgesem, MD, Fonn Group APAC.



BEST IN CONTENT SCHEDULING & MONETIZATION

## Viaccess-Orca (Viaccess-Orca Targeted TV Advertising)

Viaccess-Orca's (VO) Targeted TV Advertising solution won the most votes in this category. It features a full-stack programmatic infrastructure and TV data segmentation tools for translating viewers' usage data into valuable segments for advertisers. The solution alleviates reliance on controversial legacy third-party, data-based targeting techniques. Driven by AI analytics, it enables service providers to accurately segment audiences based on various criteria. Pictured with the award is the Viaccess-Orca team.





BEST IN CONTENT STORAGE

**Avid Technology (Avid NEXIS F-series media storage and Avid NEXIS | VFS virtual file system)**

The winning entry here was the Avid NEXIS F-series, which raises the bar on media storage performance and scalability for collaborative on-premises and cloud workflows. The storage engines combine with the Avid NEXIS | VFS virtual file system, featuring built-in intelligence to automate administrative tasks, which allows Avid NEXIS F-series storage to adapt to changing workloads without user intervention. Pictured here is the Avid team with the award.



BEST IN DISPLAY SYSTEMS

**VITEC (EZ TV Video Wall)**

The audience voted for version 8.2 of the EZ TV platform, which includes a range of enhancements across multiple modules. This includes real-time end-point snapshots, providing operators with instant visual feedback of the HDMI output for the EP5 and EP5+; adding SRT, HEVC and multi-view video playback in the EZ TV Player Lite HTML5 browser player; EZ TV player app support for LG WebOS 6.0; virtual remote interface for end-point control; and SRT playback on the EZ TV mobile player app from the phone or tablet. Pictured with the award is the VITEC team.



BEST IN DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

**Ateme (low-latency DAI solution)**

There were two hot favourites in this category; one was Ateme's low-latency DAI solution, which enables content and service providers to attain the monetisation value that sports streams can bring. Ateme is able to reduce the compute power needed to monetise these streams, proving profitable for operators. This new low-latency DAI solution impacts the global industry as it enables a vast sports inventory for monetisation. It also allows further innovation, resulting in new opportunities and more revenue for content and service providers. Pictured with the award is the Ateme team.



BEST IN FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Lawo (.edge Hyper-Density SDI/IP conversion and routing platform)**

And the winner is .edge from Lawo. Software-defined by nature, .edge can be used as a feature-laden replacement for traditional SDI routers. It combines high-density conversion with flexible routing capabilities, facilitating seamless integration of SDI devices into an IP broadcast network. The platform enables broadcasters to streamline their operations, optimise signal distribution and adapt to evolving industry standards effortlessly. Pictured with the award is the Lawo team.



BEST IN DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

**ST Engineering iDirect (SKYflow)**

The other winner here was SKYflow, which enables the delivery of native IP over satellite, and allows mobile and multi-room viewing, multi-screen viewing and education video distribution. The ABR solution offers ultra-fast, low-latency delivery of live video to mobile devices and large screens at the lowest cost. The unidirectional set-up uses GSE encapsulation, while the bidirectional set-up offers a return path over satellite using a VSAT modem for transmitting DRM, analytics and so on. SKYflow is supported by ST Engineering iDirect, EKT, EasyBroadcast, Quadriple and Broadpeak. Pictured with the award is the ST Engineering iDirect team.



BEST IN LINEAR DISTRIBUTION

**Tata Elxsi (OSNtv)**

The OSNtv box, powered by Tata Elxsi, won by a huge margin in this category. It is an all-in-one product that brings together OSN's exclusive and curated live TV channels as well as its streaming and free-to-air entertainment in a single Android device, through continuously upgraded technology. The 4K-enabled device, powered by Dolby Atmos surround sound, includes enhanced search functionality alongside the most advanced TV guide in the region, for rapid and accurate content discovery. Pictured with the award is the Tata Elxsi team.





BEST IN POST-PRODUCTION

**EditShare (Flow Universal Media Projects)**

The entry that received the most number of votes was Universal Projects, which provides a seamless means of exchanging projects between post-production users and platforms. Suitable for any enterprise from small post houses to major broadcasters, it allows projects to be worked on in real time and synchronised with edit platforms like Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere Pro and DaVinci Resolve. Universal Projects helps boost productivity and slash delivery times. Pictured with the award is the EditShare team.



BEST IN VIDEO PRODUCTION

**FOR-A Company Limited (HVS-190)**

The audience voted for FOR-A's HVS-190, a one M/E version of the company's flagship HVS-490 video switcher. It comes standard with 3G/HD-SDI and HDMI interfaces, and features frame synchronisation and processing amplification on all inputs. It is available in two models. Both include keyer, chroma keyer, multi viewer, still/clip store, macro and event memory functions as standard. The HVS-190 switchers are easily expandable, with additional multi view outputs, increased storage with an added SSD, and optional auxiliary and tally unit(s). Pictured with the award is the For-A team.



BEST IN VIDEO CONTENT ACQUISITION

**DJI (DJI Mavic 3 Cine)**

We had two winning entries in this category. The first winner was the DJI Mavic 3 Cine DJI flagship consumer camera drone. Equipped with a dual-camera system, it offers revolutionary imaging performance with its professional-level 4/3 CMOS sensor Hasselblad camera, which supports the Hasselblad Natural Colour Solution, and 24mm-equivalent lightweight lens. Mavic 3 Cine supports Apple ProRes 422 HQ encoding with a maximum data rate of 3,772Mbps and facilitates professional filming, editing and creation. Pictured with the award is Yuan Xu (left), DJI sales manager with the team from distributor Advanced Media.



BEST IN VIDEO CONTENT ACQUISITION

**Grass Valley (LDX C135 compact camera)**

The second winning entry was the LDX C135 compact camera, which offers all the features of the full-size UHD HDR native LDX 135 camera – high-sensitivity Global Shutter imagers, Native HDR in PQ, HLG and S-Log. It provides SDI and/or native IP full SMPTE 2110 connectivity straight from the camera with no external conversion. Designed for easy positioning and remote operation, the LDX C135 does not require a separate base station. Pictured with the award from left are Hany Bartella, MD, MEA, and Tim Banks, Chief Revenue Officer, Grass Valley.



SPECIAL TRIBUTE

**CABSAT**

CABSAT, the MEASA region's leading show for innovation and engaging experiences in the content, broadcast, satellite and pro AV communities, has played a critical role in bringing together a diverse range of industry players, from vendors and solution providers to content creators and end users. Its tireless efforts in bridging the gap between various industry verticals and driving meaningful conversations about the latest trends, technologies and disruptive innovations as well as diversity in the region merit celebration.

Majed Al Suwaidi, Senior Vice President of Dubai Media City, Dubai Studio City and Dubai Production City, and chief guest at the BroadcastPro ME Manufacturer Awards, handed over an honorary award to CABSAT for its exceptional contribution to the MENA Media & Entertainment industry. Rajendra Salgaonkar from the Exhibitions Department of the Dubai World Trade Centre and a key figure at CABSAT, accepted the award. Pictured below is the CABSAT team.





# CANNES' FIRST GLOBAL VIRTUAL PRODUCTION SUMMIT

The summit, put together by Disguise and Film Soho, included free training, hands-on access to tech solutions, talks and demos



In its first year at Cannes, the Global Virtual Production Summit was a huge success, bringing together studio heads, filmmakers and technology providers to discuss the latest new developments in film and virtual production. Created in partnership with Film Soho, Marché du Film and Cannes Next, the summit featured talks, demos and workshops on the future of entertainment with studio heads and filmmakers at Paramount, Framestore, Nordisk Film and more. Also attracting major attention was the premiere of Murals, an immersive visual experience that uses cutting-edge 3D scanning to place viewers face-to-face with the war devastation in Ukraine.

A key highlight was the session with director Sadie Frost and film critic and broadcaster Anna Smith, where they

discussed the making of the feature film *Twiggy* and how they used virtual production to transport *Twiggy* herself to Carnaby Street in the 1960s. Frost had only wrapped production on the scene the day before in Cannes, saying: "As a filmmaker, I feel honoured to be able to use this groundbreaking technology to transport *Twiggy* back to 1968!"

Another major highlight was Disguise's hands-on Virtual Production Accelerator workshop. Disguise offered in-depth training on everything from lighting techniques to the colour science behind LED walls. Hosted in a dedicated virtual production studio running on the Disguise real-time production platform, the course took participants on a journey from fundamental technical knowledge to on-set production techniques and beyond, enhancing skills



Addy Ghani, VP of Virtual Production at Disguise, addresses attendees of the Virtual Production Summit.

with backgrounds such as video plates, 2.5D and Unreal Engine scenes. By the end of the day, participants had the essential in-camera VFX knowledge to break into this emerging sector. "The Cannes Film Festival is integral to the history of the movie industry. That's why, as lovers of film, we're delighted to be a part of how the festival is embracing the future," said Alex Wills, CXO at Disguise. "Our team has years of experience helping creatives and technicians work with LED volumes to create films and shows for studios like Netflix, Warner Bros. Discovery and Amazon Studios. By launching Cannes' first virtual production summit, we hope to use all we've learned to help the next generation of filmmakers tell stories that don't just blur the line between real and virtual, but also between the audience and the big screen."

Another interesting panel was 'How to Master the Creative, Technical and Visual Power of Virtual Production' with Dark Matters, Disguise and Framestore discussing how VP can be a powerful tool, but only through deep experimentation and immediate engagement with the technology – with that, every department can be brought on the journey and ensure the VFX serves the story being told.

The practical part of virtual production was also a hot topic in the panel discussions titled 'Investing & Managing the Virtual Production Business: What

Producers, Funds, Policymakers & Studios Need to Know' and 'To Shoot Traditional vs Virtual? The ABC of Virtual Production for Independent Filmmakers'. Cinematographer Kathryn Brillhart, director Armin Kurasz, Nordisk Film, The Magic Camera Company, Rubicon TV, Ready Set Studio and Screenskills all contributed their thoughts.

To highlight the future possibilities of virtual production, several technologies were showcased, including the Invisible Solution, an AI-driven marker-less mocap technology built in collaboration with Move.ai. By making it easy for an actor to map their movements onto

a digital character in real time, Invisible can be used to drive digital twins, gesture-triggered particle effects like smoke and fire, and even avatars in metaverse experiences. An exclusive reception was also hosted by the Disguise team, where they unveiled the teaser for the company's first virtual production short, *Space Ryder*.

Chris Greenhill, co-founder and Director of Film Soho, said, "We are delighted to be official partners of Marché du Film and Cannes Next at this year's festival and to be collaborating with our friends at Disguise to curate this incredible global event!"

Annabel Martin, Director of V-Studios and Operations at Film Soho, added, "V-Studios is hugely proud to be at the forefront of this cutting-edge technology, bringing our 1.5mm pixel pitch LED screen powered by Disguise from London to Cannes, exclusively for the first Cannes Film Festival Global Virtual Production Summit." PRO





# TRACKING RAMADAN 2023 TRENDS

Ramadan is a standout period in MENA media entertainment, when we see some of the finest productions in the region showcased. **Heba Korayem**, an expert in the Arabic content market and founder of HConsult, spotlights acquisition and distribution patterns of Ramadan releases in MENA as well as other market trends

**Media stakeholders in the MENA region have outdone themselves each Ramadan season with greater spectacle, punchier narratives and drama series intended to keep viewers glued to the screen. With its unique characteristics and growing global demand, the content industry goes into overdrive in the months leading up to Ramadan, when a raft of productions is rolled out.**

From a strictly B2B content trading perspective, content launched during Ramadan can be broadly categorised into two types: tradable assets and non-tradable assets. This article particularly places the Ramadan content market in focus and explores the economic dynamics of the key players involved.

From digital streaming platforms to traditional TV networks and production

houses, we will attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of this industry that is presently worth \$500m.

The Arabic content market is often characterised by a specific set of genres and themes. When platforms or TV networks from foreign countries seek Arabic library titles, they often encounter a recurring pattern: 30-episode series with slight variations. These series predominantly revolve around socio-cultural narratives. Action, sci-fi, fantasy and horror genres were not traditionally prevalent until 2019, when Arabic producers discovered the changing preferences of platforms and when platforms discovered the new appetites of viewers through digitally collected data, a scarce commodity in the Arabic content industry. This discovery led to a 30% increase in the supply of quirky genres such as horror, thriller and suspense.

Tradable video assets such as series or movies retain their value over time and can be licensed and re-licensed for extended



Heba Korayem.

periods. On the other hand, non-tradable video assets are often referred to as disposable content produced specifically for Ramadan. These include some talk shows, game shows, religious programming and heavily seasonal or branded content. While non-tradable assets do not retain high value for re-licensing beyond the specific season, they play a vital role in catering to the diverse Ramadan audience and milking the ad spend budgets.

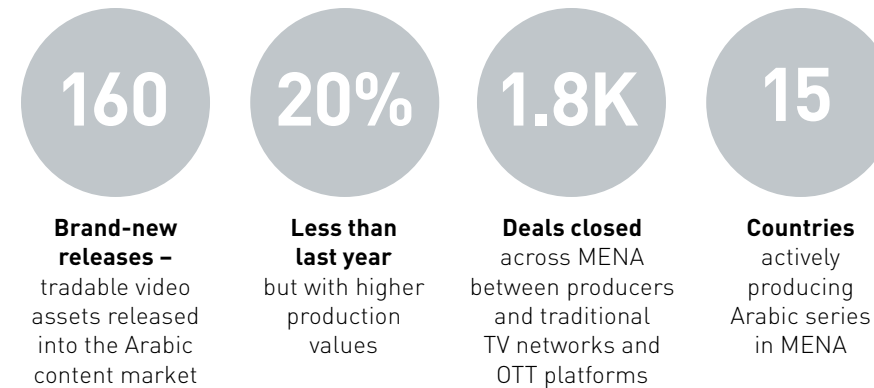
During Ramadan 2023, we counted a total of 160 tradable Arabic assets released into the content market. Although this is a 20% decrease compared to 2022, our analysis reveals higher production values and the emergence of new market entrants. Out of the 22 Arabic-speaking countries in the MENA region, 15 actively contributed to the production

of Arabic assets for Ramadan. However, approximately 12% of the initially announced titles were retracted, postponed for post-seasonal release or suspended altogether.

Among them was season two of the highly anticipated series *Kaser Adm (Breaking Bones)* by Syrian production house Clacket Media, which the producers decided to save for Ramadan 2024 due to time constraints in the production. Another example is MBC Group's *Muawiya*, a project with an estimated budget of \$75m, making it the most expensive in the history of Arabic drama. Rumour has it that it was postponed due to political concerns after warnings from Iraqi officials that it might stir up sectarian strife between religious sects due to the story's historical and controversial nature.

One notable trend observed during Ramadan 2023 was the significant increase in investment in Iraqi content. There was a staggering 70% surge since the previous season, with investments

## + Ramadan 2023 estimated at \$500m



coming from various sources. The newly launched platform 1001, with its strong April launch, announced five original Iraqi productions, contributing to this boom. In addition to MBC Group's investment in Iraqi content, a newly established fund in Iraq aimed at supporting local dramas holds the rights to at least one of the Iraqi releases. Furthermore, Iraq's UTV network had six strong brand-new Iraqi releases. Jordan's Roya Media Group, which operates Jordan's top TV channel, was quick to pick up on this trend and featured one title in its Ramadan line-up, specifically targeting the Iraqi market.

Around 90% of the Ramadan 2023-produced series found their way onto 17 OTT platforms across the MENA region. However, the remaining 10% took a different path. Some VOD rights were removed from the Ramadan content market due to low prices, while others landed on YouTube, showcasing the remnants of the previously popular model of linear channels using YouTube as a catch-up service. Interestingly, approximately 20 channels in the MENA region still publish their long-form, high-quality episodes on YouTube as a means of additional monetisation or cost savings, avoiding the need to invest in their own platforms. However, this approach carries the risk of devaluing the content, something the Arabic content industry has been

trying to address for nearly five years.

In addition to digital streaming platforms, traditional TV networks still play a pivotal role in the distribution of Ramadan content. More than 120 satellite TV channels on Nilesat or Arabsat, excluding MBC Group, have licensed or invested in at least two to eleven drama series each. These channels acquire distribution rights across multiple windows, including pay-TV and free-to-air channels, spanning five to six MENA territories. The value of these deals is a subject of speculation, leaving it to the reader's imagination to envision the financial stakes involved.

Production houses bear the heaviest weight when it comes to contributing to the Arabic content market during Ramadan. Our analysis indicates that three major production houses accounted for 25% of the supply of Arabic drama series released

during this period. MBC Group from Saudi Arabia, United Media Services (UMS) from Egypt and Cedars Art Productions, based in Lebanon, played a prominent role. Notably, Cedars Art Productions stood out this year as the only fully independent commercially run production house producing the highest number of Ramadan 2023 series. This accomplishment highlights the strength of independent entities in meeting the region's content demand during this festive season.

As the Arabic content market continues to evolve, Ramadan remains a significant period that propels the industry forward. With around 1,800 deals closed, only those dealing in the market will grasp the unusual dynamics of supply and demand, and the rather 'friendly' competition of digital streaming platforms, traditional TV networks and production houses. The demand for engaging content during this month drives innovation in content rights sharing and industry collaboration, and contributes significantly to the economic growth of countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

As audiences eagerly await the next Ramadan season, the industry strives to create compelling narratives, pushing the boundaries of storytelling while keeping a watchful eye on the commercial viability of these projects. **PRO**

## + Ramadan 2023 traditional TV







The delivery of IP broadcast workflows is not always as simple as it appears to be. Nikolaos Katsampekis, Product Owner at Pebble Control, advocates adopting the IS-12 Control Protocol to streamline architects' tasks and simplify the delivery of an IP broadcast workflow

**While it is tempting to think that IP workflows are already mature within the industry, there remain definite hurdles to their adoption and implementation. Interoperability, which we can define as the ability of an application or a device to interact meaningfully and exchange information with another separately developed application or device, is not as commonplace nor as seamless as it needs to be.**

This is a problem, as broadcast workflows, while exhibiting commonalities across many organisations, inevitably have a bespoke element as they are adapted to each media organisation's individual requirements. For example, broadcast facilities often seek to tailor ingested material to specific formats for in-house processing, before then having to reformat them again to meet

the needs of other facilities downstream in the chain.

True, there are sophisticated platforms that provide an end-to-end service, including an increasing number being established in the cloud, but these have disadvantages. They tend to be costly and restrictive in terms of toolsets, risk delivering poor performance somewhere in the chain, and can also introduce multiple single points of failure.

In an ideal world, the system architects would pick devices that offer 'best' features at a balanced cost. They'd also choose devices that provide greater flexibility in 'personas' and have accommodating licensing and expansion abilities. The ideal system can therefore feature many different flavours of devices from many different vendors, with even

the same vendors offering different versions or variants.

However, the lack of interoperability between devices currently introduces challenges for system architects. They know that Workflow Component A will talk reliably to Workflow Component C, even though Workflow Component B is actually the best-in-class and the most favoured option.

Fortunately, there is plenty of work being undertaken to solve interoperability issues and make the truly open sandbox dream a genuine reality. The Advanced Media Workflow Association's Networked Media Open Specifications (AMWA, NMOS) are a set of open and free-of-charge specifications published by the organisation. These effectively enable interoperability between media devices in an IP infrastructure.

NMOS specifications cover a range of applications, data models and interfaces, but the one we want to focus on here is NMOS Open Interface Specification IS-12. While it is still a work in progress and not available yet, it will play a key role in simplifying current IP workflow architectures.

IS-12 describes a standard way of exposing the different NMOS Control models on a device to the network, which can then be interacted with in turn by the NMOS Broadcast Controller. This software application is designed to discover, connect, control and in general manage resources from multiple vendors. In short, IS-12 makes interoperability easier by providing a robust method of linking different ecosystem elements together and making sure each one can talk to the other.

As a result, system architects


no longer have to juggle complexity with expedience. Rather than every device in a workflow being represented by a different vendor-specific protocol and control application – with all the resource costs associated not only with keeping track of the integration but also making sure they don't drift over time and cause issues – under IS-12 they can have a more simplified deployment. Indeed, by adopting the NMOS IS-12 Control Protocol together with the well established IS-04 and IS-05 APIs and the associated Best Current Practices documents, they can have a system that requires simply one control protocol and one control application.

What's more, adding a new device or replacing a failed one requires absolutely no additional development efforts to discover, interrogate and extract control parameters. Time and cost for IP deployment and system maintenance and evolution are dramatically reduced as a result.

Some may question the need for another industry control protocol, but the need in the industry for long-term stability by underwriting interoperability with open protocols and specifications, rather than proprietary ones, is very real. The involvement of both users and vendors in AMWA ensures a holistic, real-world approach to continued development, which also benefits from current and future JT-NM bench-testing activities. The hope is that its wider adoption will help to bring down barriers normally found with the exchange of information between vendors, simplifying and speeding up the deployment of end user workflows and the transition to IP as it does. **PRO**




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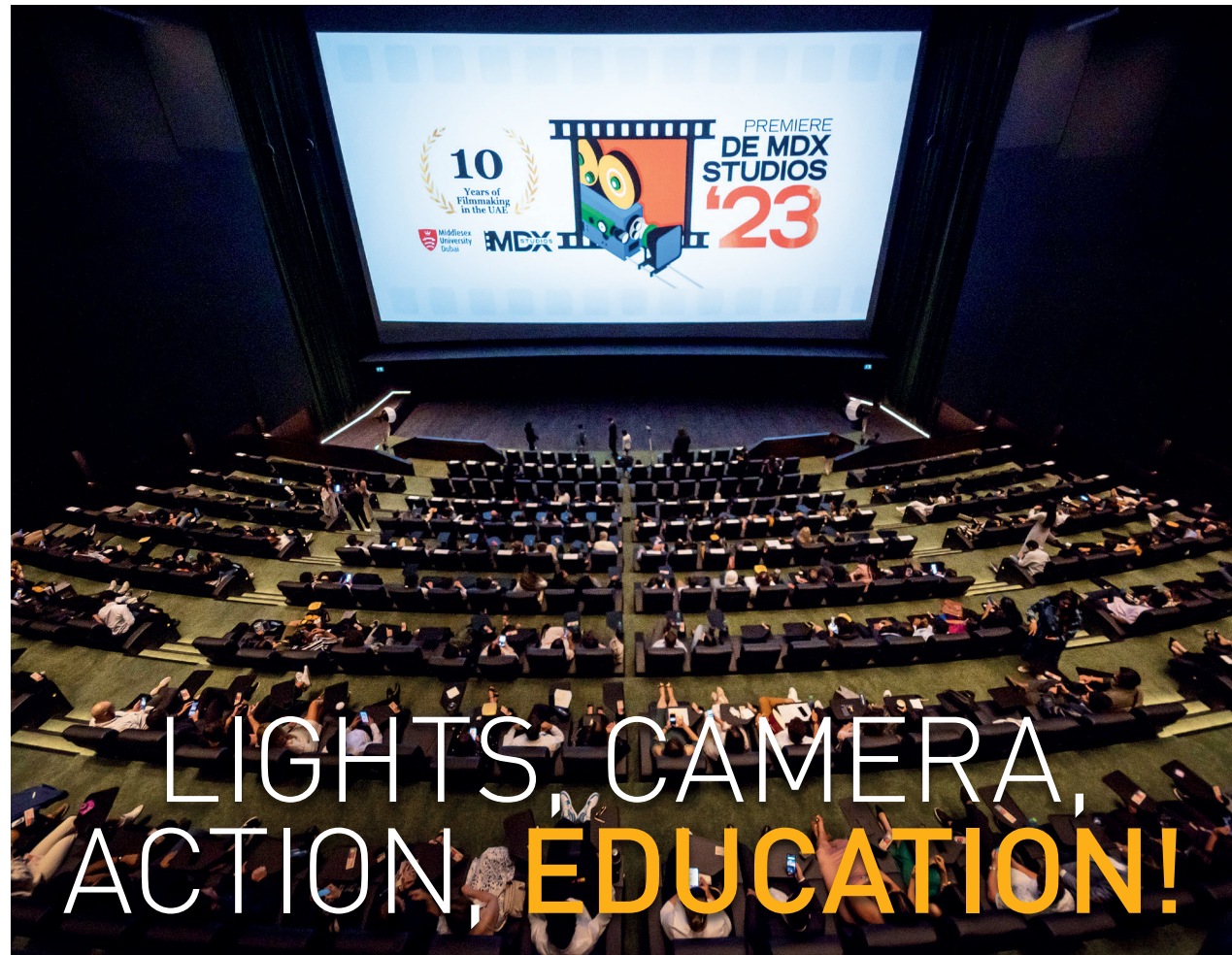
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Middlesex University's film graduates showcase their original short productions on Xtreme, the MENA region's largest screen, at Roxy Cinemas, Dubai Hills Mall

**MDX Studios, the Film School at Middlesex University Dubai, celebrated another highly successful edition of Premiere de MDX Studios, its annual student film festival. Hosted at Xtreme at Roxy Cinemas in Dubai Hills Mall last month, the event marked ten years of filmmaking at the university and saw its talented graduating filmmakers debut their original productions at the venue to a packed audience of the region's film and cinema industry leaders, as well as faculty, classmates, friends and family.**

As well as being the first edition where every film was produced in the newly enhanced MDX Studios film lab launched in February, the event marked the first time that any university has presented student work at Xtreme, the largest cinema screen in the MENA region.

Each student director was given the chance to premiere their film and discuss their process and inspiration with the audience. Head of MDX Studios Afroz Nawaf also shared news and updates about the studio's growth, future plans and upcoming industry projects.

The films showcased touched on subjects as diverse as homelessness, mental health, mother-daughter bonds and childhood fears. *Lamcy*, for instance, created by final-year students Jatin Kalwani and Omar Al Amri, focused on a young boy who sets off a chain of terrifying events when he wins a toy clown from an arcade.

Kalwani said: "The idea for this movie came from our feeling that people don't actually get scared while watching movies anymore. We wanted to change that and create a film that really addressed social and mental health issues. The name of the clown is inspired by Lamcy Plaza, an old mall in Dubai that had a clown hanging outside. We had one-on-one coaching from Afroz throughout every step of the process, and we learned so much about sound design working with the Dolby Atmos sound system on campus, and all the stages involved with film production."

Ashwin Ashta Kumar and Micheal Yazji incorporated their own personal experiences from relationships in their lives into the plot of their psycho-thriller *Polaroid*. Kumar said: "We gained so many new skills in story development, synopsis and tagline writing and

directing. The tips and techniques from our professors about how to grab the attention of investors was really useful, and we loved learning how to use the RED cameras, set up our sets and shoot our films at MDX Studios."

A series of awards for the Class of 2023 were also given to several students in recognition of their achievements. The award for Best Film went to director Zyrus De Leon and producer Vine Aerien Bianzon for their short film *Pink Rose*, while *The One-on-One* from director Ashwanth Ashwinikumar and producer Vine Aerien Bianzon won the Audience Choice Award. Several other awards were also given at the event.

Dr David Tully, Head of Media at Middlesex University Dubai, said: "Today's milestone event, our biggest ever, celebrates not only the extraordinary filmmaking abilities of our students, but also ten years of the Film Department at Middlesex University Dubai. That is a decade of continuous, spectacular growth in student numbers, in quality of studio resources, in industry-trained faculty, and we're just getting started. We have revolutionised and redefined film education in the Middle East, as the outstanding quality of today's films in every aspect of visual storytelling, cinematography, direction and production value makes clear. Here's to the next decade of cutting-edge filmmaking in the region!"

Afroz Nawaf, Head of MDX Studios, Middlesex University Dubai, said: "This year's edition held extra significance, as it featured the first student films to be created in the

**"This year's edition ... featured the first student films to be created in the brand-new MDX Studios"**

Afroz Nawaf, Head of MDX Studios, Middlesex University Dubai



Dr David Tully addresses the gathering.

**"Today's milestone event ... celebrates not only the extraordinary filmmaking abilities of our students, but also ten years of the Film Department at Middlesex University Dubai"**

Dr David Tully, Head of Media, Middlesex University Dubai

production university course, MDX Studios has an extensive facility of co-production space for filmmakers, and a dedicated podcast studio, pitch desk, writers room, viewing theatre and Dolby Atmos Mixing Theatre. It has professional gear including Blackmagic Design cameras, as well as the RED camera ecosystems approved for use by content producers for global media platforms such as Netflix. With the newly upgraded cameras and editing suites, students have access to advanced industry software, equipment and filmmaking techniques as part of their degrees, even being able to produce finalised movies in line with the latest industry standards. **PRO**



The faculty with some of the students.



# REEL OF FORTUNE

The entertainment industry is growing rapidly, with revenues projected to grow from \$27.86bn in 2022 to \$48.76bn by 2027, according to Statista. But are creators and artists benefiting from this jump? An app called ReelStar was created to rebalance the economics of content creation, engagement and value for both creators and their fans, with the help of blockchain technology. In an exclusive interview with **BroadcastPro ME**, Nick Bahl explains how blockchain can transform the media and entertainment sector

## How would you describe Reelstar in a nutshell?

ReelStar is the first 'everything app' developed from the ground up on a decentralised Web3 multi-blockchain platform with integrated live streaming, video sharing, peer-to-peer chat, audio/video calling, NFT minting, NFT marketplace and a digital wallet with special functionalities.

## What prompted you to come up with this app?

ReelStar was created in response to a need for a more democratised and equitable entertainment ecosystem. We saw that the traditional media and entertainment ecosystems are almost entirely controlled by a small number of established corporations, and these favour a business model for artists that have mass appeal over small and independent creators. Their business model requires audiences in the millions; the direct result is a lack of diversity in both content and creators. Globalisation of media and entertainment is almost a given. We strongly believe that the world needs more diverse content that will support and maintain local cultures and entertainment while providing a fairer compensation for the creators who appeal to smaller audiences.

The rise of blockchain technology and the increasing popularity of NFTs provided an opportunity to create a new type of entertainment platform that can be more secure, transparent and fairer and more accessible for all parties involved. How entertainment is delivered and consumed is rapidly evolving, and the mobile device as an entertainment platform is now in the majority. ReelStar was designed as a mobile-first platform to address the multiple issues that have plagued the industry. Almost 85% of the world has a smartphone and, through our platform, that is all they need to have a fair and equal chance to be a part of the global entertainment industry.

## What's your background?

I've had 13 years of experience in the media and entertainment industry. As the founder of Sizzlen Productions in Australia, I have formed many strong friendships with artists and other major players in the industry. We heard from many artists, even at the top of their field, that they were not being fairly compensated for their creativity and due to the contractual nature and business model of the industry were severely restricted in developing their own creativity outside of the mass market appeal that was the sole criteria for the industry behemoths. I believe that artists have a great role to play in and desire to improve the world, and I really want to help them achieve that.

## When was ReelStar launched? In which markets are you seeing the most traction?

Reel Star was only incorporated in September 2022; we have not even reached the 12-month anniversary, but in that time we have launched our utility token on four exchanges, including one in the top ten. We have distributed beta versions of our app on both Apple and Android platforms and continue to develop and improve on our offering. We have also seen interest from 14 countries and are working hard to accommodate the differing requirements in those markets and regions.

## Are you looking to partner with any companies in various sectors to attract more users?

We are to increase our user base primarily through our user base. We have extended our relationships with marketing companies and influencers affiliated with multiple social media and other platforms. We have had ongoing discussions with a number of multinationals with significant global presence to join our product offerings with theirs and their audience. We expect to have some major announcements shortly.





**How do you see people using various aspects of your platform?**

Let's take the example of a musician who wants to use ReelStar to showcase their work, engage with fans and monetise their content.

- **Content creation:** The musician can create and upload their music videos on ReelStar, which can be discovered and viewed by users worldwide. They can also create short-form videos, similar to TikTok, to promote their music and engage with their audience.
- **Live streaming:** The musician can use our live streaming feature to host virtual concerts and interact with their fans in real time. They can also monetise these live streams through ticket sales or donations from viewers.
- **NFT minting:** The musician can create exclusive, limited edition digital collectibles, such as concert posters or album art, using ReelStar's NFT minting feature. These can be sold to fans as unique, one-of-a-kind items that they can own and trade.
- **Digital wallet:** The musician can use ReelStar's digital wallet to manage their earnings from content monetisation and NFT sales. They can also use it to purchase virtual goods or tip other creators on the platform.
- **Peer-to-peer chat:** The musician can use the app's peer-to-peer chat feature to communicate with fans and collaborate with other artists.
- **An artist with a song but no video** can reach out to the global community for patronage or partnership to create the music video and to share profits with both producers and patrons, where security and transparency are fully realised through smart contract technology.

Overall, ReelStar provides a one-stop-shop for content creation, distribution and monetisation for not only independent musicians but any content creator in any

**“Almost 85% of the world has a smartphone and, through our platform, that is all they need to have a fair and equal chance to be a part of the global entertainment industry”**

Nick Bahl, founder, ReelStar

form, providing them with a global audience and multiple revenue streams. Even established artists and content creators can benefit from the in-app monetisation platform which maximises returns to the creator and not the media company.

**Is your platform targeted at DIY creators or creators in the professional market?**

It's for everyone, essentially. Our platform is intended to allow democratic access to not only the technology but also the audience. The platform can benefit everyone, no matter what stage of creativity and profession they are in. We have in place education, tools and support to help newcomers find their feet, grow and improve in leaps and bounds before an appreciative audience willing to compensate them for their creativity and the benefit they provide to the audience.

**If Web3 is all about protecting privacy, how are you looking to harvest consumer data?**

This is not an issue for us, as we do not rely on advertising revenue to sustain our platform. We, therefore, do not need to collect ever more information about our users to try and sell to advertisers. Our platform is the stepping stone to a genuine Web3 platform where consumers search for and find what they want, without any targeting by advertisers and/or corporations. Their searches are not used to try and influence further transactions. The only thing we do is ensure that our platform is the fertile ground needed for creators who in turn will share their harvest with a global audience.

**One of the concerns with NFT and blockchain is the carbon footprint. How are you addressing this?**

Yes, we took steps right from the beginning to

minimise our carbon footprint. Our token runs on a blockchain using a proof-of-stake (PoS) consensus algorithm, which is significantly less energy-intensive compared to all other consensus algorithms relied upon by many other blockchains. Our blockchain was carbon-neutral last year and is expected to be carbon-negative this year.

Furthermore, we are committed to raising awareness with all our users about the whole global environment, not just the environmental impact of NFTs and blockchain technology. We encourage them to take steps to reduce their carbon footprint as well. Ultimately, by working together, we can create a more sustainable and eco-friendlier blockchain ecosystem.

**What are the prime challenges to monetising your app?**

It has always been our intent to build something new and dynamic that would disrupt the current inequities in the media and entertainment industry. If we can quote from *Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, they will come.” Our genuine belief is that as more and more content creators see the vision that our platform is aiming to deliver, we will see much greater success towards our end goals. We are a startup without the resources of corporations that have effectively profited from their respective monopolies, at a cost to both the creator and the audience.

Our growth is and will continue to be exponential. Although we are starting from a small user base, it is growing; and like our competitors did, we fully expect that this growth will address the prime challenge – creators need an audience and an audience needs content. The world today has a much more voracious appetite and discernment for content. We know our platform is the solution to this growing need, and that it will do so by treating creators and audience fairly and democratically. **PRO**



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The MENA region has always been a hotbed for innovation and growth, and the streaming industry is no exception. Advancements in broadcast technology and the proliferation of high-speed internet have resulted in the disruption of traditional playout in favour of flexible streaming services.

On-demand streaming has enjoyed perpetual success over the last decade, and research suggests that by 2027 there will be more than 36m SVOD subscriptions in MENA alone. Subscription platforms have secured their position in the market, but consumers now expect more for less, and ad-supported content is fulfilling the demands of viewers in terms of both cost and personalisation options.

Cost is a significant factor in purchasing decisions, and the ability to access a vast library of content without any financial commitment is hugely beneficial. Likewise, when cost-savings are teamed with the ability to consume shows and movies tailored to specific interests, ad-supported channels present a highly attractive proposition for consumers.

AVOD has been a popular option for consumers; however, as they begin to turn their attention to more interest-based content, FAST channels are quickly becoming a favourable alternative. If viewers have a preference for cooking shows or want to binge-watch classic horror films, FAST channels provide the ideal platform to immerse themselves in.

**The streaming revolution**

Although there are similarities, FAST channels offer a compelling alternative

“Research suggests that by 2027, there will be more than 36m SVOD subscriptions in MENA”

# FAST Track to Success: The New Era of Streaming

to viewing models that consumers are accustomed to. Combining the benefits of linear TV with the flexibility of on-demand streaming, FAST channels provide consumers the flexibility to tailor viewing experiences to individual needs, with options to pause, rewind and fast-forward through content.

In the culturally diverse MENA region, delivering content that resonates is crucial to attracting and retaining viewers. Providing a curated selection of localised and globally popular shows and movies along with live TV allows channel providers to target and satisfy a wider audience, without tying them into a subscription model.

**The digital investment**

Globally, there has been a significant rise in investment in digital advertising, and MENA is following the same trend. FAST channels are providing new opportunities to reach wider audiences, and revenue streams are increasing as a result. Despite offering free content, providers can attract many viewers, which in turn presents a unique opportunity for brands to promote their products or services to a diverse and engaged audience.

The FAST model also presents a flexible and dynamic advertising experience for advertisers. Unlike traditional linear TV advertising, which requires pre-planned schedules, FAST channels allow advertisers to adjust their advertising campaigns in real time. This flexibility makes it possible to adapt advertising messages to changing circumstances and ensure that ads are delivered to the right viewers at the right time.

With the use of data-driven targeting techniques, advertisers can target specific audience segments based on their interests, behaviour and demographic characteristics. This makes it possible to create highly personalised and relevant ads that resonate with viewers, which in turn increases engagement and enhances the overall effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

**More than monetisation**

Although the monetisation opportunities and potential ROI from FAST channels seem favourable, it's crucial not to overlook the technological requirements. Despite some overlaps with other types of streaming services, the unique business model of FAST TV channels requires specific skills and expertise. They generate revenue from ad sales, so a deep understanding of both channel management and ad sales operations is crucial. A strong knowledge of content licensing and compliance is another important skill when operating FAST channels. Different regions have different advertising and broadcasting rules and regulations, so relevant knowledge of different markets will ensure your channel is fully compliant.

As an innovative and evolving market, MENA is well positioned to lead the way in the FAST race. As better connectivity envelops the region, channel providers will be presented with more opportunities to reach larger audiences over a range of devices. The months ahead will bring broadcasters and advertisers closer, to provide innovative viewing solutions to a thriving young demographic. **PRO**

Craig Buckland is Technical Director at Broadcast Traffic Systems.



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