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• Sunlight-readable display with Gorilla Glass™
• Decentralized AES67 IP networked antennas
• Seamless integration into RIEDEL’S ARTIST intercom matrix
The MENA media industry is going through a time of tumultuous change. Some of it is exciting and upbeat, others are downright disconcerting.

For instance, Saudi Arabia’s injection of $64bn into entertainment over the next ten years, the opening up of theatres, freeing its women to explore new avenues and shedding its ultra-conservative image in favour of a more modern outlook, will indeed bring new businesses to its door. Driving this change is KSA’s Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, CBC Egypt is seizing opportunities by planning a free-to-air launch in the GCC to fill a gap created when a niche channel moved from FTA into the pay space; and Jordan’s Roya TV is welcoming people into its new Media Academy from this month.

On the other hand, two days after MBC Group’s CEO told us in an exclusive interview about the media network’s master stroke in investing in a production house in Turkey, the network was instructed to take all its Turkish programmes off air. Not being able to broadcast programmes that a network has invested millions in over a long period of time is worrying, to say the least.

In the meantime, we are heading to NAB, and despite the Comcast-Disney-Fox-Sky saga, we will keep our eye on innovation. It will also be interesting to see what the GrassValley-SAM merger will bring to the table. For now, at least, rumours of another impending acquisition have been put to rest.

I have left the best for last. Facebook!

The controversy around its data being compromised is one that cannot be taken lightly. But the scope of our cover story this month is limited to how this platform has revolutionised video enough for the world to take notice. Social media is a big playing field at the moment and with the recent launch of YouTube Space in Dubai, more content producers have been empowered to create high-quality content. But there are unanswered questions. Who makes the rules in this space? When do you know you are overstepping the mark? The lines are blurred at the moment.

See you in Vegas!

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director

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April 2018

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GRADING LEBANON’S OSCAR ENTRY

BBC CONTENT SHOWCASED

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Jordan’s Roya TV to open media academy in April

Jordan-based Roya TV will open the Roya Academy for Media Training in Amman in April. Speaking to BroadcastPro ME, Fares Sayegh, GM at Roya TV, said: “We believe there is a significant void in the media training industry, and through this academy we want to offer a multi-dimensional, fully integrated media training approach to those aspiring to enter the field.”

Accredited to the International Academy of Arts, Media and Creativity (IAAMC), the academy will have access to international professionals from various media disciplines who will offer training at the academy.

Courses will include the latest innovations in digital media production as well as diploma and training courses covering the areas of art, media and creativity. Students will have access to practical sessions on Roya TV platforms, studios, equipment and shows, with future opportunities for internships and jobs at the channel.

CBC Egypt announces new launches and strategies

Egyptian free-to-air network CBC will launch a new channel for GCC viewers before Ramadan this year, Commercial Director Manar El Amin revealed to BroadcastPro ME on the sidelines of DISCOP 2018 in Dubai. Although the genre of the channel has been kept under wraps, she let on that it is aimed at filling a gap in the market, with the migration of a number of FTA channels to paid spaces.

CBC also recently launched two agencies in Dubai, one to oversee advertising on its linear channels and the second to manage all campaigns and advertising related to its digital platform.

CBC has decided to alter its current content strategy. Instead of launching new programmes and drama series only during Ramadan, when it will have a number of exclusives, the network is now spreading new launches across the year to ensure consistent viewership.

“We will have five first-run exclusive drama series for Ramadan this year. But we have other first-run series throughout the year, with an average of 45-60 episodes for each of them. Q2 and Q4 are critical to us, so we will have two new series in each of these quarters. The dramas air five days a week from Saturday to Wednesday around the two prime slots of 7pm and 8pm. On weekends, we screen a compilation of the week’s episodes.”

KSA sets up film council, approves licensing for cinemas

The Saudi General Authority for Culture (GAC) has announced the creation of the Saudi Film Council. Faisal Baltyuor has been named as CEO. The Film Council’s stated aims are to build a dynamic film and content ecosystem through sustained and strategic development across core industry pillars. Throughout 2018, it will “pioneer multiple initiatives to lay a solid foundation for industry growth”, including streamlined filming processes and support services, a National Fund for Saudi filmmakers and year-round training programmes and skills workshops.

Saudi Arabia has also approved licensing regulations for cinemas under the chairmanship of the Minister of Culture and Information.
twofour54 inks MOU with KSA’s Gulf Radio and TV organisation

Abu Dhabi’s Media Zone Authority (MZA) and the Gulf Radio and TV Organisation (GRTO) signed an MoU last month. The MoU will see the two organisations launch a joint training scheme aimed at boosting media skill levels across the GCC. It will also see MZA and GRTO coordinate activities, share knowledge and networks, and collaborate on exploring new markets for Arab and Gulf content.

OSN Pehla to broadcast TEN Cricket in HD

OSN has extended its partnership with Sony Pictures Networks (SPN), giving OSN Pehla customers access to Sony Entertainment Television, Sony MAX, Sony MIX and Sony SAB TV. As part of the renewed agreement, TEN Cricket will now be broadcast in high definition and will also be live streamed on OSN Play. TEN Cricket HD holds broadcast rights with five cricket boards including Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Starz Play inks exclusive deal with Saudi distributor

Starz Play and United Electronics Company (eXtra) signed a strategic partnership last month confirming eXtra as Starz Play’s sole agent and distributor across Saudi Arabia in the electronics retail sector. Through this new agreement, Starz Play subscribers in KSA will be able to sign up for the service via all eXtra’s 40 branches in 24 cities, as well as the extra.com portal, allowing residents to purchase Starz Play’s six- or 12-month plans. In addition, the subscription is offered as a bundle deal upon purchasing select eXtra products.

Commenting on the partnership, Maaz Sheikh, CEO and co-founder of Starz Play, said: “According to a recent study by IHS Markit, the growth of online video subscriptions is predicted to rise by 64.2% in 2022, with Starz Play holding 24% of the OTT market share. Saudi Arabia boasts the highest percentage of Starz Play sign-ups in MENA, and through this new and exciting partnership, we look forward to being able to service the region even better.”

Cinépolis plans $20m multiplex in Oman

Oman Avenues Mall (OAM) announced plans for a significant expansion last month, which will include a $20 million, 15-screen Cinépolis multiplex to be completed in Q1 2019, among other entertainment and retail facilities. Cinépolis is expanding into the Middle East and has set up a beachhead in Dubai with former Cinépolis India expansion chief Ashish Shukla at the helm. Plans are reportedly underway to raise a number of screens in the Gulf states of Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE in 2018.

Euronews opens Abu Dhabi bureau

Michael Peters, CEO of Euronews and Africanews, and Abdul Hadi Al Sheikh, CEO of International Media Investments (IMI), announced the opening of the Euronews Group bureau in the Middle East last month. Through its partnership with Abu Dhabi-based investment company IMI, Euronews operates from within Abu Dhabi’s Media Zone to produce Inspire Middle East.

The weekly show highlights the region’s commercial, creative and cultural landscape.
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Sharjah Media City to create OTT ecosystem with partners

Sharjah Media City (Shams), digital distribution services provider, ZOO Digital, and digital consulting agency, Olive Digital, have signed an MoU to bring localisation and digital distribution services to the UAE and the Middle East and North Africa region.

The agreement was signed by HE Dr Khalid Al Midfa, Chairman of Shams; Syed Ahmed, International Business Development Head of ZOO Digital; and Asad Khan, President and founder of Olive Digital in Sharjah. The MoU deals with roll-out localisation, media ingest and QC services in Sharjah, in response to the growing importance of OTT services in the UAE and MENA region.

The joint initiative will also establish Olive Digital’s operations within the growing Shams community.

Red Bee Media launches managed OTT services

Red Bee Media, part of the Ericsson Group, last month rolled out new OTT digital TV and film services for broadcasters and media owners across the Middle East from its base at twofour54 in Abu Dhabi.

The firm’s OTT platform provides TV and video content to a customer’s device and reportedly gives broadcasters the ability to stream live events while being able to shift from live to on-demand options. The specialised platform will enable broadcasters to deliver live programmes to the market within three minutes, the company claims.

News of twofour54’s Studio City at Mina Zayed comes as the media zone is preparing to move to a new home on Yas Island. This will increase the capacity of twofour54 as a built-for-purpose facility with offices, TV studios and retail spaces, by 30% from 2020, with the option to expand even further by 2030.

iPic theatres to debut in KSA

American luxury brand iPic Entertainment (iPic) has signed an MoU with Saudi group BAS Global Investments Company to develop iPic theatre-and-restaurant locations throughout the Kingdom. iPic auditoriums seat 50 to 90 people in an intimate setting. All auditoriums will be equipped with 4K digital cinema technology and viewing pods.

The Royal Film Commission – Jordan (RFC) has resumed the Jordan Film Fund (JFF). The fund will provide a total of $35,000 (JOD 250,000) in grants to support production and post-production of feature films, documentaries, shorts and animated films.

Abu Dhabi-based twofour54 will offer an outdoor film set, a permanent backlot and studios for productions of different sizes, said H.E. Maryam Eid Al Mheiri, CEO of Media Zone Authority – Abu Dhabi and twofour54 CEO of Media Zone Authority. twofour54’s Studio City at Mina Zayed will cover 300,000sqm and feature an outdoor film set, a permanent backlot and studios for productions of different sizes, ranging from 1,000-4,000sqm, as well as smaller studios catering to Abu Dhabi’s local production companies.
MENA content hub signs new deals

Dubai-based online platform, mena.tv, which hosts more than 250 registered buyers from over 100 MENA broadcasters and OTT platforms, signed new deals with nine distributors and producers from the US, Japan, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Spain and France at DISCOP Dubai last month.

Founder Nick Grande said he expects more deals to be signed from Europe, South America and Asia. The platform, which features a large selection of content from around the region, has also attracted MENA buyers including new regional OTT platforms like Starz Play.

Speaking about the response to mena.tv at DISCOP, Grande said: “It is reassuring to see the international industry acknowledging the strength and depth of our market access here.”

France’s CPB International, a major producer and distributor of films, TV drama and documentaries, is one of the companies that has signed up with mena.tv. Julie Tolza, Head of Sales & Acquisitions at CPB, remarked: “We would like reach out to other broadcasters and platforms in MENA, many of which are seeking our unique content.”

Maaz Sheikh, CEO of Starzplay, noted: “The mena.tv Content Hub is helping our buying team find new titles and connect directly with the rights holders.”

Grande also noted that there has been global interest in Arabic content, especially from Germany, Ireland and South Africa.

Cairo production house Advice Media’s new social thriller The Street Behind Us, for instance, was listed on mena.tv and has attracted both regional and international buyers.

“Our main objective when it comes to Arabic drama is to raise the bar,” explained Magdy El Hawary, CEO of Advice Media.

“The Street Behind Us, was locally sourced and produced, but made to international standards. It is attracting regional buyers, but we’ve also had international interest after it was listed on the mena.tv Content Hub.”

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**Yahlive’s Farsi audience rises to 62 million**

UAE satellite broadcaster Yahlive has seen a significant rise among Farsi-speaking audiences, from 25.5 million in 2014 to 62.3 million in 2017, via Yahsat’s Al Yah1 satellite located at 52.5˚ East. The figures are cited in a study conducted by communication advisory company Ipsos Connect. Yahlive has 107 exclusive Farsi channels out of a total of 125 in the bouquet.

Additionally, the report highlighted the interest in Arabic and HD content viewership across the Farsi community.

“Our journey to becoming the leading broadcast provider of Farsi channels would not have been successful without the support of our stakeholders,” commented Ammar Baranbo, Chief Operating Officer of Yahlive.

Among the key insights of the Ipsos Connect study on Yahlive’s Farsi market penetration was that the current satellite market share of 68% was captured over a span of three years.

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**MENA’s first YouTube Space opens at Dubai Studio City**

The first MENA YouTube Space opened last month at Dubai Studio City, a facility focused on supporting the creator community in the region by giving them access to production space.

With an entry threshold of 10,000 subscribers, a YouTube creator has access to free production facilities including audio, visual and editing equipment, in addition to training programmes, workshops and courses at the newly launched YouTube Space in Dubai Studio City, the 10th such facility in the world. It is estimated that more than 440,000 creators have visited nine YouTube Spaces around the world since the Spaces programme first launched in 2012.

The Spaces programme is designed to support creators of all levels. Channels with 1,000 subscribers or more will have access to the workshops and events held at the Space, while creators with more than 10,000 subscribers will be able to access the production facilities, which include two soundproof studios, editing equipment, cameras and microphones, as well as a control room. Emphasising the importance of content creation for the platform, David Ripert, Head of YouTube Spaces in Europe, Middle East and Africa, said: “As a platform, YouTube provides a blank canvas for creative expression and the Space will be one of the tools creators use to tell their own stories.”

While content creators will have to adhere to UAE laws governing media, they will be free to produce and publish their content with no prior vetting, according to a YouTube spokesperson.

The Space comes at a significant time for YouTube in MENA, with a reported 160% increase in the number of channels being uploaded in the past three years.

There are reportedly more than 200 MENA channels with over a million subscribers, and more than 30,000 channels with more than 10,000 subscribers.
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MBC removes Turkish content; Attaché says decision isolated

In a development that took the industry by surprise, Saudi-owned broadcaster MBC Group, which is based in Dubai received instructions last month to remove Turkish programming from all of its channels, including MBC Masr in Egypt, until further notice. The decision has affected six shows, including the period drama Antah Watani (You Are My Nation). Following the sudden announcement from MBC Group, Hasan Onal, Commercial Attaché, Consulate General of Turkey, told BroadcastPro ME that the decision is an isolated one and does not apply to other TV networks in the GCC or the wider Arab world.

“This decision is solely from MBC Group and does not impact other networks. Although there is some speculation, we are unsure of the real reasons behind it. Other channels like Dubai TV as well as Netflix continue to run Turkish series,” commented Onal.

The news came just after the Dubai edition of DISCOP, where Saudi Arabia’s media measurement chief Dr. Riyadh Najm discussed 2017 figures, according to which Turkish series and films were the most watched content in the Kingdom.

VOX signs distribution deal with producers of Masameer

VOX Cinemas has signed an exclusive distribution deal with Myrkott, the Saudi production company behind animated YouTube hit Masameer, which has reportedly attracted more than 700 million views across social media. The announcement marks the first deal of its kind with a Saudi production company and will see Myrkott content screened across the MENA, including a feature film based on the show.

Virgin Radio launches in Oman

SABCO Media announced the launch of Virgin Radio in Oman last month. The radio station, part of the global network of Virgin Radio, aims to be attention-grabbing and edgy, with a mix of music, entertainment, chat, celebrity news and live events.

On the initiative, Eihab Abutaha, CEO, SABCO Communication Group, said: “We want to command a leading role in the radio market and media space.”
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Turkey’s Dogan Group in talks to sell media assets

One of Turkey’s largest media corporations, Dogan Media Group led by Turkish media magnate Aydin Dogan, announced that it is currently in talks to sell its newspaper and television businesses to another Turkish conglomerate, Demirören Holding, for $1.1 billion. The company, in a statement to the Public Disclosure Platform of the Istanbul stock exchange, stated: “We have initiated talks regarding the sale of all of our components, which operate in the print and visual media, on an operating value of $1.1 billion and a share value of $890 million. “These components include YAYSAT, which performs the distribution of media and non-media products, Dogan Publishing [Posta, Fanatik], Dogan News Agency, Dogan TV Holding, DTV News and Visual Broadcasting, Doruk TV and Radio Broadcasting [CNN Türk], Hürriyat Publishing and Printing, and Mozaik Communication Services [D-Smart].”

B4U Network appoints sales representative in Bahrain

Indian entertainment channel B4U Network has appointed Go Alive Media House as exclusive sales representative to spearhead media sales for B4U Network in Bahrain. CEO Sushma Athilat will be responsible for overseeing the channel’s sales and strategies in the competitive Bahrain market. Given the strategic importance of the Bahrain market, Go Alive Media House will primarily focus on the channel’s portfolio of clients in Bahrain and on deepening the relationship with existing clients, to further accelerate the sales of the channel. “Our biggest growth opportunities are still ahead of us. We are excited to have someone with tremendous calibre and experience in market expansion to join the team. We are convinced that Go Alive Media House will play a key role in taking B4U Network market share to the next level,” said Zeeshan Sajid Amin, Business Head, B4U Middle East.

Abu Dhabi attracts big-budget Bollywood and Hollywood movies

Indian film star, Salman Khan, returned to Abu Dhabi last month to film his latest film, Race 3, six months since he wrapped production on Tiger Zinda Hai in September 2017. Paramount Pictures also announced the filming of Tom Cruise’s Mission Impossible - Fallout in Abu Dhabi. Both films will reportedly take advantage of the 30% rebate on production spend in the emirate from the Abu Dhabi Film Commission (ADFC).
Legacy events back at Singapore as ConnecTechAsia

ConnecTechAsia will combine legacy events such as CommunicAsia, BroadcastAsia and newly launched NXTAsia to stage its inaugural edition from 26-28 June 2018 in Singapore.

At NXTAsia, innovations showcased will cover areas such as AI, AR/VR, cyber security, IoT, robotics, cloud and data. CommunicAsia will focus on network infrastructure/FTTx, satellite communications and telecom software and services.

BroadcastAsia will showcase the future of broadcasting, exploring how we have consumed news and entertainment over the past decade, and the challenges and opportunities this creates for traditional broadcasters and OTT players. It will also highlight technologies that are reshaping the value chain, such as the latest innovations in UHD/HDR, IP broadcasting, live production, content security and OTT.

Egypt to launch TV channel to cover Africa

Egypt will reportedly launch a new television channel dedicated to covering African affairs. Arab and African professionals will participate in launching the channel, according to Ahmed Selim, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Media Regulation (SCM).

As per local media reports, Selim said the body is launching the new channel to enhance Egypt’s media influence globally.

The move to launch a TV channel comes amid Egyptian efforts since 2014, to enhance bilateral ties with other African countries led by initiatives from the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Iflix to stream comedy in MENA original

iflix has premiered a MENA original with The Hicham Haddad Show, featuring the comedian’s no-holds-barred observations about life in Lebanon. The 45-minute set is available to stream and download across MENA exclusively on iflix.

The Hicham Haddad Show is iflix MENA’s second original, following Waklinha Walaa, a 60-episode Egyptian comedy series that brought together 60 of the Arab world’s leading stars.

First Egyptian drama series airs on Netflix

The Arabic drama series Secret of the Nile, produced by Beelink Productions and Eagle Films Middle East, was the first Egyptian TV drama to be launched globally on Netflix last month. Secret of the Nile was first aired to critical acclaim during Ramadan 2016.

When asked about the success of Beelink Productions, CEO Safa Abu Rizik said: “We are proud of our collaboration with Beta Film and we already have another great project/adaptation of one of Beta Film’s prominent series in the pipeline.”

Tunisia TV threatens football blackout after violence

Tunisian public TV channel Wataniya threatened to stop broadcasting football matches after two of its journalists were wounded during a weekend unrest.

Fans of top club Etoile Sahel attacked the press booth of Wataniya, which holds exclusive rights to broadcast Tunisian championship matches.

The violence was sparked by a contested penalty in the second half, Wataniya spokesman Elyes Jarrahy told AFP.

Wataniya denounced what it called a series of “frequent attacks against its staff and equipment” and called for security measures for journalists.

Otherwise, it warned, the channel “will be forced to stop covering matches”.

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Industry mourns Guy Elliott

Broadcast veteran Guy Elliott passed away last month after a one-year battle with cancer. Elliott, who headed EMEA Gateway, a consultancy that served as a liaison between manufacturers and end users, and more recently served as Director of Sales for Telestream, was a frequent visitor to the Middle East and also participated in several BroadcastPro Middle East events.

Paying tribute, Nick Barratt, Senior Manager of Broadcast at MBC Group and a friend of Elliott, said: “Guy was an awesome person. I’ve never met anyone that didn’t have the utmost respect and good things to say about him. We could always call on him for advice and he was very helpful in his responses. He understood that being the representative of a company had nothing to do with selling and targets but was about building meaningful relationships that transcended products. I valued his friendship and advice and will miss him.”

Mark Barkey, Regional Sales Director for Axon, noted: “I met Guy Elliott less than a decade ago at one of the trade shows; it was like meeting an old friend. He had the remarkable gift of making people feel at ease, appreciated and always had good advice to offer, was always keen to help. His competence and business acumen was only matched by his wicked sense of humour.”

Mark Wronski, VP of Sales at Telestream, added: “The Telestream family was privileged to call Guy Elliott one of our own. Guy was a tireless sales professional. His work in broadcast technology stretches back to the late ’70s, and he demonstrated great enthusiasm and talent for regional business strategy. We first connected with him professionally through his own consultancy, EMEA Gateway. In that endeavour, Guy leveraged his strong relationships in Europe, the Middle East and Africa to connect users and vendors, creating meaningful new business models. He was highly regarded as much for his expertise and professionalism as his genuine warmth and humour. His passing leaves a void that will be felt widely in our professional community. Our thoughts are with his family at this time.”

Meriam Khan, owner of MKM Marketing Communications and a close friend, added: “Guy was a larger-than-life figure. He was fun-loving, personable yet serious, but always the consummate professional. He just emanated positive energy and was full of joie de vivre. Guy particularly loved the Middle East and would return frequently throughout each year to see friends and colleagues and to share experiences. He enjoyed the people, the customs, the culture and, of course, the food! He was a wonderful, caring, funny man. He will be sorely missed and is a massive loss to the industry at large. RIP Mr Elliott.”

SMMC chief unveils 2017 Saudi TAM results at DISCOP 2018

Dr Riyadh Najm, CEO of Saudi Media Measurement Group, delivered the keynote at DISCOP with some key figures from the country’s 2017 TV Audience Measurement results. Speaking about the sampling procedure, he pointed out that two-thirds of Saudi Arabia’s 33 million people are Saudi Arabian, while only a third are expatriates. As a result, the ratio of people sampled for Saudi versus expatriates was at 2:1, with 2,000-plus people sampled. Dr Najm reiterated that when sampling was done for each household, all the television sets in a household were part of the measurement project and all individuals above the age of four were considered.

The results indicate that in Saudi Arabia, the most watched were series with films coming a close second, after which came news and then shows. The programme with the best rating was Selfie 3, followed by Ramez Taht Al Ard and Afarit Adly Allam. The most watched films were Turkish, followed by Indian, Western, Arabic and GCC. Turkish series again were the most watched, followed by GCC, Indian, Arabic and Western. The most watched series were Selfie, Bab Al Hara and Afarit Adly Allam in that order.
DISCOP to move to Sharm El-Sheikh in 2019; KSA to be Guest Country

As the Dubai edition of the film, TV, online content and adaptation rights market concluded last month, DISCOP announced that its Middle East-focused market will move to Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in 2019, with Saudi Arabia as the official Guest Country.

DISCOP’s Dubai edition concluded with 687 delegates in attendance, including 282 buyers, representing broadcasters, pay-tv operators and streaming platforms, primarily operating in the MENA and the Indian sub-continent.

Highlights from DISCOP Dubai included the Arab Format Accelerator initiative, which showcased 25 original scripted and unscripted shows ready to be adapted for Middle Eastern audiences, as well as a programme of conferences and panel discussions focusing on co-production opportunities. India was this year’s Guest Country, with more than 50 Indian delegates representing over 30 entertainment and media companies attending.

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME on the state of the regional industry and strategies ahead, Patrick Zuchowicki, CEO of DISCOP, said: “What is exciting in the television industry is not just the quality of productions but the co-productions that are being made possible. For instance, in this event we saw joint initiatives from Ivory Coast and Saudi Arabia, from Korea and India, and so on. From the business point of view, while the industry remains difficult, these co-productions open up opportunities.

“From a financial point of view, the announcement of $65bn to be invested in the Saudi entertainment sector will see more original content being produced.”

Patrick Zuchowicki, CEO of DISCOP.

BBC Earth comes to MENA

BBC Earth will launch across MENA through beIN on April 5 as part of a deal. The agreement will also see BBC Earth extend its distribution in Turkey through Digiturk. BBC Earth will be a localised channel on the network with a schedule curated for local audiences and with 100% Arabic subtitling. The channel will launch with the natural history series Blue Planet II.

Grass Valley and Cisco partner to demystify IP

Cisco and Grass Valley hosted a day-long event in Dubai last month as part of its EMEA roadshow to demystify IP. Attendees were taken through IP standards and use cases including demonstrations of IP-based solutions. The broadcast industry also had the opportunity to view the new combined Grass Valley/SAM portfolio of solutions.

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME on the sidelines of the roadshow, Jan-Pieter van Welsem, VP Sales EMEA, said: “Over the last two years, there have been a number of high profile IP deployments in the region with broadcasters installing all IP broadcast networks in their new facilities in a number of markets as well as all IP Ob trucks being used for live production.

"The Demystifying IP Roadshow builds on the educational roadshows that we organised last year, giving CTOs, broadcast engineers and consultants, insights and key lessons learnt from IP installations over the past 12 to 18 months.”

He also elaborated on the combined range and depth of the product portfolio of Grass Valley after the SAM acquisition in February 2018. He highlighted, in particular, the range of switchers and IP-based solutions that the company can now offer broadcasters of varying scales of operation.

Opening his presentation of use cases, Robert Erickson, Director of Advanced Technology at Grass Valley said: “Real world, glass-to-glass IP-based solutions are here and ready to be deployed.”

The use cases highlighted the need to adopt different business models, upskill internal teams and manage more complex security systems, among other issues.
How would you describe your role as Head of Media Partnerships?
I joined Facebook in the first role of its kind in the region, and my team and I work closely with strategic partners, helping them leverage Facebook tools to maximise mutually beneficial objectives. We work closely with entertainment, sports and news partners, with the aim to enhance the overall consumer experience with Facebook products.

Tell us a little bit about Facebook’s ambitious moves into the video streaming market and how you intend to take this forward.
Over the next three years, the biggest trend in our products will be the growth of video. Watching videos on Facebook connects people, sparks conversation and fosters community. As more people enjoy this experience, we learned that people like discovering videos in news feeds, but they also want a dedicated place they can go to watch videos. This is why we introduced Watch, a new platform for shows on Facebook – available on mobile, desktops and TV apps.

Watch is personalised to help you discover new shows, organised around what your friends and communities are watching. The Most Talked About section highlights shows that spark virtual water cooler discussions, and What Friends Are Watching helps you connect with friends about shows they also follow. We have also seen with Facebook Live that people’s comments and reactions to a video are often as much a part of the experience as the video itself. With Watch, you can see comments and connect with friends and other viewers while watching or participate in a dedicated Facebook Group for the show.

Watch is currently available in the US. We are looking to expand our video destination and both Facebook original and partner shows to other countries and regions, including the Middle East and North Africa in the future.

We’ve found that communities formed around video like TV shows or sports create a greater sense of belonging than many other communities. Globally, we’ve found that live videos generate 10 times the number of interactions and comments as other videos.

What are your observations of MENA audiences?
The MENA region’s affinity for smartphones is increasing day by day, with more than 71% of consumers using their smartphone to consume content. We’re seeing mobile being the device of choice to access Facebook as well – out of over 164 million people in the region that use Facebook, around 156 million (95%) are on mobile devices.

Facebook users around the world are choosing to engage with video on mobile, with 75% of video views by...
users around the world on mobile. The availability of larger screen mobile devices is creating a more immersive and compelling canvas for visual content. Today, 97% of people online in the UAE watch video at least monthly (versus 88% for EMEA), and 62% of Facebook users in the UAE posted or shared video content on the platform (versus 48% for EMEA).

Monetising video content is a big area of concern among content creators. What does Facebook bring to the table that traditional and OTT players here don’t have? Video on Facebook is personal. It is built around connections, conversations and communities. It’s also personalised. We can show you the most relevant videos from the people and publishers you’re interested in. And with new formats like Live and 360, video on Facebook is immersive and built for mobile. As video watching behaviours continue to change, we’ll continue to give advertisers more flexibility and control over their ad placements and look for more ways to provide audiences with great ad experiences across devices, content types and ad formats.

How does the system work in terms of ads in videos? How long can they be, and how often can they be shown?

Videos are currently eligible for ad breaks if they are at least 90 seconds long, with the first one allowed to run at the 20-second mark. On mobile especially, 47% of a video’s value is delivered in the first three seconds, and 74% is delivered in the first 10 seconds – after that, attention starts to decline. If your brand message is at the end of a 30-second spot, this may mean people are less likely to see it.

This is why we encourage brands to keep ads short in order to engage audiences. We are also looking to roll out six-second ads before videos next year, making it a requirement that videos be at least three minutes in length to have an ad break, instead of just 90 seconds.

If someone comes to Facebook with an ad for streaming, what’s your advice?

Partners need to think about where and when they want to place an ad. Due to low switching barriers in the digital space, brands can no more rely on automated placement of an ad every few minutes within a video. Ads need to organically flow within the narrative of the story.

Digital ads, especially on Facebook, lend themselves beautifully to creative thinking, so the second thing we would encourage our partners to do is keep their target audience in mind and customise their ads in line with viewer interest.

And finally, we ask partners to be flexible by leveraging Facebook’s extensive resources to test, tweak and reiterate their ads, in order to find the optimal solution for their needs.

Your live element was getting some traction at press conferences last year, but we haven’t seen that as much now. Are you looking to ramp this up?

We have seen incredible adoption, creativity and engagement of live video on Facebook since its launch. Live video on Facebook is truly social – the people who matter
most to you watch your broadcast, comment and ask you questions. Today, one in every five Facebook videos is a live broadcast and over the past year, daily watch time for Facebook Live broadcasts has grown by more than four times. We’ve seen that people comment 10 times more on Facebook Live videos than on regular videos.

What’s your MENA strategy, and what’s next on your agenda? While we remain focused on our mobile-first strategy, we see the shift to video being as big as the shift to mobile, if not bigger. We’re putting video at the heart of all our apps and services; when done well, video brings us closer together. We’re building more features and products that focus on the camera – like Instagram stories and masks in Live – making it much easier to capture, edit and share creative videos.

“**One in every five Facebook videos is a live broadcast ... people comment 10 times more on Facebook Live videos than on regular videos**”

Fares Akkad, Head of Media Partnerships for Facebook and Instagram, Middle East, Africa and Turkey

What are some of the big challenges you face in this market? We like to think of these as opportunities for growth. For example, the further development of connectivity in the MENA region is key for digital video. This needs to be supplemented with increased awareness about the technical aspects of digital production, as well as storytelling, with the goal of enhancing both the quantity and quality of digital video in the region. However, with the popularity of Facebook as a platform and the availability of online self-help tools and programmes, we are confident that this gap can be closed fairly quickly.

What is your video strategy for this market? We are working with Arab content creators to help them use Facebook tools to enhance the quality of their video content and build communities around their passions – ranging from comedy sketches, beauty and fashion, interactive video games and even knitting sweaters. For example, we have been working with Khaled Al Ameri, an Emirati influencer, to highlight some of the amazing communities that thrive on Facebook and give more people a voice. Another example is the Dubai
CrossFit Games. We worked with regional and international CrossFit stars and fitness influencers to help raise awareness for the event. We also created targeted campaigns to recruit contestants from around the world, and used videos and images from last year’s competition to help the organisers fill a 5,000-seat arena versus the 400-seat space they used previously. We live-streamed the whole event, attracting a significant global audience.

Right now, if people want to place their short films on Facebook, what are the criteria?

Although Watch and ad breaks are set to be launched in the MENA region next year, I encourage partners to start building their video platform today! I would also recommend that advertisers experiment with short and long videos to see what works for them and for their audience.

Facebook elsewhere is showing interest in bidding for sports rights. I’m sure you’re doing the same here, but are there any specifics you can share?

On Facebook, fans discover rich and immersive video that brings them closer to the sports, athletes and teams they love. Facebook Live and Facebook 360 video give fans unprecedented access to the action, taking them on the field and in the locker room, inviting them to interact directly with their favourite players and enabling them to watch live games from around the world.

Facebook is helping athletes, teams, leagues and media connect with this global audience of sports fans.

In the MENA region, we recently worked with the WWE team to promote one of their live events in the UAE. Together with an influencer, we set up a Facebook Live broadcast from our office in Dubai, resulting in more than 300,000 views – the largest Live event ever for WWE. This not only helped to promote the brand, but also boosted actual ticket sales.

Facebook is changing its algorithm in the US to counter fake news, de-emphasise clickbait and let users contribute to the determination of the legitimacy of a news source. Is anything like this coming to the region?

Last year, we worked hard to reduce fake news and clickbait, and to destroy the economic incentives for spammers to generate these articles in the first place. But there is more we can do. In 2018, we will prioritise news from publications that the community rates as trustworthy, news that people find informative and news that is relevant to people’s local community.

We are currently testing two ranking changes in the US: Trusted Sources and Local News. Although we’re testing in the US first, we plan to roll them out internationally in

“We are working with Arab content creators to help them use Facebook tools to enhance the quality of their video content and build communities around their passions – ranging from comedy sketches, beauty and fashion, interactive video games and even knitting sweaters,” says Fares Akkad.

Fares Akkad, Head of Media Partnerships for Facebook and Instagram, Middle East, Africa and Turkey
the future. With Trusted Sources, we’re testing a change which will prioritise trusted sources to ensure that the news people see on Facebook is high quality. With Local News, we are testing a change which should connect people to more stories from news sources in their local town or city.

Is Facebook willing to explain its position on the rights of Palestinians to voice their rejection of Israeli occupation? Facebook cares about the voices, opinion and rights of all the different communities on Facebook, and we will protect and work with them all, whatever their race or religion. Palestinian voices will be as safe on Facebook as every other community on our platform.

What is Facebook’s policy on controversial content, and who dictates what is controversial? Are there some guidelines or an internal body that dictates this? We want people to feel safe when using Facebook. For that reason, we’ve developed a set of Community Standards. These policies will help you understand what type of sharing is allowed on Facebook, and what type of content may be reported to us and removed. Sometimes we will allow content if newsworthy, significant or important to the public interest – even if it might otherwise violate our standards. Because of the diversity of our global community, something that may be disagreeable or disturbing to you may not violate our Community Standards.

“Because of the diversity of our global community... something that may be disagreeable or disturbing to you may not violate our Community Standards”

Fares Akkad, Head of Media Partnerships for Facebook and Instagram, Middle East, Africa and Turkey

Content is so sensitive in this region, with so many flashpoints and fault lines. What is your first line of defence to monitor video content? We have real people looking at reported content. Our CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently announced that we will be doubling our safety and security team to 20,000 people in 2018, to better enforce our Community Standards.

We know context and intent is critical to applying our Community Standards, especially in areas such as hate speech. That’s why we have native language reviewers who understand local context reviewing reported content. It also includes experts in enforcement in areas such as child safety, hate speech, counter-terrorism and legal specialists. We also use automation to help our community operations team apply our policies and, in some cases, help stop the spread of certain types of content that very clearly violate our Community Standards.

We receive millions of reports each week and have a community operations team spread around the world working 24/7 across time zones to review and action reports as quickly as possible.
The Insult earned Lebanon its very first Oscar nomination. From depicting a gritty Beirut summer to ensuring the defence lawyer’s skin tone projected consistent contrast ratio and colour, colourist Belal Hibri gives BroadcastPro ME a riveting account of the grading challenges the landmark film offered.

“Diamond Bou Abboud, who plays a defence lawyer in the film, has beautiful fair skin that caught bounce from everywhere,” recalls Belal Hibri who used DaVinci Resolve’s 3D tracker and power windows for the long Steadicam shots.
The nominees at the 2018 Oscars boasted a number of world firsts. Rachel Morrison became the first female cinematographer to receive an Oscar nod in the award show’s 90-year run, while Mudbound, the film she shot, officially marked Netflix’s first original feature in the competition.

Then there’s The Insult. Having already gained critical acclaim at the Venice Film Festival, the courtroom thriller—which follows the story of an insult blown out of proportion between a Lebanese Christian and a Palestinian refugee in modern-day Beirut—made history as the very first Lebanese film to make it to the Oscars, with a nomination in the foreign language category.

“I’ve been working on Lebanese features for the past eight years. It’s been amazing having a front row seat to the industry’s evolution here,” begins Belal Hibri, co-founder of Lucid Post. The Beirut-based facility, which operates as a full-service post house, oversaw the completion of everything from pre-production testing to the final grade on The Insult, and Hibri certainly has quite a few things to say about his home’s rising voice on the world stage of film.

“There tend to be two approaches to narrative in this country,” he explains. “The first is to try and appeal to European tastes to attract funding, co-production and an eventual big festival premiere. That generally means the film will not do well with local audiences, however, as they have a preference for television-style drama. When we first got the opportunity to work with director Ziad Doueiri, we knew he wanted things to be different. His film West Beirut is a classic in Lebanese cinema, but he was also the focus puller on many of Tarantino’s films, from Four Rooms to Jackie Brown. It was a thrill to be in the grading suite and hear him tell stories about how they shot Pulp Fiction!”

Because of his experiences both at home and in Hollywood, Hibri reveals Doueiri’s main aim for The Insult was to be unique in combining both local and Western aesthetics. While the history of Lebanon would play a big part in motivating the characters throughout the script, it would also speak to a much more universal question of conflict resolution. People from all over the world would be able to access its underlying emotional message. This would also be reflected throughout the film’s production and final grade.
“The film was primarily shot in 2.8K RAW on a pair of Alexa XTIs,” Hibri recalls. “For a few scenes, Ziad operated a Sony A7s II recording out to a Shogun in 4K ProRes 422 HQ. All of the drone photography was captured in DNG RAW with a DJI Inspire 1, and there were even a few quick cutaways shot on a smartphone! Our job was to initially conform and match all these different rushes together with proper colour management, which we did in DaVinci Resolve Studio.

“When we came to working on the dailies and final grade, our first challenge was to collaborate with the director and cinematographer, Tommaso Fiorilli, to evoke the feeling of heat in the Beirut summer. Ziad was keen to have the image feel hot, gritty and golden, while still allowing in blues and greens to help avoid falling into sepia-land. As the story progresses, we then start to enter the courtroom and the look shifts to help focus our attention on the performances. Each of the different courtroom scenes has its own personality and we set looks based on each one’s specific tone, energy and atmosphere.”

The grading process for the main courtroom scenes required handling 360-degree lighting, created so that the entire room could be framed in-shot. “Diamond Bou Abboud, who plays a defence lawyer in the film, has beautiful fair skin that caught bounce from everywhere,” Hibri reveals. “We had many scenes that would begin with red bounce from a wall to her left, and as she walked around the courtroom and stood backlit in front of a large window, the Optima Zoom would flare blue in the blacks.

“It was very important to us all that her face keep a consistent contrast ratio and colour, which took a fair amount of masking and dynamics. Luckily, DaVinci Resolve’s awesome 3D tracker and power windows were all I needed during those long Steadicam shots. It is the tool that saved me time and time again during this project. We ultimately also used Resolve’s collaborative workflow features to render reels on a second system while continuing to work in the hero suite, saving us more precious time in between cinema tests.”

While Chilean drama A Fantastic Woman edged out The Insult to win best foreign film at the Oscars, Hibri says this is just the beginning.

“Beirut is a city full of juxtapositions, big emotions and a complicated history. The Insult speaks to those complexities,” he concludes. “I also believe its optimism leaves you with a feeling of hope, which is rare for a film about the Middle East. I believe its success will inspire a new crop of Lebanese films which can strike a similar balance of social issues, entertainment and high-quality production. I can’t wait to see what the next eight years will bring.”

“Each of the different courtroom scenes has its own personality and we set looks based on each one’s specific tone, energy and atmosphere” — Belal Hibri.
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Angst-ridden teenage elephants, conniving baboons and lionesses banned from the pride will have you empathising with animals like never before. **Vijaya Cherian** gets the low-down on the new approach to storytelling in *Dynasty* and *Serengeti*, the latest from the BBC Natural History stable.

Six hundred hours of footage for each one-hour episode, two years of dedicated filming in one case and four in another, several bee stings, raging storms and numerous challenges later, teasers for two very powerful and engaging natural history programmes – *Serengeti* and *Dynasty* – were screened at the BBC Worldwide Showcase in Liverpool earlier this year. Although the BBC has always managed to find new and innovative ways to take natural history programming to new levels that never fail to enthral audiences, *Serengeti* and *Dynasty* promise a different way of storytelling.

With *Serengeti*, an unusual collaboration between Simon Fuller, creator of *American Idol*, and award-winning producer-director John Downer, who has made several groundbreaking natural history programmes over the last three decades, has led to the first soap-style animal drama, with a large ensemble of characters from the African wild.

Fuller, who has made his first entry into natural history with this project, explains how he wound up in this neck of the woods. “I quite often get asked confidentially to give advice to certain charities on problems like animal trafficking. I found myself on a safari in Tanzania just thinking about how one could stop animals being treated so terribly, and arrived at the conclusion that a lot of it has to do with our lack of empathy towards animals. “I thought that if there was a way through some TV programme to encourage empathy for these animals among people and if we could relate to them in a different way, that might be quite a powerful opportunity.”

That thought led to a meeting with Downer, and the result of that collaboration is *Serengeti*. “We often tell natural history stories from one individual’s point of view,” explains Downer. “This was a chance to tell a bigger and more profound story, because the lives of all the animals here are interconnected. If one animal does something, it has a knock-on effect on all the other animals. When you are in their world and they become characters that you can identify with, you start to see the connections between all these different lives in a way that is thought-provoking and you begin to think about your own connections on the planet. *Serengeti* is a microcosm of the world in a way, and all the animals and the interconnections there are at the heart of this drama.”

The team had ten camera systems for the shoot, with five to six employed at any given point of time. This was especially important, Downer says, to not just capture the animals in their environment unobtrusively but to also get them from different angles and points of view, which is especially important for the drama approach to storytelling.

“I have been filming animals for the last 30 years, but it’s only now that I had all the tools at my disposal to film animals in a way that is non-intrusive and true to their natural behaviour. Simon had the perfect location – a private reserve in the heart of Serengeti. The cameras were not visible to the animals, which meant that we could follow them and capture their extraordinary behaviour. It allowed us to move and travel with them and become part of their world while being invisible to them,” explains Downer, adding that the team shot for two years with two sets of crews.

“It was continuous filming. There were always two crews and they’d take a couple of weeks off and then come back again and pick up the story again, so we were able to tell a complete story across one year. We were also able to capture major events because this story takes place over the course of a year, which means you have climatic impacts, the migration, fire burning and storms. The whole place is changing all the time, and these changes became part of the narrative.”

The camerawork was especially critical to the storytelling, explains Downer. “We often experimented with several ways of filming and settled on 10 different types of camera systems, often deploying
“You are a privileged spectator and engaged in one of the great dramas of life and death. What more do you want?”

David Attenborough, Broadcaster and Naturalist
five or six at a time and combining it with remote filming. This is such a big advantage. In the past, we would probably manage to get about 5% of what we saw. Now, when we see something, we have the ability to film it. In Serengeti, we were able to capture every moment that happened out there because we had deployed several cameras and so we were able to cover the action from every angle. This helped immensely to construct the drama because for drama, you need different angles and points of view,” explains Downer.

The big Serengeti show covers all of Africa’s favourites – the stress of a teenage elephant who has turned 14 and must leave the herd; a lioness who has cubs outside the pride, is not allowed back in and has to survive on her own; the conniving baboon, who wants to be a leader; and then there are the cheetahs, the mongooses, the warthogs, hyenas, crocodiles and elephants. Each one enters the drama at a different point in time.

“What we have done is constructed it more like a drama, where you have all these different families. You don’t see them all in one story. Of course, we are only taking true-life events to create the drama, and most of the time we are following these individual characters too closely.”

Fuller adds that the team filmed for two years “before we wrote a word”.

“The natural history element comes from recording and filming this magnificent footage. But with the knowledge of the story, we also worked with good drama writers to ensure we were then able to give it a certain structure. We have broken a lot of new ground with this programme.”

If Serengeti is a massive opera style show, Dynasty is a lot more intense. This five-part series, shot over a period of four years, follows six individual animals from amongst lions, hunting dogs, chimpanzees, tigers and emperor penguins, at the most critical period in their lives.

Each is a ruler, a leader of their family, and each is determined to hold on to power and protect their family, their territory and their dynasty.

“It’s all about animal politics and how they survive,” explains Julian Hector, Head of the BBC Natural History Unit.

The Serengeti and Dynasty teams both worked closely with scientists who have been studying these animals for a good couple of decades.

“In these films, you see the struggles of the animals and you can’t help but feel engaged,” says Attenborough.

Executive Producer Mike Gunton says the team has worked very hard to develop new photographic techniques to give a sense of being in the world of the creatures, and got down to the eye level of the animals in this one.

“Today, our camera teams are able to get much closer to the animals and immerse the audiences in their world. We developed some technologies to get down to the level of the animals while also ensuring the safety of our crew. For the lion’s film, for instance, our producer and his camera operator created a tracking system that could be attached in place of the doors on the side of the vehicle and it was situated down. This meant they could sit in the car safely while filming at the eye level of a sleeping lion. That makes it a very clever piece of kit,” explains Gunton.

Both teams were careful to say that their films are not intended to serve any moral purpose.

“You are a privileged spectator and engaged in one of the great dramas of life and death. What more do you want?” asks Attenborough.

“You don’t know whether it is a tragedy or a comedy, but neither do those who are making the programme. They watched the story develop as they were shooting. Whether a young animal will become a hero or a villain, only time will tell.”

When asked if the team had a plan B should any of their characters die before the film was complete, Gunton
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On buying content for the African market
Insights from Farzana Wadee, Content Specialist – International Series, Showmax, and Shaamila Fataar, Content Specialist, Showmax Originals and Non-fiction.

“We watch content for a living and work at Showmax, a subsidiary of Naspers. We are interested in Born to Kill and Good Omens at this Showcase. The first season of Dr Foster was well received, so we have come back for the second season and hopefully, it will do just as well. Dr Who has a new female lead now, and we cater to an emerging market where the appetite for drama, comedy, sci-fi, action and female-driven pieces is huge.

“After Liverpool, we will head to London, where we will attend some independents and close some deals there as well. We fall under the umbrella of Naspers, Multichoice, but technically we are still a start-up and this is the second year of our operations.

“We buy content for the whole African market, but from a curation point of view, we separate the content based on region. The single biggest challenge for OTT in Africa is the data accessibility and the price of data. Our price is extremely affordable. We have a fixed RPU based on our Rand value and we can offer that to our customers at an affordable price, but to stream it you still need the data package, and this has been the challenge. In the last 10 years in South Africa, we have seen six or seven VOD players who have come to the market and folded because of the data issues. It’s challenging to hit that subscriber/scalability number. In our case, as a Multichoice company, we have great backing and we use our relationship in a very smart way.”

said the fifth Beatle is “always going to be a meerkat, because you can always make a great meerkat film”.

In the best traditions of modern-day television, ‘actors’ do get killed. Only here, TV writers did not have to get creative concocting deaths.

“Our lioness in the pride fortunately makes it to the end. Quite a lot of her pride don’t make it,” explains Gunton.

What catches our attention, though, is the passion with which every person associated with natural history programming speaks about it. Gunton says there was no turning back for him once he started on the path, while Attenborough called “natural history films” his life “for the last 60 years”.

“This is a privilege and one I greatly value,” he says.

Making blue-chip natural history films is, of course, not easy. Besides the time and effort that goes into them, significant money is also invested in these productions.

“Everything about blue-chip natural history programme making is about putting huge amounts of money into the capture. The men and women we put into the field are amazingly skilled and get our audiences close to the subject. Dynasty broke that boundary of observation,” explains Hector.

“It includes very strong individual stories, for instance, and more filming days were put into those individual films than we have ever done in our filming history. Each film had about 600 filming days per episode. It took all of the filming crews and directors to the very edge of what they can do, and it’s not just filming technology and innovation and storytelling, but in terms of going to different parts

“Camera technology has been miniaturised massively. We put the cameras on animals and let the animals film for us”

Julian Hector, Head of the BBC Natural History Unit
of the world and observing a single group of animals and documenting every single piece of behaviour in really tough conditions, and putting so many hours in. It’s going to be a really good series. We haven’t done anything quite like this.”

Hector goes on to say that bringing “relevant and edgy content into our storytelling” has helped draw in younger audiences as well, in addition to social media engagement efforts.

Although Serengeti and Dynasty took most of the limelight at the showcase within the natural history segment, Hector draws our attention to another landmark programme, Big Cats.

“There are 40 species of cats in the wild and the series filmed 32 of them, and it rated fantastically well on BBC 1. And again, the digital activity around this programme was amazing. Some of these cats were so tiny, with the rusty spotty cat weighing just 120g.”

He also speaks about the camera technology innovation that has made it possible for the producer to go even deeper into the habitat of the animals.

“Technical innovation is at the heart of much of what we do. This is where we work with scientists all over the world. We employed someone who was amazing at building bespoke camera housings. Camera technology has been miniaturised massively. We put the cameras on animals and let the animals film for us. They revealed parts of their lives that we couldn’t possibly have got. It gave a new look to the programme, as the pictures were very racy and inviting.

“We put a camera on a habituated chimpanzee that was going to be released into the wild. The chimp was curious about the camera and took it off and on, but on one occasion, it went up into the trees and showed exactly how it makes its nest in the trees and how it manipulated twigs in the canopy. We even saw him wash his hands in a hole in the tree that was filled with water. Then there were the meerkats that took it deep into their underground chamber in South Africa, where some babies had been born.”

Hector adds that the team often works closely with biologists.

“We can put a camera on an animal only for a few hours, although the battery life is much better now and can stay for days. We had one on an African penguin in South Africa, which we took off. The cameras themselves are bomb proof, but the animals could make absolute mayhem of the devices that we built. We also ensured that the devices came off or were taken off by the biologists when they returned. It is an amazing series to do.”

In the case of Planet Earth, Hector points out that the team used HD thermal imagery to film leopards in Mumbai at a resolution never seen before. With a 50% decline in global wildlife numbers just in the last 30 years, he says there is an increasing need at the BBC to “tell inspiring and compelling stories in a different way” that will inform audiences about “the fragility and our relationship with the natural world”.

Both Serengeti and Dynasty fit that bill perfectly.

“We also worked with good drama writers to ensure we were then able to give it a certain structure. We have broken a lot of new ground with this programme”

Simon Fuller, Idol franchise creator
The 3G truck has been designed for eight to ten cameras and is expandable on one side. The inside of the OB van is divided into four different areas that are separated using sliding glass doors: engineering and CCU, production, sound and a voice-over booth.

Coach specs and equipment

Van:
- Chassis based on Mercedes-Benz ATEGO
- Custom-made FRP panels to prevent sand and dust damage
- Motorised cable drum system

Key Kit:
- Grass Valley LDX-86 WorldCam systems
- Karrera video switcher with K-frame
- NVision 8144 video router
- Densité 3 glues
- Kaleido multiviewers
- Vinten camera tripods
- Riedel intercom systems
- Evertz replay system
- Genelec monitors
- Studer audio mixers
- Tektronix waveform monitors
- Canon XU-81W camera
The custom-built OB van for Sharjah TV by systems integrator ARET went beyond equipment specs to create an effective tool for the broadcaster.

Sharjah TV recently took delivery of an OB van from ARET for sports coverage and other demanding productions. The Italian broadcast systems integrator ARET has supplied 450 OB vans over four decades since 1976, with several customers in the region, and this probably influenced Sharjah TV’s choice.

“ARET has been active for the past 15 years in the MENA region, and the Middle East is one of the leading markets for ARET,” comments Sales Engineer and Marketing Director Dr Eng Umberto Asti, who is also Vice President of ARET Video and Audio Engineering.

“Among the 450 OB vans delivered around the world, many are operating in the Middle East, including Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and the UAE. The last year has seen the completion of many outstanding projects in the region.”

As broadcasters require access to content no matter where they are, the mobile unit is now less of a workhorse of equipment and racks, and much more of a creative hub where broadcast technicians can focus on better engaging audiences through innovative live coverage. In response to the demands of the modern-day broadcaster, Dr Asti and his team at ARET created integrated workflows.

“We did all the coachbuilding. Instead of buying a pre-made coachwork from third parties, as most of the other companies do, we are very proud to have our in-house coachwork department that relies exclusively on internal resources. Our coachwork allows us to carefully monitor every single step of the creation process. We also did the designing and systems integration.

“Another strong point of ARET is the ability to combine coachbuilding and systems integration towards creating a state-of-the-art product. This technique allows us to have strict connection among all the parts and variables of the project that need continuous feedback. As a result, all our coachwork creations are instruments for broadcasters built around equipment specifications, and this OB van is proof of that.”

Recalling the timeline of the project, Dr Asti says: “After an initial draft for the project was submitted, we at ARET proceeded with the analysis and modified it accordingly. Following the client’s requests that arose during the development phases, we then revised it and further customised the system. Every detail has been monitored with maximum precision and expertise. The van was completed last year and commissioned the following month.”

Giving an overall perspective of the OB van, Dr Asti says: “This 3G truck has been designed for eight to ten cameras and is expandable on one side. The inside of the OB van is divided into four different areas that are separated using sliding glass doors: engineering and CCU, production, sound and a voice-over booth.

“It features a telescopic mast with a PTZ camera on top and a flexible layout that allows adapting to different types of productions. The robotic PTZ camera, installed on the top of a pneumatic telescopic mast, can be raised...
up to eight metres. The pan-tilt head system incorporates a camera with 20x optical zoom that can supply high-resolution and high-magnification video in real time. The system is managed by an active control installed on the CCU desk that provides smooth transitions of the pan-tilt head.

“The voice-over booth, designed as per the customer’s requirements, is used for live commentary and features dedicated acoustic treatment. A satellite antenna, used to receive digital TV and radio signals, is also mounted on the roof. Each area is also monitored by a closed-circuit surveillance camera system.”

Highlighting the wide interiors of the OB van with dedicated lighting in every area, Dr Asti also remarks on the finishing details, from the designed tapistry to desk materials. He adds: “The power supply can be selected between the public network and a diesel generator. On the back of the truck, there is also a motorised cable drum system.”

Despite all the buzz around live remote broadcasting, OB trucks will remain on the front line of production, especially when it comes to covering live events. Having an in-house coachwork department has helped the team at ARET to custom-design each van according to the client’s requirement, Dr Asti stresses – especially in the case of Sharjah TV, which requested a full expansion to be able to adapt its workflow to every type of event.

“The chassis of the OB van is based on a Mercedes-Benz ATEGO. Modifications have been carried out by ARET in its internal coachwork department.”

The technicians at ARET also accounted for the harsh summer temperatures in the region, as Dr Asti explains: “The vehicle has been specially built to endure harsh weather conditions, with particular attention paid to the climate of the region. ARET has developed a unique coachbuilding technique dedicated to OB vans working in hot, dry and humid countries, that includes using custom fibreglass reinforced plastic (FRP) panels and dedicated solutions to prevent sand and dust damage, as well as internal water condensation from the AC system. In addition, the careful selection of the materials, together with their assembly methods, guarantees perfect resistance in every weather condition.”

The new 3G HD van joins a fleet of OB vans already with Sharjah TV. “This brand-new truck is a vital addition to their fleet that allows for the proper distribution of workload, optimisation of the overall workflow and significant improvement in video quality,” says Dr Asti. He explains that partnership with more than 30 broadcast brands has helped ARET “select the best equipment for every turnkey project”.

“Most significantly, partnering with the major broadcast brands has enabled ARET to be flexible and cost-effective, allowing the customer a tailored configuration instead of an all-in-one brand solution.

“The OB van uses Grass Valley’s LDX-86 Worldcam cameras and a Karrera video switcher with K-frame, NVision 8144 video router, Densité 3 glue, Kaleido multi-viewers, Vinten camera tripods, Riedel intercom systems, an Evertz replay system, Genelec monitors, audio mixers by Studer (Vista 1 for the main mixer, On Air 1500 as a back-up) and Tektronix waveform monitors. A Canon XU-81W camera is mounted on the telescopic mast.”

On the critical issue of testing and training, Dr Asti spells out the exacting procedure that ARET followed.

“The first part of the training was carried out at our headquarters in Milan. We verified that the coachwork corresponded in all of its details to the project specifications. The same meticulous check-up was carried out for the broadcast and electrical systems. The whole system was then validated and tested together with all the supplied devices, always including the broadcast, electrical, air conditioning and hydraulic systems.”

“The second part of the commissioning was carried out on-site in Sharjah, where ARET’s engineers fine-tuned all the configurations, verifying that the OB van operated without any issues in every condition. Both phases of the training were carried out flawlessly and the customer was pleased with the support received.”

To understand the potential uses of the OB van and provide solutions to suit the client’s requirements is at the heart of the success of such a project, Dr. Asti underlines. Signing off on our conversation, he adds: “We have received positive feedback from the client, and we are looking forward to the next collaboration.”
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Transitioning from a traditional AVC workflow may seem daunting for video providers streaming in multiple formats, but the move to HEVC will be cost-saving and result in consumer satisfaction, writes Anthonypillai Stanislous of Rohde & Schwarz

HEVC – TIME FOR MENA BROADCASTERS TO MIGRATE?

Across the Middle East, broadcasters are planning their launch strategies for new HD, 4K and UHD services. Inevitably, this will have important implications on their infrastructure upgrade strategies. However, before you start thinking about major capex projects, it is important to look at the challenge in a broader perspective. How important could something as simple as your choice of video encoding codec be to system capacity and bandwidth requirements? Here, we explain how HEVC could be the ideal technology to help broadcasters make this key migration.

For more than a decade, H.264, also known as AVC, has been the go-to video compression standard. Whenever you download a movie, view HDTV broadcasts or watch cable TV, there’s a very good chance that the video stream has been encoded with H.264. However, many broadcasters in the Middle East are still using MPEG-2, a 20-year-old codec.

H.264 is a great compression standard for a number of reasons. It provides very good quality at relatively low bitrates, and its widespread use means it’s supported by essentially every video playback device made in the past five to ten years. It’s also very versatile, not only allowing compression to small file sizes, but also to high-quality, high-bitrate files suitable for production and playout.

However, any discussion about ultra-high resolutions or more HD services in DTH or DVB-T2 terrestrial broadcasts eventually turns to the question of H.264 compression suitability, and this is where HEVC comes in. Professional HD cameras generate a huge amount of raw data, requiring some form of compression before it can be ingested into a production workflow and then transmitted. Dealing with the far larger volume of data that comes with UHD/4K compounds the problem.

High Efficiency Video Coding (HEVC), a video codec jointly developed by ISO/MPEG and ITU-T Video Coding Expert Group, is the natural successor to the Advanced
Video Coding (AVC) codec, also known as H.264.

**Half the bitrate**

HEVC divides the required bitrate by two compared to H.264, for the same level of quality. HEVC can be regarded as a considerable enhancement over H.264, with its ability to take advantage of the significant improvements in CPU power in the intervening years and be able to both deliver UHD over broadcast networks and extend the footprint of HD delivery over broadcast networks such as DTH and DVB-T2. HEVC promises a bandwidth reduction of around 35% – while delivering similar quality to H.264 – in live encoding applications. In the context of video-on-demand (VoD) applications, this increases to around 50% with no quality compromise and half the bitrate.

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**“HEVC promises a bandwidth reduction of around 35%, while delivering similar quality to H.264 in live encoding applications”**

*Anthonypillai Stanislous, Rohde & Schwarz Technical Manager, MEA*

Adopting HEVC in DVB-T2 terrestrial broadcast in the Middle East is definitely an advantage while the low-resolution SD services are migrating to HD services without occupying additional bandwidth.

A 50% bitrate saving from H.264 means twice as many HD services using the same bandwidth, or the same number of HD services with approximately double the coverage area. There are many new-generation TVs with a built-in DVB-T2 receiver and HEVC decoder. Many DVB-T2 in-car receivers with HEVC decoding are also popping up in the market, taking advantage of DVB-T2 being natively good for mobile reception.

A number of satellite service providers in the Middle East are still providing SD video, which looks very odd when displayed on the new-generation high-resolution TVs. These SD video services need to be migrated to HD services soon to cater to the quality of these TVs.

HEVC leverages more bandwidth savings when DTH services are migrating from SD to HD, and gives the opportunity to add more HD services along with the existing HD services.

Introducing HEVC to HD services will release more bandwidth to roll out ultra-HD channels for DTH satellite providers in the Middle East.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>H.264</th>
<th>H.265</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>40-50% bitrate reduction compared to MPEG-2</td>
<td>40-50% bitrate reduction at the same visual quality compared to H.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Led the growth of HD content delivery for broadcast and online</td>
<td>Potential to realise UHD, 2K, 4K for broadcast and online (OTT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression</td>
<td>Successor to MPEG-2</td>
<td>Successor to MPEG 4 AVC, H.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compression</td>
<td>Hybrid spatial-temporal prediction model</td>
<td>Enhanced hybrid spatial-temporal prediction model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>• Flexible partition of Macro Block [MB], sub MB for motion estimation</td>
<td>• Flexible partitioning, introduces Coding Tree Units (CU, PU, TU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intra Prediction (extrapolate already decoded neighbouring pixels for prediction)</td>
<td>• 35 directional modes for intra prediction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduced multi-view extension</td>
<td>• Superior parallel processing architecture, enhancements in multi-view coding extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 9 directional modes for intra prediction</td>
<td>• CTU supporting larger block structure (64x64) with more variable sub partition structures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Macro Block structure with maximum size of 16x16</td>
<td>• Entropy coding is only CABAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Entropy coding is CABAC and CAVLC</td>
<td>• Up to 8K UHDTV [8192×4320]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specification</td>
<td>• Supports up to 4K [4,096×2,304]</td>
<td>• Supports up to 300fps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supports up to 59.94fps</td>
<td>• 3 approved profiles, draft for additional 5, 13 levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 21 profiles, 17 levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawbacks</td>
<td>Unrealistic for UHD content delivery due to high bitrate requirements.</td>
<td>Computationally expensive [-300%+], due to larger prediction units and expensive Motion Estimation [Intra prediction with more nodes, asymmetric partitions in Inter Prediction].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Better Quality
Unlike H.264 macroblocks, H.265 processes information in what’s called Coding Tree Units (CTUs). Whereas macroblocks can span 4x4 to 16x16 block sizes, CTUs can process as many as 64x64 blocks, giving the ability to compress information more efficiently. HEVC also has better motion compensation and spatial prediction than AVC.

Using existing infrastructure
One of the key advantages of the technology is that it allows broadcasters to use existing HD TV network infrastructure to distribute 4K, bearing in mind that an uncompressed use signal needs a bitrate four times higher than an uncompressed HD signal. At this stage we are seeing that a 4K TV signal will need a bitrate of 20-30Mbps for contribution and between 10-15Mbps for distribution, comparable to the bitrate used with a codec H264 for an HD signal.

HEVC adoption in the contribution encoding presents the least scope for disruption. The cost implications will be marginal, as there won’t be a major impact on the consumption of space segment versus HD H.264 contribution. The main impact will be on the renewal of video encoders and decoders to support HEVC.

“Introducing HEVC to HD services will release more bandwidth to roll out ultra-HD channels for DTH satellite providers in the Middle East”
Anthonypillai Stanislous, Rohde & Schwarz Technical Manager, MEA

On the distribution side, the economic impact will be significantly different, as moving from H.264 to HEVC implies renewing set-top boxes. However, the consumer electronics industry moves much faster than the broadcasters and wants to increase fourfold the number of pixels on every device. Without HEVC, this will quadruple the storage requirements for video content and clog the already limited network bandwidths. To bring 4K or UHD to the consumer, the HEVC standard is essential, as it can cut these requirements at least by half.

The broadcast industry moves very slowly. It will have the biggest advantages in cost saving and consumer satisfaction by adopting HEVC. The industry is pushing for additional video enhancement tools such as Higher Dynamic Range, more colour information and better colour representation (BT 2020). UHD support in broadcast may not be feasible without upgrading the infrastructure, and with the advantage that HEVC can provide to UHD video, including it in the infrastructure upgrade is the optimal choice. On the other hand, contribution encoding can heavily benefit from HEVC with reasonable change in infrastructure.

Now is the time for Middle East broadcasters to move to 4K/UHD production, including archiving contribution with HEVC and preparing for future UHD distribution, among other factors. A UHD video downscaled to HD video looks better than native HD video. All these are strong drivers for the widespread adoption of HEVC throughout the Middle East.
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NAB 2018: A COMMITMENT TO INNOVATE

Amidst a broadcast industry in upheaval over acquisition bids and counter bids, NAB will shine a spotlight on innovation as the worlds of media, entertainment and technology converge at the Las Vegas Convention Centre from April 7-12

Closed caption encoding with Telestream

At NAB 2018, Telestream will introduce a one-box solution for closed caption encoding to multiple live streams. The 608/708 caption insertion capability is part of the latest version of Lightspeed Live Stream, Telestream’s multiscreen live encoding and packaging at scale solution for broadcasters, content aggregators and live event production companies. Telestream’s solution reportedly also eliminates restreaming, instead encoding the live captions within the original stream and ensuring the best possible quality.

A single 1RU enclosure encodes captions to multiple live video streams. Standard captioning protocols are used, so third-party court reporting software can connect to Lightspeed Live Stream via IP, making the system plug and play.

Booth # SL3316

Calrec addresses live production

Calrec’s RP1 remote production unit is a live-broadcast product that addresses a requirement for content from remote locations. Remote production offers the ability to capture a broader range of live events, such as sports, news or regional music festivals.

RP1 consists of a 2U core that contains integrated FPGA-based DSP, enabling a console surface at another facility to control all mixing functionality.

Booth # C7408

Sonifex unveils new talkback intercom models

Sonifex’s AVN range of talkback intercoms use AES67 AoIP natively to connect devices together over a standard Ethernet network. New at NAB 2018 are two models: the AVN-TB6 6 station talkback intercom and the AVN-TB20AR 20 station rackmount intercom.

The two models to be showcased have mic and headset inputs, +48V phantom power for the mic input, headphone and speaker outputs with volume control, and loudspeaker mute and mic mute buttons.

Booth # 3035

Grabyo to enrich live digital broadcasts

London-based video specialist Grabyo has partnered with Singular.Live and on-air graphics specialist Reality Check Systems to add live graphics authoring to its cloud-based production platform.

The partnership enables users of Grabyo Producer to insert dynamic broadcast graphics into live broadcasts, reportedly creating new viewing experiences for audiences across digital and social platforms.

Booth # SU13706CM
MultiDyne Fiber Optic Solutions will unveil its second-generation BullDog II platform, a common fibre-optic platform for three key product lines, empowering customers with a versatile and modular solution to support virtually any field-based transport need, the company claims.

With the BullDog II platform, broadcasters, content producers and commercial AV users (corporate, medical, venues) reportedly retain the benefits of a purpose-engineered solution from a durability perspective, yet Multidyne unleashes BullDog II can scale up and down for any configuration and signal count, traditionally spread across various product lines.

The new BullDog platform will accommodate multiple video formats as well as mic/line audio, intercom, tally, Ethernet, genlock and data. Camera control is supported using the camera manufacturer’s RCP via serial or Ethernet connection.

Booth # C6818

Tedial will be introducing Smartlive, a live event support tool for sports production, at NAB 2018. The solution leverages AI tools to increase the number of highlights created automatically, thus reducing production costs and boosting revenues for production companies, the company claims.

Also on display will be end-to-end IMF workflow leveraging IMF methodologies to reportedly save users up to 25% in storage and versioning costs, as well as an augmented storage management [AST] solution that expands traditional HSM into a multi-site, multi-tier heterogeneous storage enabling cloud deployments, multi-site operations for a broadcaster or hybrid clouds with minimal impact on upper layers.

Booth # N 1420

VSN gets ready to Wedit

VSN is showcasing VSNExplorer MAM at NAB 2018. VSNExplorer MAM incorporates web-based editing tool Wedit with new functionalities such as voice-over capability. Wedit’s features are also available in the cloud to ensure flexibility for users.

Users are able to record voice-over tracks straight to the timeline while previewing the sequence proxy video with frame accuracy, removing the need to switch to another NLE and enabling users to complete their videos solely from the Wedit interface, the company claims. VSN will be also showcasing its latest cloud-based playout solution at NAB this year, following the implementation of four VSN systems in the cloud, namely VSNOneTV, VSNCreaTV, VSNExplorer and VSNWebTV.

Stand: SL 8006

The AI Experiential Zone

Study real-world applications and content workflows for automatic speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), deep learning-based image and video analysis.

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Booth # C6818

Appear to demo ultra-low latency encoding codecs

Appear will demonstrate the spectrum of encoding codecs available within its X10/20 platform for the first time at NAB 2018. The updated ultra-low latency encoding includes TICO, JPEG2000 and HEVC all within a single chassis.

This spectrum of codecs reportedly covers the gamut for bitrate and latency applications from distribution to contribution compression, supplying operators with a range of compression capabilities for the broadcast chain, the company claims. By unifying ultra-low latency modes within one chassis, video processing is streamlined for the majority of video applications, the release stated. The modes achieve latency of less than 5ms with TICO, 200ms with JPEG2000 and 160ms with HEVC. The operator is free to define the optimal codec/network trade-off – from high-capacity fibre to satellite. Appear continues to develop its product offerings to support the implementation of both current and future video standards.

Booth # SU6110

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Booth # SU6110
EVS showcases next-gen XT server

The 2018 NAB Show will see additions to EVS’ offering, including the introduction of the next-generation XT live production server and the integration of AI into its video-refereeing system, Xeebra. In addition, the EVS booth will feature demonstrations for live e-sports production and sports venue control rooms.

Also at the booth is the new XT series server, which will come with reportedly higher UHD-4K channel density and offer optimised bandwidth for any live production workflow – whether in UHD, HD or 1080p.

At the show, EVS will present a partnership with one of the world’s largest e-sports organisations and feature several partnership demonstrations, including one with ChyronHego for the delivery of in-stadium audio, video, graphics and animations.

Booth # SL3816

Dejero unveils video transport solutions

Cloud-managed solutions provider Dejero will showcase blended connectivity solutions offering reliability for live feeds over IP networks, and connectivity for crews working in the field. It will also showcase new encoding/decoding equipment with HEVC video compression technology in support of live and file-based broadcast and media workflows during NAB 2018.

Dejero CellSat leverages the company’s patented network blending technology to improve reliability by combining cellular connectivity from multiple mobile network carriers with Ku-band IP satellite connectivity provided by Intelsat.

Booth # C2025

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Booth # C2025

Wazee streamlines content management

At NAB, Wazee Digital will highlight Digital Media Hub, a centralised, software-as-a-service solution that allows video content to be captured and made available for global access.

Through Digital Media Hub’s user interface, customers can acquire, distribute, enhance, license and publish metadata-enriched media gleaned from production, post-production, marketing and live-event environments. Digital Media Hub is powered by Core, Wazee Digital’s enterprise SaaS asset management platform built specifically for the cloud, through which users can search, manage and monetise digital content. Wazee Digital also offers centralised online access, a factor critical for news media.

Wynn Hotel, Encore Salon Suite

Artel solutions to ease the IP journey

At NAB, Artel will feature three integrated end-to-end IP-centric demo areas to address customers’ requirements as they migrate toward all-IP or hybrid IP/SDI networks.

Artel’s exhibit will showcase the company’s portfolio, including solutions for SMPTE 2110, AES67; SMPTE ST 2022-7 hitless protection; and ARQ RIST OTT streaming.

New at the show is the Smart Media Delivery Platform, a carrier-grade, software-defined platform with integrated nonblocking Layer 2/3 switching and routing capabilities. The Smart features four video ports for transport of video, audio and ancillary data, and four GigE data ports bridged to a 10G interface.

The company will also showcase the ARG Quarra family, which offers IEEE 1588-compliant timing and synchronisation. The switches support the SMPTE ST 2110-10 standard.

Booth # SU6102

NEW AT NAB 2018

Business of Sports Entertainment

The industry’s leading business executives will examine the best opportunities for engaging and monetising sports fans in today’s marketplace.

Wazz Digital will highlight Digital Media Hub, a centralised, software-as-a-service solution that allows video content to be captured and made available for global access.

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Wynn Hotel, Encore Salon Suite

Artel solutions to ease the IP journey

At NAB, Artel will feature three integrated end-to-end IP-centric demo areas to address customers’ requirements as they migrate toward all-IP or hybrid IP/SDI networks.

Artel’s exhibit will showcase the company’s portfolio, including solutions for SMPTE 2110, AES67; SMPTE ST 2022-7 hitless protection; and ARQ RIST OTT streaming.

New at the show is the Smart Media Delivery Platform, a carrier-grade, software-defined platform with integrated nonblocking Layer 2/3 switching and routing capabilities. The Smart features four video ports for transport of video, audio and ancillary data, and four GigE data ports bridged to a 10G interface.

The company will also showcase the ARG Quarra family, which offers IEEE 1588-compliant timing and synchronisation. The switches support the SMPTE ST 2110-10 standard.

Booth # SU6102

NEW AT NAB 2018

Business of Sports Entertainment

The industry’s leading business executives will examine the best opportunities for engaging and monetising sports fans in today’s marketplace.
Axon to demonstrate IP and UHD solutions

Providers of routers and switchers Utah Scientific will showcase 4K and Ethernet infrastructure solutions from Axon Digital Design at NAB.

As the US distributor for a range of Axon products and production tools, the team will demonstrate integration between Axon, Utah and other broadcast manufacturers.

Booth # SU12413

Real-time monitoring solutions from Video Clarity

At the 2018 NAB Show, Video Clarity will launch the new RTM Manager with automated file QoE, a new configuration of its RTM real-time audio and video monitoring solution.

RTM Manager with file QoE applies an automated file-testing routine for VOD or OTT file-encoding workflows, for users who need an added layer of video and audio quality measurement, with a threshold for recording low-quality events in the baseband domain. The RTM Manager browser interface gives users access for setup and testing feedback.

Also on display will be Video Clarity’s Venue Player IP, which automatically plays multiple uncompressed segments of content to multiple screens in precise timing and sequence.

Booth # SL8320

ENCO offers NDI support in live captioning workflow

ENCO will demonstrate enCaption4 with its new NDI capability alongside the software-defined solution’s reputed accuracy, accelerated speed, extremely low latency, and expanded foreign language support.

With NDI support, we’re making it easier for TV networks, local stations and non-traditional broadcasters to use our automated captioning solutions within their real-time NDI productions, said Ken Frommert, President of ENCO.

As an automated, turnkey on-premise or cloud based solution, enCaption products are well-suited to IP-based NDI video production and streaming environments. The breakthrough interoperability offers a strong and reliable solution for accurate closed captioning within live web and social media streams, such as Facebook Live.

Booth # N3824

Cybersecurity Summit

Whether it’s film, subscription or broadcast TV, media and entertainment is a high-level target for global piracy. Meet experts who protect our content.

NEW AT NAB 2018

Broadcast Pix app simplifies content distribution

ioGates, a Broadcast Pix company, has launched the new ioGates desktop app, a free option for clients to view and distribute large content files through its secure cloud-based video management service.

Compatible with Mac, Windows and Linux operating systems, the ioGates desktop app is installed on each destination that will receive content, such as a server, laptop or NLE system. Clients can view and browse files, as well as upload files, within specific folders of an ioGates cloud account. The app can also be set to automatically download all content, including the folder structure.

Booth # N3824
Range of audio solutions from Lawo

Luo will be demonstrating a range of audio production solutions for the broadcast community.

The product offerings include implementations of Ravenna audio-over-IP technology and the world premiere of the company’s new SDI-Dock, JADE and Multitrack Editor software products, the new Version 4.16 software running on the mc²66 MKII broadcast console, Visual Extension for sapphire, Nova29, the crystal console, plus demos of practical applications using the virtual studio manager for the device-independent control of audio and video equipment.

In addition, the VMatrix IP-Routing & Processing Platform offers integrated multiviewer capability for IP and SDI sources.

Booth #2046, Hall C2

IMT and Marshall present integrated solutions

xG Technology, a provider of wireless video solutions to the broadcast industry, has announced a collaboration between its Integrated Microwave Technologies (IMT) business and Marshall Electronics to offer a wireless video solution for live broadcasts and sporting events. The integrated bundles of IMT’s wireless video transmitters and Marshall’s POV cameras will be on display at NAB 2018.

The integrated bundles include one of IMT’s ultra-miniature wireless video systems – IMT DragonFly or MicroLite 2 HD COFDM wireless video transmitter – as well as a Marshall Mini-Broadcast POV camera – CV502 (HD-SDI) or CV505 (HD-SDI/HDMI). It will enable live broadcasting by capturing points of view for programming of any kind.

Booths # C6008 / C6508

TSL promotes products on open standards

TSL Products will showcase the latest updates to its range of audio monitoring products, including SMPTE 2110 and Ember+ protocol support, and new additions to the MPA1 range at NAB 2018.

In response to the recent ratification by the industry of SMPTE 2110 audio-over-IP standard, TSL Products’ PAM1-IP and PAM2-IP audio monitoring units now support the modern suite of standards.

This new support positions TSL, the company claims, as the only manufacturer of audio monitoring units capable of monitoring uncompressed SMPTE 2110 video and audio streams for deployment in essence-based workflows.

With a reported 1,000 TallyMan Systems deployed worldwide, TSL Products is also bringing its experience in control and system integration in its audio monitoring solutions through a growing list of control protocols.

In addition, TSL’s MPA1 range has updates that will premiere at this year’s NAB Show.

Booth # N5615

FOR-A unveils universal system frame

FOR-A will introduce the latest solution in its USF-Series of universal system frames, the USF-106UDC-12G 4K up/down converter. The unit offers interlace/progressive and up/down conversion for HD to 4K, and will be demonstrated at NAB alongside FOR-A’s line of video production solutions.

Another new solution to be shown in this area is the ESG-4200 multi-rate 12G/ IP 4K test signal generator, which features 4K UHD output support, 12G/3G/HD-SDI outputs, IP stream outputs (SMPTE 2022-5/6/7, 2110 and NMI), WAV file support and the option to choose from ITU-R BT.2020 or ITU-R BT.709 for 4K testing. Other products in the 12G/SDI technology area include the new MFR-6000 SD/HD/3G/4K/12G router, MV-4320 multi-viewer supporting 12G-SDI I/Os and MFC-2GB 12G-SDI/Quad Link 3G-SDI converter.

Booth # C5117

NEW AT NAB 2018

Immortal Storytelling Pavilion
Engage with innovators who create and commercialize immersive content – whether virtual, mixed or augmented.
Sennheiser’s best performing analogue and digital receiver system in one compact pack.

The EK6042 two-channel camera receiver handles analogue and digital transmitters simultaneously.

A BROADCAST MASTERPIECE
There’s an old joke about the Isle of Skye, a small island of 10,000 inhabitants situated off the northwest coast of Scotland: if you can’t see the island from the mainland, it must be raining; if you can see the island, it’s just about to rain. Working in a technology-focused industry like broadcast reminds me of the joke because it often feels like we too are perpetually living in one of two states: migrating to the latest platform/standard/format, or waiting for its imminent arrival.

Please don’t think I’m complaining – new technology is obviously wonderful, insofar as it allows R&D engineers to create cool new products and (hopefully) make customers’ lives easier. We may have seen a few white elephants and false dawns along the way – 3D probably stands tallest among them – but the majority of new technologies in broadcast have helped create an end product that has been better to look at and easier to produce.

The latest changes taking place in our industry also seek to achieve these same goals, but the process of integrating these new technologies into existing facilities and workflows looks like a delicate balancing act that must consider system complexity and scale, budget and organisational tolerance for change.

IP and UHD/4K are currently the two hottest discussion topics in our industry. They open up exciting opportunities for greater workflow efficiencies and better-looking end products, so the attraction is obvious. However, it’s only fair to recognise the challenges they bring, especially for established broadcasters with multiple sites and legacy hardware. Furthermore, should these two technologies always be married? Should UHD always be transported using IP? Our view is: not necessarily.

When the openGear platform – an open standard for gear cards now adopted by over 90 partners – was launched, the desire was to create a standard that would simplify customers’ buying decisions and create certainty where there had previously been complexity and confusion. This brings me neatly on to the concept of software-defined production (SDP), a philosophy that seeks to offer simplicity in the face of potential migration migraines.

SDP is based on the idea that broadcasters should be able to use whatever choice of transport is most appropriate for a project. It delivers agility and scalability by moving away from single-function devices that mostly sit idle, towards a pool of flexible resources able to meet production needs on-demand. As IP has crystallised as a technology, it has become apparent that it is not an ideal or singular path to achieve agility in all cases. With SDP, however, manufacturers can combine and orchestrate software-defined, modular products to create agile production workflows with demonstrable cost benefits.

An SDP approach also enables customers to maximise the utility of existing hardware resources, a very positive message when it comes to future-proofing capital expenditure investments and removing the element of risk from these purchases. SDP provides certainty and clear upgrade paths – exactly what broadcast professionals are looking for in these turbulent times.

By building a family of transport-agnostic products, enlightened manufacturers are making a strong statement – we believe that the one-network approach is underpinned by hybrid production models (IP and SDI) that will be around for a significant time to come. The key is ensuring that customers have the right options given their scale, budget and tolerance to risk, and that no one is trampled by an unnecessary or compromising technology rush.

Todd Riggs is Marketing Product Manager for Infrastructure at Ross Video

"Software-defined production (SDP) provides clear upgrade paths ... what broadcast professionals are looking for in these turbulent times"
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Booth #C7408
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