JRTV ON WHEELS

Jordanian broadcaster to capture all the action with high-tech HD OB van

NIGHT RIDER
Sony Alpha 7s shines in low-light conditions

TV AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
Content anytime, anywhere in focus
One hundred and eighteen films from 48 countries were screened as part of the Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) last month. What a grand way to close the curtain on another beautiful year! DIFF has grown from strength to strength over the years, and we are happy to have been part of this growth since the event took its first baby steps 11 years ago.

Among topics piquing the interest of Dubai Film Forum attendees this year was digital storytelling, and the impact of new technologies and platforms on content creation. I had the pleasure of moderating a panel on this topic. As a panellist from European broadcaster ZDF pointed out, broadcasters are no longer the gatekeepers of content. Platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo and Facebook among others now give content creators the opportunity to display their work. Panellist Philip Alberstat, branded content expert and COO of LA-based firm Contend, explained how his company had successfully used website visitor profile data to create specific branded content. He cited the example of a web series his company had created for Lexus on people who had invented something, and how the company had created for Lexus on people who had invented something, and how one video had received 32 million hits.

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The availability of platforms such as YouTube and Facebook to showcase work without relying on any external entity has clearly given rise to a new breed of entrepreneurs. Another panellist, Diana Badr, Head of Partnerships at YouTube, MENA, commented that two hours of video is uploaded to YouTube from this region every minute. The potential of online platforms and websites to generate an even larger audience cost-effectively has given rise to entrepreneur like panellist Dinash Lahani, a Dubai-based techie. Lahani established Growl Media, a company that creates apps and websites. He is now looking to integrate print with augmented reality, apps and other online platforms for children – his prime target audience – so they can genuinely enjoy a rich and immersive user experience.

All of these panellists are part of an emerging business ecosystem that will give rise to a new generation of entrepreneurs. There’s no greater way to start the new year than with such uplifting stories of innovation and I believe we will hear more on this topic at IBC Content Everywhere, which will run from January 20-22. I wish all of you a happy 2015.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director
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January 2015
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**Riedel connects Abu Dhabi F1**

Riedel Communications, which has a long-standing relationship with Formula One, supplied the communications systems for the Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, last month. Riedel provided the radio and intercom communications as well as international internet connectivity to all crew members, the organiser and the team players.

“We supplied over 300 radios and deployed nearly 90 Artist Digital Marine intercoms, as well as 700 Artist 1000 series user keypanels, across the different areas of the Yas Marina circuit, between the race control area, the team areas and inside the garage,” explained Ahmed Magd El Din, Head of Riedel’s Dubai operations.

“The reason why our panels are so popular is because they are the only ones that are easy to use in direct sunlight. Nobody else at the moment has anything similar to offer.”

Riedel participates in all 19 F1 events each year and traditionally supplies up to 1000 radios each week, including broadcast links for RTL and others, as well as HD camera links for in-car cameras. The PJ project also requires the installation of a fibre infrastructure at the venue. “The required fibre infrastructure installed at the F1 racing circuit moves with the races to each of the 19 tracks around the world,” Magd El Din explained.

“We install the fibre infrastructure, use it, take it down and move on week after week. By installing our own fibre backbones, we are fully responsible for and in control of the infrastructure.”

An event such as F1 demands a high degree of redundancy. Riedel’s Artist intercom systems and Rockset audio systems are combined onto a MediorNet backbone to build a complete broadcast infrastructure that can be completely managed remotely. Since it is a network, every signal is available at every node. As MediorNet is based on a fibre ring, even in the event that a fibre is cut or broken, the system can heal itself and re-route signals around the fault. The radio systems are then layered on top of Artist, for complete control over all communications.

“F1 drivers talk nearly 80% of the time while matching speeds of more than 300 kph. These chats include sensitive driver-team feedback and telemetry for the ears and eyes of the race team and must be clear and understandable despite high noise levels. These are routed to pit lane and to the team HQ in the UK and/or Italy in order to make decisions in real-time,” said Magd El Din.

Riedel added that improvements to its products are based on years of working with F1 and similar clients, and intimately understanding their requirements.

**ARABSAT upgades STC hub**

Arabsat and STC have renewed their long-term partnership to upgrade STC’s satellite hub in Riyadh (Dinah). Commenting on the partnership, Khalid Balkhalyour, President & CEO of ARABSAT said: “The multi-million-dollar renewal enables reliable communications throughout Arabsat Broadlink’s satellites on 27°E, with extensive footprint, which facilitates the operations of STC with high throughput links. Arabsat and STC continue to work very closely to enhance their presence in domestic and international markets.”

**Social video news service opens Cairo bureau**

Newstag, a Stockholm-based crowd-curated news service, is opening a subsidiary in Cairo, Egypt to handle all of its incoming video news content. Newstag’s approach of sharing news through social media will bring together video news stories from professional content producers around the world, including AP, AFP and Reuters.

The six-member Cairo team will be responsible for handling, verifying and tagging stories as they arrive from the central control area, the team areas and inside the garage, explained Magd El Din.

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Riedel added that improvements to its products are based on years of working with F1 and similar clients, and intimately understanding their requirements.
Viacom International Media Networks (VIMN) has signed a multi-year agreement with Dubai-based pay TV operator OSN, which makes three of its HD channels — Nickelodeon HD, Nick Jr. and MTV Live HD — available on the OSN bouquet from Jan 5, 2015.

Emad Morcos, Senior Vice President, Business Development, Strategy & Digital at OSN, has confirmed to BroadcastPro ME that “this is an exclusive partnership and the channels will be exclusive to the OSN platform”.

Although the immediate result of this tie-up is the availability of the channels on the OSN platforms, both parties have confirmed that this deal will be extended to include future local co-productions as well.

In fact, from February 2015, both Nickelodeon HD and Nick Jr. will also be available in English and Arabic on OSN.

“After reviewing the channels for eight to nine months, we decided that Nickelodeon and Nick Jr. were perfect to be made available in Arabic. Nick Jr. will be dubbed in Arabic and Nickelodeon will have Arabic subtitles. With more than 200 million youth in the region representing about 60% of the population in this region, MTV Live HD is also another welcome addition to our bouquet,” Morcos said.

Providing further statistics to justify Viacom’s focus on kids, Raffaele Annecchino, Executive Vice President & Managing Director South Europe, Middle East and Africa, VIMN, said: “The under-15 population in the Middle East is at 23% compared to 18% in Europe and 19% in the US. Kids also tend to consume content on TV and other devices in this region more than any other part of the world.”

VIMN’s Dubai Media City team will take over the production of Nickelodeon HD, with the aim of transforming it into the only international kids TV channel available in Arabic.

To provide a more comprehensive channel experience to children, Viacom is also developing an app and a web page in English and Arabic, which is scheduled to be ready by Q2 2015.

“In fact, from February 2015, both Nickelodeon HD and Nick Jr. will also be available in English and Arabic on OSN. We are also looking to stream the channel on our OSN Play platform sometime in 2015. Most premium content is available for catchup but we have a few channels that are also streamed on Play. The Nickelodeon channels will be part of this effort.”

In a separate development, BroadcastPro also learnt that Viacom had axed some of the staff at its Dubai office last month.

In response to our query, Viacom responded: “Viacom International Media Networks confirms that there has been a small, necessary re-alignment of the Middle Eastern team in line with the new announcement. This is also in line with the new business focus towards the kids market.”

Top 10 films from Dubai 48-hour Film Project screened at DIFF

The top ten films from the Dubai 48-Hour Film Project were screened at Dubai International Film Festival last month and the winners were announced at the event.

Team Random won the first prize for their film Talent no.21 and their film is now on its way to Hollywood for the “Filmmapalooza” international screening. Although a total of 39 short films were eventually submitted, only 32 qualified as the rest were late submissions.

The entry will compete for best film alongside 140 other winning entries from other cities, and the opportunity from them to move on to Cannes. Team Epic’s Mission HXK secured second place and Disco Insect’s Spaced Out was awarded third place at the event.

This year, 42 teams took part in the 48-hour filmmaking challenge. Although a total of 39 short films were eventually submitted, only 32 qualified as the rest were late submissions.

From left: Emad Morcos and Raffaele Annecchino.
Ericsson partners with Ethiopian telco operator

Ericsson has signed a framework agreement on 2G/3G mobile communication equipment and related services including design, planning, deployment, tuning and optimisation with Ethiopia’s telco operator, Ethio Telecom. The agreement allows the telco operator to further improve the capacity and performance of its 2G/3G network. This will consequently ensure improved quality of network coverage for subscribers in southern Ethiopia.

The deal with Ericsson will be used for the procurement of Ericsson products and services. It aims to transform the current network and add additional capacity to meet the country’s need to bring connectivity to more than 60 million subscribers nationwide. “Ethio Telecom sees this agreement as a step towards fulfilling the country’s need for better communication,” commented Andualem Admassie, CEO of Ethio Telecom.

Ericsson has signed a framework agreement on 20/30 mobile communication equipment and related services including design, planning, deployment, tuning and optimisation with Ethiopia’s telco operator, Ethio Telecom. The agreement allows the telco operator to further improve the capacity and performance of its 2G/3G network. This will consequently ensure improved quality of network coverage for subscribers in southern Ethiopia.

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**Saudi broadcaster trains with twofour54**

Tview recommended for industry-wide adoption

The UAE’s TV audience ratings system, tview, has been given the green light for wide-scale industry adoption, following an intensive quality audit conducted by Paris-based international specialists CESP.

The audit report, presented to the media last month at an event hosted by the Media Zone Authority in Abu Dhabi, concluded that tview had shown massive improvement in critical aspects of the system, which uses matrix devices in a panel of homes to deliver detailed minute-by-minute viewing data.

John Illingworth is now Business Development Director MEA at Friend MTS, a content and platform security company, which has introduced a new service to enable secure streaming of live video. He was previously Sales Director, Middle East at Irdeto.

Illingworth is heading the MEA operations of Friend MTS. Friend solutions are able to both detect unauthorised live streams on a multitude of platforms and track them back to the source of the leak where they can be stopped in real time. “Friend offers a solution that is not a single technology but offers several proprietary components combined to create an integrated service. The solutions offered include watermarking to secure live streamed videos, network forensics and video fingerprinting technologies,” John Illingworth told BroadcastPro ME. He recently represented the Friend MTS racing team at the Radical Middle East Cup held at Dubai Autodrome.

These security solutions are especially useful for high-value events such as live sports, he commented. The security that they provide widens the opportunity for broadcasters and content owners to safely reach any connected device without risk, he added. Friend MTS is promoting Exposé Source, claimed to be the world’s first streaming video security service that pinpoints live content leaks instantaneously. “No other streaming security service is able to pinpoint the source of a live streaming video leak and shut it off,” added Illingworth.

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**Illingworth exits Irdeto, joins content security firm**
**African channel joins Yahlive**

UAE-based satellite broadcasting company Yahlive has added African entertainment channel Clouds TV International to its bouquet. The new station joins Yahlive’s growing portfolio of channels broadcasting from the East beam across the Levant, GCC and Southwest Asia. Yahlive offers a mix of programmes for Farsi-, Pashto-, Dari- and Kurdish-speaking audiences, and this partnership will extend its reach among the African diaspora.

Commenting on the new addition, Sami Boustany, CEO of Yahlive, said: “We continue to select channel partners based on the quality of their programming, whilst serving our diverse and culturally rich viewers. As a result, the new addition is consistent with the company’s ongoing growth trajectory and in line with the East Beam’s strategic focus to meet the needs of regional audiences across the Middle East, North Africa and Southwest Asia.”

Joseph Kusaga, CEO of Clouds TV International, added: “Until now there has been no broadcast medium targeting this demographic, and I am proud to say today that Clouds TV International, with our partner Yahlive, is here to fill that void and to deliver the very best in programming from across the continent of Africa to our viewers.”

**Vitec group buys SmallHD**

Vitec Group has acquired SmallHD, a high-definition, on-camera field monitors provider. Under the terms of the acquisition, the initial estimated cash consideration is $4.6m on a debt/cash-free basis. This is subject to certain post-completion adjustments for changes in net assets. Up to a further $25.4m is payable in cash, based on the future profitability of SmallHD. This will reflect performance against demanding EBITDA targets over a two-and-a-half-year period to 30 June 2017. The maximum payment will be achieved if SmallHD delivers these targets with an annualised EBITDA run-rate of $9.0 million in 2017.

SmallHD is based in North Carolina, USA. Vitec said the acquisition complements Vitec’s existing video activities, including Teradek, which serves a similar customer base.
Morocco’s Atlantic FM begins digital migration with NETIA

Moroccan radio group Atlantic FM has upgraded to version 8.2 of NETIA’s Radio-Assist digital audio software suite. The installation provides the foundation for a complete shift to digital broadcasting while enabling operators to take advantage of the familiar functionality and interfaces they know from the initial Radio-Assist system deployed in 2006. The software covers the entire distribution channel from ingest to distribution, and Atlantic FM relies on the software in areas including news, commercials and music scheduling.

The new Radio-Assist 8.2 installation at Atlantic FM’s Casablanca facilities comprises more than 32 workstations for editing, planning and recording. Operators use NETIA’s broadcast module for production and distribution. New features introduced in Radio-Assist 8.2 include cloud-based management, giving users the ability to access the system database from any network-connected work station.

Private MENA radio stations up by 48%; Arab Advisors

Private FM radio stations slightly outnumber government-owned ones in the Arab world, according to a report from the Arab Advisors Group. The analyst’s research revealed that 264 local private FM radio stations broadcast in 19 Arab countries, as of September 2014. The number of private radio stations continues to grow in the Arab world, due to liberalisation in many countries. Still, Qatar, the UAE and Yemen do not yet allow private radio stations to broadcast.

Etsalat attracts SMEs with new Quick Start offer

Etsalat has announced the launch of Business Quick Start, the first in a series of Etsalat’s integrated Business-in-a-Box solutions, which offer SMEs high-speed fixed broadband internet, free voice minutes and a free smart device on a single, converged bill. Etsalat envisages that with Business Quick Start, SMEs can save on upfront investment and enjoy transparent and predictable communication costs. It offers over 25% savings on their existing communications and equipment spend.

Canon marks C100 Mk II launch with competition

Canon Middle East has announced the finalists of its first-ever regional EOS short film competition. The three aspiring filmmakers – Marwa Mahmoon and Baryl Sanit from Egypt, and Khaled Ghalam from the UAE – were the first in the region to get their hands on the EOS C100 Mark II, before it officially hits the Middle East market in January. The winners were announced during the official Middle East preview of the EOS C100 Mark II at an event held in Dubai last month. The three finalists will each be loaned the C100 Mark II for a period of one month to shoot their film. Those who want a technically advanced video camera without a huge price tag. With this short filmmaking contest, some of the region’s best filmmakers will have had the opportunity to experience this camera first-hand, before it hits the Middle East stores this year,” added Verbrugghe.

Providing amateur as well as professional videographers in the region a platform to showcase their talent and creativity, Canon Middle East launched a MENA-wide short film making competition in November. During the one-week period, more than 120 entries in the form of a 100-word storyboard were submitted on the EOS short Film microsite. These entries were then judged by a jury comprising Paisal Hashimi, Shereif Moeid and Harvey Glou. They shortlisted a total of nine entries. Out of these nine, Egyptian actor, producer and director Khaled Abol Naga, who is also a Canon brand ambassador, selected the three finalists.

Building on the success of the EOS C100, the Canon EOS C100 Mark II offers a comprehensively upgraded package. It has a dual format recording feature, allowing users to simultaneously capture full HD footage in low as well as high resolutions.

The camera comes packed with an integrated Wi-Fi connectivity – a first for EOS – enabling quick file transfers, along with the new OLED organic display that delivers higher contrast, more vivid colours and faster response times, even in bright conditions.

“Through this initiative, Canon aims to empower this talent pool by giving them access to our state-of-the-art imaging technology and expertise. “The EOS C100 Mark II is made for all those who want a technically sound and user-friendly professional video-camera within a huge price tag. With this short filmmaking contest, some of the region’s best filmmakers will have had the opportunity to experience this camera first-hand, before it hits the Middle East stores this year,” added Verbrugghe.

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Last month, Alarab News Channel’s CEO, Fahad Alsukait, announced at a press conference in Bahrain that the news channel, owned by Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Alsaud, will begin transmission on February 1, 2015. Alsukait, who was also recently appointed Chairman of the Board of Alarab by Prince Alwaleed, in addition to his existing roles as CEO of Alarab News Channel and Rotana Network, added that the channel would aim to provide “independent and credible” reporting to its viewers, “unlike the existing news channels in the region.”

Alarab, which was first announced in 2011, will enter an already crowded regional news space, presently dominated by Al Jazeera Network, Al Arabiya and Sky News Arabia. It will be an all-Arabic language news channel delivering programming focused on politics, business and social affairs, in addition to travel, sports and culture. Business news will be delivered in co-operation with Bloomberg.

Alsukait constantly reiterated at the conference that the channel will “break the mould of news presentation, becoming a platform for transparent presentation and discussion of the region’s most intractable issues and challenges, and will raise the relevant questions that are of concern to its viewers”. He explained that his new role as Chairman of the Board specifically ensures that the Bahrain-based news channel will be able to work independently.

“This new role is an extension of what I am doing currently, but it [includes the] responsibility of fully setting the strategy of the channel independent of its owner, and I think that is the message we want to send out.”

Fahad Alsukait, CEO, Alarab News Channel

Prince Alwaleed has invested “hundreds of millions of dollars” in the channel, Alsukait said, stating that the management has put together a roadmap to also achieve commercial success.

At present, Alarab employs around 280 staff across the world, 80% of who are Bahraini nationals. Journalists were taken on a tour of the new cutting-edge TV station, which was integrated by German systems integrator Qvest Media. Alarab News Channel occupies two floors at Moda Mall, Bahrain, and has now been joined there by the Rotana team.
UBMS HOSTS URSA WORKSHOP

UBMS recently hosted two training sessions on the Blackmagic URSA camera at its training academy in Dubai. A report

United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS) hosted a Blackmagic Design camera workshop last month at the distributor’s headquarters in Garhoud, Dubai.

Conducted by Blackmagic Design camera and workflow specialist Richard Lackey, the workshop was held in two sessions over one day. Each three-hour session took attendees through the complete production workflow of the Blackmagic URSA, from filming to post production using Resolve 11. While the focus of the session was Blackmagic’s new release, URSA, Lackey also touched on the basics of other Blackmagic cinema cameras.

“URSA hasn’t been out too long, so building that understanding about how it works engaged the audience,” commented Lackey. Both the morning and post lunch sessions had excellent turnout, according to Peter Kyriakos, Head of Marketing at UBMS: “The attendees comprised professionals from TV channels, producers, independent filmmakers and students. It was a very interactive and engaging session,” he said.

Kyriakos added that the training academy has been created as part of UBMS’ long-term commitment to its customers to educate the local market.
Jordan’s state broadcaster, JRTV, recently acquired its first high definition OB van. Built to the latest broadcast specifications, the vehicle is expected to lead the TV station into a new era of broadcasting.

BroadcastPro ME takes an exclusive tour of the van set-up to downlink satellite channels. It is fitted with full HD Sony HDC series cameras with Fujinon lenses, a Sony MVS series 3M/E vision mixer, a Gigawave HD D-CAM clip-on wireless camera system as well as TSL audio monitoring and Genelec speakers.

Prior to building its own HD OB van, JRTV used to rent equipment for its outdoor productions. Escalating rental prices, however, compelled JRTV to revisit its business strategy and build its own OB van.

The availability of a new HD OB van will now enable the broadcaster to undertake more productions around Jordan including sites like Petra and the Dead Sea. It will be used primarily to cover live sports, musicals and general events for news and current affairs programmes. JRTV, which presently broadcasts two channels within Jordan, the MENA, America and Europe, transmits its signals from Amra Satellite Earth Station, which is linked to the Eutelsat, Intelsat and Arabsat satellites.

The state broadcaster caters to a mix of audiences and demographics, with a wide array of programmes covering news, economics, sports, drama and talk shows.

The state broadcaster, however, has plans to launch a third channel that focuses on news, confides Khawaldeh.

**Snapshot**
- **Objective:** To build an HD OB van
- **Client:** JRTV
- **Location:** Amman, Jordan
- **Key vendors:** Sony, Gigawave, Fujinon, Pixel Power, Trilogy, Evertz, Studer, TSL, Ericsson
- **SI:** Sony PSMEA, VSC Broadcast Engineering

Shadi Al-Omari, OB Manager, JRTV in the newly acquired van.
“We plan to add a third channel that is fully dedicated to news in 2015. We also aim to position ourselves more on social media networks and are looking to engage and communicate with our audience online, keeping them up-to-date on the latest news. We will also benefit from their views and comments on how we could improve and meet their expectations," says Khawaldeh.

In the meantime, the availability of a new van provides greater flexibility to JRTV to shoot more programmes. The van was designed by Sony PSMEA and kitted out with the help of UK-based systems integrator, VSC Broadcast Engineering.

“Sony PSMEA worked closely with us from the initial design stage to ensure that the OB was designed and built to the highest standards,” explains Khawaldeh.

Shadi Al-Omari, OB Engineering Manager at JRTV adds that the van saves the state broadcaster “both time and money and will be beneficial in the long run rather than outsourcing, and also gives us the benefit of top-of-the-range technology”. “Sony was able to meet all the expectations in terms of quality, price and HD standards set in the official tender produced by the engineering committee for JRTV,” he comments.

“The workflow
The vehicle contains four key areas: including the rack room with loudness equipment; engineering room; a two-row production gallery for graphics; VTRs, vision

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- As OEM component integrated in your product

DCM add-on cards for PCIEx

- Provides an easy-to-oversee mosaic of decoded video, subtitles, audio bars and monitoring status
- Software-based solution that runs on standard PC hardware
- Multiple switches support for DAM, Tellnet and DCC
- Loudness indicators compliant to EBU R 128
- Picture salts with custom contents
- Simultaneous monitoring of multiple transport streams
- Maintains detailed statistics information about bitrates, PCR and IP jitter and packet loss

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mixing and EVS operation and the audio room. The engineering room contains camera line-up controls and space for the truck supervising technical manager.

The OB van was designed to be the next generation of OB for JRTV, moving the client into HD production for the first time, according to Sony’s Project Manager Omar Abuaisha, who oversaw the project.

“The rigid chassis design has a small footprint, allowing access to some of the more difficult terrains in the country,” he says.

The file-based workflow of the van is built around an EVS cluster and is designed for HD production,
PROCOVER

with a simulcast in SD to link into legacy systems. It also allows for instant replay and highlights. The van’s link to Gigawave wireless cameras with full remote control adds flexibility to avoid complex cable connections, which are unsightly in certain setups. With the help of Pixel Power graphics, the fully finished, multi-layer productions can be used direct to air alongside simultaneous clean feeds for other distribution circuits.

“Using a combination of multipliers, feeding back SDI into the router core allows for a concatenated flexible multiscreen layout to not just be confined to dedicated multiplier monitors but also adding an element of hot desking to a traditionally fixed environment. This also provides a degree of redundancy, should there be a failure within a specific section of a multiplier,” explains Abuaisha.

The baseband house standard for the truck is HD 1080i50, with audio referenced to -18dBFS with the file-based house standard being DVFBO HD. Other formats, such as SD 576i, are handled by converters at the edges of the system.

The configuration offers eight record ports and six replay ports in the EVS record and live slow motion replay servers. The flexible commentary unit from Glensound, combined with the Trilogy talkback and Studer audio mixer, provide the essential on-site talent voiceover facilities.

The Sony cameras, with the collection of large Fujinon lenses ranging from wide-angle to high-zoom box lenses, allow for a wide range of events from sports to conferences to be covered. For news events, the flexible communications and combination of HD, SD and composite conversion presented on the tailboard means onward connection to SN1 uplinks is available.

“The van is fitted with auto voltage regulators as well as motorised triax and power reels for quick start-up. It also features an Eaton UPS for quick deployment and sustained reliable uptime.”

Challenges

The van was put together with engineering teams working across different continents. The coach design and the broadcast technical design, as well as the physical integrations of the van were completed in the UK.

“There were four main collaborators on this project, two of which, the coach builder and the SI, are based in the UK, while the other two are in the Middle East. However, a good working relationship and trust across parties enabled this to be done smoothly. “We were working in different time zones and with a multilingual crew, which required a lot of coordination and planning,” explains Abuaisha.

One of the requirements of the project was that the van be able to achieve 50 degrees Celsius ambient temperature when working on a full load. This made keeping the van cool proved to be a challenge.

“This is the first High Definition equipment that is in use at the client’s site, so although the broadcast fundamentals remain the same, the new concepts and the new equipment created a learning curve for the client,” says Sony’s Abuaisha.

On handover, Sony provided two months of on-site training, which included a full package from both the vendors and the system specialists, to ensure that the OB van could be used to its full potential.

“Training is an integral part of this project. As this is the first HD OB for JRTV, PSMEA worked very closely with our team to ensure we were familiar with the new technology in order to ensure JRTV’s smooth transition to HD,” explains OB Manager, Shadi Al-Omari.

“Our main requirement for the OB van was to have equipment with the latest high definition technology, professional video cameras, wireless cameras, audio mixers and so on, to help us achieve our technical objectives”

Khalaf Al-Khawaldeh, Engineering Manager, JRTV
Ever so often, there’s a new feature added on a camera that’s touted as a game-changer for filmmakers. For most of last year, the superior low-light shooting capabilities of the Sony Alpha 7s received special mention from camera experts. The Alpha 7s is a mirrorless digital camera that features a 35mm sensor with large pixels for high ISO and dynamic range. It shoots uncompressed 4:2:2 full HD and 4K via external HDMI storage.

I have always advocated shooting documentaries or for TV with the full-frame HDSLR offerings from Canon, but the features of the Alpha 7s also seemed impressive. I was looking to tinker with one when an opportunity presented itself in the form of a review for BroadcastPro ME.

This is not intended to be an in-depth camera review, but I have tried to extensively identify what the camera can offer independent filmmakers and whether it does the job in a run-and-gun setting.

Shooting in the real world
I was shooting a feature documentary and a music video project at the time I received the Alpha 7s, so I was able to use it as a secondary camera for both projects. I wanted to place the camera in as many difficult and challenging situations as possible to see how it fared against the Canon 5D MKIII and the C100 we were primarily shooting with. Both these cameras are capable full-frame cameras in a run-and-gun shooting scenario, and both render a cinematic image quality.

In several instances, I found myself shooting with the Alpha 7s without image stabilisation – lengthy hand-held shots and constantly pushing the ISO way past values that I would normally use. I must say the camera held up really well.

While the Alpha 7s may not have the full arsenal of native full-frame E-mount lenses to choose from, the Metabones EF to E adapter certainly gave me that full line-up of prime Canon lenses to shoot with. I shot some images with the Canon EF 50 1.2L and the Canon EF 85 1.2L via the Metabones adapter on the Alpha 7s.

The ergonomic design of the Alpha 7s is especially worthy of mention. It feels really solid and makes handling the camera quite comfortable. The placement of the dial on the top makes shutter speed
Sound takes on a new dimension when the passion and creativity of the artist meets the expertise of a sound engineer. We’ve developed the MK 8 to capture the magic that happens when these talents combine – in both professional and project studios. The MK 8 not only ensures precise and beautiful sound, it also unleashes enormous versatility. Five switchable polar patterns, a three-position pad switch and the low-cut/roll-off filters offer room for creative sound design.

“The Alpha 7s has a variety of flat picture profiles that enable you to take full advantage of the camera’s dynamic range. This gives you added flexibility when colour grading your footage in post production.”

Kamil Roxas, filmmaker

There’s no doubt that the Alpha 7s handles low light extremely well. However, that’s not all I was impressed with. I also found the colours that you get from it, including the skin tone, and the dynamic range very impressive for a camera of this size.

When shooting with the Alpha 7s, I set the camera to XAVC at 25/50fps and chose the PP5 flat picture profile. The Alpha 7s has a variety of flat picture profiles that enable you to take full advantage of the camera’s dynamic range. This gives you added flexibility when colour grading your footage in post production.

## Image quality

When shooting with the Alpha 7s, I set the camera to XAVC at 25/50fps and chose the PP5 flat picture profile. The Alpha 7s has a variety of flat picture profiles that enable you to take full advantage of the camera’s dynamic range. This gives you added flexibility when colour grading your footage in post production.

“An internal monitor will show you what the camera sees, but your monitor might not be able to show you the same thing.”

Kamil Roxas, filmmaker

When shooting with the Alpha 7s, I set the camera to XAVC at 25/50fps and chose the PP5 flat picture profile. The Alpha 7s has a variety of flat picture profiles that enable you to take full advantage of the camera’s dynamic range. This gives you added flexibility when colour grading your footage in post production.
Introducing Canon’s latest addition to the Cinema EOS range – the CN20x50 cine servo lens, offering a native 50-1000 focal range. It is the industry’s first ever to include a built-in 1.5x extender, which combines with a class-leading 20x magnification and a removable servo drive.

The Alpha 7s is often pitted against another compact camera, the Panasonic GH4. The GH4 boasts 4K internal recording, superior image handling and great all-round performance in the hands of experienced filmmakers. However, much of the comparison ends there. The GH4 has a micro 4/3 sensor, unlike the full frame offered on the Alpha 7s.

While it [Alpha 7s] does not record 4K internally, external monitors and recorders like the Atomos Shogun provide the flexibility to bypass the Alpha 7s’ internal compression.
“The ergonomic design of the Alpha 7s feels really solid and makes handling the camera quite comfortable”

Kamil Roxas, filmmaker

The Sony Alpha 7s

I had the pleasure of using Sony’s new Alpha 7s camera to record the Big Project Awards in November at the Conrad Hotel in Dubai. The Sony Alpha 7s is the world’s smallest full-frame interchangeable lens camera. The 12.2MP full-frame Exmor CMOS sensor and BIONZ X image processor work together to provide dynamic range with minimal noise, making it one of the best low-light cameras available in the market.

The first thing I liked about the camera was its retro style and how slim it is. Its size makes it perfect for travelling – discounting lens, it only weighs a little over a pound. It’s easy to pack and light enough that you don’t even notice it hanging around your neck for hours on end, which in comparison to a bulky DSLR is a big deal. It measures just 3.75x5x1.9 inches (hXWXD), partially due to its mirrorless sensor.

I’m happy to say what it lacks in sensor size, it doesn’t lack in quality! The camera was used only for video with a 55mm prime lens and a 24-70mm zoom lens. It has an ISO from 50-409600, which in conjunction with its 12.2 million pixel full-frame CMOS sensor makes it perfect for shooting in low light. Furthermore, its impressive auto focus sensitivity in low light allows it to go to as low as -4EV. This mirrorless camera can also record videos in 4K resolution, though it needs a convertor to do so. It also has a 4K output which can be used with its HDMI connection – which again, unfortunately, requires an adapter.

The Alpha 7s design is very user-friendly; the controls are right at your fingertips, including two control wheels. The three-inch LCD screen easily tilts up and down, allowing you to get those difficult high and low angled shots. It has an impressive 921K dot resolution and a very impressive optical view finder that is ultra-sensitive and responsive, switching the view immediately as your eye meets it or leaves it – the OLED electronic viewfinder is 2.36 million dots. Unlike some cameras, the live screen is a true representation of the final product, so you can trust that the quality of the final image matches the image on the screen. Furthermore, the silent shutter mode allows the user to be discreet when taking photos or videos. It also boasts a continuous shooting rate of 5fps.

Another great feature of the Alpha 7s is its built-in Wi-Fi and NFC. These make it really easy to share your photos and videos instantly, as well as letting you easily control the camera with your smartphone via its ‘one touch’ connection. Sony even has its own app store for this camera. I had a browse through it, and my favourite was an app for doing time-lapse videos. There’s a huge range of apps available, with many different effects.

I was quite impressed with the battery life – I got three to four hours of life out of it, with the camera switched on and recording videos the whole time. I presume if it was being used for still photography, it would last a lot longer.

My usual camera of choice for videography is Canon’s 5D Mark III, and I was pleasantly surprised at how well the Alpha 7s matches the video quality, as well as its many modern features and sleek, vintage design. The only disappointment I had with the camera was the need for an adapter to record or view with 4K, considering it is increasingly becoming the standard for television and now, some computers.

Alison Sheehy is an up-and-coming filmmaker, who tested the Sony camera while on a visit to Dubai.
Largely due to the scale of the region and diversity within it, operators need high quality and varied content, and licences come at a painfully high price.

Mohamed Hamed, Head of Business Development & Sales, Piksel

Furthermore, with 83% of consumers using the internet on a daily basis, generally for upwards of 30 minutes, and 40% watching at least one video a day online, the opportunities for OTT services in the region are clear. People are spending more time online than they are watching linear television. (according to research from the European Travel Commission – Digital Portal, ETC-digital.org).

While free OTT video services are already gaining popularity among internet users, the market has yet to be conquered by international OTT giants such as Hulu and Netflix, due to restrictive market challenges, leaving a welcome space for other regional players to come to the fore.

The challenges

There is fertile soil for OTT providers in the Middle East, but as with all markets, the region presents its own unique set of challenges to companies wishing to make their mark in the area. The same few obstacles are causing problems for all involved in the TV and media ecosystem, ranging from OTT service providers to telecom operators and content owners.

Largely due to the scale of the region and the diversity within it, operators need high quality and varied content, and licences come at a painfully high price. Online video solutions must cater to English- and Arabic-speaking audiences in order to stay competitive, as well as serve an Asian population which has risen to over 10 million.

In light of this, operators and broadcasters need OTT solutions providers that can both cater to markets of this scale and keep costs as low as possible.

Piracy is also a key concern. It is rife throughout the Middle East, and has a detrimental effect on OTT service provider revenues. The hope in that, in time, consumers will become more amenable to paying for high quality content, instead of pirated videos that risk damaging devices through viruses and other malware. Early research supports this viewpoint, which is good news for the industry, but the U-turn on pirated content is not yet in full swing.

Bandwidth

Largely, the biggest challenge is the high bandwidth required for streaming video and consuming data in this quantity. As video becomes a bigger part of people’s lives and the costs required to keep up with consumer demand accelerates, the pressure on operators and broadcasters to solve the bandwidth conundrum increases. Companies that neglect to update their business model to address this tension may struggle in the years ahead.

Despite the shadow of costly bandwidth looming over the industry, there need not be a dead end for operators and broadcasters that are open to change and experimentation. In fact, the limitations can serve as an incentive to provide flexible offerings and create bundled packages for consumers, thereby keeping costs as low as possible.

Many operators and broadcasters are finding that distributing content from a centralised broadcast to an international audience can run up crippling costs, even though there are alternative options on offer. SaaS-based solutions, for example, can build on existing infrastructure and connect content to local data centres for caching. By cutting out the back and forth, this solution could ease one of the biggest headaches facing operators right now.

For operators, one of the most encouraging prospects for the future has emerged from one of the most potent threats to the telecoms industry. When Skype and other VoIP services rose to popularity in the mid-2000s, they struck at the heart of operators’ revenues, which came entirely from SMS and call functions. In the years since, operators have been faced with a choice about how to use their valuable pipelines – carry on delivering the services that are eating into their revenues, or create a new online offering and make their pipelines useful to them once again.

By collaborating with broadcasters and media owners and branching out into OTT, operators can profit from the content flowing through their systems.

The future

Over time, we’ve seen operators and broadcasters shifting towards collaboration, as both industries find their way and learn as they go. Often, major considerations such as monetisation have fallen by the wayside as the race towards getting an OTT offering to market. Many evolving companies are still in the dark about what monetisation model will work best for them, and how to choose between free, pay-per-view and subscription-based service. As a result, operators and broadcasters can derive huge benefits from working with online video experts, who have an agile, modular solution and the ability to advise on the commercial framework at the core of their business.

In many ways, the Middle East is a green field for operators and broadcasters today if they decide to embrace the opportunities of online TV and video. With the right support from specialists who have deep broadcast and broadband heritage, who can assess the most appropriate business model and create great user experiences at scale, the industry can look forward to an exciting journey.

For operators and broadcasters exploring OTT options in the Middle East, there are some reassuring numbers out there. A recent report from Digital TV Research, for example, found that pay-TV revenues in the Middle East and North Africa will grow by more than 83% between 2010 and 2020, to US$5.60 billion. A closer look at the technology landscape and demographics in the region shows this should come as no surprise.

Smartphone ownership has exploded, fuelled by the influx of low-cost devices and widespread desire for internet access. In the Middle East especially, the trend to connect with others and engage with issues of global and national significance has undoubtedly been the driving force.

Along with increasing penetration of smartphones, growth of fixed broadband connections in MENA is likely to have a positive impact on OTT adoption. In MENA, fibre is expected to provide 17% of fixed broadband connections by 2018, up from 8% in 2012 (according to research from Analysys Mason Limited 2013).

OTT opportunities abound in the Middle East, thanks to the high uptake of smartphones and tabs. Regional operators and broadcasters must avail of this before it’s too late, says Mohamed Hamed.
What, according to you, will be the route for 4K adoption? Will it start with linear TV and move to OTT, or the other way round?

In our view, OTT providers will most likely be the first to offer 4K UHDTV services. Unlike a linear channel, OTT services can be started with a small library of content. Delivery of 4K UHDTV content via OTT will involve early 4K UHDTV adopters, drive sales of 4K UHDTV sets and support the business case for media companies to launch full-time 4K UHDTV channels. Ultimately, given the bandwidth constraints of delivering 4K UHDTV over OTT, we believe OTT services will be complementary to full-time 4K UHDTV channel distribution via satellite and cable systems.

Our view is further supported by our global survey, which showed that 60% of respondents believe video on demand will be the first business model to gain momentum, almost double the 34% stating that linear channels will be the first to do so.

What is the main difference between 4K on second screen and linear TV?

Unlike linear TV, we don’t anticipate 4K UHDTV viewing on tablets and PCs to become mainstream, given the viewing habits required to truly experience the 4K UHDTV immersive experience. 4K UHDTV is best viewed on a larger TV set—experts recommend 60 inches or larger in size. This is because on a smaller screen the pixell become so small that the viewer will need to get very close to the screen to be able to enjoy the higher resolution of 4K UHDTV.

The optimal viewing distance for a 4K UHDTV image is 1.5 times the height of the screen—for a 10-inch tablet, that’s only 7.5 inches away from the screen. While viewing 4K UHDTV on a second screen is possible, it isn’t likely that the consumer is going to keep the screen right in front of their faces (7.5 inches) for an entire programme or movie, and from a more typical viewing distance for a tablet like 15-20 inches, the 4K UHDTV image is not going to look much different from an HD image.

The industry standard for a ‘true’ 4K UHDTV viewing experience is becoming 10 bit colour depth and 60 frames per second, which requires considerably more processing power than HD. We didn’t foresee processing power designed to support 4K UHDTV to be available in smaller second screen devices for a while. It will also cost more to manufacture screens with 4K resolution. This is likely to drive the cost of the second screen up considerably, making it unlikely that a regular consumer will invest in such a device, especially when the benefits are limited by the size of the screen and the optimal viewing distance for 4K UHDTV.

What are the challenges of UHDTV? Is the transmission infrastructure ready for it yet?

Intelsat has conducted a number of live true 4K UHDTV, end-to-end video transmissions over satellite. These transmissions demonstrate that the satellite ecosystem is ready to deliver 4K UHDTV content when it becomes more widely available. However, in terms of the broadcast infrastructure, there are a few elements that still need to be further developed to ensure the successful acceleration and adoption of 4K UHDTV.

Content: It still remains king. Filming in 4K UHDTV is still in the nascent stages, and it will take time to develop enough content to launch full-time linear 4K UHDTV channels.

Transport: In order to effectively transport uncompressed 4K UHDTV in the production stage, many broadcasters will need to upgrade their internal networks to all IP capable in order to handle it.

Distribution Costs: The rollout of High Efficiency Video Coding (HEVC), or H.265 standard, is critical to lowering distribution costs and halving the bit rates necessary to deliver video. Although HEVC encoders today can support 4K UHDTV transmission, it is only in the lower frame rate of 30p rather than 60p. Second, low-cost, high-performance, broadcast-quality set-top-box chips are needed to support 4K UHDTV processing power requirements, which are 90 times greater than HD. Only a handful of manufacturers offer production units today, and costs are still high.

Engaging Mainstream Viewers: Consumers still need to understand how to best utilise the technology.

"Unlike linear TV, we don’t anticipate 4K UHDTV viewing on tablets and PCs to become mainstream, given the viewing habits required to truly experience the 4K UHDTV immersive experience."

Peter Ostapiuk, Vice President, Media Product Management, Intelsat
to truly experience and appreciate 4K UHDTV’s immersive experience. For example, the recommended viewing distance is 1.5 times the height of the screen. At this distance, the screen occupies 60 degrees of a consumer’s field of view. Additionally, a 4K UHDTV that is 80-plus inches is recommended for optimal viewing. While the close-up viewing requirements challenge consumers’ current viewing habits, it is important that consumers view 4K UHDTV content correctly in order to experience the difference between a 4K UHDTV and a regular HD image.

Where are the gaps in 4K transmission? How will the high costs be met?
We believe that a 4K UHDTV channel is expected to end up in the 10-20 mbps range per channel, but that is subject to the development of HEVC technology. By combining HEVC with DVB-S2X modulation, we expect satellite capacity for 4K UHDTV transmissions to remain affordable for programmers.

In addition to advancements in HEVC technology, there are also elements of the broadcast infrastructure that still need to be further developed to ensure the successful acceleration and adoption of 4K UHDTV. To effectively transport uncompressed 4K UHDTV in the production stage, many broadcasters will need to upgrade their internal networks to all IP.

What’s in store for broadcasters once the 4K model takes off?
When compared to the transition period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid evolution of technologies and multiple distribution outlets. Industry leaders are grappling with the evolution of technologies and challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD, media executives are facing increasing challenges surrounding the rapid period from SD to HD.

“In addition to advancements in HEVC technology, there are also elements of the broadcast infrastructure that still need to be further developed to ensure the successful acceleration and adoption of 4K UHDTV”

Peter Ostapiuk, Vice President, Media Product Management, Intelsat

build. This is completely different from the migration from SD to HD, as broadcasters now need to develop business models based on the distribution paths that are best suited to drive rapid adoption and, more importantly, a return on their investment for 4K UHDTV.

Which regions do you think will be the first to adopt 4K, and when are they likely to start?
Not surprisingly, respondents to our survey of leading media executives worldwide identified the Asia-Pacific region as the first to adopt 4K UHDTV (47%), followed by North America (34%) and Western Europe (16%).

The Asia-Pacific region is leading 4K UHDTV adoption. Japan already has a 4K UHDTV test channel on the air, and two 4K UHDTV channels are slated to launch on March 1. Japan is also currently focused on the rollout of 4K, particularly for the 2020 Olympics. Other than Japan and maybe one or two other countries, from our point of view, the rest of the world is focused on accelerating the adoption timeline of 4K UHDTV for 2016, when the first viable uptake for 4K UHDTV is expected, with a few linear channels appearing globally.

How do you see the future of 4K in the Middle East? Who do you see as some of the first users of this technology?
According to NSR’s July 2014 Global Satellite Capacity Supply & Demand report, 4K UHDTV is expected to emerge in the Middle East and North Africa in 2017. The report cites a fairly weak DTH market, as well as DTH platforms with government involvement such as Al Jazeera Media Network, as drivers for 4K UHDTV adoption. NSR predicts there will be roughly 35 4K UHDTV channels in the Middle East and North Africa via DTH by 2023, with Ku-band supplementing around 15 4K UHDTV channels and C-band distributing just a few 4K UHDTV channels.

The first Middle East programmers to use 4K UHDTV are likely to be distributors of movies or broadcasters of premier sporting events who seek to differentiate themselves and set a first mover advantage for their companies. Intelsat’s survey of leading media executives worldwide indicated that 90% of respondents believe those two content types will lead in 4K UHDTV adoption, with general programming and news trailing by a wide margin.
A decade ago, broadcast commentators and vendors started using the mantra that consumers wanted “to watch the content they choose, when they want it, where they want it, and on the device they want it.” Today that concept – now generally referred to as “TV everywhere” – is a practical reality.

According to research carried out for Adobe, in the USA consumers watched 38.2 billion videos online in Q2 2014, up 43% over the same number in 2013. Monthly unique views for online TV were up 38%, again year on year.

The Pew Research Centre found that 78% of adults in the USA with online access watched videos. The big driver for this is the smartphone: 40% of smartphone users regularly watched video on their devices.

As we saw with the launch of the iPhone 6, with more than 10 million devices sold in the first weekend of availability, there is no slowing in the enthusiasm for smartphones.

Speaking at CABSAT 2014, Vidya Subramanian Nath, Research Director at Frost and Sullivan said: “With 76% high-speed broadband penetration, 77% TV connectivity and over 100% mobile device penetration, the region is on the threshold of this phenomenon.”

She pointed out that the region will have 390 million internet users, and six or seven connected devices for every household, by 2020.

Nath’s view is that, while linear free-to-air and pay TV services will continue to dominate in the region, there is growing evidence that consumers will want to watch content on video-capable internet devices.

According to Cisco’s research, there will be 25 billion devices connected to the internet next year – that is more than three devices for every man, woman and child on the planet. And the figure will double again, to 50 billion, by 2020.

Newer technologies like LTE (so-called 4G) cellular connectivity and 802.11ac Wi-Fi mean that bandwidth constraints have all but disappeared. If you want to watch video on your phone, tablet or laptop, you can.

Broadcasters have been forced to face this reality. Their audiences expect to see their favourite shows when and where it is convenient for them, not the broadcaster.

“TV everywhere has been developed as a collective strategy by both pay-TV operators and TV content owners to enhance the traditional linear TV proposition,” according to Erik Brannon of global research organisation HIS.

“In spite of the differences in strategy, all TV everywhere products have one thing in common: they allow for current pay TV video subscribers to authenticate and consume on secondary screens a significant amount of content that they purchase as part of their normal pay TV video subscriptions.”

The challenge faces free-to-air broadcasters as well as subscription services. Indeed, the most successful multi-platform video on demand and live streaming service in the world is the BBC iPlayer. It has a reach of more than 10.2 million online views a month (BBC iStats, January 2014) in the UK alone, a country with a population of less than 60 million.

10% of those using the iPlayer “Creating a cohesive collaborative set-up that can unify content workflows for linear broadcast television alongside multiscreen distribution will be a priority for broadcasters, studios and pay TV providers.”

Vidya S Nath, Research Director, Frost & Sullivan
were watching live television; the vast majority were using their online device to catch up. Viewers were choosing when as well as where to watch.

There is also a new breed of service providers, which exists solely to fulfil the TV everywhere demand. Netflix is one such entity, which now creates its own content – such as two series of House of Cards – as well as offers existing movies and programming. It has around 50 million subscribers worldwide, so it is best described as a relatively small player that is a growing threat to traditional players.

Looking at over-the-top pay services in general, researchers Frost & Sullivan predicted a compound annual growth of 60% or more over the next three years, in the Middle East.

So consumers now have a huge choice of what they can watch and when. For the broadcaster, having to stay in this market, it is a business and technical challenge. The business challenge lies in raising revenues from audiences who have learnt that “the internet is free”, while demanding ever-more sophisticated services that can be expensive to generate.

Broadcast television is simple in that there are really only two output formats: SD and HD. But TV everywhere means serving a multitude of devices: smartphones, tablets, games consoles, smart televisions, browsers and more. Each of these devices has its own unique combination of screen resolution, audio capabilities, codec, wrapper and streaming format. To be truly compatible, broadcasters and service providers have to create custom-made packages for each device, separately.

Even security is now an issue. Previously it seemed that online services were converging on PlayReady, the DRM element of Microsoft Silverlight. Recently, though, Google has announced that it will no longer support Silverlight on Chrome, its browser which now has more than 20% of the market. So service providers have to cater to at least two forms of intellectual property protection.

At first the tendency was to create all the different formats as part of the signal processing factory and store them all on servers ready to go to the content delivery network as requested. As processing power has fallen in price, increasingly the trend is to store the content once and create the package on the fly, at the point of demand.

Whichever route is chosen, it is clear that the complexities of creating all these different formats have to be automated, and made part of a new kind of broadcast infrastructure. There will be less reliance on the bespoke hardware that broadcasters have traditionally used, with virtually all tasks being implemented in software running on flexible processing farms.

Not just the workflows but the allocation of resources will be automated. “This concept – the software-defined network – exists in other IT applications, and it will become increasingly common in broadcasting. Without it, the challenges of serving the growing demand for TV everywhere will swamp the broadcast business.”

In her presentation, Nath analysed the growing need for collaboration between traditional and new media, stating: “A typical TV everywhere ecosystem includes at least 15 different components, spanning ingest to management, delivery, monitoring and playback of content. “Most vendors providing these solutions are multinational companies,” she explained. “Creating a cohesive collaborative set-up that can unify content workflows for linear broadcast television alongside multiscreen distribution will be a priority for broadcasters, studios and pay TV providers. “The demographics of the market and the cultural make-up contribute significantly to the demand for TV everywhere. Home entertainment and social networking play an important role in people’s lives. All these factors contribute to the demand for more and more content in local languages as well as international media. “Clearly this is set to be a big growth market for the creative and technology players in the MENA region.”

This CABSAT whitepaper has been authored by Dick Hobbs, journalist, Broadcast Technology.
The Dubai International Film Festival (DIFF) showcased regional as well as international films, and brought together industry experts from across the world to discuss the business of film. Emirati films and Arabic content were at the forefront of this year’s edition as several new initiatives were announced to fuel their growth.

The annual Muhr Awards rewarded the region’s best filmmakers for their work in the industry, and were presented by His Highness Sheikh Mansour Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum during a ceremony at the Burj Al Arab. Categories in this year’s Awards were the Muhr Feature (for non-fiction and fiction feature films), the Muhr Emirati and Muhr Shorts.

The inaugural Ministry of Interior Award for Best Societal Screenplay went to Emirati filmmaker Saeed Salmeen Al Murry for his project Going to Heaven. The award carried a prize of $100,000 for Al Murry’s screenplay, which addressed child welfare.

DIFF’s Arabian Nights Programme was a celebration of Arab cinema, showcasing films made in the region as well as outstanding international films that focus on the region. This year’s line-up featured a selection of insightful, culturally-enriching narratives that offered a genre-challenging perspective of the Arab world and those who live across the region.

DIFF's Artistic Director, Masoud Amralla Al Ali, called the Arabian Nights programme the heart of the Festival. “The Arabian Nights’ line-up offers the vision of some of the Middle East’s most celebrated directors as well as the perceptions of highly talented filmmakers from other parts of the world. The films, with their unique medley of viewpoints, techniques and stories, are a powerful, thought-provoking take on the issues facing the Arab world today,” he said.

The Cinema of the World section brought together films from the world’s brightest directors, producers, screenwriters and filmmakers from all walks of life and diverse corners of the globe. DIFF introduced a number of new initiatives this year, such as the Dubai Film Market’s Dubai Distribution Programme. Through the programme’s efforts, five Middle East distributors have agreed to acquire at least one Arab title from the DIFF line-up and release it theatrically across the region, with Dolphins, Abood Kandaish and Cairo Time among the first titles selected. Distributors include Empire, Gulf Film, VOX Cinemas, Iraqi Cinemas and Front Row Filmed Entertainment, which is participating alongside its business partner, Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC).

The business hub of the Dubai International Film Festival, the Dubai Film Market (DFM), ran from December 11-15. It is now considered the world’s leading industry stage for Arab cinema, and a platform that contributes to shaping and developing the Emirati film industry. In a bid to improve the visibility of a range of Arab productions, DFM combines a showcase of Arabic content from the small and big screen, enabling international buyers to sample the very best from the Arab world. In addition, it also provides a platform for content providers in the region to acquire the latest offerings from around the world.

This year, DFM increased the number of exhibitor stands for companies to take advantage of the opportunities to interact with industry leaders, view their products and network with major players in the region and beyond. The market explored growth opportunities to

CELEBRATING
FILM WITH
DIFF

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expands the network of partners both locally and internationally in the coming months. DFM will now be supporting filmmakers and distributors through targeted marketing campaigns, during the run up to each film’s release.

Enjaaz, the Festival’s production and post-production support arm and part of DFM, supported 17 films this year.

DFM hosted a number of forums as platforms for industry experts to discuss issues that have an impact on regional film and broadcast. The topics of discussion ranged from the merging of TV and film to distribution, marketing and finance and co-production.

DFM hosted a broadcast day dedicated to all matters of broadcasting with panels focusing on the new narratives, key players and digital opportunities for both film and TV. At the marketing and distribution day, filmmakers heard about crowdfunding and discussed ways to overcome challenges of distributing films in the Arab world. All of the panel discussions were followed by networking sessions.

A mix of talent including Arab and international stars walked the red carpet at the Festival this year and the film line-up featured a selection of insightful, culturally-enriching narratives that offered a genre-challenging perspective of the Arab world.

Visitors to the Dubai Film Market also got a glimpse of the UAE’s first interactive film, in the form of an interactive documentary (‘ZaabiDoc’) directed and produced by Emirati visual storyteller Hassan Kiyany.

The film focuses on a school with more than 35 years of history that was vacated in late 2011 with no signs of recovery or maintenance. The school was filmed by Emirati talent Ajman Al Attar in an attempt to document it, using analogue and digital photography techniques, as signs suggest the place is set to be demolished or converted.

Emirati producer Hassan Kiyany commented: “We wanted to capture the photographer’s journey to document the building with his thoughts and opinions while on-site, visiting the location, and reporting on its significance to the history of Dubai and the local community at large.”

Barajoun Entertainment, an animation and visual effects studio headquartered in Dubai, marked its debut outing at DIFF this year with the announcement of a new film for 2015, featuring Hollywood actor Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the Festival, Ayman Jamal, Barajoun’s Producer and Managing Partner, announced the company’s partnership with the actor for the new project.

Agajah is notably known for starring in TV shows and films such as Lost, The Bourne Identity and Thor. His forthcoming film, Anni, is set for a December 2015 release, and he will feature in popular TV show Game of Thrones next year.

Barajoun Entertainment provided a full suite of animation and CGI productions, from concept design to final render. The team comprises professionals with expertise in working on distinguished projects, including blockbusters, theme park content and award-winning character modelling.

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When Aldar Properties approached Footprint International to present a concept to promote the soon-to-open Yas Mall at Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, it made two things clear. Firstly, the producers would have full access to the mall; and secondly, Red Bull Racing would be providing a car to drive through the mall. The promotional video, therefore, was to feature a car – but it didn’t have to be about the car.

Julian Phillips, Managing Director of Footprint International, who wrote and produced the commercial, says the first thought that came to mind was Top Gear’s Jeremy Clarkson racing a Ford Fiesta around a UK shopping centre and how he could use the opportunity to do something different.

“The client was very specific about what they wanted, in terms of highlighting the mall’s architecture and establishing its location on Yas Island, but the rest was up to us. We further abandoned any ideas of racing the car in the mall as soon as we learnt that the car that we were going to use was an F1 car. The last time we checked, the panels on a Fiesta were a lot cheaper than those on an F1 car,” chuckles Phillips.

Yas Island is home to the Yas Marina Circuit, which hosts the Formula 1 race in Abu Dhabi, hence the car played a key role but couldn’t be the focus of the film.

“I wanted the focus to be the journey and the human interaction along the way,” says Phillips. “Although we had an F1 car to play with, the focus of the feature had to be the mall. We started off with two objectives. Firstly, we didn’t want to create another ‘look how fast a fast car can go’ performance video; in fact, we looked at opportunities to do the opposite. We also needed to broaden the appeal beyond car lovers and humanise the car’s journey in order to allow the viewer to connect and relate to driver experience. By doing so, we believed we could create a striking promo with a very human story,” explains Phillips.

The mall was still under construction while the promo was being shot, so the producers considered CGI in the storyboard during the early developmental stages. In the end they opted to drop the CGI elements for a more ‘raw’ viewing experience.

“Fortunately for Footprint, the client gave us complete creative freedom to explore all creative avenues and derive

**THE WINNING FORMULA**

What does it take to shoot an F1 car in action? For starters, multiple cameras to capture the action from different POVs with no room for error. BroadcastPro ME goes behind the scenes of a recently filmed promotional video for Yas Mall to find out more.
a concept. Our aim was to exceed the client’s expectations.

“We created an extremely detailed storyboard, and apart from a couple of last minute omissions, the boards were laid out exactly as you see in the video,” says Phillips.

The shoot
The main camera used for the shoot was the ARRI Alexa, with additional angles such as driving POVs and bird’s eye views captured on GoPros and a Canon 5D Mark III attached to a drone. The video was shot over three days at various landmarks on Yas Island, with the aim of drawing attention to Yas Island as a destination.

“From the seashore of Yas Marina Circuit to the serenity of Yas Lagoon, we wanted to highlight the different looks of the island and the areas leading up to the mall. Due to the technical limitations of driving such a powerful vehicle, retakes were limited and not going to always be possible,” says Phillips.

The decision to shoot all material over-cranked, at 50 to 150 frames per second, was made early on by Tony Ruthman, who heads post production at Footprint International.

“This allowed us to capture some of the finer details of the car’s movement, as well as have greater flexibility in the edit. All material was shot at 2048x1152 to allow reframing in post if required, and was shot on Log C colour space to allow maximum flexibility for the grade,” says Ruthman.

The shoot turned out to be quite challenging, mainly because the production team had never worked with an F1 car before, considering that 100kph can still be regarded as low speed for an F1 car.

“The team at Red Bull was extremely cooperative but we had a steep learning curve and we had to learn quickly. An F1 car is completely different from a regular performance vehicle and needed more prep time than other models. First and foremost, there were huge issues with overheating when the car travels at low speed. The necessary speeds were never going to be met anywhere other than the racetrack. This posed numerous stop-start issues, especially as the concept for the film was to distance ourselves from a fast car theme, but also with keeping up with the vehicle in the ATV,” explains Phillips.

The workflow
The workflow entailed footage recorded on the Alexa at 2048x1152 up to 150 fps ProRes 4444, with cards backed up and verified from the cameras by an on-site DIT. The offline versions were created at ProRes 422 and proxy from the ProRes 4444 masters with LUTs were applied to change the colourspace from LOG C to Rec 709. The GoPro and 5D footage was also converted to ProRes 422 Proxy for edit purposes. The offline edit was carried out in Final Cut Plus.

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Julian Phillips, MD, Footprint International
PRODUCTION

Post production and CGI

All post production on the film was carried out at Footprint’s in-house post production facility at Park Rotana Offices in Abu Dhabi with its in-house post-production team, according to Ruthmann.

“DaVinci Resolve 11 hadn’t been very long, we thought that technical issues might crop up during the one light and the grade, due to the software being new. However, we were pleasantly surprised with Resolve’s new editing capabilities; that we were pleasantly surprised with the software being new. However, the one light and the grade, due to technical issues might crop up during out very long; we thought that with its in-house post-production Park Rotana Offices in Abu Dhabi was carried out at Footprint’s in-house post production facility at Sky Dive Dubai. These involved three overlapping productions in different locations with each being very different from the other. The common factor, however, was the very short timeframe for deliverables.

“For us as a company, the key goal was to demonstrate that Footprint International could seamlessly manage a project of this magnitude from concept right through to delivery,” concludes Phillips.

Film shots were then passed on to After Effects CC (2014) via EDL, along with the ProRes 4444 masters.

Pro Tools was used for offline editing, while the grading and online edit was carried out with Resolve. The editing took three days, as did graphics and VFX, while the final grading and finishing were done over two days. The music and sound mixing took five days.

Many aspects of the production were run in parallel to ensure the project was delivered within a stipulated timeframe.

Since completing this project, Footprint International has worked with Infinity Middle East to promote the new Q30 Sport and concept car, Q30 Eau Rouge, which involved driving the cars alongside Red Bull’s Formula 1-winning RB7 through the streets of Dubai and on the runway at Sky Dive Dubai. These involved three overlapping productions in different locations with each being very different from the other. The common factor, however, was the very short timeframe for deliverables.

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Key kit

- Arri Alexa
- Drone camera system with SO Mark III
- Flight head
- Panther dolly kit
- Foxy crane
- Zoom lenses
- Ultra prime lenses 14, 20, 24, 32, 40, 50, 65mm
- Zoom lenses 35mm 14mm 100mm 25-250 HR
- Wireless HD video
- Wireless focus
- DaVinci kits
- 9” and 17” monitors
- Tracking / all terrain vehicle for inside mall

Post kit

- Mac Pro 3.3 GHz Hexacore with 64GB RAM, SSD-based internal RAID & Dual AMD Sapphire 7950 GPUs
- Blackmagic DeckLink playback card
- Sony’s latest 4K HD monitor for Resolve output
- Final Cut Pro 7
- After Effects CC (2014)
- DaVinci Resolve 11

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Security matters

While a proliferation of devices enables the delivery of premium content to far more consumers, it also makes content more vulnerable to illegal use. According to security experts, the bigger increase on 2013. Coupled with the proliferation in connected devices and the exponential growth in broadband speeds, by any metric – data per second, tweets per minute, app downloads – the market for multiscreen sports is growing at a phenomenal rate.

Yet because of its profile as the world’s premium content, its use – or misuse – is also thrown into sharp relief. Piracy, for example, has become a massive business in its own right, fuelled by the rise in OTT delivery. At least 190 countries have bandwidth speeds that allow them to view HD content, as does Greenland, where piracy has been detected in areas that are not served by broadcast networks. In North America, the Far East and Western Europe, the number of devices now exceeds the number of set top boxes. For Rory O’Connor, VP, Services, Irdeto, this means we’ve reached a tipping point where OTT becomes bigger than broadcast.

This became obvious during the 2014 World Cup. On the one hand, Akamai regularly recorded higher than six terabits of data per second across its network when live games were played, beating the previous peak of 3.967bs recorded during an ice hockey match from Sochi. Yet in Australia alone, Irdeto identified 7.790 hours of illegal streams of World Cup content, representing 23.1 million illegal views – the same as the whole population of that country.

“How do they find pirated content?” asks O’Connor.

“Through social media. We disabled Facebook pages in Australia promoting illegal sites to two million followers, and another 199 streams of FIFA content illegally streamed on YouTube.”

However, consumers are confused. Many cannot tell the difference between a website offering legal streams and websites hosting pirated content.

“If they can’t determine what is legal, then the biggest issue we face as an industry is offering a credible legal alternative,” says O’Connor. The industry must detect the pirates, shut them down and work closely with ISPs.

“Just fighting piracy on its own won’t solve the problem,” warns O’Connor.

“When you frighten people away from pirates and they miss their favourite match or the winning goal, you have to have an alternative at a realistic price, which also means having an OTT strategy and an active social media strategy to drive people to legal content.”

As the industry gears up for content delivery in 4K UHD, broadcasters are required to have a watermarking strategy of content protection, as already mandated by MovieLabs and the Hollywood majors for premium recorded content.

“It’s not so much about the fragmentation you see today, but about the fragmentation coming tomorrow and how you can adapt your business to that.”

Alpert Lai, CTO, Brightcove

Piracy may be the worst blight, but it is not the only issue affecting sporting content everywhere.

“ISPs are able to deliver more bandwidth to consumers, and we have a better quality of service from CDNs, the delivery of live coverage during the World Cup was good even in peak times, and this was a new experience compared to the past,” notes Frank Coppola, President, Hexagrid.

“Better bit rates, better QoS, is bringing online closer to broadcast quality but is not yet at its equal. The industry’s content everywhere technology is less stable than traditional broadcast technology. If we want half of the global audience to watch the event live, there will be a lot of technical work to do for Content Delivery Networks.”

He also believes that the industry has yet to develop a really compelling usage for second screens, although the ideas are there, such as global fan zones.

Albert Lai, CTO, Brightcove, explains that the ability of content owners to publish to the internet is increasingly complex and inefficient.

“It’s not so much about the fragmentation you see today, but about the fragmentation coming tomorrow and how you can adapt your business to that.”

He outlines the multiple hurdles that content owners have to leap through, in getting content acquired onsite out to the consumer. These include support for the main platforms (Android, iOS) and support for multiple versions of these platforms.

“When you look at the media workflow, there is intractability at every step. Different codecs, different audio and capturing requirements, different QoS and different bitrates. Content owners and facilities must not only support the video but all the metadata that surrounds it.

“Then there are different form factors, various and confusing content protection systems, varied and disjointed audience measurement techniques. On top of that, there is not just technical fragmentation but fragmentation of business model.

A single content owner might be pursuing delivery models that include ad-supported free VOD, subscription VOD and transactional VOD.”

The picture, Lai says, is not all bleak.

“The solution lies in using cloud-based services to reduce that friction and fragmentation, or at least acknowledge the issues that are there to make it easier for your business.”

Source: IBC Content Everywhere

This event will take place in Dubai from Jan 20-22, 2015.
Thunderstorms in the cloud

An increasing number of companies are interested in cloud computing to improve their efficiency and adaptability, as well as reduce costs. By leveraging the cloud properties of elastic and on-demand access to computing resources (networks, servers, storage, applications and services), companies do not need to own and maintain dedicated servers. Cloud service providers can manage various tasks like mailing, collaborative tools and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP).

This trend toward cloud computing is certainly not limited to traditional applications. The use of private data centres is also becoming popular for applications like over-the-top (OTT) video content services. Indeed, several aspects of OTT services, such as content preparation and delivery through cloud-based online video and digital rights management platforms, are quickly developing.

However, cloud computing is not free from security risks. Companies like Evernote and Feedly recently suffered from severe service outages, and software hosting provider Code Spaces even went out of business. Similarly, video content services even went out of business and software hosting provider Code Spaces suffered from severe service outages, like Evernote and Feedly recently.

Companies in the cloud require a 360-degree approach to security management. This includes focusing on security-critical for paid content protection and rights management applications, new attack methods or vulnerabilities in the system must be addressed, with clear visibility of operations or data that could be affected. Content service providers must be able to examine the capabilities of each vendor in the cloud requiring secure awareness and renewability. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration.

Availability can be improved by using distant or foreign data centres, and by adhering to the active-active servers principle, meaning data, services and databases are mirrored and synchronised between data centres.

Providing a comprehensive and global security management analysis is of paramount importance for content service application development or migration, as it is a global security approach addressing technical, operational and legal frameworks over time. Moreover, security monitoring and audit is critical for service reliability. Content service providers should consider a comprehensive and global security management analysis is of paramount importance for content service application development or migration.

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When developing or outsourcing content protection and rights management applications that are security-critical for paid content services, content service providers are aware of this and already use HSM in their cloud architecture.

Content services applications generally require dedicated use of HSM for cryptographic operations and data protection. Some cloud service providers are aware of this and already use HSM in their cloud architecture.

In content services applications, data location should be treated with special attention. Cloud computing elasticity is based on virtual machine migration (applications and platform) between data centres all over the world. Specific rules apply to personal and application data location.

Content services applications data (video content at various stages of the content preparation workflow, digital usage rights, authentication credentials, usage data of content services, user information) is sensitive. Confidentiality and integrity should be considered during the complete data lifecycle. Cloud infrastructure can provide VPN-based authentication, white-list access or data encryption on servers’ filesystem. Software can be deployed in the cloud to ensure data integrity.

Content services applications require high service availability, even in the face of DDoS threats. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration.

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David Leporini is EVP Marketing, Products and Security at Viaccess-Orca.

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This trend toward cloud computing is certainly not limited to traditional applications. The use of private data centres is also becoming popular for applications like over-the-top (OTT) video content services. Indeed, several aspects of OTT services, such as content preparation and delivery through cloud-based online video and digital rights management platforms, are quickly developing.

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Companies in the cloud require a 360-degree approach to security management. This includes focusing on security-critical for paid content protection and rights management applications, new attack methods or vulnerabilities in the system must be addressed, with clear visibility of operations or data that could be affected. Content service providers must be able to examine the capabilities of each vendor in the cloud requiring secure awareness and renewability. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration.

Availability can be improved by using distant or foreign data centres, and by adhering to the active-active servers principle, meaning data, services and databases are mirrored and synchronised between data centres.

Providing a comprehensive and global security management analysis is of paramount importance for content service application development or migration, as it is a global security approach addressing technical, operational and legal frameworks over time. Moreover, security monitoring and audit is critical for service reliability. Content service providers should consider a comprehensive and global security management analysis is of paramount importance for content service application development or migration.

Content services applications data (video content at various stages of the content preparation workflow, digital usage rights, authentication credentials, usage data of content services, user information) is sensitive. Confidentiality and integrity should be considered during the complete data lifecycle. Cloud infrastructure can provide VPN-based authentication, white-list access or data encryption on servers’ filesystem. Software can be deployed in the cloud to ensure data integrity.

Content services applications require high service availability, even in the face of DDoS threats. Providers have to support this requirement with application replication and migration.

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