ASBU BroadcastPro Television Awards 2015 honours MENA achievers
Last month was super busy with the Summit and Awards so I’m so grateful that the Christmas season is almost upon us and I have no complaints at all about tired feet or wearing my shoes out shopping. It’s so much more joyful to enter this season knowing that we have had the most successful conference and awards event yet. The hardest part of the conference has always been securing good speakers but here again, I’m thankful for the mix of speakers we had at this year’s event. While it is always important to open the platform out to new players who have made a mark for themselves in this market, it is equally crucial to have veterans join us, for it is this mix that has made the panels vibrant and successful.

Some of the numbers we heard both during the keynote and the panel discussions were staggering and a reminder that this region is hotting up. But I won’t dwell long on the summit or the awards here as we have dedicated a substantial number of pages to the event elaborating on some of the key points discussed there.

For me, the Summit and Awards for 2015 already seems long gone and December ushers in another exciting edition of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF).

One of the themes that continue to recur at many of these events, be it at our Summit or at DIFF, is the dire need for more quality Arabic content. It was distressing to hear that at last Ramadan, more than 100 drama productions were made in the region but 25 of them never even made it to the screen and very few actually appealed to viewers. But fear not! It’s not all bleak. We do have some exciting productions on the horizon. Zoomies will be screened at DIFF and I look forward to seeing it. We have also heard as we were going to press that some local players will be pitching to Netflix during DIFF. If the international OTT platform sees some good scripts and talent here, they intend to come over for some serious shooting.

I’ll be at DIFF. If you will be there, do say hello! Otherwise, see you in the New Year!

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director

Welcome

At Yahlive, we’re committed to broadcasting quality, free-to-air channels to targeted communities across the region. In fact, we currently provide bouquets of the most sought-after TV & Radio channels to the Farsi, Afghan, Kurdish, Balkan and Arabian Maghreb communities across MENA and South West Asia - in SD & HD. Share your world with them today.

Yahlive Satellite Broadcasting, connecting with communities via Yahsat Y1A at 52.5°E

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Sony Professional Solutions MEA FZ LLC, Unit C-50, P. O. Box 502050, International Media Production Zone, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
In response to speculation about a possible acquisition of Ericsson by Cisco, Hans Vestberg, President and CEO at Ericsson, commented: “We note that there are rumours regarding an acquisition of Ericsson by Cisco, possibly spurred by the recent announcement of a partnership between our two companies. The talks leading up to the partnership announcement have been ongoing for a year and there have not been any discussions whatsoever on a merger or an acquisition.”

A press statement from the company added: “On November 9, 2015, the two companies announced a global business and technology partnership to create the networks of the future. The partnership was supported by multiple agreements that include commitments to network transformation through reference architectures and joint development, systems-based management and control, a broad reseller agreement, and collaboration in emerging market segments.”

Netflix will explore the possibility of a long-term production opportunity in Dubai, should it find the right talent pool and regional scripts to support such an initiative, Jamal Al Sharif, Chairman of the Dubai Film and TV Commission told BroadcastPro ME in an exclusive interview.

Ted Sarandos, the head of content acquisition at Netflix, will address attendees at the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) on December 12 via video conference while some of the company’s delegates will be at DIFF to interact with attendees.

“Part of our 2016-2017 mandate at the Film Commission is not just to attract big productions to the country but to also develop local talent and create opportunities for them to work regularly on international projects so as to gain more experience. As Netflix is one of the fastest growing media platforms in the world, we had a meeting with them in Hollywood last month to discuss possible methods of collaboration,” Al Sharif confided.

“There will be a huge opportunity at DIFF for resident scriptwriters and talents to pitch their projects to Netflix. Netflix has done this in other countries as well. They like to look at what kind of talent is available and explore the market before they come down to film and I believe there are a lot of scripts and talent available here but we need such cooperation to identify the right people. We are hoping to receive some interesting pitches at DIFF – projects that Netflix can choose and help develop further for a global audience. If they find the right talent here, they are willing then to bring some part of their productions to Dubai and we hope the emirate will serve as the backdrop for more global productions.”

Netflix recently filmed War Machine in Abu Dhabi. War Machine is the biggest film to be produced by the video streaming platform and is scheduled for screening in 2016.

Yahlive has launched 43 channels in the Greater Arab Maghreb region in partnership with Paris-based Sahli Media Group. 20 of these channels are available exclusively on Yahlive.

Speaking about the launch, Sami Boustaney, CEO of Yahlive, said: “We have worked closely with regional broadcasters to deliver familiar local channels along with international favourites. This latest development has increased the available channels by 25%.”

Yahlive launches 43 channels in Maghreb

Dubai Media Inc, Dubai’s state broadcaster, has contracted UK-based sports and events graphics company MOOV to provide live race graphics for its world feed coverage from the Meydan race course. The horse racing festival, which began last month, will culminate in the Dubai World Cup in March next year.

Two new graphics systems from American company ChyronHego are part of the graphics suite from MOOV.

DMI ties with MOOV for live sport graphics

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Riedel ties with Sono Cairo

Riedel has signed a partnership agreement with Sono Cairo for representation in Egypt. Sono Cairo is the production arm of the government-owned broadcaster ERTU (Egyptian Radio and Television Union) and is responsible for the production of dramas, series, films and music videos. Riedel was invited exclusively to take part in the My Content exhibition at World Trade Centre in Dubai. Commenting on the partnership, Mohamed Al Emary, Chairman of Sono Cairo, said: “We are very happy to represent Riedel in Egypt. Riedel is an established brand among local broadcasters and producers, and this partnership will further boost its position in Egypt and give us a whole range of products to choose from.”

Riedel will provide an entire portfolio of products for selling and rental purposes. It will not stock any equipment in Egypt but doesn’t rule out the possibility of building a logistics facility in Cairo in the future.

Ahmed Magd, General Manager at Riedel Communications Middle East, added: “We will use Sono Cairo’s influence in Egypt to launch and promote our products. They can rent, sell and offer after-sales services on behalf of Riedel. We didn’t have an official presence in Egypt, but have been working with several broadcasters there. We hope to have a better reach in the market with this partnership.”

The range of Riedel products represented by Sono Cairo includes intercom, smart panels, signal distribution and processing equipment.

Nigeria chooses Paywizard

Paywizard has been selected by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) of Nigeria to support the national digital TV switchover project. Working with Inview, Paywizard’s Agilxtora platform will manage all customer data, subscriptions and billing, including voucher code and scratch card transactions. Paywizard’s platform will be integrated with Inview’s set-top boxes (STB) and Nigeria’s conditional access (CA) system to allow subscribers to sign up to and access the content of their choice. Paywizard’s tailored services will also provide Inview with contact centre support, service automation, DTT and digital switchover insight.

Grey Juice Lab opens Dubai office

Grey Juice Lab, a major provider of premium VOD content services, has fortified its MEA presence with a new regional content marketing and commercial hub in Dubai Media City. It will be headed by EMEA Regional Director Remi Olivan. Remi Olivan called the office launch “a strategic step which demonstrates our commitment to our current and prospective customers in the Middle East and Africa”.

Grey Juice Lab’s CEO Mihai Crasneanu added: “As increased bandwidth and awareness pushes the demand for DTT across the MEA, it becomes crucial for any new or established player to only gain access to premium content in a quick, flexible and sustainable way, not only to promote and monetise that service to maximise revenue potential.”

He claimed that the company “is the only independent content aggregator committed to the region offering the whole range of premium on-demand content rights and services.”

Arab Telemedia Group adds Baselight colour pipeline

Emmy Award winning production company, Arab Telemedia Group has added an integrated Baselight colour pipeline to its production and post workflows.

The colour management workflow starts with four FLIP units for on-set pre-visualisation, each capable of handling four clip panels. FLIP is part of the Baselight environment, so the colour grades imposed on set are not burnt in, but stored as metadata in FilmLight’s Baselight Linked Grade (BLG) file format.

Connect all your SD, HD and Ultra HD gear and eliminate messy cable patching with the new Smart Videohub 12G!

Smart Videohub 12G 40x40 is the world’s first 12G-SDI Ultra HD mixed format router built with in video monitoring and spin knob control. You have access to real-time SDI technology so you can simultaneously connect and route any combination of SD, HD and Ultra HD video, up to 2160p60, all on the same router at the same time! You also get revolutionary new visual routing that lets you route signals simply by looking at the video on the front panel, plus unlimited users can control remotely via Ethernet from a Mac or Windows computer or optional hardware control panels!

Advanced 12G-SDI Technology

Smart Videohub 12G 40x40 features advanced 12G-SDI connections that allow high frame rate Ultra HD up to 50fps over a single SDI connection. Each router SDI output includes an SDI re-clocker for better signal integrity and longer cable lengths, plus 12G-SDI automatically switches speed so is compatible with all your SD, HD and Ultra HD equipment.

All Video Formats Simultaneously

Smart Videohub 12G 40x40 includes multi format technology so you can simultaneously connect SD, HD and Ultra HD equipment all on the same router. Smart Videohub will automatically detect the SDI video format when it changes and instantly switch standards to all connected outputs. This means you can seamlessly work in NTSC and PAL, SD, 720 and 1080 HD and even 2160p60 Ultra HD in the same facility!

Visual Routing

Smart Videohub’s super fast spin knob control lets you dial through your router crosspoints while displaying live video combined with custom on screen labels. Scroll order is arranged alphabetically so it’s easy to find the crosspoint you are looking for and imagine scrawling through your connections while viewing them live video on the LCD!

Built in Video Monitoring!

Now you can monitor all the live video connected to your Videohub. That means you don’t need a separate external monitor because it’s built into the front panel of the router itself! You can look at any source or destination and control the correct video inputs are being sent to the correct video outputs.

Ethernet Control

You can control your Smart Videohub 12G 40x40 with the included free Videohub Control software for Mac and Windows. Videohub Control software has an elegant user interface design with attractive icon buttons and when used with touchscreen computers, you get a fantastic large screen XY control panel!
Al Baghdadia TV upgrades with Avid

Iraqi satellite TV network Al Baghdadia TV recently upgraded to a file-based HD workflow with Avid Everywhere. Avid provides a modern file-based HD workflow recently upgraded to a file-based HD workflow across the TV network’s infrastructure, thereby unifying its studio, local affiliate and field operations. The full MediaCentral solution includes an upgraded iNEWS newsroom control system with iNEWS Composer, Media Composer | NewsCutter, ISIS | 5000 shared storage; 12 channels of AirSpeed 5000 and Interplay | Capture and Interplay Archive.

Fitian Alkhashlok, News & Programme Director at Al Baghdadia TV, commented: “The design and installation of the new Avid workflow has transformed Al Baghdadia TV’s news production. Now, all of our producers and journalists are linked through the single web-based interface of Avid MediaCentral | UX.” He added that the end-to-end system across the organisation gives greater agility to create stories in the field, providing operational efficiencies at all points of production. Al Baghdadia has achieved full file-based operation, a transition to HD and a closer integration of its studio production and field news gathering workflows.

BeIN Media Group ink deal with Front Row

BeIN Media Group has signed a five-year first-run output deal with Middle East film distributor Front Row Films Entertainment. This deal follows beIN’s recent announcement to expand its offering of paid channels from premium sports to entertainment and movies. In order to strengthen its content portfolio, beIN is also reportedly in talks to purchase Miramax. beIN’s move into movies is considered a game changer for the pay-TV landscape in the MENA region.

Arabsat launches Badr-7 successfully

Arabsat has successfully launched Arabsat-6B to cater to the growing need for satellite broadcasting capacity across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Arabsat-6B, which is also called Badr-7, is the ninth satellite orbited by Arianespace for use by Arabsat. It is the initial sixth-generation satellite for Arabsat’s fleet, providing broadcast, broadband and telecommunications services over the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia. It was launched on behalf of Airbus Defence and Space and Thales Alenia Space as part of a turnkey contract with Arabsat.

Commenting on the launch, Khalid Balkheyour, President and CEO of Arabsat, said: “Badr-7 has a great variety of different frequency beams, including a Ka-band to provide broadband and internet services as well as direct TV broadcasting and satellite telecommunications services. “Arabsat presently has three new satellites under manufacturing within the sixth generation project. They will be launched successively over the next three years representing an investment of $1.5 billion.” Manufacturing and launching Badr-7 has accounted for $400 million, he added.

ABS and Arabsat sign expansion capacity deal

ABS and ArabSat have signed an expansion capacity agreement on ABS-3A for a multi-transponder, multi-year deal for Ku-band payload. The additional capacity will be used for different customer networks within the Middle East and North Africa region, in particular Saudi Arabia. Under the agreement, ArabSat will use the new bandwidth on ABS-3A at 3W, mostly for data services for enterprises, banking and government institutions. ABS-3A, an all-electric propulsion satellite, entered commercial service on August 31. The satellite features 48 C- and Ku-band transponders (36 x 36MHz equivalent) and is equipped with high performance beams to support rapidly growing markets in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Kuwait TV deploys Calrec Summa in OB van

Kuwait Television (KTV), Kuwait’s official television station and part of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information, is installing a Calrec Summa audio console in its newest and most advanced OB van. The Summa will give KTV the flexibility to cover a wider variety of programming such as talk shows, sports and concerts. “We are always working on expanding capacity and raising our standards of television production and delivery,” said Waad Hamadah, TV Broadcast Engineer, TV Engineering Division, Ministry of Information. “With six other OB vans, and though the audio consoles in those units are more than adequate, the Summa console enables us to take our audio coverage to new heights. This will also mean less reliance on third-party companies and other departments when covering the more complex audio events,” he added.

SANAD-funded films among Oscar contenders

Three of the seven Arab films being considered in the Best Foreign Language Film category in the 2016 Academy Awards were funded by SANAD. These include: Three by Najib Abu Nowar; The Wanted 18 by Ammar Shamaile and Paul Cemaw, submitted by Palestine; and Iraqi Odyssey, submitted by Iraq’s Federal Office of Culture.
**Introducing Ki Pro Ultra**

**Powerful Record/Playback at up to 4K 60p**

Ki Pro Ultra is a next generation 4K/UltraHD/2K/HD capable Apple ProRes file-based video recorder and player with broad support for video formats and frame rates (up to 4K 60p) and flexible input and output connectivity, including 3G-SDI, Fiber and HDMI. Designed to be either portable or rack-mountable with a half-rack wide 3RU high dimensions, it’s well suited for use in studio/truck environments in addition to on-set and even digital signage applications. The Ki Pro Ultra answers the growing demand for 4K and UltraHD capable recorder products with full support for current HD projects.

**Facilis provides shared storage to Dubai Media Inc.**

Facilis has delivered a H.264 TerraBlock shared storage system to Dubai Media Incorporated (DMI). The Terrablock system is positioned at the heart of DMI’s new media management and content creation facility, which has been designed, installed and commissioned by Dubai-based systems integration specialists Wecomm Global.

A new production workflow enables entirely new and radically different collaborative working practices within the broadcaster’s creative department. Two Facilis TerraBlock 4TB systems work in unison to power a workflow where content is ingested and then edited on any number of 80 client workstations using Adobe Premier.

**Twofour54 and O3 sign production deal**

Twofour54 and O3 Productions have signed a three-year deal that will secure an additional 300 production days a year for Abu Dhabi’s twofour54 campus. Fadi Ismail, General Manager of O3 commented: "Twofour54 has developed a strong offering for the production market that includes the right infrastructure, resourcing and incentives for the growth of Arabic drama. We look forward to collaborating with twofour54 for quality Arabic productions.”

**Alrai TV virtualises playout with Imagine**

Imagine Communications has implemented a proof of concept IP-based playout system at Alrai TV, Kuwait’s first privately owned television channel. The broadcaster plans to use the virtualised environment to optimise workflows and speed up service introductions, as well as for business continuity protection in the event of a service disruption. The solution uses Imagine Communications Versio integrated channel playout running in a virtualised environment on a standard HP platform and Naxio Motion and AMP servers. The playout software also provides branding animation, logo insertion and live switching. Alrai TV has fully integrated its existing physical operations with the new virtual playout facilities. This hybrid approach allows common control of existing and new channels and helps ensure both hardware-based and virtualised solutions are kept in synchronisation for disaster recovery applications. Talesh Magdalani, Director of Engineering and Operations at Alrai TV, commented: “We see a whole range of advantages in IP, including reduced cost, simplified processes, speed to air and more powerful workflows.”

**Job Track**

Avid has appointed Ahmed Shanti Territory Account Manager for the Middle East. Shanti will be responsible for increasing Avid’s market share in the region as well as to be the company’s first point of contact with customers. He joins Avid from Grass Valley, where he was Regional Sales Manager.

**Find out more at**

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

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**Ki Pro Ultra**

Ki Pro Ultra captures directly to rugged AJA Pak SSD media. Pak1000 is the perfect companion for Ki Pro Ultra, offering 1TB of fast SSD media for up to 4K recording at 60p in Profiles HQ. Two Ki Pro Ultra drive bays provide rollover recording, for unrecorded capacity on any project.

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**Rollover Recording**

Twin media drive bays provide rollover recording, for unrecoverable capacity on any project.

**Take Control from Anywhere**

Ki Pro Ultra features a beautiful high resolution HD display for pristine monitoring of your material, and serves as your interface to Ki Pro’s familiar and intuitive menu system. When remote from Ki Pro Ultra, utilize the fast LAN connectivity and access the internal webserver from any web browser on any OS.
DIFF 2015 to screen the best of regional and global cinema

Dubai International Film Festival has unveiled the line-up for its 12th edition that will showcase 134 films from 60 countries.

The festival, which runs from December 9 to 16, spans films from 60 countries. It will include 55 world premieres, 17 GCC premieres, 46 MENA premieres, 11 international premieres, and 134 shorts and documentaries, all vying for the top spot this year’s category is testament of feature films ever in the Muhr Emirati category, which is tangible proof of the growth in the UAE film industry and global interest in its development at a rapid pace.

Now in its 12th year, DIFF will open with Deepa Mehta’s Room while Adam McKay’s The Big Short will close the curtain on the 12th edition.

The UAE film industry has been selected for exhibition at the Muhr Emirati Competition. The compelling line-up includes five feature films, the most feature films ever to be selected in this category, and a further seven shorts and documentaries, all vying for the top spot during the festival.

DIFF’s Muhr Feature competition jury will be headed up by the Oscar nominated screenwriter, director and producer, Deepa Mehta. The unprecedented number of features in this year’s category in testament to the increasing number of talented filmmakers in the UAE, explained DIFF’s Artistic Director, Mossad Amadila Al Ali.

“Now in its 12th year, we have seen the Arab films industry and global interest in it develop at a rapid pace. This year, we are delighted to see the highest number of feature films ever in the Muhr Emirati category, which is tangible proof of the growth of the Emirati film industry in recent years.”

DIFF will open with Lenny Abrahamson’s Room while Adam McKay’s comedy-drama The Big Short will close the curtain on the 12th edition.

Sennheiser, in conjunction with UAE-based regional reseller partner United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS), hosted a workshop in Dubai on November 12, 2015. Titled Broadcast Sound Perfected, the event aimed at informing and educating customers from the broadcast industry on the latest solutions from Sennheiser’s ENG, studio and outside broadcasting (OB) product ranges.

Ryan Burr, Technical Sales Manager at Sennheiser Middle East, stated: “By focusing on a particular market vertical, we are able to address specific customer requirements. In addition to product demonstrations, we deliver presentations that inform them about the latest trends in the industry.” Burr was joined by members of Sennheiser’s regional team, as well as members of UBMS.

Africanews channel to launch in January

Euronews sister channel Africanews will go on air across Africa on January 4, 2016. The pan-African news channel, based in Congo Brazzaville, will be available in English, French and partially Swahili, via the SES 4 and SES 5 Ku-band satellites. A digital version, Africanews.com, will also be available globally across mobile, tablet and desktop platforms in January.

The channel will employ a team of 85 professionals across 15 nationalities. Bureau will be set up in Johannesburg, Nairobi, Abidjan and N’Djamena.
The ASBU BroadcastPro conference brought together more than 290 attendees to discuss some of the core issues impacting the region’s broadcast industry.

Mohamed Abuagla, Executive Director of Technology & Operations (CIO/CTO), Al Jazeera Media Network, opened the summit with his keynote speech. He spoke extensively about the Al Jazeera Workplace Transformation Project (AJWT) and the progress made by the network. Having joined Al Jazeera in 2012, Abuagla was gradually entrusted with the role of ringing in change at the broadcast facility from both a technology and operational point of view. He spoke about how the project had shaped up as the tech team embraced new technologies and changes along the way. He cited examples of where the broadcaster was successful and where the team hit roadblocks.

Abuagla spoke extensively about JIVE - Al Jazeera Integrated Virtual Environment - and the cost and time savings it brought with it. According to him, adopting the Al Jazeera Media Cloud has enabled the broadcaster to establish fast and reliable connectivity to all AJMN offices.

He addressed concerns regarding big data and how it could be handled and stored for future use. Can the broadcasters make meaningful extractions from the multitude of data available to us? “90% of the world’s data today was produced in the last two years,” he said. Around 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and you’d need 15 years without sleep to watch all videos uploaded in one day. Targeted production and VOD are some of the areas that can benefit from data. Broadcasters are considering these as serious monetising avenues and exploring opportunities to exploit them. Digital offerings are one such promising outlet, according to him.

Security risks in today’s connected world and the need to protect information are other key concerns for broadcasters. Al Jazeera, for instance, receives 2.4m legitimate emails monthly and around 9.1m threat emails. Commenting on the convergence of broadcast and IP technologies, he added that “the intersection of broadcast, IT, telecoms and consumer technologies, is only possible when there is a convergence of the processes and ways of working also”.

He explained how cloud is the technology of the future and the ways in which cloud deployments were helping the broadcaster.

“Accelerate your approach to develop strategy and plan for cloud readiness. Integrate big data strategy into broader strategic and transformation engagements,” Abuagla added.

Following the presentation were four panel discussions that focused on production, OTT, free-to-air and piracy. The launch of beIN Entertainment and its impact on the region’s pay TV market was discussed and so was Fox’s announcement to join the beIN bouquet. Exclusive statistics, a look at how piracy has evolved with OTT and how the MENA TV industry is fighting back were part of the discussions.

The panels have been discussed in detail over the next few pages. Raffle draws were held, with prizes including four iPhone 6s devices, headphones and iPad Minis from Media Guru, Selevision, Sennheiser, Axon and BSA. The summit ended with a piracy quiz from Irdeto. Mukund Cairae, CEO of Zee Entertainment Middle East, received an Apple watch from Khaled Jamal, Irdeto’s Sales Director for MENA, for correctly identifying legitimate and pirate sites.
PRODUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Producers and broadcasters discuss the pros and cons as well as the factors impacting decisions on keeping productions in-house or outsourcing them to independents.

The first panel discussion of the ASBU BroadcastPro Television Summit centred on production in the Middle East and whether broadcasters should continue to invest heavily in in-house productions or outsource them to independents. Moderator Chris O’Hearn began by asking what defines in-house production. Sharif Maghraby, CEO, Creative Venture, pointed out that as a state broadcaster, DMB uses its infrastructure to boost local talent and create jobs for Emirates in the media sector. “We are mandated to do in-house productions spanning sport, drama, entertainment and news. We also use our facilities for vocational training to create jobs for Emirates.”

Paul Baker, Executive Director, Film and TV Services, twofour54, added that a thriving independent production ecosystem creates the foundation for a bright production future. “At twofour54, we have over 400 partners working for us and a significant proportion of these are production companies, around 50 of them. They struggle to get commissions, particularly from state broadcasters, here in the UAE.”

Badih Fattouh, CEO, Creative Venture, pointed out that as a state broadcaster, Dubai TV is doing very well in the Middle East and whether broadcasters prefer to produce reality shows in-house. “We have to have more projects should be encouraged, to get a holistic picture of the production, and the onus is on the state broadcasters and large companies to fund pilots to grow the production base in the UAE.”

MBC, was the first to comment. The free-to-air network has invested in large-scale, big-budget productions in recent years and has built a thriving drama and reality show production ecosystem through O3. Sharif said that when a broadcaster commissions a production, it takes complete control of every aspect of the show, from genre to administration and financial control, and networks with the infrastructure prefer in-house production.

Continuing in the same vein, he said that the broadcast sector is growing, with the team of freelancers having grown from 0 to 500. However, there is room for growth on the single-camera side, he added. While Abu Dhabi is attracting a lot of foreign productions because of its 30% rebate policy, these productions mainly work with their own crew. “We have to have more programmes to develop local talent, which is the reason twofour54 has mandated that you can’t access Abu Dhabi’s production rebate unless you have UAE-national interns working on the production,” he said.

At this point, Elkhalifa added that it’s not the infrastructure that’s lacking, but rather the pitch that fails short. “What we get through our doors are more than 100 drama productions were made from across the Arab world during Ramadan, although more than 25 of them never even made it to the screen.”

Maghraby steered the discussion again to the importance of metrics and audience measurement to improve the quality of production. Metrics are the key driver that will attract more money into production from advertisers as well as broadcasters, he pointed out. Many producers prefer to produce in Lebanon and Egypt, because the UAE is more expensive and there is a larger talent pool available in those countries.

Maghraby noted that a large proportion of these productions have never made it to the screen, and that the panel concluded, and that can only be achieved if there is more investment in local talent.
Moderator Nick Grande opened the discussion by asking Maaz Sheikh to comment on the standalone OTT proposition, a relatively new concept in the region. As a young service, Starz Play is still in the process of “finding its way around”, commented Sheikh. While he sees a definite demand for Starz Play’s offerings in the region, the service in its initial months had to face several challenges. The method of payment is one such concern, as many people in the region do not use credit cards for online services. To counter this, the streaming company has launched cash on delivery through a prepaid card. “It's unusual for an e-commerce service, but that's what the market demands. It has more to do with customers’ confidence with the brand and the ability to let go and trust the merchant,” he said.

Samer Abdin agreed with the challenges of online payment in the region. He said that mobile uptake has grown tremendously in the region, with more device penetration, and now it's a matter of gauging what the viewers want. In the past five years, viewing patterns on mobile devices have also changed. New customers are viewing long-form on mobile, which was not the case earlier. “We haven’t finished learning about our consumers, as we are all operating in a young market. Viewing habits are constantly evolving,” he said, adding that kids’ content and drama are, by far, the most popular genres for Istikana.

Dr Raed Khusheim of Selevision said that his company operates in the OTT space through partnerships with different players in the broadcast chain, including broadcasters, content owners, telcos and satellite providers. “Selevision is a multi-platform operator collaborating with partners to offer the best services to the viewers. In fact, most of the panellists here today are partnering with us in some way or the other,” he said. Samer Geissah of du said that, as a telco, du is strong in the IPTV sector and has now introduced du View to extend its services into the OTT realm. “Our fixed footprint is limited. As of now, du View is available as a VOD service to du TV subscribers. We are also exploring solutions that run over home broadband or mobile network to move to the next level. Growth outside the UAE is exciting for us: we don’t want to limit ourselves.” The large screen at home is the main screen when you want to watch premium content. No one likes flickering, buffering or scattering of picture when viewing premium content, Geissah pointed out. To further develop its IPTV offering, du is in the process of ramping up relationships with studios and independent producers while also collaborating with local companies to provide a multi-platform network.

UTURN’s Al Khatib said that his company was no longer an MCN but had evolved into an MPN – a multi-platform network. With YouTube and Facebook as their main platforms, UTURN uses other

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social sites such as Instagram and Twitter to gain traction with users. “Our money comes from advertising revenues from product placements, branded content, branded entertainment, product mentions and sponsorships. YouTube is used to stream to reach our target audience,” he explained.

The content that online platforms produce does not involve a lot of production spend, unlike television, making it quite lucrative. The most popular content on UTURN is short-form content between five and 15 minutes in length, explained Al Khatib.

Fares Akkad of Shahid.net mentioned that people associate Shahid with MBC and the brand equity that comes with it. Shahid has developed new business models and digital strategies and has now evolved beyond a catch-up service to a premium service offering exclusive digital content unavailable on MBC’s linear platform. “Breadth permeates in the region compares to Western Europe, where multiple OTT services coexist. More than 60% homes have tablets in the region, compared to 60% in the US. We have the devices and the behaviour in the region, there is no reason why multiple OTT won’t flourish here,” commented Sheikh.

He also added that Starz Play is testing Arabic content including Khaloij dramas, Egyptian movies and Turkish content, and plans to launch an Arabic bouquet next year. The way Arabic content consumption is evolving in the region, young people like to watch short- and medium-length programmes rather than long-form series. While there is room for big-budget classics such as Harem Sultan, OTT snack content is quickly gaining popularity and evolving as a lucrative business model. Do MCNs go beyond YouTube and build a relationship with the telcos?

Al Khatib said that MECIS was the first to support UTURN and that the company has partnered with Zain as well. There is huge potential in subscription-based content on online platforms, but as a content creator, UTURN remains as agnostic as possible and focuses on advertisements.

Samer Geissah added that du has a strategy to work with OTT providers who face challenges in online payment modes. “There is a very high rate of credit card adoption, but sensitivity to using them online. We facilitate payment services for OTT companies.”

Statistics show that the majority of viewing on OTT platforms is over Wi-Fi in the UAE. Fares warned that the OTT evolution in the region might pose a threat to telcos and their IPTV offerings unless they proactively devised new business models focused on OTT.

Dr Raed interjected to say that satellite is still a strong platform in the region and will continue to be so, as 96% of viewers watch satellite channels in the MENA region. The panel concluded that while OTT is a growing force, linear and satellite TV will continue to dominate as the primary screen in the region, especially for premium content.

"We haven’t finished learning about our consumers, as we are all operating in a young market. Viewing habits are constantly evolving”

Samer Abdin, CEO and co-founder of Istikana
Cloud, IP and New Technologies

CTOs discuss the pain points surrounding the adoption of cloud and IP-based technologies at their facilities and how to address regional challenges.

The CTOs discussed the role of cloud and whether IP is a replacement for SDI. How will cloud services empower broadcasters? What services, possibilities and opportunities are available on the cloud? The panel agreed that the real power that cloud brings to this industry is flexibility. Dominic Baillie of Sky News Arabia commented on the capability of the cloud to unleash a completely new way of viewing content. Rather than using it to replace existing infrastructure, broadcasters should use the cloud to leverage solutions that cannot be achieved on traditional media.

For web players such as iflix, cloud offers the elasticity to scale up or down operations based on demand. David Irvine of iflix commented: “We use cloud as a service that enables us to scale up transcoding operations, for example to deal with peak demands. Cloud bypasses long-term commitment, and its true value lies in the flexibility that it brings.”

Mark Billinge of OSN pointed out that cloud should not be seen as a technology solution, but as an enabler to provide more efficient service and better customer experience. He added that cloud is the tool of choice for live streaming on digital platforms. Broadcasters should consider disaster recovery another way of leveraging the cloud, as in the next 12 to 18 months cloud technology will be more widely available.

Mijenko Logaric of Al Jazeera commented that broadcasters are building today what will run for the next ten years. The broadcast industry is experiencing a paradigm shift, with business models shifting to digital. Advertisers are being drawn to the digital domain, and if traditional players don’t evolve, they will be out of business.

“Cloud is a marketing terminology. In the next few years, everything will be service-based instead of being product-based. Everything in Al Jazeera is running as a service now and the results have been very good. With new developments in technology, we cannot change the headends but we can change the infrastructure that leads to them,” he said.

It is not a secret that in the future, everything will be in the web domain, with pay-as-you-go models gaining traction, thereby saving capex. This is the model that new-age players follow and which conventional players will eventually adopt as well.

“We take technology services as a commodity. If we need to use metrics from a user, we write a metrics storage tool. We can buy off-the-shelf or pay-per-gigabyte services. We don’t need to know where or how data is stored, all we care about is that we get it when we need it,” Irvine pointed out.

Digital platforms are all about building user experiences that go beyond just streaming or owning a robust content library; they’re about giving the viewers what they want, when they want it. Customising content based on user profiles is what OTT companies are cashing in on.

Logaric said that the infrastructure to build these services is already there and it’s just a matter of when and how broadcasters use it to their advantage. For instance, Google has 64 big data centres around the world and boasts the most extensive ocean fibre network globally.

“I foresee the next five years as a critical period in developing software to configure major operational workflows that we have today,” he said.

Dr Naser chipped in to say that Rotana will have its private local cloud ready by Q1 of 2016. “We will not go all the way to hybrid just yet, but plan to have virtualised infrastructure based on blade servers and gradually move into a managed public cloud such as Amazon,” Baillie interjected to say that the real advantage of the cloud is in building a new architecture that doesn’t merely replicate the traditional systems or replace the existing hardware with software. “Replacing SDI with IP gives only operational efficiencies.”

New media is giving rise to new business models, Logaric commented, which has forced conventional players to update their skill-set and equipment to keep in step with the change.

He gave the example of Al Jazeera investing in 10 KMI cameras recently and buying 1,500 GoPros at the same time to equip its journalists with new-age tools. “Before we know it, all the money we are spending on SDI and IP routers will soon be moved to IT equipment. Change is coming faster than we expected,” he said.

Billinge said that it’s just a matter of when and how the cloud becomes compelling. “Are we ready to face the 800-pound gorilla in the room?” he asked, asking the panellists about the impending entry of Netflix and HBO to the region.

Billinge said that satellite will stay strong in the market for at least the next five years, giving room for both traditional and OTT players to coexist.

Baillie added that the bottom line is to make the content more interesting by offering a user experience that’s interactive and relevant. Are traditional players offering compelling services that make their content exclusive and one-of-a-kind? A hybrid model that integrates social media with TV may have an answer to that, and that’s where the role of the cloud becomes compelling.

The panel concluded that cloud broadcasting is undergoing a change, a rather revolutionary change. The success or failure of the highly competitive world is to embrace the change and give the viewers a better quality and experience.
Imagine you were the CEO of a free-to-air television network in the Middle East, working on your strategic plans. What would your outlook be? Is the sector on the path to recovery? Will there ever be enough advertising revenue to sustain an industry, or is the answer to switch to the subscription revenues of pay-TV?

That was the debate tackled by the CEO panel at the BroadcastPro Summit recently. The pro-FTA side was represented by:

• Mukund Cairae, CEO of Zee Network Middle East, a group that runs a commercially successful FTA business in addition to licensing pay-TV channels
• Carl Von Doussa, GM of Channels at Imagenation Abu Dhabi, which is about to launch the newest FTA channel in partnership with Discovery
• Sarah Al Jarman, General Manager – Dubai One at Dubai Media Inc, a stalwart of the FTA industry

On the other side, the proponents of the pay-TV movement were:

• Hamad Malik, Head of Marketing at beIN, a premier sports pay-TV network that has just launched its entertainment offering
• Sanjay Raina, GM of Fox International Channels in MENA, who took the decision to switch his Fox Movies and Fox channels from FTA to the newly launched beIN Entertainment network from November 1
• To provide a perspective on the piracy threat to pay-TV revenues, the panel included Mark Mulready, Senior Director – Cyber Services & Investigations, Infotra.

Cairae gave a spirited defence of FTA distribution. He argued that pay TV penetration in the Middle East will simply not reach significant levels and that FTA remains the only efficient means of reaching a large audience in the near future. The best way to rise above the cluttered FTA space is to create content that is relevant to the region’s audience. Cairae added that networks that are backed by governments, such as DMI, do not only consider commercial comparisons between FTA and pay-TV. While they are open to considering subscription-based channels on a case-by-case basis, the need to reach a large audience remained an important factor in support of FTA distribution.

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Von Doussa kicked off the session with his assertion that pay-TV penetration in the Middle East will simply not reach significant levels and that FTA remains the only efficient means of reaching a large audience in the near future. The best way to rise above the cluttered FTA space is to create content that is relevant to the region’s audience. Cairae added that networks that are backed by governments, such as DMI, do not only consider commercial comparisons between FTA and pay-TV. While they are open to considering subscription-based channels on a case-by-case basis, the need to reach a large audience remained an important factor in support of FTA distribution.

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For Raina, the overarching dominance of the FTA space by one large media group made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to generate a profit. He added that the situation was exacerbated by the lack of widespread measurement systems in the region, making it harder to rent the incumbent.

Naturally, it was expected that beIN’s Malik would clearly support the move to a pay-TV model. beIN is aiming to acquire 10m subscribers over the coming years. However, his assertion that FTA channels were knocking on beIN’s door to the extent that they had to convince beIN why it should add them to its network instead of the other way round was certainly confident. If that is true, the statement is an eye-opener when it comes to the state of mind of FTA channels in the region.

While each side had a clear vision for why they were in FTA or pay-TV, Mulready from Irdeto highlighted some of the piracy challenges facing pay-TV through a revealing quiz. He showed the attendees several screen shots of websites and asked them to guess which were pirate and which were legitimate. Needless to say, most of the room couldn’t guess all five correctly. He also showed how easily and cheaply one could obtain pirate decoders in the wholesale Chinese market. In conclusion, while legal enforcement and technology are essential, piracy can only be defeated by offering consumers choice and value.

Karim Sarkis, CEO of Sync Media and the moderator of this panel, summed up this discussion.
The MENA broadcast industry converged at Habtoor Grand for the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards on the evening of November 10, 2015, to celebrate innovation and technology. We gave away 13 awards in different categories to honour those who have made a mark in the industry in the last year.

The fifth annual ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards brought together all of the major players from the MENA broadcast industry. We are pleased to have hosted more than 350 industry professionals for the gala evening. The event provided the perfect platform to network and celebrate some of the achievers in the industry.

The awards recognised broadcast specialists from the MENA in both traditional and new media. We had 13 awards in creative and technical categories. Among the winners were broadcasters, MCNs, pay TV operators, systems integrators, producers and filmmakers. A new award, MCN of the year, was introduced this year to acknowledge the impact of OTT in this region, where 60% of the population is under 25 and owns smart devices. As the industry continues to evolve technologically, new business models are coming to the fore and playing a key role in shaping the industry of the future.

The jury:
Our judges this year were (in alphabetical order):
- Abdulla Al-Balooshi, Director Technical Affairs, Information Affairs Authority (IAA), Bahrain
- Harvey Glen, DoP (production expert)
- Khalid Abu Ali, Broadcast Technology Consultant and CTO, Sudan National TV
- Vibhuti Arora, Deputy Editor, CPi Media Group
- Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director, CPi Media Group
- Vipin Vijay, Filmmaker and Editor

The MEnA broadcast industry converged at Habtoor Grand for the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards on the evening of November 10, 2015, to celebrate innovation and technology. We gave away 13 awards in different categories to honour those who have made a mark in the industry in the last year.
PRO AWARDS

SPECIAL TRIBUTE
DR. RAED KHUSHHEIM,
CEO, SELEVION

BroadcastPro Middle East wanted to thank and acknowledge our title sponsor, Selevision, for the continuous support it has offered us in 2015. Alongside that, under the leadership of Dr. Raed Khusheim, Selevision has reinvented itself from being a hardware manufacturer to a software developer offering a suite of products and services to telcos, service providers and consumers. Having partnered with satellite operators, telcos and content providers, the company today offers OTT with core packages of VOD, live, restart and catchup services on its cloud-based technology platform. Selevision recently made another breakthrough with its compression codec Nukodec to speed up HD and 4K uptake in the region.

BEST MCN OF THE YEAR

This is a new category created this year to acknowledge new players bringing more OTT content to the MENA region.

UTURN ENTERTAINMENT

UTURN is one of the largest and most diverse MCNs in the region. The company started in Saudi Arabia as a digital production company in mid-2010, with original YouTube shows. After the initial success of the first batch of shows, it pushed itself to create and aggregate edgy, relevant and quality online content.

BEST MCN OF THE YEAR

Diwan Videos is a more recent entrant but has already become one of the top 50 MCNs globally in terms of viewership. It generates more than 350 million views a month and manages more than 400 channels, and has become one of the more successful players in the market. Diwan Videos also has partnerships with Dailymotion, a video sharing website and Vuclip, a mobile video solutions provider.
MENA OTT TRENDSETTER OF 2015
BEIN SPORTS CONNECT

beIN Sports Connect was chosen as the winner for this category by the judges for several reasons. It has been one of the most successful OTT platforms in the region with the highest number of subscribers and subscriber growth month on month. It has 18 live streaming channels and is the only platform to stream in 1080P. It is fully integrated with social media and highly customisable. With two hours of playback, its platform gives comprehensive stats and analysis on teams, players and coaches from the beginning to the end of a match.

BROADCAST PROJECT OF THE YEAR
OSN FOR ITS NETWORK OPERATIONS CENTRE BUILD

OSN undertook the redesign and upgrade of its network operations centre and central apparatus room, as well as its editing areas, to cope with additional services and platforms. The judges were impressed by the scale and volume of the solution, which has made it a world-class operational area.

INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR
BARAJOUN ENTERTAINMENT

Bilal from Barajoun is the first CG-animated feature fully funded and produced in the Middle East. It is a blend of art and realism, demonstrating great attention to detail. This attempt in the Middle East to create a world-class feature length animation with international appeal was a unanimous winner among our filmmaking experts.

LONG-FORM PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR
RABBI ZIDNI KPA FROM THE GOLD MINE FILMS

Again, we had so many entries in this category but the judges unanimously chose this one. Whether it was the art of storytelling, the composition or the voiceover, the documentary kept us riveted from the first moment. From the fishing slums of Karachi to the wheat fields of Punjab, the director, along with two renowned Pakistani photographers, embarks on a journey and meets some inspiring individuals along the way.
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WTA TECHNOLOGY OF THE YEAR AWARD 2015

ASBU BROADCAST PRO ME 2015 INNOVATIVE PROJECT AWARD
AMAGI MEDIA LABS

NDTV deployed Amagi’s regionalisation platform in the Middle East, based on its low OPEX and no CAPEX. As part of the solution, the vendor inserts unique, invisible and inaudible watermarks on ads that need to be replaced in the Middle East. This has helped the broadcaster to serve local ads relevant to the region, open up new revenue streams and provide better value to advertisers. The judges unanimously chose this vendor for its flexible and innovative cloud-based system.

MEN NA BROADCAST TRENDSETTER OF 2015
AL JAZEERA MEDIA NETWORK

Al Jazeera is taking an innovative approach to reconfiguring its bureaus around the globe. The broadcaster built a prototype solution in Beirut using state-of-the-art technology for newsgathering and broadcast. Beirut is the first of 80 international bureaus targeted for the upgrade over the next 18 months. The network also took an innovative all-round approach to the way it connects with its centres around the world.

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Du took on a significant challenge in October when it decided to launch du View, an OTT service for its subscribers. As one of only two telco operators in the UAE, du caters to more than 180 nationalities in the country and therefore needed to come up with attractive commercial and content packages that could potentially attract a vast number of people from different cultural and economic backgrounds.

The telco created a state-of-the-art OTT offering that works well in a competitive regional environment.

Tek Signals has been involved in several big and prestigious projects in the Middle East. Most recently, it undertook projects for Al Jazeera Arabic, Es’hailsat and Sharjah Media Corporation. Although Tek Signals has been a regular contender for the ASBU BroadcastPro Awards, this year, the systems integrator stood out for meeting exceedingly tough deadlines and delivering high-quality solutions.

From left: Klaus-Joerg Jasper from Lawo presents the award to Carmen Mandziak, VP Consumer New Business and Innovation at EITC, du.

From left: Tariq Raja, CEO of Tek Signals, receives the award along with the rest of his team, from Peter Hajitoffi, MD of Pebble Beach Systems.
Every year, when we interview end users, we come across people who have tried to do something different. Al rayyan TV attempted to virtualise its playout facility for more flexibility and efficiency. They dared to experiment, and came up with an open-ended sophisticated solution that is future-proof and highly resilient.

For the first time in the history of this broadcaster, its technology and operations departments were combined under one man, who has been leading the transformation of the teams into delivering world-class operations. Leading by example, Mohamed Abuagla has set out to transform the company and has been instrumental in bringing about key developments.
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EXTEND YOUR REACH AROUND THE GLOBE

With the launch of its new satellite at 8 West B in August, Eutelsat has brought much-needed additional capacity to the 7/8-degree hotspot. In the MENA region, 52 million households, consisting of 250 million people, watch a TV channel broadcast from this position. The launch will increase that number.

Yahlive and North Telecom have both endeavoured to reach out to the region’s Farsi community. More than 170 channels are now available on Yahlive for this community. North Telecom put together the bouquet of channels, which is now available on the Yahlive platform. Yahlive currently transmits to 80 million people in Iran, 32 million in Afghanistan and millions in other countries in the Gulf, as well as Iraq, Turkey, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, through its partners.
Selevision honours some of its key partners and customers in recognition of their contribution to the MENA broadcast industry.

Selevision, our title sponsor this year, paid tribute to some of its key partners at a brief ceremony at the ASBU BroadcastPro Selevision Awards on November 10. The awards were conceived by Selevision to recognise the accomplishments of some key players in this industry and for the value they’ve added to it. Sony Pictures Television was awarded for its contribution to 4K content. Ziad Yaghi, Vice President, Distribution – Middle East & Turkey, received the award on behalf of his company.

Mariam Farag, Group CSR Manager at MBC Group, collected the award for MBC Hope, a social commitment project from the broadcaster that focuses on education, supporting entrepreneurship, community development and humanitarian causes. Cartoon Network Arabic was commended for its contribution to developing kids’ content. The award was received by Tariq Islam, Distribution Manager at Cartoon Network Arabic, which features a mix of classical and new shows dubbed from English, in addition to original productions and locally produced shows.

Rotana Media Group received the award for undertaking a massive restoration project to convert its media assets to full HD format. Rotana Group has one of the oldest and largest movie libraries in the Arab world, with Arabic-language movies dating back to at least 1921. Michael Cairns, Chief Operating Officer of Rotana Media Group, received the award.

Etisalat was commended for its IPTV service. Rashed Majed Alabbar, VP / Consumer Product Innovation, received the trophy. Etisalat was also honoured for achieving the most complex integration of its IPTV service. An executive from Etisalat received the trophy on behalf of Eng. Saleh Saeed, VP of Digital Services.
In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, Christophe Firth, Manager at A.T. Kearney Middle East, speaks about the MENA region’s evolving TV trends and the outlook for the market in the wake of new services in the region.

What is your take on the TV industry in the MENA region?
The Middle East TV industry is quite complex compared to other parts of the world, but it also offers higher opportunity. It is complex because of three factors.

Firstly, on the demand side, it is fragmented in line with the cultural, ethnic and economic diversity of the region. If the MENA was a country, it would be the third largest in the world. This leads to a wide variety of content consumption profiles and the ability to pay for TV services, from Morocco in the west to Oman in the east. Limited audience measurement only adds to the challenge for broadcasters, pay TV operators and advertisers to profile and reach their audience.

Secondly, on the delivery side, most of the region is only covered by DTH satellite, with almost no cable, and pockets of IPTV and variable (but fast-improving) broadband connectivity. This is a limiting factor in the ability to expand the range of services.

Thirdly, content rights are sold on a regional basis covering more than 20 countries which, for pay TV operators, for example, means setting up and managing a network of different distributors for each country. It involves navigating different regulations for each country, pricing and receiving payment in different currencies, and so on.

That said, the strong appetite for TV in the region, young and growing populations, and still relatively low base of pay TV penetration should provide the basis of a positive future outlook for executives at TV companies in the region.

How would you compare the region’s uptake of OTT with global trends?
The region’s uptake of OTT is still low, but with strong growth potential. In the most positive scenario, we see a potential market in 2020 of up to USD 1bn in the MENA region.

The market potential is there, with a young demographic, improving broadband access speeds and a fast-growing range of OTT services. Saudi Arabia is already the biggest YouTube country in the world in terms of viewership per capita.

You recently conducted a survey, we hear. What were some of your findings?
Yes, we ran a survey of senior executives from amongst MENA broadcasters, pay TV and OTT service providers, telcos and advertising companies, which we complemented with a pan-regional audience survey of more than 6,000 viewers. Perhaps the most interesting and topical insights are on the OTT side.

The top three factors cited by TV executives to enable the take-off of OTT video in this region are faster broadband, more content and effectively tackling piracy.

In addition, when asked what type of company was best positioned to win in OTT, it was perhaps surprisingly the telecom operators who came out on top. That said, only 38% of respondents from the different types of service providers — broadcasters, satellite pay TV operators and telecom operators — believed that their type of company was best positioned to win! This clearly says that there will be a lot of partnerships and collaborations in the sector, as players look to build on one another’s core strengths and address challenges.

For example, this region’s OTT service providers are already partnering with telecom operators to enable customers to pay for their OTT consumption on their monthly bill or with their prepaid balance, which helps to address the constraint of low credit card penetration.

Globally, I believe that we are entering into a second golden age for TV, which will be as transformative as the first golden age in the 1950s, when TV became mass-market. This is no less the case in the MENA.

Christophe Firth, Manager, A.T. Kearney Middle East
We are offering our key clients a chance to reserve their space in the BroadcastPro ME & SatellitePro ME branded desktop calendar for 2016.

The calendar will feature 12 companies – one for each month of the year with their logo and advertisement. With one full page dedicated to each company, the company’s name and logo will be carried prominently on one side while the company’s advertisement will be displayed on the following side with the logo at the bottom of the page.

The calendar, which will be distributed with BroadcastPro ME & SatellitePro ME December 2015 issues and also at CABSAT 2016, gives your company an opportunity to be viewed for a whole month.

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The calendar, which will be distributed with BroadcastPro ME & SatellitePro ME December 2015 issues and also at CABSAT 2016, gives your company an opportunity to be viewed for a whole month.
PRO50 has all you need to know about the top players in the region’s broadcast and satellite market. A compilation of profiles of 50 broadcast and satellite companies in the GCC, the hardback coffee table book is a valuable resource for not only business entities but also customers looking for a ready reckoner of key industry players.

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We are seeing unprecedented change in the world of broadcasting and electronic media at present. This change is genuinely disruptive, as it offers the potential to have a radical shift in the way we work, bringing new efficiencies, new productivity and new ways of serving our audiences.

As always happens when shifts in technology occur, there is a clamour to make dramatic changes as quickly as possible. Conference sessions are dedicated to the new possibilities. Vendors are keen to sell you new solutions. My first piece of advice to all those being bombarded with information about change, though, is to very carefully evaluate what your future plans are. Define your goals and the timeframe in which you hope to achieve them. Then you can develop the detailed plans to make it happen.

Those plans will be unique to you. The speed of transition and the level of business continuity and security during the transition, as well as the ultimate end state, will be different for every enterprise going through today’s transitions. Make sure your objectives are clear: that will define your transition planning.

Let us consider just a couple of the significant changes facing the industry today, and how we might plan to address them.

Software-defined architectures
The most obvious shift, and the foundation for the change in workflows, is the move to a
Gigabit Ethernet is giving way to 10...
Bahrain TV has upgraded its 35-year-old MCR to a new state-of-the-art HD/3G facility, as part of its system revamp. BroadcastPro ME brings you the details.

Bahrain TV, the TV arm of Bahrain’s Information Affairs Authority, has been revamping its broadcast infrastructure in phases to build a state-of-the-art facility. It recently refurbished its news studio and upgraded to an HD setup while also modernising its master control room (MCR).

The MCR project was awarded to Dubai-based systems integrator Glocom Ltd last year and has now been handed over to the broadcaster. The project entailed a complete overhaul of the broadcaster’s 35-year-old setup to a 24/7 live MCR with full HD infrastructure. The previous setup was a mix of analogue and SD systems.

Alongside revamping the complete MCR, the project also involved installing a monitoring solution for all sources in different levels such as playout, audio processor out, final output, demux of BTV and other channels. This included multiple remote sites for live feed reception over fibre, two live studios with production control rooms, centralised equipment room, centralised talkback connectivity and continuity rooms for seven-channel master control playout.

Eng. Abdulla Al Balooshi, General Director of Technical and Technology Affairs at Bahrain TV-IAA, explains that in a bid to modernise its broadcast infrastructure, Bahrain TV refurbished its newsroom with key deployments from Avid and the MCR to create a 24/7 HD environment with main installations from Grass Valley.

“The with this revamp, we have embraced the latest, state-of-the-art broadcast technology in our facility. We have moved to a full HD environment now, using the latest digital equipment. The core of our MCR was built on Grass Valley, so we decided to go with the latest version from the same vendor. We worked closely with Glocom and Grass Valley to revamp the systems,” he says.

Project Manager Ishtiaq Ahmed of IAA, adds: “This was the most challenging project for me and I am very happy with the final outcome of the project.”

The solution

The facility now boasts a full HD setup with 3G compatible cabling, for more secure connectivity in terms of signal quality and strength. All remote sites used for content acquisition now use fibre connectivity, for faster and safer communication. The solution has several integrated receiver decoders (IRDs) that receive DVB-S/S2 signals and provide SDI-embedded sources for the facility.

Grass Valley transmitters/receivers, with fibre-to-SDI converters for live record and playout. The production and transmission routers have the entire sources connected to them for proper routing purposes for all of the studios and continuity rooms. The continuity rooms have seven master control switchers from Grass Valley (4xMC-Panel-200, 3xMC-Panel-100) and Grass Valley Densite LGK-3901 for TV channel playout.

“All of the components are tightly integrated with each other and there is no incompatibility anywhere in the broadcast chain. The data is seamlessly shared between various systems to avoid any delays or downtime” Abdulla Al Balooshi, General Director of Technical and Technology Affairs, IAA

These sources are taken to the production and transmission routers and used as per requirements. The central site has a main equipment room with its core based on Grass Valley central production and transmission routers. The MCR receives live feeds from multiple locations, which are fed into both the production and transmission routers. The feeds come to the central location from more than seven remote locations through fibre connectivity via Grass Valley transmitter/receivers, with fibre-to-SDI converters for live record and playout.

The central site has a main equipment room with its core based on Grass Valley.
These also include embedded graphics with the logo and ticker feature. The master control switcher is connected with feeds from various Omneon video servers for video playout. The system uses Vertigo graphics solution for channel branding; sophisticated, multilayer graphics combine text crawls, animated graphics, DVEs and audio inserts.

The monitoring room provides monitoring of all of the 50 SD/HD channel from AXON, with sources from an RF downlink chain and the live feeds coming over fibre. The Trilogy Gemini Talkback system, integrated with the existing Orator system, connects the entire facility’s technical locations for a centralised communication solution.

Al Balooshi says that they have ensured that “all of the components are tightly integrated with each other and there is no incompatibility anywhere in the broadcast chain. The data is seamlessly shared between various systems to avoid any delays or downtime”. He adds that the solutions will eventually help to reduce the overall manpower cost without compromising the channel’s look and feel.

“Having most of the systems automated not only reduces our manpower costs, but also reduces the risk of human errors. Each solution has been handpicked with Glocom’s design team to serve the purpose, thereby, saving cost and time.”

Fibre connectivity between remote sites and central sites give faster access to MCR users. The newly installed systems boast user-friendly GUI of routers, multiviewers and controls to monitor the equipment. The

“We didn’t expect it to be smooth sailing, considering the legacy setup was more than 35 years old and the switch from the existing facility to the new one was bound to be a challenging one” Asim Saeed, General Manager, Glocom, because multiple sets of SPGs for different technical sections needed to be connected to each other. Each of these also followed centralised sync for equipment. All Bag, Senior Manager Solution Sales and Operations, Glocom, explains that “cabling was another challenge, as we had to segregate all of the old cables and then put new cables in the same places to install the new equipment, without disturbing the legacy setup which was live and in operation at the time of installation”.

Glocoms was involved in the project at a very early stage and helped the end user with the upfront planning and designing. “We have been using analogue setups all this while, and the switch to digital was a major change for our staff, as they were used to the manual setup. Glocom and Grass Valley invested heavily in undertaking the training of our staff quite effectively in order to equip them to handle the new systems. This was hugely valuable to us in addition to the high quality delivery and implementation,” Al Balooshi concludes.
Embracing scalable technology like AoIP will become increasingly critical if organisations want to seamlessly accommodate emerging audio requirements and video formats, says Ken Tankel.

Even with these new technologies well within our grasp, many broadcasters are still not using AoIP to its full potential. Right now, AoIP tends to be used as a point-to-point replacement for MADI and not as the efficient and flexible distributed networked architecture that multicast routing enables.”

Ken Tankel, Product Manager, Linear Acoustic

There is a misconception in the broadcast space that media outlets must wait for video over IP to mature before fully embracing an audio over IP (AoIP) infrastructure. AoIP technologies have been stable for some time and can provide the flexibility, reliability and connectivity needed to deploy audio separately from video. Before the introduction of SDI video with embedded audio, video and audio had been handled separately for years. Although embedded audio seemed a step forward, it did not reduce lip sync issues, and associated metadata was still easily separated from the audio. Since metadata is an increasingly essential part of new audio services, this becomes a major problem.

Traditional channel-based audio looks set to gradually be replaced by object-based audio – the carriage of the individual sound elements, bundled with metadata, that make up the channels. Multiple languages, emergency audio and services for the visually impaired are all competing for auxiliary space in broadcast delivery. While these expanded audio services can provide flexibility and enhanced consumer experiences for broadcast and internet-based OTT services, they need to be supported by the right platform to deliver as promised. AES and SMPTE have been working together on ways to enable the sub-sample accurate linking of AoIP with video while keeping the two streams separate until final delivery. The result of their efforts on the audio side is the new AES67 standard currently being adopted by many manufacturers.

Past & present – breaking down the boxes

To best understand where AoIP technology can take the industry, one needs to reflect on how we have been working until this point. The broadcast chain, as we know it, consists of a string of devices that are each assigned to complete a specialised task. Closed capturing, stills, graphics, squeeze, crawls, bugs, audio processing and video encoding are each done with specific hardware dedicated to a certain function. Add to that countless utility products, such as frame syncs, distribution amplifiers, audio de-embedders and re-embedders, and audio and video synchronization, and the system becomes installation intensive. Troubleshooting and maintenance is made far more complex and difficult, given the multiple points of failure.

Reducing the number and types of hardware devices used in the broadcast chain limits failure and helps streamline the process, and the broadcast industry has been working to consolidate functionality in everything from video switchers to video effects and audio processors. There are two major advances driving this consolidation: the widespread use of Ethernet for file distribution, device control and real-time video and audio delivery, and the increasing power and storage of open, reliable IT platforms. Major increases in computing power have also allowed video and audio processing to evolve from one specialised box per function to multiple functions in a single box. These advances mean broadcasters can now use fewer devices in the air chain, resulting in higher density, reduced space requirements, less AC power, reduced cooling requirements, less wiring, better system management, and faster design and installation.

AES67 takes all this a step further, bringing AoIP devices under the umbrella of interoperability. Prior to the standard, several manufacturers had their own dedicated AoIP
“Reducing the number and types of hardware devices used in the broadcast chain limits failure and helps streamline the process, and the broadcast industry has been working to consolidate functionality in everything from video switchers to video effects and audio processors.”

Ken Tankel, Product Manager, Linear Acoustic

protocols. AES67 removes those barriers completely, allowing the designer to take diverse products from different companies and create a wider ecosystem built around standards-based AoIP.

Thinking outside the box

Even with these new technologies well within our grasp, many broadcasters are still not using AoIP to its full potential. Right now, AoIP tends to be used as a point-to-point replacement for MADI and not as the efficient and flexible distributed networked architecture that multicast routing enables. With increased channel density and interoperability comes the possibility of supporting emerging formats and rethinking how we look at audio altogether. Around the world, 5.1 channel audio is common and the broadcast of 7.1 channels and more is in the process of being standardized. Delivering immersive audio experiences to the home and providing audio objects and metadata that can place these objects in anything from stereo to 11 (or more) channels of playback is already a reality. For example, Dolby Atmos services are “on air” today via US online content providers VUDU and Netflix, with Comcast and HBO ready to follow suit in the very near future.

There are many other areas beyond increased realism or an immersive audio experience that can benefit from increasing the number of audio channels. One is live sports, where increased channels could better serve fans by simultaneously delivering home and away commentary with venue atmosphere. Another is descriptive audio for the sight-impaired. Handling multiple languages and multiple levels of emergency information are additional uses. The idea is to deliver a more personalized audio experience to every consumer, regardless of how they are listening – on headphones, handheld devices or laptop, or from televisions and home theatre systems with 11 or more channels.

In addition to increased audio services, separating video and AoIP streams simplifies delivery. All you need for audio distribution are network cables, since the video does not need to run through a facility to reach broadcast management and audio processing devices. Another benefit of AoIP is universal contribution and access. This means that any AoIP-enabled device or computer with an AoIP driver can put audio on, and receive audio from, the network. The end result brings audio outputs to control rooms, edit bays and studios that can be used anywhere and heard anywhere. AoIP interfaces that provide GPIO, AES digital audio, analogue audio and sync connections can be placed anywhere within the reach of the network, eliminating separate runs of sync, RS-422, time code and GPI and audio cabling. On top of this, national emergency announcements, local emergency audio and local audio cut-ins can be added to the AoIP network, using interfaces at its edges.

In addition to what is heard over the airwaves, AoIP makes it possible to converge subsystems that otherwise remain separate. The emergence of agnostic IP stream control and routing has made the management of IP audio simple and coherent. Intercom feeds are no longer tied up to their own matrix, nor is programme audio routed independently for on-air and in-studio feeds. Access becomes open and developed, flattening role-specific signal paths in the process. Everything is just audio – low latency, programme-quality, 24-bit multi-channel sound.

The emergence of the AES67 standard for AoIP adds many possibilities for broadcast outlets beyond the distribution of audio. OTT may change how we are viewing content, but AoIP aims to change how we hear it. With proper system configuration, it is now possible to distribute more channels than ever before. In addition, many facilities are using AoIP to become more flexible while reducing overall costs. It will be critical in the coming years to embrace a scalable technology like AoIP if we want to seamlessly accommodate emerging audio requirements and video formats. Video over IP may still be a few years away from full maturity, but we can start to pave the way for it now.
Over the summer, I was back in the UK, trying to escape the worst of the heat in the UAE. While there, I was lucky enough to be asked to shoot a factual documentary with long-term collaborator and friend director, Nat Sharman, for the BBC factual department.

The programme was all about how to stay young and avoid aging, something I think I actually need after recently becoming a father.

Our resident DOP Harvey Glen takes the ARRI Amira on a road test and gives us the lowdown.

The filming took place in LA and San Francisco. We decided to hire all of the equipment locally in LA, and the ARRI Amira was our camera of choice. I, like almost every DoP in the world, am a big fan of the ARRI Alexa and it is high on my requirement list for most TVCs I do in the Middle East. The Amira offers very similar functions to the Alexa, but has been packaged by ARRI as their documentary or single-user camera. This was the first time I got to use it,
PROREVIEW

“It’s still a fair amount of weight to be carrying around for long handheld days, but you have to remember that you are shooting with arguably, the replacement of a 35mm film camera on a documentary show”

Harvey Glen, cinematographer

and I must say I was excited. After all, the Alexa has replaced 35mm cameras in both the feature film and the TVU world. Even legendary cinematographer Roger Deakins shot Skyfall digitally. Now was getting an opportunity to shoot a factual show on the same equipment, which I found remarkable.

Unlike the Alexa, the Amira has the option to change the mount from PL, EF or B4. For many users, the opportunity to revive their expensive Canon PL lenses will be very welcome. We decided that EF was the best route forward. With the change of mount requirements and the varying focal lengths required. I used a set of Zeiss CP2 primes and a Zeiss 24-80mm, and took my old trusty Canon 70-200mm with a double speed reducer.

If I could have got hold of some Xeen PL mount lenses in time, I would have gone for a set of those, but due to the nature of the shoot I would have still needed a long zoom. With a PL mount, this wouldn’t have been an easy solution to fit within a BBC factual budget. If I could have had some idea that I would have been shooting with arguably, the replacement of a 35mm film camera, I would have still needed a long zoom. With a PL mount, this wouldn’t have been an easy solution to fit within a BBC factual budget.

We mounted a lightweight matte box and took some ND filters and a Pola. The Amira has matte box and took some ND filters and a Pola. The Amira has a 35mm ARRI ALVE III CM08 (28.17x18.13) sensor. The resolution is 3414x2198:3200x1800 (28.17x18.13) sensor. The data is something to consider for an interview. Our camera assistant, Harvey Glen, had brought an additional RAW licence.

The Amira has no RAW recording yet, although it’s rumoured that it has the technology for this, so maybe ARRI will bring out an additional RAW licence. We shot all our LA, from the mean streets to an area known as ‘blue zone’ where there are many contradictions (people over 100 years old). Apparently the secret to living a long and healthy life is to eat a handful of nuts, particularly pecans, have a good body mass index, exercise and avoid meat… for me, the last one is the hardest, but a handful of pecan nuts surely gave me some energy during our shoot.

In San Francisco, we had a few challenging situations where we had to shoot against a window, with the exterior around seven stops over. The Amira claims to have 14 stops of dynamic range, and I believe it almost achieves that.

With the Amira licence options, you have access to REC 709, with the Premium, you can upload your own LUT. I find the REC 709 on the Amira to be a little over-saturated and with a lot of contrast, so I uploaded the one with a slightly less contrast. I find looking solely at LOG too flat and a little joyless. I like to get excited by colours, skies, the environment and the people I’m photographing. Of course, it’s a good option to flick between your LUT and LOG so you know your footage is exposed correctly, but that’s all I use it for. With the Amira Premium, you can crank it to 200fps at HD or 2K resolution. This is awesome! Frame rates higher than 20fps often aren’t required in the documentary world, especially when you’re filming lots of people over 100 years old, but who says this camera should be limited to the single-user world? You could quite happily use it for drama or TVUs. In fact, while I was back in the UK, I did some operating for a very close DOF friend of mine on a big UK drama. As the owner of an Amira, he brought it on to the drama and it worked side by side with the Alexa and cut seamlessly. Overall, I fell in love with the Amira – it’s a great tool for almost any shoot. The ND filter jump is annoying, and on the drama I had the foresight to bring my own shoulder pad for the handheld scenes, but these two compromises are a small price to pay to have a digital 35mm camera that you could effectively describe as an Alexa dressed up slightly differently.

Harvey Glen is a Dubai-based cinematographer. He can be reached on www.harveylan.com or dslrblog.com.
Today, 4K is suddenly everywhere: from consumer TVs, cameras, tablets and phones to cinema projectors and medical imaging devices. And just like HD before it, 4K is having an equally profound effect on our perceptions of picture quality. Sitting just a couple of metres away from a 65” UHD TV, the most sharp-eyed human observer can’t discern those eight million individual pixels.

The 4K story is beyond big screens. More than ever before, you’re instantly judged by how your content looks on every size of screen – whether you’re producing news, sport, drama, factual or entertainment.

Beyond pixels

Replacing 35mm for acquisition and distribution of movies. Digital projection has been the norm in cinemas for several years now, and this transition will reach its natural conclusion when studios and distributors abandon celluloid altogether. Meanwhile, 4K content is rapidly making its way into a huge range of other environments, too. New-generation projectors can beam astonishing super-size 4K images into galleries and museums, retail stores, boardrooms and industrial design/simulation suites.

Better-looking pictures on real-world budgets

For broadcasters and content creators, today’s challenge is delivering better-looking pictures on real-life production budgets. The good news is that 4K acquisition tools now available can dramatically reduce the commercial risks of 4K. Operation is reassuringly familiar, while 4K picture quality is phenomenally sharp and detailed, even with fast-moving sports footage. Even better, one platform is all you need for 4K, HD and 8x super slow motion. It really is a game-changer.

Of course, 4K isn’t just about counting pixels. Just as important for viewers’ experience is the huge jump forward that 4K offers in terms of higher dynamic range. Coupled with the extra detail and expanded colour space of 4K, HDR boosts audiences’ sense of dramatic engagement.

Improved audience engagement, today and tomorrow

For live and recorded workflows alike, the conversation we’re having with many of our broadcast and AV media customers right now is about future-proofing. With real-world production costs that already compare very favourably with HD, shooting in 4K is the sensible default option for a huge range of projects. There’s another valuable payoff from acquiring in 4K today. 4K footage that’s been down converted to full HD looks stunning – giving your content an immediate premium with viewers while maximising its shelf-life.

Just like HD over a decade ago, 4K’s commercial viability depends on a smooth end-to-end workflow supported by a complete ecosystem, from capture to transmission and archive. XAVC has quickly proved its worth as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution in live UHD production environments, where it’s ideal for 4K master recordings as well as live streaming to editing platforms and archive, too.

Vivian Saldanha is Business Head – Content Creation Sales and Market Development at Sony Professional Solutions MEA.

“The 4K story is beyond big screens. More than ever before, you’re instantly judged by how your content looks on every size of screen – whether you’re producing news, sport, drama, factual or entertainment”
LIGHT... SOUND... CAMERA... ACTION

LET'S START 2016.

Advanced Media is wishing all its clients happy holidays and a prosperous year 2016.