THE SYRIAN CONNECTION
Abu Dhabi chosen as home base for mega drama series

ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
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In conversation with Conax and Kudelski Group heads
Dubai-based boutique creative production company, Talkabout Media recently invested in a full HD fly-away OB (outside broadcast) kit aimed at servicing the local conference and events market.

“It’s a natural extension of our current business,” said Ian Carless, Owner & Executive Producer of Talkabout Media. “With more than 20 years of experience working in live television with broadcasters such as MTV, ESPN, Star TV, we’re pretty comfortable in any live broadcast environment and it’s this experience we bring to the table with our coverage of events, conferences and seminars.”

The multi-camera production OB kit features key components from Blackmagic. “We chose Blackmagic because they ticked all the boxes. We wanted a broadcast quality solution that was also easily scalable for future expansion. Blackmagic gives us that and more,” said Carless.

The system is based on ATEM 1/ME Production Studio 4K which offers eight-frame synchronised camera inputs, two auxiliary inputs, digital and analogue audio inputs plus a comprehensive up-stream keying component and graphics capability.

AIRFILMS TO OPEN OFFICE IN DUBAI

Airfilms, a Dutch production house that specializes in aerial photography, intends to set up base in Dubai. The company has been working in the region since 2011 and has filmed for several clients in Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE. Headquartered in The Hague, Airfilms will have a base in the Middle East by September. “We will appoint sales and business development staff in the region and are looking at Dubai as a base. By September, we should be able to arrive at a decision on the location and number of staff,” Bart Hartge, MD of Airfilms Production confirmed to BroadcastPro ME.

Qatar’s telecom provider Ooredoo has renewed its contract with beIN Sports to provide content for its entertainment service Mozaic TV. The two-year deal will give Mozaic TV the rights to broadcast all beIN Sports channels on Mozaic TV, including 15 HD channels that will showcase the latest sporting events and news in four different languages.

Mozaic TV and beIN Sports have prepared a new beIN Sports + Global package for next generation and standard Mozaic TV customers. Ooredoo will also provide World Cup access to its subscribers.

US $2BN

Estimated value of the combined entity of 21st Century Fox and Apollo Global Management as they enter into a tentative deal to create one of the world’s largest television production businesses. The agreement will see Fox’s Shine Group merge with Apollo, which owns Core Media and Endemol.
Azam launches Ugandan pay-TV service

Azam, a new entrant in the Ugandan multichannel digital television market, has launched a satellite-delivered service.

The Bakresa Group-backed company offers subscribers a 60-channel plus package for US $8 a month, according to a report in the Ugandan daily The Independent. It also provides free-to-air channels including those from East Africa’s national broadcasters.

In less than four months, Azam has reportedly attracted more than 55,000 customers in Tanzania, and now aims to sell 30,000 decoders within 30 days of launch in Uganda.

Only 10% of an estimated six to seven million TV sets are currently able to receive digital signals in Uganda, ahead of the July 2015 ITU deadline for analogue switch off.

SANAD fund announces first cycle of grants

Abu Dhabi Film Festival’s fund, SANAD, announced the first cycle of grants for 2014 to support the development and post-production of several films by filmmakers from across the Arab world.

Projects receiving post-production grants are Car, The Valley, The Wanted Life, Um Ghayeb, and Pirates of Salt.

Projects receiving development grants are Money Babe, Catch the Moon, Kiss Me Nat, Sons of Sunday, The Golden Harvest, and The Bird of the Mountains.

Nat Geo Abu Dhabi unveils photography reality show

National Geographic Abu Dhabi launched its first photography reality show Nat Geo Abu Dhabi unveils photography reality show Nat Geo Photographer that premiered recently is shot entirely in the UAE with Nikon as the Presenting Sponsor. Eight amateur photographers from across the Arab world compete against one another in a series of challenges.

OSN LAUNCHES NEW OTT INITIATIVE

Digital TV to reach majority of homes in MENA: report

Digital TV penetration will be 73.8% in the Middle East & North Africa (up from 64.3% in 2010) and 57.1% in Sub-Saharan Africa (up from only 19.2% in 2010), according to the Digital TV Middle East & Africa Database from Digital TV Research. The report projected 132.4m TV households across the region by end-2014, up from 117.2m in 2010. However, 113.0m homes (46.0% of total households) will not have a TV set by end-2014. Furthermore, the region is expected to reach 89.3m digital TV households by the end of 2014, up by 12.4m during the year and up by 32.4m since 2010. The Middle East & North Africa is projected to have 15.5m pay-TV subs by end-2014 (up from 10.6m in 2010), with Sub-Saharan Africa on 13.1m (more than double the 2010 total).

In terms of platforms, free-to-air satellite TV will become the most popular platform in 2014, overtaking the declining analogue terrestrial total. Satellite TV is forecast to contribute the bulk of pay-TV revenues, with its share of the total rising from 77.5% in 2010 to 78.8% in 2014. Pay TV revenues in the Middle East & North Africa will increase from $3.0bn in 2010 to $4.4bn in 2014, with sub-Saharan Africa doubling over the same period to $8.6bn.

Social media main source of news in MENA region: Arab Media Forum

A new report released at the Arab Media Forum shows that social media is used by the majority of internet users across the Arab world and is their primary source of news.

The Arab Social Media Outlook 2014 suggested that Tim people used social media in the region last year out of a total 135m internet users. Egypt topped the Arab countries with the largest Facebook user base in 2013 and the UAE recorded the highest penetration to population ratio of 58%, an increase of one million users during 2013.

Tiffen takes great pride in introducing the Steadicam® Shadow V™ camera stabilizing system, a low cost big rig that performs like the Ultra2® Shadow V is designed to be user-friendly, field-serviceable, tool-free, straightforward, and versatile so the operator can quickly and easily configure the rig to the best advantage for each shot. Change the sled length, balance, inertia, and go to low mode , all without tools, extra parts, or fuss and bother. It is a solid, versatile and fast system.
A senior executive from ARRI’s lighting unit was in Dubai recently to meet with the company’s strategic partners. During his visit, Markus Zeiler, General Manager of ARRI’s Business Unit Lighting also announced the appointment of Sohail Shafi as Head of Lighting, Middle East and Africa. Based in Dubai, Shafi will be responsible for driving growth through the implementation of sales and support strategies in the region with special focus on broadcast system solutions.

Commenting on the new appointment, Zeiler said: “We are pleased to have Sohail on board as part of the ARRI lighting team. We have been working through partners and resellers in the region for some time now, and with Sohail’s appointment, we will have a representative in the region, which will help us to be closer to our customers at any given time.”

Zeiler added that “each region has a different business behaviour and it helps to have someone from the region who understands the market.”

“ARRI is exploring the possibility of having a base in the region because MEA is a big territory. We cannot be everywhere, so we need a local team to provide sales and technical support in the region.”

“ARRI’s lighting business in the MEA region accounts for about 10% of its total global turnover for lighting. The market has the potential to grow to 20% or more in the next three to five years, according to Zeiler. The company has won a number of projects for converting conventional tungsten lights to power saving LEDs.

“ARRI’s business from the Middle East comes from studio lighting projects, demand for which is constantly growing,” said Zeiler.
Twofour54, the commercial arm of the Media Zone Authority – Abu Dhabi, confirmed that Star Wars: Episode VII was shot in the UAE capital last month and it provided the support the team required. Abu Dhabi served as the first location for the shooting of the seventh instalment of the global movie phenomenon, which is due to premiere in December 2015.

Director J.J. Abrams and the Star Wars cast flew to Abu Dhabi in early May. Hundreds of local and international cast and crew worked on the production in Abu Dhabi with key production staff working closely with twofour54 since January. The combination of diverse desert landscapes, an extensive production infrastructure and a 30% cash rebate served as an instant allure for the producers. Six UAE nationals had the opportunity to work on set through twofour54’s Creative Lab Community Internship Programme. Two of the interns will be given the opportunity to also follow the production to London’s Pinewood Studios, thereby, expanding their international production experience.

“Twofour54’s vision is to enable the development of world-class Arabic media and entertainment content,” commented Noura Al Kaabi, CEO, twofour54. “By exposing our local young talent to international productions and prominent directors, we look forward to developing their skills, and developing our next big director.”

TV Everywhere in MENA to grow to $100m by 2018:
 Frost & Sullivan

TV everywhere in MENA in 2013 accounted for more than USD 10m, which is projected to grow ten-fold by 2018 to $100m. The main drivers of TV Everywhere are high proliferation of connected devices and high-speed internet connectivity. Rising consumption of online video content in the Middle East triggers market opportunities. Boom in local Arabic content availability online will boost TV Everywhere adoption. MENA is expected to be linked through 54m consumer connected devices by 2020, stated a Frost & Sullivan report.

TV Everywhere, Personalised Discovery and Digital Life Solutions will be the most transformative over the next 36 months. The rest are expected to remain at the same level of importance. The deterrents in its adoption are lack of online ad spend, the predominance of FTA content and rampant piracy of online content.

The report also said that there will be six to seven connected devices for every user by 2020 in the MENA region.
QUICKLINK SPEEDS UP AL JAZEERA’S NEWS DELIVERY

Al Jazeera Media Network has been broadcasting from several underreported locations around the world using Quicklink technology. Some of the most recent news stories that made the headlines include the mudslide incident in Afghanistan, the schoolkidnapping by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria and the avalanche tragedy in the Himalayas, where 31 Sherpas died on Mt Everest. Al Jazeera Network was one of the first to broadcast those stories on its platforms.

Quicklink has become the main method of field and bureau content delivery for Al Jazeera English since its launch in 2006. Quicklink live compression, coupled with its live software, enables the correspondents to report from remote regions, previously outside the news cycle. The technology was used with Windows Live and Windows Store & Forward version of the Quicklink software, which was later adapted to the Mac OS X version to cater to the broadcaster’s demands.

The technology will get a further boost from Jazeera’s recent HDR launch and future Global Xpress (GX) service, which is expected to speed the network’s newsgathering operations.

The broadcaster’s field acquisition consists of a combination of MacBook Pro-based laptop newsgathering (solutions) coupled with traditional satellite newsgathering. Its camera crews are equipped with Hughes BHS 1201 BIAN.

DFTC launches Film Dubai Production Guide at Cannes

Dubai Film and TV Commission (DFTC) has released the first ‘Film Dubai Production Guide’ - a comprehensive resource listing information about locations, talent and advice on filming and producing in Dubai. DFTC launched the guide at Cannes Film Festival, where it participated with other UAE film entities to producing in Dubai. DFTC launched the guide at Cannes Film Festival, where it participated with other UAE film entities to

The directory is the first guide of its type in the emirate and forms part of DFTC’s ongoing strategy to simplify and streamline film and TV production in the emirate. It will act as a one-stop resource for information about filming in Dubai, connecting professionals from across every aspect of the production process.

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Manufacturers of professional lenses have been on life support since the debacle of the 2/3-inch sensor cameras and a near saturation in 2/3-inch lenses. While most of the action in Super 35 and related sensors has been in cine and DSLR, there is already a splinter developing. UHD is increasingly being taken up by broadcasters, which was initially meant for sports trucks and medical video suites.

Just as the UHD movement is going beyond cinematography, a considerable lift is also prevalent in lenses. Furthermore, growth is seen in DSLR lenses and PTE (pan, tilt, zoom) lens use for robotics. Part of the renewed enthusiasm is built on the blending of movie-making and television. Since 1995, questionnaires have been taken up by broadcasters, which was initially meant for sports trucks and medical video suites. This means that primes are more applicable and practical as an investment.

Who’s zooming who?
Manufacturers have found increased demand for a very wide range of lenses as users are starting to see them as being nearly as good a quality as primes or fixed mm lenses, still far more widely applicable and practical as an investment. This means that primes are more often rented while zooms are growing faster as purchases. And, often that has meant that the practice of renting primes for specific production rather than owning them continues. With the blending of movie-making and episodic TV production in an all-digital workflow emerging as the international standard, zooms stand to gain. The workflow emerging as the international standard, zooms stand to gain. The price-point of lenses has come down as the price of storage devices, lenses, software, bags and tripods. And, much more. Habits around lens use, whether primes or zooms are clearing to old ways in some very predictable aspects. That is, like the tendency for D-SLR owners to own a very similar ‘kit bag’ of lenses such as – typically – a 50mm and 35mm fixed (primes) a mid-range zoom as well as a macro lens, fisheye lens or wide angle lens. Longer telephoto lenses – which tend to carry with them ultra-high prices – remain a near saturation in 2/3-inch sensors helped build a huge market for lenses has there been anything approaching the potential pull-through being anticipated for lenses. And, with a warmer already being shown by applications beyond cinematography, it should only be a question of timing the transition, not of whether it is coming. Unlike 3D that has come and gone many times, upward mobility in regards to resolution from 3D to HD, to UHD has always seemed a sensible path. Also larger sensors really require new lenses and so many new brands of cameras keep arriving. This was particularly notable at the recent NAB Show – demand for UHD-appropriate lenses is growing dramatically.
Dubbed as a one-of-its-kind production for its scale and style, big-budget Syrian drama The Brothers opened to rave reviews on Abu Dhabi TV in April. Vibhuti Arora reports from behind the scenes

The year 2014 began on a high note for Abu Dhabi as the city hosted a roster of regional and international productions. The UAE capital was in the spotlight for Hollywood biggies such as Star Wars 7 and The Fast and the Furious 7 as well as Bollywood action thriller Bang Bang, while also hosting several regional productions. One such production that has been turning heads since it began filming is The Brothers – one of the biggest TV series not only in the history of Syrian drama but also for Abu Dhabi. With an estimated budget of USD 46m, this Syrian production stands out for its technical finesse and star cast. The production is claimed to be slicker and smarter than many of its counterparts, and experts have even termed it as a milestone in the history of Syrian drama.

The series has a different look and feel to it. Unlike most TV dramas, this series is being shot entirely on location. There are no studio scenes, as one would typically expect of a TV drama. A private villa in Abu Dhabi has been transformed into a home of the five brothers, who serve as the central characters in the series. Some portions of the series are also being filmed on the streets of the UAE capital and at a retreat on Saadiyat Island.

A complex family drama that chronicles the life of a businessman’s five adopted sons, The Brothers is set in modern day Abu Dhabi. The story has been adapted from a popular Mexican soap opera and features more than 36 main actors, who are all stars in their own right and hail from Egypt, Syria and Lebanon.

Produced by Syrian production house Clacket Media, the series is supported by twofour54 and Abu Dhabi Film Commission. The filming on this 90-episode series was in full swing when BroadcastPro ME went on location. The crew had been shooting in Abu Dhabi for more than two months in 12-hour shifts every day and filming of the first 50 episodes had already been

“We developed a visual style in the early stage of the project with Director Ammar Alani. Although we have a different director now, we have maintained the same visual style” - Mario Delic, DoP
completed. The series premiered on Abu Dhabi TV on April 20 but the shoot is expected to continue until July.

Twofour54 offered a 30% rebate on the production cost and helped the production team with location scouting and infrastructural facilities. Intaj is handling the post production of the entire series.

This soap opera has clearly raised the bar for Arab productions, thanks to its scale and style, says Series Director, Seif Sbei, who describes it as a massive project and a trendsetter of sorts.

"Historically, one wouldn’t associate Abu Dhabi with drama but here we are showing a story set in Abu Dhabi, reflecting the high life of the cosmopolitan city. It’s a combination of Syrian and Egyptian drama with some Lebanese characteristics and we have tried to give it a Turkish feel. The anchor of the project, however, is its storyline.

"The shooting is being carried out in blocks and not as episodes, which are then brought together at the editing table. Between our DoP and myself, we have tried to give the series a very slick look. Having big stars from different countries in the Arab world is expected to attract more viewers from these countries," Sbei comments.

Croatian DoP Mario Delic, who shares an Emmy Award for his work on the documentary Calling the Ghosts and boasts a vast body of work in the Arab region, is the main man behind the camera.

According to Delic, it’s a modern story that reflects wealth and sophistication. The camerawork, therefore, had to be aligned with bringing out these characteristics in the script.

"We developed a visual style in the early stages of the project with Director Ammar Alani. Although we have a different director now, we maintained the same visual style," he explains.

The story is filmed at two main locations, the brothers’ villa and “Bait Riad”. The visual concept for the villa was to keep it in cooler, bluish hues with lots of reflections, bright spots in the background and photography that’s somewhat over-the-top and traditionally seen in TV commercials. That’s keeping in line with the fact that the brothers are living in a rich world and don’t face the reality of ordinary people. The idea for “Bait Riad”, on the other hand, was to keep it modest with warmer colours and realistic
photography. This is the reason the shoot is being handled by two units. While Delic heads the first unit, the second unit is under Nizar Wawiye. Both the DoPs have different framing and lighting styles, which according to Delic, add two different dimensions to the drama.

The series is being shot on the Sony F55 and the Sony F5, one for each unit and the audio is recorded on Sennheiser mics, which are synched with the cameras.

“The choice for these cameras was made early on for their ability to shoot 2K RAW. They also shoot 4K, however, that’s more demanding in terms of data storage. I attended the Sony F55/F5 workshop last year in Advanced Media, Dubai and was very keen to try out these cameras. We shoot both 2K RAW and HD, but HD is used for editing since it takes less storage and then the EDL (edit decision list) is sent as output to use with the RAW files,” explains Delic.

Commenting on the versatility that the two cameras offer, Delic says: “I love the ability to use the existing light in the night since we shoot a lot of night scenes on the streets.

The ISO2000 sensitivity of the F5 is great. I filmed some unbelievable shots using only small lights for the actors while getting to feel all of the existing sources in the background. In one scene, I operated the Steadicam system from a car ahead of one of the actors, Qays Sheik-Najib, who rode a motorcycle. We used only one LED

“I believe that the main role of a DoP is to translate the script and the director’s vision to screen through cinematography. Keeping the communication channel open between the director and his crew and the actors helps greatly in achieving this.”

Mario Delic, DoP

PROCOVER

DOP Mario Delic and focus puller Mohammad Badran with the Sony PMW-F55 camera.

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stick for a fill-in and all of the rest was provided by the street lights, which gave the scene a very dramatic effect.”

**Let there be light!**

Delic has deployed Kino Flos extensively throughout the location and calls Chineaballs his “weapon of choice.” “They give a soft contrast to the actors’ faces and work very well for close-up shots,” he says.

Having worked in the Arab world for 12 years, Delic has deciphered a thing or two about complementing natural light with cinematography lights when shooting in the region. “I have realised that 12KW lamp Dinos work perfectly in local conditions. With their help, I can get away with many things even after the sun goes down. As opposed to common light here, I use light from the camera angle very rarely. My light mostly comes from the sides and from the back. I don’t reveal all and let things unravel slowly.”

In addition to the LED lights, the kit has two Jablights, two EcoPunch lights and one Spacelite, which enhance the visual texture of the footage. Lighting can make or break a scene, according to Delic. He emphasises the importance of angles, use of colour, space in the frame and composition, which can be managed with good lighting.

“I believe that the main role of a DoP is to translate the script and the director’s vision to screen through cinematography. Keeping the communication channel open between the director and his crew and the actors helps greatly in achieving this,” explains Delic.

**Key kit**

In addition to the rented equipment, the producers imported six AAdynTech LED lights from the US – three for each unit – and bought some kit that was not locally available. According to Delic,
Beyond distributing broadcast equipment, First Gulf Company is a major force in the broadcast systems sector in the region with the most significant achievements in HD TV Production and Post-Production facilities and studios. FGC’s capabilities cover the design, implementation, integration and support of the most sophisticated systems. Additionally, FGC provides turnkey solutions in all systems including high-capacity Media Asset Management and Digital Archiving Systems.

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Post production
Ayman Abdel Basset at twofour54 intaj is handling the colour grading for the project. He works closely with Mazen Al Saady, the in-house editor of Clacket Media. Basset elaborates on the workflow: “The DoP wanted to enhance the atmosphere while maintaining an overall style. Colour grading is done on twofour54 intaj’s Baselight. We use FCP for editing. Considering that the series is being shot in 2K resolution and our final delivery is in HD, the output turns out in very high quality and what’s more, RAW allows full freedom in post production. “The main challenge in this project, however, is dealing with footage done on two different cameras, the Sony FS and the F55. Although both cameras film in RAW, they use different sensors, which one has to bear in mind while grading. Our objective is to make the pictures look the same throughout the project. The other challenge is, of course, the tight delivery schedules, which are part and parcel of a soap opera production. “I wouldn’t measure the footage in terms of hours but just suffice to say that it is a lot. To start with, we were grading specific scenes as opposed to an episode, at a time, until an episode is locked. “The cameras film two types of files. An HD file goes to edit and the same file in 2K resolution RAW comes for colour grading. The editor then cuts the scene and sends the XML to conform with the raw footage. I copy the RAW footage to the internal storage, which, so far, has been in excess of 21TB. It is conformed to rebuild the edit but using the 2K re-RAW. “It is then graded and we receive approval, then lock the episode to finalise it, using the pre-graded scenes. “The graded footage is delivered back to the series editor, who then takes care of audio and versioning.”

the most important element of the kit is the SGR Twin Dolly, which is a dolly/slider that is very easy to set up and can even be operated by one person, as opposed to conventional dollies. “I have used the twin dolly before and liked the flexibility it offers; it can be set up on the floor or even on top of a table. It comes with very sturdy tracks that can be extended as much as one can afford,” says Delic.

The workflow
The crew shoots between seven and 15 scenes a day in a 12-hour shift. Right after the shoot, the camera cards are sent to twofour54 intaj’s editing suites, where the footage is colour corrected. Colourist Ayman Abdel Basset, who is handling the colour grading, takes care of the footage at intaj. “The biggest challenge of this project was to keep up with the schedule and still maintain the quality. Films give you the luxury of time and you can experiment more, which is not the case in soap operas, as one is constantly pressed for time. “I find myself shuttle between locations a couple of times a day. At times, the light conditions are not the best for a given scene and we have to make do with what we have,” comments DoP Delic.

The crew will be camping in Abu Dhabi until July, when it is scheduled to finish the filming of the entire series. The series is presently running on Abu Dhabi TV, CBC Egypt, OSN, Zee Alwan and LBC.
BroadcastPro ME turns four

BroadcastPro Middle East celebrated its fourth anniversary at Rixos The Palm Dubai on May 20, 2014. The event served as a great platform for more than 150 regional industry professionals, including broadcasters, filmmakers, systems integrators, manufacturers and distributors to network.

“The event was well organised and presented us with a good opportunity to link with industry colleagues and friends. BroadcastPro ME is becoming a mature industry publication and once again the team has proven their ability to organise successful and valuable events and conferences.”

Hany Bartella, Strategic Accounts Director, Grass Valley

"Great event! Thanks to the relaxed atmosphere, great refreshments and great company. Happy Birthday BroadcastPro ME – wishing you many more."*

Simon Tempest, Account Manager - Content Everywhere MENA at IBC

“The party was a good way to get to know the broadcast community. The event gave broadcast professionals an opportunity to network on a social level.”

Dipesh Makwana, Technical Sales Manager for Region, Snell (Quantel)
Whenever BroadcastPro ME organises an event, you can be sure that the broadcast community will attend and the fourth anniversary was no exception. Industry colleagues, peers and friends gathered to celebrate, exchange the latest news, talk shop and have a nice evening out. Congratulations on your fourth, looking forward to the fifth!

Mark Bailey, Regional Sales Manager in the Middle East with AXON Digital Design

"Great event in a very relaxed and atmosphere. With the relevant broadcast professionals present, it provided an excellent networking platform. One couldn’t ask for more." 
Sanjay Raina, General Manager, Fox International Channels

"It was good to see so many industry professionals come together and just relax. The event gave me an opportunity to see many people that I had been wanting to see but didn’t have the time to do so. Congratulations! Good show!"
Vahid Macvandi, Regional Distribution Manager, Advanced Media Trading
How have things changed for Grass Valley since it was bought over by Belden and merged with Miranda?

With the acquisition of Grass Valley and previously, Miranda, the broadcast part of Belden’s business has now become quite substantial. Belden is a stable company financially. It spent more than USD 800m to acquire Grass Valley and Miranda.

After the merger, we immediately announced our new sales structure worldwide. The company will now be operating in five regions. The Middle East will be managed from Dubai while we also have a small office in Istanbul.

What are your expectations for the region?

The Middle East is a big region for us and we expect it to grow further this year. We have retained the team members from both Miranda and Grass Valley, and we plan to expand the team further. Our immediate goal, therefore, is to have a bigger office space to accommodate the combined teams and also to hire new people.

We have decided not to cut down our staff as it is important for customers that the teams stay. Belden’s office in Dubai Internet City has about 10 people while the combined strength of Miranda and Grass Valley is about 15, so we are...
talking about a team of 25 or more, which we eventually plan to bring together in one office.

How will this merger impact your regional business and who will head the local team?

If you look worldwide, we are one of the largest manufacturers with the widest product portfolio today. We definitely want to enhance our capabilities in the region and will continue to invest in the Middle East. Hassan Ghoul and Hany Bartella are key members of our regional team. Hassan will lead the Middle East operations for the combined business. Hany will take on a new strategic role focusing on strategic accounts across the Middle East as well as globally. For example, he will be responsible for accounts operating across the region, such as Al Jazeera, which has offices and facilities across the world.

We will strengthen our sales team by hiring more sales managers, presales staff, field support engineers, administration staff and marketing personnel. We have not yet consolidated the teams but have more vacancies to fill.

What changes can we expect in the combined product portfolio? Which products are you going to retain?

In this merger, there has been total transparency and swift implementations. Merging the teams, announcing the product strategy and our go-forward plan — we did that very quickly.

We are trying to combine the best of both worlds and are in the process of chalkling out a new platform migration pathway for our customers.

We will retain the Grass Valley cameras, switchers and servers. We also plan to retain our editing platform EDIUS.

Miranda is renowned for its channel-in-a-box, glue, switchers, which will stay. Grass Valley Trinix NXT digital video routing switcher and GeckoFlex converter modules will be phased out, gradually. We will provide at least five years of support going forward. These will eventually be replaced by Nvision routers and Densité modular platforms.

We have already announced that on our channel-in-a-box side, iTX and K2 will come under one platform, a year and a half from now.

What happens with the dealers?

Are you planning to restructure your sales and channels staff? Both Miranda and Grass Valley have specific regional dealers. Just like we have created a strategic
account function, we have also created a channel function to operate between Middle East and Africa. The channels team is responsible for the integration of both the brands.

We have announced that all decisions on the channels will be made by July 1, 2014. We are strongly represented in each country, and the channel structure will vary from country to country, with specific focus on each.

We have many SI and dealers on both sides but no decision has been made on who will continue and who won’t. There is flexibility, it will not be an exclusive distribution tie-up and we need to study this for each country in the region.

There was news that 400-600 people will be losing their jobs in the merger. Will there be layoffs in this case?

Whenever any acquisition or merger happens, synerges need to be achieved to ensure we have the right scale and internal structure, which enables us to move to the next level. We are aiming to become a $1bn company on the broadcast side. We are building a structure to allow our customers to be future ready. As mentioned, we are looking to hire more in the region. We will also add more resources in Central Europe and Russia, which are part of my remit.

What kind of challenges do you foresee for the two brands coming together? The challenge now is to ensure that we cross-train our teams on both the purple and green sides. We have conducted full day training sessions of the purple team to green and vice versa in the UK and will carry that forward to other regions as well.

Going forward, all of our customers will deal with only one person. For any project be it production studio, OB van or MCR, with the old GV or Miranda products, the customers will be dealing with one sales manager. Our customers and partners have already been told who their contact persons are.

We had a quick and thorough implementation of the plan in this merger. The process was very transparent. I have been through acquisitions before but this one was managed very well and I must add here that it was a smooth transition for both the brands.

For Belden, it is a strategic acquisition, and the company has a long-term objective in building a strong broadcast platform.

What are your future plans? Where is the new Grass Valley headed now?

Having been in the broadcast business for decades, we have a built a strong legacy. Innovation these days is more software-centric so we need to strike the right balance in the company, between R&D focus on software and hardware.

We want to build the right network of direct sales and resellers, which are both equally important.

Presently, our broadcast segment accounts for more than $500m, which we plan to take up to $1bn in the near future.
The economics of channel-in-a-box are compelling. First of all, the software and hardware bundles are relatively inexpensive devices — giving them a low capex footprint. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, channel-in-a-box technology offers a plug-and-play solution; the traditional playout infrastructure involves the integration of products from a number of vendors, with the consequent installation complexities and, a potential risk of finger-pointing when something goes wrong. Channel-in-a-box devices also save rack space and eliminate the need for much of the wiring, so they are fast and simple to install.

A key application of the channel-in-a-box is to get channels on air quickly. One of the surest ways to market test a new idea for a channel is to broadcast it. Experimental channels can be on air in weeks — perhaps days — rather than months. And if the experiment fails, then the channel can be taken down overnight, with the hardware redeployed so there is virtually no capital loss.

It also opens up the prospect of the pop-up channel. Broadcasters can now set up channels for short periods to meet special needs. If you want a World Cup channel, for example, then you need a channel-in-a-box device and a delivery chain and you can be on air, digging deep into your audience’s expectations and earning new revenues that previously were not available.

Taking the channel out of the box

The reason that channel-in-a-box devices can replace legacy playout infrastructures is due to the ever-growing power of standard IT hardware. The logical next step is to implement the whole process in software, so all the broadcaster — who will almost certainly own a rack or two of blade server power — needs do is buy a licence for the channel. So, now we have the channel without a box.

The whole process is virtualised. ‘To the broadcaster, this means another step change in channel agility. No need to wait for days to get a channel on air — now it can be implemented in moments simply by entering a software key. You could even have a channel template, so the planning is almost instant.

Moving to the cloud

Is playout from a virtualised environment practical yet? Inevitably, as soon as someone mentions virtualisation, someone else will mention the cloud. If we can virtualise something as technically demanding as television playout in on-premises hardware, why cannot it be done in the cloud?

At least in theory, it can be achieved. The hardware running inside a cloud playout processing centre is identical to that running in the in-lease processing farm. So from that point of view, the
software of the channel without a box can happily run in the cloud. That said, we are still far away from using cloud playout services just yet. The most obvious point is that content transfer requires a very big pipe, which poses a challenge. It is not just that we want a big pipe, we reliably need a big pipe – audiences expect television to always work, and will not tolerate any freezes or jumps, black or silence. The transfer has to be seen to be secure too. The prospect of someone interrupting the stream is unacceptable. Malicious hackers could simply disrupt your stream, or worse, add something unpleasant to it. Content owners will also need to be reassured that their intellectual property is being properly safeguarded. But these are issues that will be overcome in the near future. The big cloud providers such as Amazon Web Services will be able to offer dedicated, firewalled cloud space. They could also provide the dedicated bandwidth. The world of broadcast needs to convince cloud providers to think the way we think.

Realising new revenues

Even today, there is much that can be done with virtualisation and the cloud. Since everything is in the IP domain these days, it is simple to move content, for instance, for distributed playout. That simplifies local insertion of content and commercials also. What was once a single channel is now a fully localised service with tailored regional content attracting more viewers, and local advertising attracting more revenue. While we tend to think of channel-in-a-box services as automatic, it is perfectly possible to give virtualised and cloud channels full manual control, mixing live and recorded content. Our pop-up sports event channel can include live coverage and debates as well as packaged programming, which means more opportunities for transmitting advertising. We can also use the “rent by time” model of cloud processing on the next order of magnitude down.

Broadcasters, today, are faced with the challenge of delivering catch-up services on a multitude of platforms, and this is inherently a “lumpy” demand. Sometimes there will be a lot of content to be transcoded, and at times there’s virtually none. Some content – the main evening news, for instance – is expected to be available on demand the instant transmission stops.

Virtualisation is ideal for this. Our software allows for live programmes to be recorded as they are transmitted, and play online as soon as transcoding is complete. To handle the peaks in demand you simply spool up another processor or two, either in your on-premise server farm or in the cloud. We are close to reaching the point where the technologies and techniques of the IT industry are sufficiently advanced to be able to support most of our requirements, to the level of reliability and predictability that broadcasters (and their audiences) expect. Smart vendors have developed software products that take advantage of this new processing and connectivity power. There are challenges still to be solved, such as moving large content files into and out of the cloud. But I am sure they will be solved in the near future. The result will be an environment where broadcasters can concentrate on what they do best – building relationships with their audiences – while the underlying technology provides the delivery platform, in a simple and seamless manner.
Content owners have traditionally archived material as a resource worth keeping in perpetuity, but this simplistic approach is no longer fit for purpose. While vintage programming can be transferred into the production server to flesh out a TV schedule, the spread of online distribution platforms has dramatically increased the demand for more diverse content, which broadcasters are under pressure to meet. What’s more, the intelligent use of archived material from audio and video media to ancillary information such as offline tracks can be worked into a significant revenue stream. Archival material can go a long way to strengthen and refresh a broadcaster’s inventory to fuel on-demand access, international sales or to enhance new productions. Invariably though, often detailed knowledge about the content is unavailable or it is in a state where it cannot be easily unlocked. If assets are stored on disparate hard discs, sliced servers or on shelves as tape, there will be considerable wasted time, effort and cost in locating, retrieving and collaborating on content creation and onward distribution. Time to air is impacted and the archive is effectively devalued. An archive system used solely for preservation or for legal compliance realises very little of its true value and barely justifies the ongoing cost of acquisition, documentation and maintenance.

Only by reimagining the archive as a unified repository of assets, which are integral to production, content preparation and content delivery workflows, can its true potential be realised. How can you do that?

The starting point has to be the particular needs of the organisation. What do you want the archive to achieve in terms of production and distribution? Is there a need to keep content available for production or to organise it for on-demand and catch-up service? Which assets should be considered “live” after transmission to optimise storage?

Armed with this strategic vision, organisations can begin implementation by structuring and generating metadata models. Metadata is the building block of asset management and essential not only for making content searchable, but for automating the crucial links between assets.

While many facilities have installed an asset management system for a portion of their workflow, these systems are unlikely to have the scale, power or intelligence to search for or relate files to one other in an efficient, integrated or meaningful way. This is because metadata is vastly more complex today than in the early days of tapeless workflows, when a single metadata set equated to one media file. With the expansion of file-based media, multiple files were required to create different formats (e.g., distribution versions) or resolutions (e.g., proxy, high-resolution) of the same content. To that mix was added subtitles, language tracks and captions for various outputs. The situation continues to increase in complexity, to the extent that an individual file will make little sense in isolation. The German language subtitle file for a premium English language movie, for example, holds little value without relevance to its constituent parts. It is the relationship between files that is important, and an asset management system must be powerful enough to make sense of the connections.

Metadata modeling
Metadata sets will, of course, differ depending on the type of content. News, for example, doesn’t have the same metadata set as a drama or a sports game. And even, soccer and tennis would have very different metadata sets.

Deeper subsets might contain match highlights or feeds from various camera angles, pre-game and post-game interviews, press conferences, “bet you” feeds and other user-generated input, or of the five-minute preview produced for mobile handsets. All of these files and associated metadata are bracketed by the same asset.

Similarly, a drama will be copied as a master file with different audio and subtitle tracks in different languages. There may be different length versions, re-edits for compliance, an AS-11 file for delivery to UK broadcasters, a Dolby audio file for theatrical release and so on. Related promos, shot lists, time-coded transmission information, scripts, production notes and cast lists all fall under the same asset. A facility’s asset management system should be able to combine those different, complex asset models as well as the links between them in a way, which is easily configurable to fit the user’s needs and which evolve over time as new distribution needs arise.

Smart MAM
There are further attributes of a successful integrated asset management platform. For manual input, users should be driven by the system so that they enter the right metadata at the right time, depending on the content and the type of content. Items like controlled vocabulary, thesaurus and glossaries really help in this context. While advancing in quality, speech-to-text technologies cannot be relied upon for 100% accuracy, although they can provide a good basis for automated input. When used in conjunction with other types of logging, such as scene detection, facial recognition and semantic interpretation, it is possible to enrich content automatically with relevant metadata and to clean up raw metadata. Production and technical metadata can be augmented by automatically linking data feeds relevant to the business. The MAM should be able to seamlessly import external data feeds, as needed for the operations. There are many examples around XML and exchange standards like SportsML alongside feeds from Opta (which provides teams, rosters, logs and statistics), that bring in valuable data in the context of sports material. Similarly, NewsML, dts sheets provide extra valuable information about topics.
It is important that the archiving system is capable of tracking and propagating the metadata that you have invested in creating and gathering. With genealogy and metadata inheritance, it is possible to trace and correctly action broadcast rights and descriptive metadata. Ideally, as you edit a new asset, the user won’t need to re-enter all the metadata again and again, reducing labour and risk of error.

Search and browsing technologies such as federated search or navigation of links between assets will help to quickly locate relevant content and enrich production with more archived content.

Integration capabilities

To maximise the value of your archive, it needs to be integral with production, content preparation and distribution workflows. This means a MAM that is interoperable with third-party hardware and software, compliant with industry standards, and has the ability to easily import metadata from legacy systems.

Once integrated by the MAM system, the archive’s rich metadata can be analysed to optimise storage. Content can be held on production systems for instant access, on spinning disc for near-line access, or on tape libraries or servers for deeper archive, possibly accessible over the cloud. Despite business rules based on how fast access needs to be, the cost of storage and the organisation’s goals can assign content to the appropriate archive tier and, therefore, optimise the archive infrastructure.

Regardless of media, whether for news, sports, radio, long form programmes or every piece of content that passes through a facility, it is imperative to think beyond storing files on tape libraries and disks and to think in terms of freeing that content up to work better for you with addition of rich, consistently applied metadata.

For this, a flexible asset management solution is required, one that is built around the archive to unlock all of its potential. This will be a MAM solution that has the intelligence to recognise links between metadata files, the power to search, browse and exchange assets, and that has the scale to expand as production and business planning demands. All of that requires a top down vision that removes archive from the sidelines and places it at the heart of future business.

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Raoul Cospen is Director of Marketing and Business Development at Dalet.

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Intigral recently expanded its headend to improve the delivery of its IPTV and OTT multiscreen services. BroadcastPro ME takes a closer look at the project.
The new VSNEXPLORER PAM makes the production environment more efficient with tools to manage and follow media along the whole creation process. Its new sequence management features allow for comprehensive control of all associated media in the database, enabling improved distributed workflows and online storage use optimization.

- Integrated with Adobe Premiere, FCP 7, FCP 10 and Avid Media Composer.
- Drag and drop media and sequences to timeline.
- Send sequences and associated media to LTO.
- Smart production storage management functions.

NEW PRODUCTION ASSET MANAGEMENT MODULE: VSNEXPLORER PAM

ARCI AMIRA. TRULY CINEMATIC.

ALEXA image quality up to 200 fps
Single-user ergonomics perfect shoulder balance
Cost-efficient in-camera grading
ARRI product quality rugged and reliable

Integrai is considering launching a range of enhanced services like mobile advertising, e-health, and e-learning, while also improving Saudi Telecom Corporation’s mobile-value-added services.

In essence, Integrai wants to add value at every stage of the digital value chain by acting as a bridge between content and service providers and telecom operators through product integration, inception, and go-to-market solutions across multiple channels and platforms. The new headend solution enables Integrai to achieve this goal through its broad format support, flexibility, scalability, and density.

“Through broad format support and a high-density scalable architecture, our newly installed multiscreen solutions allow us to provide high-quality live and VOD content on any screen,” Saab adds.
PROQ&A

Why did the Kudelski Group acquire Conax?

AK: Kudelski. Since 2011, one of our priorities has been to further expand our footprint in emerging markets. In this context, the decision to acquire Conax was a logical one for the Group as Conax has focused on emerging markets, and their solutions are suitable even for smaller to mid-size operators, which perfectly complements our existing product portfolio. With this acquisition, the Kudelski Group now has probably the best product portfolio in the industry to address both the needs of the new emerging market as well as the complex needs of advanced economies operators. Morten Solbakken. It’s true, it really is a perfect fit. For more than 20 years, Conax has established a strong reputation by developing and delivering state-of-the-art, cost-effective and easy-to-deploy conditional access systems. We’ve been very successful in addressing both the needs of emerging market operators in addition to covering the specific needs of other operators for turnkey solutions. I am looking forward to Conax playing an important role as part of the group by increasing the group’s overall market share, footprint and range of solutions, as well as enriching it with the expertise brought by our high-quality staff.

What changes will take place at Conax as a result of the acquisition?

AK: The Kudelski Group will continue to run Conax as a company within the Kudelski Group, with Morten Solbakken reporting to me. The two management teams will jointly define a strategy and a structure leading to a close alignment of the two organisations over the coming weeks, while keeping the best interests of our customers in mind.

Conax will continue to be run from Oslo by the existing management team. The Conax team runs a tight ship and serves its customers well and delivers innovative new solutions to market. We will do everything we can to support the team in continuing to do so.

Will Conax continue to develop its existing products?

MS: Conax’s security technology will continue to be actively developed in order to serve our existing customers as well as win new ones. Our technologies are complementary, and one will not replace the other. The whole premise of the acquisitions was to add to NAGRA’s existing portfolio of CAS solutions. Together, we will actually have more to offer to our respective customers, and where there are product or partnership synergies with the NAGRA portfolio, we will look at what makes the most sense over the long-term to better serve our customers and maximise the success of the group.

We have an ambitious roadmap both for our highly efficient Contego backend, for our security clients and for our pre-integrated solutions. Of course, being part of the Kudelski Group opens a range of opportunities to strengthen the Conax roadmap further, enabling us to serve our customers with an even stronger products and solutions portfolio, and to get these to market quicker. We will actively pursue these opportunities. There are also opportunities the other way – Conax has products that NAGRA can take to their respective customers, and where there are product or partnership synergies, we will look to maximise the success of the group.

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Will the Conax brand disappear?

AK: No, the Conax brand will not disappear. We will be maintaining its corporate identity, which is widely recognised and respected in the industry.

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Morten Solbakken, CEO, Conax.

"Conax's security technology will continue to be actively developed in order to serve our existing customers as well as win new ones. Our technologies are complementary, and one will not replace the other. The whole premise of the acquisition was to add to NAGRA's existing portfolio of CAS solutions." - Morten Solbakken, CEO, Conax.

has other business areas, like Kudelski Security, which is totally complementary and highly interesting for our customers.

How will this affect the existing Conax partner network?
AK: We launched our Conax Connect partner programme last year and will continue to team up with best of breed partners to create pre-integrated and tested solutions for various market segments. Through this initiative, we look forward to exploring the Kudelski product portfolio for opportunities to create additional attractive solutions to take to our customers across the globe.

In what ways are the two product portfolios complementary to one another?
AK: Conax clients will have access to the non-CAS product portfolio of the Kudelski Group, like SmartDTV devices, Kudelski Security services, as mentioned by Morten Solbakken, OpenTV middleware and where required, the NAGRA MediaLive OTT service platform. This will give customers the possibility to acquire both individual products as well as end-to-end solutions from across the entire group, which will effectively reduce their overall cost of ownership, risk and time to market.

At the same time, Conax has some innovative new products like Conax OTT Access that may be of interest to some NAGRA customers. We are only just beginning to explore all the different ways to bring the best of both worlds to all our customers.

This is not the first example of consolidation in the CAS market. How do you see this trend going forward?
AK: As the market matures and customer needs evolve, we have found increased demand for offering turnkey, pre-integrated solutions that include CAS, middleware, set-top boxes and multi-screen solutions and security services as well.

We strongly believe that ultimately, the parties that are able to offer these solutions will be most successful, so that is why we have assembled a strong portfolio of world-class products. And because much of the growth in our industry is taking place in emerging markets, acquiring a champion in these markets like Conax increases the addressable market for our overall portfolio and contributes to our long-term success.

"Conax’s security technology will continue to be actively developed in order to serve our existing customers as well as win new ones. Our technologies are complementary, and one will not replace the other. The whole premise of the acquisition was to add to NAGRA's existing portfolio of CAS solutions."

Morten Solbakken, CEO, Conax.
BroadcastAsia2014, Asia’s largest digital and multimedia trade show for the pro-audio, film and TV industries, takes place from June 17 to 20 at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore. The 19th edition of the show will provide a platform to broadcast professionals to network, gather industry information and source the latest products.

Shotoku Corporation perfects pan & tilt
Shotoku Corporation will introduce its SK3000 19th/550C tripod system at the exhibition. It comes with pan and T/T EFP head (SK5000) and new heavy-duty carbon fibre tripod (SK7502) for balancing. The new two-stage TK150SC carbon fibre tripod incorporates the latest technology to give operators a lightweight, yet sturdy tripod system for EFP or documentary production. Built with carbon fibre legs, the tripod weights a mere 13 lbs. (5.9kg), features a 150mm bowl base, and stands over 5’ (161.5cm) tall at its maximum height. Available with a ground spreader or a mid-level spreader, the tripod is ideally paired with Shotoku’s SK3000 pan & tilt head for optimal performance.

The optional accessories that come with the system include: TLM150 mid-level spreader with floor pads, TLA150 ground spreader, TSL150 semi-hard carrying case with casters, TD-72 studio dollies. Also on display will be a range of advanced robotic camera systems and VR camera tracking solutions.

Stand: 5B2-02

Front Porch Digital
DISTILL’s metadata
Front Porch Digital will demonstrate DISTILL, its new metadata management system that eliminates the cost and confusion of managing metadata and associated standardisation. Industry sources note that less than 5% of metadata created in production remains available for the full lifecycle of the content, with most being lost as the video asset is moved, transcoded, and made available. Repeatedly, DISTILL makes it simple to create, process, manage, and retrieve that critical metadata, ensuring that almost any metadata created at any stage of the content lifecycle can now be managed.

DISTILL allows media professionals to work with the tools they prefer while ensuring that any user with the proper permissions can leverage critical metadata wherever and whenever they need it. DISTILL is designed to ingest into digital workflows, where it makes use of the on-demand partial object restore capability of the Front Porch Digital OnDemand content storage management (CSM) system and its cloud-based counterpart, LYNX, to enable the specific retrieval of the original artifact from any connected Front Porch Digital system. SKMs from Stream which is closely integrated with LYNX, ease ingestion of the metadata across with existing applications such as enterprise media asset management systems.

Stand: 5B2-02

New Grass Valley makes Asia debut
The LDX WorldCam multiformat camera system will also be demonstrated in conjunction with the Copperhead 3404K camera-mountable transmitter. The Copperhead 3404K requires only two strands of fibre optic cable to carry all bi-directional signals, including four 3Gb/s HD/SDI paths, from camera to truck or control room.

Grass Valley’s new LDX XtremeSpeed 8X ultra slow-motion camera — one of four recent additions to its LDX range — is an ideally integrated, high-speed fine production camera based on Grass Valley’s proprietary Finsler FT CMOS image, which delivers superb picture quality, high sensitivity and high-dynamic range for a wide variety of broadcast production applications.

Grass Valley’s LDX cameras operate in tandem with the company’s K2 Dyno Replay System (consisting of the K2 Dyno S Replay Controller and K2 Summit JG Production Client), which provides smooth playback at any speed from 0 to 200% expanded replay storytelling options.

Stand: 5B2-01

Netia highlights MAM
At BroadcastAsia2014, NETIA will highlight an array of new product features and functions that streamline the sharing of content among production sites, and enrich the use of metadata in media asset management. The company will showcase enhancements that improve users’ multimedia production capabilities, as well as their mobile and remote production workflows.

NETIA will also demonstrate its ability to integrate complex production ecosystems and simplify the publishing of content and data to the second screen.

NETIA will showcase the integration of its new multiple-device interface for audiovisual media management with its Radios-Audio radio automation solution via a secure cross-platform web-based interface. This integration enables journalists and field staff to use virtually any mobile device — laptop, tablet, or smartphone — and operating system (iOS, Windows, and Android) to gain remote access to the NETIA Radios-Audio database. From there they can search, browse, ingest, edit video and/or audio, segment the video, and insert a logo or subtitle, and then export and publish the content on social networks.

With this portable, lightweight interface, broadcasters gain a tool for multimedia content creation. The new NETIA web-based interface not only enables convenient content editing and repurposing of professional broadcast multimedia, but also automates publishing to key social media outlets.

Stand: SM7-06

Open-BcastAsia2014
Argosy will demonstrate a range of fibre management solutions at BroadcastAsia2014 in collaboration with its joint venture partner, Argosy Broadcast Asia Sdn Bhd (ABA).

Neutrik opticalCON advanced tactical fibre assemblies, including the opticalCON OUT, opticalCON OVAL will be displayed in addition to the debut of the latest addition to the range, the opticalCON MTP connection system. The MTP connection system offers an end-to-end solution with rugged outer jackets for harsh environments, making it suitable for outside broadcast applications.

“We have moved from fibre being a new and slightly daunting concept to the point where it now makes up a fair proportion of all new infrastructure projects. Consequently, most of us are now familiar with fibre and we are proud to be able to provide a growing range of solutions alongside an in-house cable termination service in support of this trend,” said Steve Wingrove of Argosy Cable Asia.

Also forming part of the demonstrations at BroadcastAsia2014 is the IEC-Lock mains cable, which incorporates a locking mechanism to fasten it to the earth pin. The connector features a red button, which must be depressed to unlock the lead.

Stand: 5E2-01

Digitigr姆 brings audio control
Digitigr姆 will highlight a new RAENNA/ASE17-enabled sound card for low-latency synchronous audio IP distribution over LAN.

On display will be the low-cost, ultra-low-latency IQON CALL, and IQON CALL/E audio-over-IP distribution codec; the IQON LINK and IQON LINK/LE stereo audio-over-IP distribution codec; the high-density IQON SERV/LINK multiple-stereo or multichannel audio-over-IP codec for professional IP audio distribution; and the latest release in the company’s AQLM family of video encoders for professional video broadcasting and distribution over IP networks.

Stand: 5E6-07

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RTW will exhibit its loudness tools from the new Masterclass Plug-ins range of software, the LQI loudness analyser (larger software and to TM7 and TM9 TouchMonitor audio meters at BroadcastAsia2014.

The new Masterclass Plug-ins software provides RTW’s metering tools as standard-format plug-ins for Windows and Mac OS platforms, allowing for a larger number of RTW customers to access the tools. The RTW business tools are the first of the company’s products available as part of the new software.

The RTW Masterclass Plug-ins business tools usually depict audio with all relevant level and loudness values as specified by international standards. Conforming to the EBU R128 loudness standard, as well as EBU R 177-3, EBU R177-4, ATSC A/85, ARIB, OP-59, A/90C, and custom as well as SPL mode, it is a handy tool for quality control to ensure compliance with custom specifications. The plug-in includes RTW’s Peak Programme Meter, TruePeak, and Spot.

Correlator and also offers all common loudness displays as well as MagiSKm mode or SPL view.

Wohler’s smart signal management

Wohler will showcase the company’s expertise in smart signal management and monitoring for evolving audio and video formats, as well as its depth of experience in developing powerful and versatile IF- and IP-based solutions for highly efficient file-based media processing. AMP2-E16V audio/video processing monitor features simultaneous multiformat monitoring, quick-programme selection, instant stereo-difference, loudness monitoring, internal channel mixing including SDI re-embedding, and audio delay, plus a wide variety of meter scales and ways to view meters, video, and Dolby or SMPTE 2020 audio delays, plus a wide variety of meter scales and audio processor card options facilitate easy configuration for multiple SDI, AES I/O, analog I/O, and connection to external surround systems.

Wohler’s new AMP1-LMU dual-input SDI audio monitor provides high-performance monitoring of embedded audio in two 3G/HD-SDI streams at an attractive price point. The 1-RU system de-embeds and provides metering and monitoring of any or all of the 16 audio channels in the selected 3G/HD-SDI stream. It assures intuitive operation and clear display of levels and other critical information using bright 2.4-inch LED-backlit LCD displays, enabling one-touch monitoring and summing of any selected channel pair(s) to built-in speakers, headphones, or 16-bit balanced analog outputs. Additionally, Wohler will feature the NPFES-6200, a 4-RU system with two 9-inch screens; the NPFES-3700, a 3-RU system with two 7-inch screens.

Stand SG4-04

RTW exhibits loudness tools

Dalet expands Galaxy

Dalet Digital Media Systems brings its second generation application programming interface – AP2. An integral part of the Dalet Galaxy MAM platform, the new SDA-compliant web services AP2 provides a high level of interoperability and straightforward integration with third-party broadcast and corporate systems and applications. Dalet Galaxy gives the tools, data and metadata models, to address the challenges of today’s archives. AP2 will simplify and empower third-party integration with new capabilities.

Designed with the Dalet open and scalable MAM vision in mind, Dalet AP2 enables easy and seamless integration within existing environments and infrastructures. Backed by intuitive back-office services and a BPM workflow engine, Dalet AP2 is a key component in making Dalet Galaxy an enterprise-class platform.

Based on the principles of SDA, Dalet AP2 offers developers a set of services, ranging from asset, metadata, and search to more advanced services such as notifications, configuration, access rights and more. Dalet AP2 also comes bundled with an intelligent dashboard for monitoring AP usage per service.

Stand S15-12

Quantek’s Eureka moment

Quantek, a supplier of digital radio and wireless audio solutions, will launch the DBS-70, the small scale DAB broadcasting system at BroadcastAsia2014. DBS-70 offers a complete solution to operators who are looking for affordable DAB broadcasting systems for digital radio. DBS-70 is a compact, affordable and easy-to-use Eureka-147 Digital Audio Broadcasting system, which is suited to serve small areas, particularly with a single transmitter.

It is also a suitable solution for research institutes or receiver manufacturers that require a flexible digital broadcasting system to facilitate their work. The DBS-70 includes a DAB/DAB+ audio encoder, an ensemble multiplexer, a baseband modulator and a RF up-converter. Furthermore, DBS-70 can utilise the public IP networks to improve accessibility while reducing the capital and operating costs.

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Critical-mass will dictate the tipping point at which traditional linear TV broadcast becomes obsolete and content delivery platforms take centre stage

As more and more users and viewers become accustomed to viewing their preferred content on a second screen connected device such as a tablet or smartphone, which incidentally is also the device they use for email, chat, web, games, and a wide range of other functions, they also become accustomed to the user experience the device delivers.

The user experience provides unprecedented levels of freedom and control, but it also delivers varying results in terms of the quality of service, experience and availability. All of these factors are affected by the App, delivery mechanisms, communication path, bandwidth, the performance characteristics of the device and competency of the individual in terms of his or her mastery of the device and its OS as well as battery life.

The typically high on-air availability required by television broadcasters is not expected by second screen device users, because they are accustomed to the inconsistent user experience these OTT devices deliver.

Transition to cloud

As broadcasters explore the transition to cloud for their broadcast and delivery model, they need to understand and accept, that for the time being it may present a different and potentially inconsistent experience to the viewer. We may not yet be experiencing an erosion of traditional linear TV viewing, but we are seeing a rapid increase in the use of tablets, smartphones, wearable devices, et al, which is translating into a greater reliance on such devices as their features and functionality develop rapidly.

Critical-mass will dictate the tipping point at which traditional linear TV broadcast becomes obsolete and content delivery platforms take centre stage. This will be the case even for advertisers who must deal with the complexity of placing spots throughout a diverse and fragmented broadcast ecosystem. Although they may not know it yet, many broadcasters will develop somewhat to become content producers only, if they have invested in production capability and infrastructure.

The other functions will be carried out by cloud-based services leveraging virtualisation, CMS, CDN, PaaS, SaaS and global datacentre and network infrastructure. Many broadcasters who have invested only in content acquisition and traditional playout channels and services will have to either migrate to the cloud or be displaced by it.

Adopting a software-centric approach

This touches on another interesting point which is already having a profound effect on broadcast system manufacturers – SDI or software defined networking. As broadcasting moves to the cloud, the reliance on traditional hardware-based systems will diminish rapidly.

A glimpse of hope for broadcasting will be the cloud’s adoption of dedicated massively multicore SoC’s (system on a chip) to enable 4K streaming as a common delivery platform via global IPX’s using MMT (MMPEG media transport) and the successor to HTTP – MMT. We’re taking global delivery of 4K to homes as a perfectly realistic scenario in the near future – with a little investment, of course.

Life with smart TVs

Finally, and less importantly – I think we all understand that the linear TV experience has a limited shelf-life, even on connected devices, as the demand for more complex interactivity and control over the user experience increases. As for the big screen in the living room, its only saving grace is screen size. The integration of smart TV functionality must continue to develop as a complementary feature which essentially synchronises with, and mimics the second screen device as users expect their favoured device to be their central source of communication, entertainment, productivity and remote control. Developing smart TV as strictly independent connected devices would present an interesting business case for reinventing the wheel.

T. Steve Halis is Principal Consultant at HeavyMedia.tv

As broadcasting moves to the cloud, the switch infrastructure is being displaced by SDI or software defined networking. As broadcasting moves to the cloud, the reliance on traditional hardware-based systems will diminish rapidly.

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