MBC’s tech team uses innovative technologies to be at the cutting edge of regional broadcast

TARGETED ADVERTISING
IP-based OTT distribution expands monetisation opportunities

IBC 2017 PREVIEW
A SNEAK PEEK AT WHAT’S ON OFFER AT THE SHOW

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I was really impressed with the MBC facility at Dubai Studio City, which I had the pleasure of visiting last month. Over the years, I have visited several TV centres, but this one will stay in my mind for a long time. If you get past the deceptively narrow security area and the inner boundaries of what used to be a soundstage and open the doors to the main studio, you will find yourself instantly transported to a different world.

It’s not just the vibrant colours in the studios, the huge LED walls, the lighting on the ceiling, the social media towers and the sets that captivate us; this facility also has a successful IP installation that connects MBC’s Dubai Media City and Studio City sites. MBC claims to be the first in the region to have implemented a media service that links workgroups and enables multi-site workflows by smartly handling the transfer of media, sequences and shot lists.

It doesn’t end there. The ultra-modern tech extends to the open spaces in the newrooms, the writing on the walls and the flexibility to sit anywhere.

As you walk through the facility, you begin to realise that this is not just the work of an ordinary engineering team that worked out algorithms and how to put together the best technologies they could source to create the finest studios; this is the clearly the handiwork of a visionary team. We tried to put together a larger selection of pictures of the facility than we normally do in our cover story this month, to reflect this outstanding work. We hope you enjoy reading the story as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director

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Satellite with IPTV delivery is on the rise but still expensive
BeIN Sports TV channels have been reinstated on both Etisalat and du. The UAE telecoms unblocked the sports channels after more than a month amid the political stand-off with Qatar, where the broadcaster is based. Other channels such as Al Jazeera and Barari TV are still blocked by the UAE authorities.

Text messages were sent to subscribers about the service being unblocked in the UAE. The message said that the beIN channels will be available to customers starting July 22 and that "normal charges would apply". It further added that "the provision of the beIN package will be subject to an ongoing review".

The news came just as beIN Media Group announced that it has secured the exclusive MENA broadcast rights for the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League for the 2018/19 to 2020/21 seasons. Both will be available exclusively on beIN Sports for the next four years. For the 2017/18 season, every match will be broadcast live and exclusive across the 20 beIN Sports channels, available in Arabic, English, Spanish and French. beIN also has the exclusive MENA rights to broadcast the English Premier League, Spain’s La Liga and other major competitions, including the Champions League.

On June 14, authorities in the UAE ordered vendors to stop selling beIN Sports receivers and cards, warning that any shop that violated the order would be subject to fines, according to UAE’s official news agency, WAM.
Ross Video announces Middle East appointment

ROSS Video, which has announced 20% year-on-year growth in the Middle East, seems to be ramping up its efforts in the region with the recent appointment of Deepak Sandhar as Regional Sales Manager. Sandhar, who has worked previously with Avid Middle East, will be based in Dubai. The regional appointment seems to be Ross Video’s first step to eventually opening an office in the region. Speaking about the new appointment, Oscar Juste, Director of Sales for EMEA, said “Sandhar is a highly accomplished sales professional and I am sure his technical expertise will be valued by our customers in the MENA region. The Middle East remains a vibrant and challenging market for all broadcast technology manufacturers. Appointing a sales manager who lives in the UAE reaffirms our commitment to the region and demonstrates that we are accelerating our growth plans.”

In a separate conversation with BroadcastPro ME, Stuart Russell, EMEA Marketing Manager, Ross Video, commented: “I think it is safe to say that we’re committed to investing in the region and want to expand the team there, so they’ll need a home eventually. I can’t offer any comment on time scale, but our customer base is getting to a size where it’s the next natural step.”

ATV invests in Avid graphics

Turkish television channel ATV has opted for an advanced Avid graphics solution to enhance its sports broadcasting. When ATV began broadcasting Turkish Cup soccer matches, it decided to invest in a new graphics solution in order to succeed in the competitive sports broadcasting market. It needed an advanced on-field graphics solution that could provide real-time data from soccer games with graphics. ATV turned to Avid and its Turkish partner, Turaret, investing in an Avid sports graphics enhancement solution.”

Avid’s sports enhancement solution enables ATV to add visual interest to its soccer coverage and convey game information to audiences in more compelling ways. It can enhance any soccer game by superimposing virtual graphics over the playing field using tracking technology.

Starz Play secures more funding from investors

Starz Play has revealed that it has raised additional funding in 2017, although it hasn’t divulged the amount it has secured recently. The digital video platform has raised a total of $125 million in funding since its launch in 2015 with all of its investors, including Starz, a Lionsgate company; new investor Stata Street Global Advisors (SSGA); and media and technology investment firms SED Capital Partners and Delta Partners. The new investment funds will go towards enhancing Starz Play’s customer experience and acquiring new programming so as to strengthen its position in the region. Starz Play aims to have more than 700,000 paying subscribers at present. Speaking about the new announcement, Maaz Sheikh, CEO of Starz Play, commented: “We appreciate the continued support of the strategic investors to the Starz Play family. In recent months, Starz Play has introduced several service enhancements, including a download function for offline viewing, expanded telecom partners in North Africa and expanded content partnerships to all major Hollywood studi.”

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Vislink secures $300,000 order in the Middle East

Vislink, an xG Technology company, has designed and configured a fully integrated wireless video transmission system for a major sports-broadcast entity in the Middle East. The $300,000 system has been designed to support demanding open water-based sports competitions and will be shipped in time for an undisclosed event next year.

Among the unique challenges the Vislink system addresses is the need to support extended video transmission distances of over 15 miles in extremely hot and humid conditions. The Vislink solution consists of eight 20W portable Peli cases integrating ChipShot ultra-low delay transmitters to be installed on small boats used for the coverage of the event. The high-definition video feeds will be received into a centralised receiving architecture composed of eight J2174 diversity receivers to be installed on a boat studio. The solution features a series of transmitter and receiver systems specially housed in compact form factors that promise robust performance, maximum transportability and flexible coverage support.

“This order is another example of our JMT and Vislink business model of offering innovative solutions to meet the challenges of dynamic sports broadcasting,” commented George Schmitt, Executive Chairman and CEO of xG Technology. “JMT and Vislink have amassed long histories as key suppliers to prominent sports video production clients around the world, and they continue to deliver products recognised for their uncompromising performance, transmission quality, extended operating ranges and configuration flexibility,” he added.

Irtdeto and MultiChoice Africa nab pirates in Egypt

Three content pirates have been sentenced in Cairo following a collaboration between security services provider Irdeto, MultiChoice Africa Limited (MAL) and Egyptian enforcement authorities. The three defendants were found guilty of all criminal charges and were each sentenced to a two-year jail term and a fine of $4,100.

Multiple piracy raids were conducted to uncover a large cybercrime syndicate offering premium content services illegally.

The syndicate offered control word sharing equipment and illegal pirate subscriptions for sale, allowing 163,802 viewers unauthorised access to content from a number of international broadcasters. The ruling follows extensive collaboration between Egyptian cybercrime police, MAL and Irdeto and is the culmination of one of the largest investigations into an extensive control word sharing piracy network. The initial investigations into suspects began through a partnership between MAL and Irdeto, before a joint criminal investigation referral was made to the Egyptian Ministry of Internal Affairs. Raids were conducted that uncovered several electronic components, servers, almost 40 smartcards from multiple conditional access providers, several pirate decoders, smartcard readers and other related equipment typically used within a pirate control word sharing operation. Investigation also uncovered advertisements for pirate devices on Alibaba’s B2B platform.

Newstag to launch in MENA

Stockholm-based media technology company Newstag has announced plans to launch a new experience specially designed for the MENA region later this year. Newstag will be available in Arabic and will provide a stream of video news stories each day covering international and regional news, culture and entertainment.

Newstag Arabic will feature professionally produced news content from suppliers including the Associated Press, AFP and Euronews. Talks are also taking place with prominent news providers from the region. Newstag Arabic is being marketed on Facebook ahead of its launch. Newstag is a new mobile first application that enables users to create and watch their own personalised video news channels.
Yahlive offers Cartoon Network Arabic

Yahlive has extended its partnership with Turner Broadcasting to include Cartoon Network Arabic on its MENA beam. Up to now, Yahlive has only offered CNN from Turner as part of its bouquet. Commenting on its growing collaboration with Turner, Sami Boustany, Yahlive’s CEO, said: “We are delighted and honoured to further expand our relationship with Turner.

Our organisations first joined hands in 2012 and since then we have been working together to bring content people want to see to their television screens. Adding Cartoon Network Arabic to our MENA beam is in line with our vision of becoming the Satellite broadcasting platform of choice for both broadcasters and viewers.”

“North Africa is a key focus for us, and we are consistently looking to enhance our bouquet. Currently, our viewers can enjoy a diverse mix of channels such as France 24, Al Jazeera TV, Canal Sport, Face TV, Nay TV and Fashion One 4K on Yahlive. We have also added more than 50 TV channels to our offerings this year and we are working closely with regional broadcasters to ensure that our audience have access to popular channels,” added Boustany.

Al Arabiya opts for ArabiaWeather for weather coverage

Al Arabiya News Channel has chosen ArabiaWeather for weather data. The deal, which was formalised in an agreement signed by Mohammed Al Shaker, CEO of ArabiaWeather, and Turki Al-Dakhil, QM of Al Arabiya Television News Network, will provide Arab identity of our bouquets.”

ArabiaWeather’s personalised weather coverage. This information is gathered through its hyper-local technology, data amalgamation from various weather models and the company’s network of automatic weather stations – the largest such network in the MENA region – as well as the expertise of its meteorologists and weather experts.

As per its agreement with Al Arabiya, ArabiaWeather will deliver localised weather data to the news channel.

Turksat buys digital hybrid STBs from ZTE

Chinese firm ZTE Corporation, a major international provider of telecommunication enterprise and consumer technology solutions, has secured a contract to provide a digital hybrid set-top box (STB) solution for Turksat, Turkey’s main satellite operator.

“Adding this magnificent kids channel to our platform is with no doubt a great asset for both local and international broadcasters, the company’s network of automatic weather stations – the largest such network in the MENA region – as well as the expertise of its meteorologists and weather experts.

PCCW Global signs distribution deal with Nilesat

PCCW Global has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nilesat to deliver TV channels across the MENA region, and now Nilesat will be able to expand its coverage into other parts of Africa and the Middle East via PCWW Global’s specialised TV network reach.”

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Al-Dakhil, GM of Al Arabiya Television News Network.

The channel will also feature international franchises (My Little Pony, Transformers), Little Pony, Transformers), and live-action series (Power Rangers).

Vubiquity ties with Viva Africa to distribute local content

Premium content services provider Vubiquity has signed a deal with Viva Africa to license local content across Nigeria, South Africa, western Africa and eastern Africa. The deal will provide customers with more than a thousand titles in different languages.

Viva Africa is one of the largest sources of African video content and focuses solely on sourcing, creating, aggregating and distributing locally produced content.

Tittles will be available to customers as part of Vubiquity’s MicroPack offering and its existing SVOD catalogue. This will enable customers with budgets of all sizes to access high-quality content from both local providers and international studios.

Turksat’s direct-to-home (DTH) and cable operator, Turksat, is purchasing DVB + OTT hybrid STBs for the first time, in order to provide stable DVB services and interactive OTT services.

Shure powers Turkey’s Presidential Complex

Shure has supplied an array of AV systems, microphones and automation mixing hardware for Turkey’s Presidential Complex, in the Turkish capital Ankara. Supplied through Atempo, Shure’s distributor in Turkey, the equipment includes DCS simultaneous translation and conferencing systems, Mikroflex Wireless conferencing microphones and Axient Digital wireless microphone systems. The Presidential Complex, or Cumhurbaşkanlığı Külliyesi, incorporates the official residence of Turkish President Erdogan, assorted offices of state, a mosque, a library and a cultural centre. Atempo, which is also the integrator on the construction project, submitted the Shure equipment as part of its tender to install the AV systems in two sizeable multi-purpose congress halls at the complex.

Turksat is a result of a partnership between My-HD and Lagardère Active, launched by Lagardère Active [France], joined My-HD on June 29. The Arabic-language channel has been adapted to the lifestyles, tastes and school rhythms of young viewers and brings a line-up of programmes that are designed to appeal to Arab kids.

My-HD launches kids channel

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UBMS hosts acoustics workshop in Dubai

Dubai-based broadcast distributor UBMS recently hosted an acoustics workshop in collaboration with EZ Acoustics. We bring you a report

The workshop was excellent to refresh my knowledge about acoustics. It’s been severeral years since I finished my degree in sound engineering, and this workshop was a way to learn how technology has advanced over the years. A lot has changed, and it’s good to keep track of the latest in the science of sound. I particularly liked the part about bass traps and how they are used for sound absorption at low frequencies. It’s a talk about low frequency treatment was very interesting.

We have five TV studios and two post-production suites as well as editing rooms and two radio studios at Sharjah Media Corporation. We are building an extension of some of these, and this knowledge will be greatly helpful. The fact that UBMS now has a world-class acoustic solution available locally is great news.

Tamer S Eldemerdash, Audio Engineer, Sharjah Media Corporation

I found the workshop very informative and useful. It was good to learn about the latest in acoustics technology and the various materials used these days to treat studios and edit suites. Marc explained what problems we can expect in a studio or recording room and how they can be solved. Understanding the science behind such solutions was particularly interesting.

Naser Sibai, Producer and DOP, e-junior, Etisalat

It is very important for audio professionals to have the right acoustic knowledge. When Studios want to install our speakers, we make sure the room is acoustically treated to get the best performance from our products. It’s good to have a world-class acoustic brand locally available. The workshop was very useful because it discussed the basics of acoustics and the technology to treat problems, and not the products. The focus was on identifying problems, and then using acoustics to solve them.

Salam Askar, Area Sales Manager, Systems Solutions, Sennheiser Middle East

United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS) hosted a one-day acoustics workshop on July 19 at the UBMS Training Academy. The workshop was conducted by Marc Viadiu, Managing Director and owner of EZ Acoustics.

EZ Acoustics is a Barcelona-based acoustic group of three key business platforms – manufacturing, distribution and brand management. UBMS recently signed an exclusive deal with the Spanish manufacturer to distribute its complete portfolio of products in the GCC. The distributorship covers the entire GCC region except Oman.

Commenting on the workshop, Paul Vickerage, MD, UBMS, said: “We have EZ Acoustics as an exclusive partner, and to my knowledge there is only one other supplier of similar products. Our target customers were represented at the workshop and we have tried to keep that limited to only a very relevant audience. The workshop focused on the technology and introduced the attendees to the various solutions available today.”

Vickerage added that the idea was to keep the event relevant and educational for the attendees.

“We started our partnership with EZ initially on a six-month trial. Both companies are very happy with the way things are going. We have several projects in the pipeline but can’t announce anything now. Thus the workshop is the first in a series of more to come from EZ Acoustics, as we are partnering with the company to promote the brand as well as awareness about the science of acoustics.”

Attended by 20 professionals including sound engineers, broadcast specialists, post-production experts and producers, the workshop took the attendees through acoustics design and the fundamentals of acoustics. It also covered modern broadcast facilities, recording studio design, guidelines and approach. Acoustics play a major role in the success of any production or performance, whether it’s in a studio, concert hall or outdoors.

Giving an overview of the workshop, Marc Viadiu said: “I discussed the core technologies used in acoustics and the need for acoustics, educating the market. The idea of this workshop is not to discuss our products but to introduce the audience to proper acoustic treatment and how it can be achieved. Our approach is incremental. I first introduced acoustics, then went on to explain how acoustics interact with various surfaces, how sound interacts with the room and spaces.”

The workshop also introduced the fundamentals of audio engineering, audio, spectral analysis and harmonic series, vibrations and resonance, the science behind musical instruments, the human voice, hearing perception and concert hall acoustics. Viadiu gave an overview of digital sound editing as a tool for understanding waveforms and spectral analysis. This was followed by a question-and-answer session.

Through case studies, Viadiu explained where acoustics are required and how the technology can be best applied to obtain optimal results. “I focused on how to treat a certain acoustical issue and why such treatments were required. From studios to large arenas and sports complexes used for live broadcast, to corporate meeting rooms, multipurpose halls, auditoriums and theatres, acoustics are used everywhere. While the core of our business is broadcast-related, acoustics is not limited to that; we also receive enquiries from hospitals, hotels and restaurants for acoustic treatment. We have supplied acoustic doors and panels and other products to Middle Eastern broadcasters.”

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MBC Group recently transformed a 25,000sqft soundstage in Dubai Studio City into a multi-tiered TV facility that doesn’t just run some of its channels, but also connects with its main building in Dubai Media City. Vijaya Cherian goes on a tour of the facility with MBC’s senior tech team and discovers a TV centre that reflects a visionary outlook and futuristic design.

I recently went on a tour of one of the GCC’s state-of-the-art studios, along with a few CTOs and other senior executives from both regional and international broadcast stations. Seeing how most of them gushed eloquent about the studio, Nick Barratt, Senior Manager, responsible for MBC Group’s broadcast technology, whispered conspiratorially: “Wait till you see what we have done!”

As I walked into MBC’s new facility at Dubai Studio City – a closely guarded secret until its launch in March 2017 – I could see why Barratt and his team were so proud of what they had achieved. MBC took the 25,000sqft soundstage space launched by Dubai Studio City in 2013 and transformed it into a multi-tiered TV facility combining the finest of broadcast and LED technologies with contemporary design, not just within its studios and the galleries but even within the office environment.

“This studio complex highlights MBC’s commitment to producing engaging, informative and innovative content for our viewers,” explains Barratt. “It also demonstrates our drive to maintain our position as one of the best places to work in the Middle East by providing an open, collaborative and, most of all, inspiring work environment.”

The 19,957sqft facility at Studio City is the new home of MBC1 and MBC3. It has three studios, large movable LED walls, social towers that go all the way from the studio on the ground floor to the studio on the top floor, two galleries, two voice-over booths, editing suites and a very modern newsroom that

Snapshot

- Client: MBC Group
- Location: Dubai Studio City
- Design concept for studios: Clickspring Design
- Objective: To build a state-of-the-art TV facility that includes production and broadcast operations and connects well with MBC’s HQ
- Key suppliers: Qstech, Barco, NEC, Lindy Electronics, Add, Autoscript, Axon, Clear-Com, Evertz, Sennheiser, Sony, TSL Products and Vizrt
- Key systems integrators: Intertech Vision, Four Dimensions, TSL Middle East
PROCOVER

can accommodate around 180 employees. The facility, dedicated at present to news, sports and children’s programmes, has been built within the existing soundstage like a building within a building.

“We have built the whole facility in one of the existing pre-made spaces, which is why it’s like a box within a box,” explains Raed Bacho, Broadcast Manager at MBC Group and the man who led this project. “It was previously occupied by MBC’s sister company, O3 Productions, for a joint venture with Stargate.”

As you walk into the main studio, which occupies about 575sqm and has an 18m ceiling, the first sight that greets you is a massive double-size LED wall. The LED wall is more than 60sqm with fine 2.5mm pixel pitches; in total, the facility has in excess of 300sqm of LED. The LED wall features the skylines of various countries in the GCC at 4K resolution, and it appears as though the whole experience is live.

The illusion of depth is created by the way in which the screen has been fitted, explains Bacho, taking us to the back of the wall and proudly pointing to the massive steel structure that holds the LED wall together.

But this is only one of several screens of various sizes that brighten up the studio. A large second curved screen – a huge design challenge – adorns a side wall, while a kitchen set occupies the opposite side of the studio. A number of touch screens and interactive technologies surround the sets, and the work space and the possibility of interconnection between the sets give a sense of free boundaries.

“When we designed this facility, we had two objectives. One was to build facilities for MBC1 and MBC3, and migrate the production team from DMC to DSC. The other was to ensure that this site could serve as some sort of a DR unit and we could maintain connectivity between the two facilities. The rest of the facility is an island, where news, sports and entertainment shows are handled independently”

Raed Bacho, Broadcast Manager, MBC Group

Greater encoding performance, better bandwidth utilization, and incredibly power efficient: the new line of Teradek HD and UHD H.265 codecs offer unprecedented value for broadcasters and independent content creators alike.
Clickspring Design, an American firm, and executed by Zen Studio, a local company, Bacho says. 

"The selection of LED specs, the choice of brand and the method of installation was not easy to achieve. We continuously checked specs and did factory surveys to secure what came closest to the MBC vision. Once we identified Qstech, a manufacturer in China who could deliver, we went there several times to inspect the brand and the quality before we finalised the product. Even after that, we had to test the LED in front of the studio cameras and check several other variables before we were happy with the end result," he explains. 

MBC's technical team also approved two specific models – the Barco 55" for the MBC3 studio and the NEC 55" series for the office areas, which were proposed by two Middle East technology firms, Intertech Vision and Four Dimensions, with whom the network worked on different aspects of the project. 

"The Barco and NEC displays are designed for the rigours of 24/7 operations. Advanced technologies of this model include direct LED backlighting for improved uniformity, full 1920x1080 HD resolution and a 3.5mm distance bezel width with matte surface to suit the camera shooting and avoid any light reflections," explains Bacho, adding that Intertech LLC committed to installing the LED and LCD walls within a very tight timeline. 

"Several video wall layouts installed at our studios in DSC, such as the 3x2, two 4x1 and the 2x2, were done by them. Each video wall is driven independently by an IPTV source and the video processors, such as Datapath, are fed by Vizrt engines. The studios share NEC 5 touch screens of 84" size mounted in landscape mode and driven by a high-end Vizrt GFX engine."

In addition, products from Lindy Electronics were used to build the video infrastructure's core connectivity, such as fibre cables, DVI, display port extenders and patch panels, as well as the other connectivity required to deliver a high-quality video signal and control. Four Dimensions was responsible for delivery, i.e. supply, installation, testing and commissioning of NEC and Lindy products, within the time schedule. 

The facility also houses 13 cameras with the flexibility to route them to any of the two galleries. A wireless camera and crane complete the set. 

This studio is used primarily for filming the daily two-hour MBC Morning Show and the Nine O'Clock News. Other shows shot here include MBC in a Week, which highlights social media trends in the Arab world; Bil-Mokhtasar, Raed and his team have done an amazing job under challenging timelines and constraints. They thought out of the box to build a box in a box! This new facility is the latest in a long line of innovative, complex studio and other projects that highlight the superb in-house technical resources available to MBC, preparing us for the future, ensuring we are always pushing the boundaries" 

Nick Barratt, Senior Manager - Broadcast, MBC Group
A live chat about Arab personalities who are considered pioneers in their field; and Ma Lam Tarra. A major element of this studio is a social media tower that runs messages from MBC's social platforms.

A second 180sqm studio dedicated to sports includes a large movable LED wall. This studio is used for the Sada Al-Mala’eb programme, which focuses on the Saudi Football League and hosts stars from the world of sport and entertainment.

A third colourful 200sqm studio set has been created primarily for MBC Kids, though other programmes are also shot in the space. The studio boasts multiple LED and LCD screens and enables the production of games and entertainment shows suitable for the whole family. Shows like Tasaly and Khatawat Na’aema and brand-new entertainment content used between shows, are also shot in this studio.

Lighting plays a significant role in these studios. Almost 3km of LED strips from Rosco have been laid all over the studio. Dubai-based lighting specialist Oasis Enterprises was responsible for its supply, installation, testing and commissioning.

Oasis also supplied motorised hoists and pantographs as well as LED fresnel lights and LED soft lights from Desisti, an ETC console, Rosco Braq Cubes and I-Cue moving mirrors. Oasis undertook the lighting integration, ensuring the power and DMX distribution was efficiently organised. The Braq Cube provides a smooth effect for low-ceiling applications, while the flicker-free RGBW strip from Rosco illuminates the decorative set.

“When we designed this facility, we had two objectives. One was to build facilities for MBC1 and MBC3, and migrate the production team from DMC to DSC. The other was to ensure that this site could serve as some sort of a DR unit and we could maintain connectivity between the two facilities. The rest of the facility is an island, where news, sports and entertainment shows are handled independently,” explains Bacho.

“The more interesting bit is the IP installation, which helps connect both sites. We have a decent network connectivity to ensure a smooth file-based handshake between the two sites. Both sites are baseband fibre-linked with more than 17 lines. MBC was the first in the region to implement Avid Interplay | Delivery as a media service that links workgroups and enables multi-site workflows by smartly handling the transfer of media, sequences and shot lists between Interplay workgroups on both the DMC and DSC sites.”

Barratt explains that this new facility is a reflection of the team’s larger vision to be able to connect with its different offices.

“Along with providing MBC with a new production environment, this project has enabled us to prove that centralised core broadcast systems can operate effectively over distance. This is the first step of many into moving towards a more distributed working mindset allowing us to utilise all of the creative talent available to us, along with helping us provide cost-effective business continuity systems.”

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Raed Bacho, Broadcast Manager, MBC Group

“We don’t want people to worry about the underlying technology; the systems should be invisible to the end user and automate laborious time-consuming tasks, allowing them to get on with what they do best and continue producing the best content.”

MBC’s workflows are standardised across both sites.

“We consider it as an expansion set-up of the existing topology or additional floor to the MBC HQ building,” explains Bacho.

“This project can be split into two aspects technically. While the studio design, LED walls and sets were undertaken as a whole, the other broadcast element was integrated by TSL Middle East.

TSL’s Dubai office worked closely with MBC’s engineering team to build an extraordinary design along with the challenges of multi-site based workflows,” explains Bacho.
The project involved the design and installation of the three studios, two galleries, two audio control rooms, three CAIs (central apparatus rooms) and an MCR (master control room), within a new building that was being completed simultaneously. In order to meet the deadline, TSL pre-built 80% of the system off-site and then relocated it.

The system was configured and pre-commissioned off-site, with the majority of the equipment sourced from different manufacturers including Avid, Axon, ClearCom, Evertz, Huisman, Sony, TSL Products and Vizrt.

“The core ingest and playout of the newsroom comprises integrated by Avid with Vizrt graphics. Thirteen Sony HD cameras and vision mixers form the baseband core in the studio galleries, which also house a redundant vision mixer from Ross Video.

The studio HD cameras and CCU monitors are Sony as well, locked by Axon. The studio HD cameras and vision mixers form the baseband core in both the galleries, along with a redundant vision mixer from Ross Video.

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The social media tower is a special addition to the facility and extends all the way from the studio on the ground floor to the studio on the top floor.

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“Raed and his team have done an amazing job under challenging timelines and constraints. The team showed amazing commitment and we are obviously very proud of what they have achieved. They thought out of the box to build a box in a box! This new facility is the latest in a long line of innovative, complex studio and other projects that highlight the superlative in-house technical resources available to MBC, preparing us for the future, ensuring we are always pushing the boundaries,” concludes Barratt.

Nick Barratt, Senior Manager - Broadcast, MBC Group
The secret to better personalisation and ad insertion for OTT platforms lies in the implementation of an efficient metadata management system that provides accurate viewing patterns and viewer profiles, says Roger Franklin.

The global OTT market is booming. Although traditional broadcasters see its provision as somewhat time-consuming and expensive, demand from viewers means they must get on board to remain competitive. Some have even speculated that the popularity of OTT will overtake broadcast within the next few years. In fact, a recent survey report from Level 3 Communications and Unisphere Research found that 70% of respondents expected OTT viewing to exceed that of typical broadcasts within five years.

Regrettably, the Middle East OTT market continues to lag behind. The reasons are complex and multi-faceted, but mainly centre around the difficulty involved in paying for subscription services. Most credit agencies in the MENA region are rightly suspicious of video platforms, partly due to the link between video piracy and terrorist groups. As a result, subscription payments are often declined. For starters, it’s difficult to encourage customers to commit to regular payments for an online service in an area where levels of credit card fraud are so high.
PROOTT

To both viewers and advertisers.

producers can offer unique benefits by correctly using metadata, content tends to irritate viewers. However, forced to sit through irrelevant ads is a serious problem in the industry, but being aware of this model would be ensuring that advertisements are in front of the correct demographic.

The information provided by metadata can ensure this is the case, by automatically triggering responses from a system based on trends or policies, and replacing certain ads with those more appropriate for the viewer. Advertisers are much more likely to have a higher rate of click-through if their advertisements are in front of the correct demographic.

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Data about data

Over the last few years, much has been said on the subject of metadata. This ‘data about data’, as it were, has become increasingly essential to the provision of OTT content and will continue to be. When used correctly, it offers advertisers access to a very targeted audience, while also providing highly personalised suggested content to viewers. Metadata can provide several types of information, most of which is invaluable. One form, known as ‘human authored’, is largely considered the most useful, as it enables audiences to find content based on parameters such as actors’ names, genre of content, scene descriptions and ratings, to name just a few. More importantly, this information will automatically remain within the content as an invisible watermark, provided it has been correctly described upon transmission. This level of information can enable users to search for content on a granular level, while OTT providers, with the right system of course, can analyse user behaviour and suggest highly personalised content.

Consider the way Netflix provides a linear selection of suggested content at the top of the interface, based on the content the user last watched. Let’s say a system has detected that a user has watched several Tim Burton films featuring Johnny Depp. These parameters would trigger a response for a system to suggest films which would feature Johnny Depp, which may be slightly strange and unusual or which may be directed by Tim Burton. Some systems could also analyse the suitability of content that has been watched by viewers with the same preferences and habits. This is only a very basic example of the type of sophisticated features that metadata can enable. Other contextual information, such as who is actually watching the content, where it’s being watched and on what device, can also be discovered within metadata-described content. Benefits to the viewer include a highly personalised experience and less time spent tirelessly trawling through a deluge of irrelevant content.

The very same information can, in the same way, increase value for broadcasters by enabling highly targeted advertising. Advertisers are much more likely to have a higher rate of click-through if their advertisements are in front of the correct demographic. The information provided by metadata can ensure this is the case, by automatically triggering responses from a system based on trends or policies, and replacing certain ads with those more appropriate for the viewer. The value of the ad increases, benefiting both the OTT provider and the broadcaster by enabling highly targeted advertising.
and the advertisers themselves. The great thing about targeting ads using metadata is that it can make the provision of OTT content less time-consuming and much simpler. This is down to the type of systems capable of doing so, which can bypass the manual preparation of files in favour of automation. Of course, not all systems are equal, but to ensure ad insertion is effective, a system must be able to insert and detect frame-accurate metadata markers described within content. That way, a system can be made to automatically and dynamically insert ads to replace those that are less appropriate. Metadata markers are essential to frame-accurately replacing ads, as this is what makes it a seamless transition and ensures the viewing experience is not impacted. Thanks to the markers, content aggregators and OTT providers can find out the exact timing of the beginning and end of a segment, whether that be ads or the programme/documentary/film itself. Frame-accurate ad insertion is just not possible without a sophisticated and intelligent system.

Making the links
As we have already ascertained, mobile internet penetration is high in the Middle East. The number of individuals with a mobile subscription is continuously rising and includes a large proportion of the region’s citizens. This gives us a solid indication that the model discussed above may well be successful, particularly given that personal electronic devices, such as mobile phones, are able to build a much more accurate picture of someone’s viewing habits, as opposed to a household device. The consistency of one user means the metadata management system will rarely deal with anomalies in viewing patterns and will therefore be able to facilitate better personalisation and better ad insertion.

A report from Digital TV Research forecast that 304 million smartphone subscribers will be watching OTT TV and video at least once a month by 2021 – almost triple the 2015 total. Using mobile devices to view OTT content increases both the effectiveness of advertising and the viewer experience. On top of this, a report from L.E.K. Consulting found that millennials are much more open to ads than older people, as long as they are targeted to their interests. The facts tell us that those most inclined to watching OTT content are young, open to targeted ads and likely to have a mobile subscription. The Middle East is calling out for a viable and accessible OTT option which does not require a monthly subscription fee. Putting two and two together, a free-to-view service reliant on advertising could surely be a contender.

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Acclaimed Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof’s film *Lerd (A Man of Integrity)* has won accolades at several international film festivals. The Farsi-language film received the main prize in the ‘Un Certain Regard’ category at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival, beating 17 other international titles. The film was also awarded the Fipresci Jury Prize at the 14th Yerevan international Film Festival and it enjoyed a very positive reception at the 52nd KviFF (Karlovy vary international Film Festival) held last month in Karlovy vary in the Czech Republic.

**Lerd** is Rasoulof’s second film to be screened at Cannes. It was produced by Dubai-based filmmaker Kaveh Farnam, CEO of Advance Media, a distributor of broadcast products. The film’s title refers to the sediment that settles or collects on a surface by a natural process. It’s the worthless residue that collates and sinks to the bottom of beverages such as coffee. According to Farnam, who also worked on the script along with Rasoulof: “Lerd has the spirit of a Rasoulof film. ‘Dregs of society’ usually refers to people you consider to be immoral and of no value. The English title of the film is *A Man of Integrity*.”

Rasoulof is often called Iran’s most outspoken filmmaker. Farnam describes him as an artist with a good knowledge of the courage society displays in criticising power. The director tackles issues such as poverty, corruption, murder and organised crime, with flair. “As with all of his films, *A Man of Integrity* has a deep look at society. Rasoulof is not only telling a story about people and relationships through this film, but he also analyses and criticises society. The focus of this analysis is a centralised power structure,” says Farnam.

**Lerd** is set in rural Iran. The 117-minute feature film, Rasoulof’s sixth, centres on a politically liberal goldfish farmer battling corporate oppression in northern Iran. More than 90% of the film was shot in Gilan in the northern territories of Iran, with the rest shot in Tehran.

Shot on an ALEXA Mini with Angénieux zoom lens, the film has a authentic look like Rasoulof’s other films, and the focus is more on the drama. The cinematography captures the natural world around the goldfish farm where the story is set, and the real locations add to the dramatic element in the film. The surroundings are as much a part of the story as its lead characters, played by Reza Akhlaghirad and Soudabeh Beizaee.

Farnam reveals that the film was originally meant to be shot on the new RED 8K but there was a delay in its launch. He adds that the ALEXA Mini was good enough for a 4:4:4 picture, which the film required. Proxy editing was done using Final Cut Pro, and the editors used DaVinci Resolve for grading. “The idea was to realise the director’s vision, and these tools worked well to achieve the look we wanted. It was a team effort, with more than a hundred technical and creative crew involved in the project, led by Rasoulof’s creative vision,” Farnam points out.

The story revolves around the life of an educated young couple. Having distanced himself from the complexity of urban living, Akhlaghirad leads a simple life along with his wife and only child, in a remote village in Gilan. He spends his days working in his fish farm. However, a private company with close links to the government and local authorities has taken control of nearly every aspect of life in that region. Its powerful and wealthy shareholders have been pushing local farmers and small businesses to let go of their belongings, farms and estates, for the company to establish a monopoly. It is under their pressure that many villagers have themselves become local ringleaders.
The protagonist resists the company’s power to preserve his farm, but soon realises that he is too small an entity to fight the deeply ingrained corruption. The film is a moving account of his frustration at being trapped in a complex web of bullying and malice.

For Farnam, working with Rasoulof was a dream come true, as he has always admired the director’s style and commitment to society.

“I can say I’m in love with all of his films. I was at the first screening at Manuscripts Don’t Burn at Cannes 2013. At the end of the screening I went to him and extended my appreciation for his courage and of course, his fantastic movies. It was in that meeting that I proposed a possible joint venture. I was fortunate enough to have this opportunity with Lord.”

This collaboration with Rasoulof was not just about Farnam’s passion for films but also the experience, which he will cherish for a lifetime. Farnam says: “Normally the stories which interest me relate to the society and people around me. I was fortunate to work with such a wonderful person as Rasoulof. I have learnt a lot from him not only about films, but also about humanity. Although this was not my first co-production, I can say it was probably the best professional experience of my career.”

Rasoulof is a regular at Cannes. His 2013 film Manuscripts Don’t Burn (Dast-Neveshteha Nemisoozand) was screened at the 66th Cannes Film Festival. The story is inspired by real events, which Rasoulof has yet to clarify, but they seem likely to be the so-called ‘Chain Murders’ of more than 80 Iranian writers, intellectuals, political activists and ordinary citizens between 1988 and 1998, all critical of the Islamic Republic. Speaking about his films, Rasoulof says: “My characters are based on those around me. In my mind, I can find references to the events and characters in this film too. I am only looking around me. I tell my stories and within them ask my questions. Many are questions that have remained with me since my childhood. For example, when our history books in school told us that, from hundreds of years ago, kings have ruled people by subjecting them to oppression and injustice, I used to ask myself, how is this possible? I think that I am still asking the same questions.”

Mohammad Rasoulof

Mohammad Rasoulof was born in Shiraz in 1972. His first brush with creativity came at the age of nine when he made his first appearance on stage in Shiraz. He went on to study social science. The impact a dictatorial and impervious government has on an individual and society as a whole has been the subject of most of his films. The documentary The Twilight (Gagsoom, 2002) was his first feature-length film and won the Crystal Simorgh (Phoenix) at the 21st Fair International Film Festival in Tehran, as well as the Best Documentary award at the sixth Iran’s House of Cinema ceremony.

Following the events after the 2009 presidential election in Iran, Mohammad Rasoulof and Jafar Panahi were arrested while on location making a film. At the ensuing trial, Rasoulof was sentenced to six years imprisonment. In the appeals court, his sentence was reduced to one year. In 2011, due to selection of his film Goodbye (Be Omid e Didar), 2011 at the 64th Cannes Film Festival, his exit ban from Iran was lifted. In 2013, after making the film Manuscripts Don’t Burn (Dast-Neveshteha Nemisoozand, 2013) and its screening at the 66th Cannes Film Festival, his passport and personal belongings were confiscated at Tehran Airport. He is currently out on bail.

In 2013, at the 40th Telluride Film Festival, the Silver Medal of the festival was awarded to Mohammad Rasoulof, the Coen brothers and Robert Redford.

• 2017 A Man of Integrity (Lerd)
• 2013 Manuscripts Don’t Burn
• 2011 Goodbye (Be Omid e Didar)
• 2009 The White Meadows (Keshtzar Haye Sepid)
• 2008 Bad-e dabour
• 2005 Iron Island (Jazireh Ahani)

ZEISS Compact Prime CP.3 and CP.3 XD Lenses

The ZEISS CP.3 lenses offer the perfect combination of high image quality and reliable usability. They exhibit the clean, crisp characteristics ZEISS is known for. The compact and light-weight design is ideal for handheld, gimbal, drone and Steadicam applications. The ZEISS CP.3 XD version features innovative and ground breaking lens data technology to speed up and simplify the workflow on set and in post-production.
Over-the-top (OTT) distribution, which is of course IP-based, is quickly becoming the preferred video delivery method for millions of consumers, and a state-of-the-art OTT distribution operation is now a business imperative, says Y. Fisher.

Most media industry professionals now understand and acknowledge that IP-based, commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) equipment represents the future technology foundation of the media and entertainment industry. Accordingly, broadcasters and media companies are now beginning to turn their attention to transitioning their workflows to more agile and flexible environments, as well as exploring new monetisation opportunities made available through an IP-based infrastructure.

Over-the-top (OTT) distribution, which is of course IP-based, is quickly becoming the preferred video delivery method for millions of consumers, and a state-of-the-art OTT distribution operation is now a business imperative, says Y. Fisher.

OTT delivery offers media companies both a means to reverse these trends and a mechanism for tapping into new monetisation opportunities, including data-driven or targeted advertising which can be focused on specific regions or even individual consumers. That’s because the one-to-one, bidirectional nature of content delivered as fragments over HTTP-based networks leveraging adaptive bitrate (ABR) technology empowers distributors and content providers, including broadcasters, to significantly improve the efficiency of their video delivery and ad insertion infrastructures.

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Distributors and broadcasters that unify their distribution operations by leveraging the next-gen networks they are building to deliver content to internet-connected devices, including PCs, tablets, smartphones and connected TVs, are opening up new opportunities to reduce expenses and increase revenue.

For starters, by transitioning to a single HTTP-based architecture, all transcoding can be implemented in software on a single platform, and media companies would no longer be required to perform multiple transcoding operations within their networks. A reduction in transcoding operations means both capital and operational costs, while at the same time improving video quality through the elimination of quality degradations and delays that accompany most processing operations. The adoption of a single HTTP-based architecture would also enable all storage operations to be consolidated into a single workflow for optimal use of disc, network, and tape-based resources.

But the biggest benefit of moving to an OTT distribution model for many media companies is the ability to significantly expand monetisation opportunities by tapping into the capabilities of dynamic ad insertion (DAI). This enables Ad insertion (DAI) functionalities. By distributing content over IP-based terrestrial backbones, broadcasters can create ideal conditions for inserting regionally or personally targeted ads wherever the enabling software mechanisms are positioned in their own or affiliates’ facilities. All processes underlying the OTT infrastructure, from transcoding to encryption, packaging and all ad operations, can be controlled by a dynamic ad insertion ecosystem.

DAI enables near-the-fly substitution of any ad on a per-stream basis. That gives broadcasters and distributors the power to replace generic ads with targeted or more relevant ads based on a number of factors, including geography, the content being viewed or known demographic information about the individual viewer, such as income or interests. In addition to ad replacement, the DAI ecosystem can also provide alternative content replacement or ‘blackout’ content, since technically alternative long-form content can be treated as a long ad.

The Power of OTT

The ability of OTT distribution to support ad targeting holds the greatest promise for service providers, arming them with the potential to increase revenue per impression and create new monetisation opportunities.

Let’s use the example of a hypothetical service provider, called VSP, that has 1,000 viewers. Factoring in some overlap, VSP’s viewership can be broken down into three groups of 400 bird, cat and dog owners. Bird, cat and dog advertisers want to market their products to VSP’s customers and are willing to pay to reach their potential customers. But cat advertisers don’t care about advertising to dog owners that don’t own cats, and so on.

VSP currently runs three ads in its morning show without employing targeted ad insertion, so all 1,000 viewers receive the same ads at the same time. VSP sequentially runs one bird product ad, one cat product ad and one dog product ad, charging the companies $20 CPM (cost per 1,000 views), earning a total of $60.

After some consideration, VSP decides to employ targeted-ad insertion. They explain to their advertisers that they can reach their desired targeted audience and pay the same $20 fee. With a targeted campaign, the pet ads are sent only to the appropriate pet owners. The CPMs rise to $50, because for the $20, each advertiser only sends ads to 400 viewers. During the three ad opportunities in the morning show, the pet advertisers only use up 1,200 of VSP’s 3,000 impressions, creating 1,800 ad opportunities that were not available without targeted advertising.

In a universe of only dog, cat and bird advertisers, there is no more advertising money to be had, and VSP still earns only $60 for the three ad slots in their morning show. In this scenario, the extra impressions could be used for promotions or public service announcements, or the extra 1,800 impressions could be sold to advertisers that currently publish ads in print, radio or on the web. And even if they are sold at low CPMS, say $10, VSP can add another $18 of revenue, a significant increase. However, if VSP can hire other advertisers to its audience, such as car advertisers

“The ability of OTT distribution to support ad targeting holds the greatest promise for service providers, arming them with the potential to increase revenue per impression and create new monetisation opportunities”

-- Fisher, CTO MIPD, Imagine Communications
Y. Fisher is CTO/MVPd (Multichannel Video Programming Distributor) at Imagine Communications.

Dubai’s digitisation initiatives could generate a potential USD 4.87 billion in value by 2019.”

John Chambers, Chairman, Cisco, 2017

Dubai attracted USD 7 billion in Foreign Direct Investment in 2016, with 73% directed to tech projects

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Wohler Technologies will be highlighting its latest audio and video monitoring, metering and IP solutions at IBC 2017.
Wohler’s IAM Series monitors, including IAM-Audio, IAM-MIX and IAM Video, incorporate hardware with upgradable software components combined with an on-board web server. This allows multiple units on the same network to be monitored, controlled and updated via a browser-based user interface and via API calls from third-party connected devices. The IAM Series uses small form-factor pluggable (SFP) slots to enable simple adaptation of interfaces and a wide selection of signal I/O. The overall variety of audio and video metering options supported includes analogue, AES3 and MADI inputs, and options for video over IP formats (HPEGS15T and SMPTPE 2022), AoIP formats (Dante, Ravenna, AES67), 3G/HD/SDI as well as a range of additional I/O options via its SFP interface. IAM-MIX features an ultra-intuitive front-panel control surface for multi-channel mixing and monitoring.

Hiltron Communications will introduce the Super-HMAM large-capacity motorised antenna mount at IBC 2017. Based on the HMAM three-axis motorised antenna mount, Super-HMAM is designed and built to accept much larger reflectors. “Preceded for two-way VSAT communication or rescue-only downlink applications, Super-HMAM was originally developed for a major German customer and is now being added to our catalogue,” Hiltron Managing Director Jan Molter said. “It accommodates satellite transmission antennas of up to 4.9m diameter compared with the 2.7m maximum antenna capacity of the standard HMAM. Integrated to the Super-HMAM is a newly developed support structure which can survive the storm conditions experienced at high-altitude relay and transmission locations where wind speeds can exceed 200km per hour. All models in the HMAM range provide full motorised control of x and y axes as well as transmission beam polarity.”

Like the standard HMAM, Super-HMAM can be controlled via an IP link from a PC running a graphic user interface compatible with standard web browsers. The control GUI displays all the information required to set and maintain azimuth, elevation and polarisation, including current position and target position plus a database of potentially accessible satellites. Once a satellite is selected, precise access parameters can be calculated at the press of a single button. The Super-HMAM antenna control unit and associated motor-control electronics are contained in an IP rated weather-proof outdoor housing with a hinged front-access port secured by dual key locks. An emergency cut-off switch is easily accessible. Above the housing is a resolver, which is used to measure the azimuth angle of the antenna. An identical second resolver allows constant monitoring of antenna elevation. Azimuth and elevation drive motors each operate through a reduction gear. The entire antenna support system is built to withstand standard atmospheric pollutants and to operate at humidity levels of 99% over a temperature range from minus 25 degrees up to 35 degrees (optionally 55 degrees) Celsius. Additional protection can optionally be provided to withstand pollutants, such as salt encountered in coastal and industrial areas. The rotating pedestal mount is made of corrosion-resistant hot-dip galvanised steel.

Wohler to demonstrate IAM series

Wohler will demonstrate its IAM series of audio and video monitoring, metering and IP solutions at IBC 2017. The IAM series features a range of audio and video monitoring solutions, including the IAM-Audio, IAM-MIX and IAM Video monitors. The IAM series offers a small form-factor pluggable (SFP) interface to enable simple adaptation of interfaces and a wide selection of signals. The overall variety of audio and video metering options supported includes analogue, AES3 and MADI inputs, and options for video over IP formats (HPEGS15T and SMPTPE 2022), AoIP formats (Dante, Ravenna, AES67), 3G/HD/SDI as well as a range of additional I/O options via its SFP interface. IAM-MIX features an ultra-intuitive front-panel control surface for multi-channel mixing and monitoring.

Suitcase TV Ltd will feature Iphrame Flyaway, a highly portable production system that enables content publishers to produce more live events using the same budget. Iphrame is a low-cost method of providing frame-accurate switching in the cloud, or can be used as an add-on service for host broadcasters who want to offer remote stream selection to clients without the need for expensive equipment and on-site staff. Iphrame’s software-based remote architecture framework combines IP, ASI and SDI signals for real-time, ultra-low latency production on the fly. Iphrame handles video, audio and graphics on standard IT hardware or VMs, which eliminates the need to acquire and ship the majority of traditional hardware. The Iphrame system includes Suitcase’s proprietary TimeLock functionality.

ProProducts

More portability with Suitcase TV’s Iphrame

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BWS to enrich IBC with Sapphire 4K codec

Broadcast Wireless Systems (BWS) will feature its BWS Sapphire 4K Codec System at IBC2017. The ultra-low latency Sapphire enables 4K wireless camera systems to be used on productions in exactly the same way as current standard HD systems. Sapphire can encode UHD signals at up to 50/59.94 frame-rate in 6.260-2.2 bit and 10-bit. In addition to 4K encoding, it can also encode four simultaneous standard HD 1080p/59.94 signals, which is useful for wireless siterevo, multi-camera and aerial downlink applications. Its compact size of 123x610x210mm enables it to be easily attached to a wide range of camera types. Low power consumption enables long battery run times and requires minimal cooling. This keeps the overall size and weight much lower. Sapphire uses the same board for encoding and decoding, which means the unit can change functions at the flick of a switch, enabling operators to maximise utilisation and recoup capital investment much sooner.

According to BWS Managing Director Stuart Brown: “Although some 4K wireless systems have been available previously, the long latency inherent in such systems meant they were relegated for use on long range aerial shots because they cannot be inter-cut with cabled cameras. Sapphire changes all that with its true 4K coverage.”

Stand 1.A78

Aviwest launches new video uplink systems

At IBC2017, Aviwest will showcase AIR300 and AIR320, the two first products in its AIR series of high-end, powerful and ultra-lightweight video uplink systems. Integrating H.265/HEVC hardware encoders, the series enables HD and SD encoding and exceptional video quality delivery.

Featuring up to four cellular connections, an internal Wi-Fi modem, internal battery and Aviwest’s SafeStreams technology, the AIR series allows broadcasters to seamlessly stream low videos and store and forward recorded content even during unpredictable and unmanaged network conditions.

This new transmitter series is designed for on-the-go video professionals.

Stand 2.B31

Enensys to showcase OneBeam

ENENSYS will be showing V2 of its OneBeam technology. This system provides the ability to use a standard satellite DTH network to also distribute services to DVB-T/T2 or ISDB-T transmitter sites, saving very significant operator costs. V2 also allows customers to benefit from two important upgrades: it’s a unified version that supports both DVB-T and DVB-T2 networks, and it also provides the ability to create a terrestrial mesh from multiple rather than a single satellite.

As Operators can now also create the terrestrial mesh from multiple satellites, content can be taken from different transponders to create the terrestrial service.

Stand 2.B30

LiveU and BeTerrific.tv ‘at-home’ at IBC

LiveU will feature its new at-home remote production solution enabling an exclusive live studio, in collaboration with BeTerrific.tv. LiveU’s complete wireless at-home production solution enables broadcasters to reduce costs by producing live shows from a centralised studio control room instead of on-site production and satellite trucks – leveraging its existing technical infrastructure and equipment.

LiveU’s IBC studio set will consist of three cameras to capture live interviews with special guests, talking about the latest technology disrupting our industry and how this impacts their business. In addition, there will be two roaming cameras where hosts will interview different exhibitors and showcase their products. Each of these five cameras will be connected to LiveU’s LIVIUS HEVC units. The live feeds will transmit back to the BeTerrific production studio in New Jersey, where they will control the production remotely.

Stand 3.B82

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INFORMATION

PROPRODUCTS
**PROPRODUCTS**

multiCAM Systems, a supplier of integrated video production systems serving the broadcast and professional AV markets, is launching a new IP interface feature, compatible with its comprehensive line of products, that receives IP video streams directly from the local area network.

### Elements to debut new cloud feature

Elements has announced plans to present its new and secure option to push projects or media assets to the cloud via Elements’ own GUI at IBC 2017.

The new cloud feature, embedded in Elements’ Media Library, allows all connected workstations to share assets through a private cloud, directly from within Elements’ GUI. With a mouse click, every operator from any workstation, even those without direct internet access, can initiate the upload and create a link to the specific video in the cloud, or leverage the “auto-upload” functionality allowing operators to automatically load assets to a new cloud-hosted web platform for easy external access.

The web portal allows the cloud to be easily accessible from within the Elements system via various applications.

### Blue Lucy offers BLAM-in-a-can at IBC

Blue Lucy is introducing a range of pre-packed entry-level solutions focused on specific operational business use-cases – ‘BLAM-in-a-can’ – at IBC. The solutions centre around Blue Lucy’s core product, the Blue Lucy Asset Manager (BLAM), a media management toolset which provides asset and workflow management through a simplified browser-based interface.

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### multiCAM Systems offers integrated IP input support for all-in-one production

multiCAM Systems, a supplier of integrated video production systems serving the broadcast and professional AV markets, is launching a new IP interface feature, compatible with its comprehensive line of products, that receives IP video streams directly from the local area network.

The new capability, which requires no additional hardware or software, works with the company’s entire product line as well as any PTZ camera available today. multiCAM Systems will showcase the IP input functionality at IBC 2017. multiCAM Systems’ integrated IP interface supports a much greater number of cameras than is traditionally available through SDI capture cards. The IP functionality also reduces the size and cost of the central server as all video streams and PTZ camera control are managed over the network without the need for special IT equipment. Customers retain the flexibility to use IP or SDI for each input to support mixed camera environments.

Available immediately, the IP input feature works seamlessly in visual radio applications using MULTICAM RADIO, the first system of its kind to offer native IP connectivity for visual radio. On the commercial AV side, the new IP interface is designed for classrooms, corporate AV environments (meeting and huddle rooms, large conference spaces) and theatrical auditoriums using MULTICAM CONF, MULTICAM E-LEARNING or MULTICAM TRACKING to produce and stream lectures, presentations and live events.

*Stand 12.E56*

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### Bringing the latest news from the MENA broadcast and film industry

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**Stand 7.007**

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**Stand 12.E56**
ProProducts

Video Clarity and PacketStorm Communications will demonstrate how manufacturers and programme service providers can apply a comprehensive test system for the new SMPTE suite of standards for Professional Media over IP Networks (SMPTE ST 2110).

The ST 2110 suite of standards (10, -30, -2, -30 and -60) is currently in the final draft stage. This demonstration will take place in the Video Clarity booth and will feature a fully operational interactive demonstration of IP network transport, IP network emulation, media flow analysis, quality and performance testing for uncompressed video, audio, and ancillary data. In the demonstration, IP streamlining technology will come courtesy of Macnica Technology, whose transmit and receive solutions augment or replace today’s SDI architectures for delivering multiple types of high-quality contribution-level content. PacketStorm Communications will provide the IP network emulation to simulate actual network and media over IP analysis conditions to measure flow characteristics to ST 2110 based on ST 2110-21. Video Clarity’s RTM real-time monitor will provide the source video playlist and test the source against the network output. The RTM system plays uncompressed content while it continuously measures audio/video quality, as well as lip sync and loudness.

Dejero streams broadcast workflow

Dejero has announced updates to its Dejero Core software that streamlines broadcast clip and asset management workflows.

Dejero Core is the software shared by all Dejero transmitters and receivers, and can be seen at IBC2017.

Dejero transmitters are often used to record clips in addition to live workflows. Using watch folders, many broadcasters have defined workflows automating the movement of the clips into their media management tools.

The automation eliminates the need to manually move clips and quickly provides access to production staff who need to trim, apply overlays and perform other pre-broadcast tasks, as quickly as possible. The latest Core update provides more features to simplify and support the clip workflow.

NewTek announces world’s first NDI native camera

NewTek has introduced what it claims is the world’s first plug-and-play PTZ camera. With built-in NDI functionality, this IP camera connects to the network and delivers pristine video and audio, as well as tally, PTZ control and power, all over a single Ethernet cable.

Once connected to the network, the camera is visible to all compatible systems running the latest version of NDI, including: LiveStream Studio, Splexmedia, Aki XSplit, Streamstar, OBS Studio, StudioCoast Xнес, Telestream Wirecast, NewTek TriCaster and hundreds more. More sources become available immediately with the simple addition of NDI cameras to the network.

NewTek has included the latest high-quality image processing technology to deliver high-quality video performance. The NewOne supports standard 720p, 1080p 60 and 1080p 59.94 and offers a variety of input options including: YPbPr, SD-SDI, and HD-SDI. The camera supports all IP encoders and decoders, making it easily compatible to existing network infrastructures. At IBC2017, NewTek will show the NewOne with NDI and RTMP streaming.

Edgeware to focus on dedicated CDN delivery

CND provider Edgeware will showcase its latest research into when content owners and online TV distributors should consider leasing CDN rental and instead build their own delivery infrastructure.

“Understanding what private TV CDNs aren’t the right approach for everyone, but more and more services in the content delivery industry are recognising that it’s the right option for them,” commented Edgeware CEO, Joachim Roos. “We work with customers that have turned to private networks so they can take control of their content and deliver high-quality TV services while benefiting from a cost-effective solution.”

To demonstrate when a self-built solution is right for a content distributor, Edgeware commissioned Frost & Sullivan to create a whitepaper which lays out a set of criteria which help operators decide if a self-built network is for them.

“Building Your Own CDN For Video Delivery: Why When and How’ explains when many regular users of a service need to have, where those users need to be based and how long they watch a service for, as the basis for the answer.”

Dejero streamlines broadcast workflow

Dejero has announced updates to its Dejero Core software that streamlines broadcast clip and asset management workflows.

Dejero Core is the software shared by all Dejero transmitters and receivers, and can be seen at IBC2017.

Dejero transmitters are often used to record clips in addition to live workflows. Using watch folders, many broadcasters have defined workflows automating the movement of the clips into their media management tools. The automation eliminates the need to manually move clips and quickly provides access to production staff who need to trim, apply overlays and perform other pre-broadcast tasks, as quickly as possible. The latest Core update provides more features to simplify and support the clip workflow.

NewTek announces world’s first NDI native camera

NewTek has introduced what it claims is the world’s first plug-and-play PTZ camera. With built-in NDI functionality, this IP camera connects to the network and delivers pristine video and audio, as well as tally, PTZ control and power, all over a single Ethernet cable.

Once connected to the network, the camera is visible to all compatible systems running the latest version of NDI, including: LiveStream Studio, Splexmedia, Aki XSplit, Streamstar, OBS Studio, StudioCoast Xнес, Telestream Wirecast, NewTek TriCaster and hundreds more. More sources become available immediately with the simple addition of NDI cameras to the network.

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"As with broadcast suppliers the world over, the primary drivers of increased service, technology sales and expanded connectivity are the insatiable demand for news and sport"

Connectivity in the Middle East

The fall in oil prices in the Middle East and North Africa in the last few years, although now recovering, has had a knock-on effect on spending on broadcast technology and services in recent months, with budget cuts, deferred projects and overall decreases in investment.

Demand for occasional-use satellite connectivity has remained strong, however, even increasing, which continues to make the region a very attractive proposition for growth in the provision of these services, provided the price is right.

In part because of pressure on oil revenues, the MENA region is more price-sensitive than most for similar services. It also tends to be more reactive, in that long-term planning for satellite capacity is less common than the more prevalent last-minute requests for satellite service. I should perhaps rephrase ‘occasional use’ to ‘right now’, as many requests that come into booking departments are for capacity needed within the hour.

A corollary to the price sensitivity for satellite connectivity is that it also applies to the growing IPTV market, and perhaps even more so. Although satellite with IPTV delivery is very much on the rise in the region, it is still underdeveloped, and because the majority of IPTV offerings have been introduced by regional telcos, the proverbial ‘last mile’ connectivity into the home is a bit more complicated and, importantly, expensive.

IPTV delivered by satellite has achieved significant penetration, and although the total number of HD channels is still somewhat limited, demand is growing rapidly, which in turn prompted a significant expansion of capacity offered by satellite service providers.

All of the above said, it is fair to add that many parts of the region are still very much in the throes of the transition to digital broadcasting, and by default, HD, UHD and multiplatform delivery. And because most of these transitions are backed, at least in part, by government-led initiatives, many of them currently lack the financial resources to not only reevaluate and reconstruct broadcast infrastructures, but to extend that financial support to individual homes with subsidised set-top boxes and the like. Nevertheless, the digital transition continues, and with that the need for satellite connectivity services and, increasingly, fibre-based IPTV services.

As with broadcast suppliers the world over, the primary drivers of increased service, technology sales and expanded connectivity are the insatiable demand for news and sport, which has helped drive expansion in the region.

News in particular is still for the most part delivered by traditional SNG connectivity rather than emerging technologies such as cellular bonding, which means demand for satellite capacity remains high. This also means that although there are a lot of capacity-only sales, satellite capacity sales are very price-sensitive and there are many operators competing for that business.

The other driver, sport, particularly considering the 2022 Qatar World Cup, is in our case based on interest in UK-based sport (okay, football) and bringing it back to MENA. In our case, this is primarily via satellite via our UK teleports. Fibre networks that connect more than 100 sport and entertainment venues and international data centres have received increasing interest from broadcasters, partners and customers in the region.

But the key to fibre is availability, and with that the ability to establish relationships with multiple data centres that already have strong ties to the Middle East. For example, data centres in Paris with strong ties to MENA can deliver services from the UK to Paris and then on to customers in MENA. The simple fact is that the fibre proposition has too many advantages, particularly in light of the migration to IP-based products and services, to not be developed and expanded in tandem with established satellite offerings.

So while spending has been lagging in recent years, demand has not. And what we’ve seen throughout history is that demand almost always wins in the end. 

Paul Airey is Sales Manager of SIS LIVE.
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