RAMADAN 2017
TV VIEWERSHIP PATTERNS IN THE HOLY MONTH

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DaVinci Resolve Micro and Mini panels tested

IN FULL GEAR
Palestine TV designs and builds SNG van for live news coverage
Hybrid routing from 288 x 288 to 1152 x 1152
- More multiviewer inputs & outputs than any other router on the market – with no loss of router capacity
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The recent ban of beIN Sports in some of the GCC countries has raised some pertinent questions that will compel international leagues and clubs, as well as regional sports authorities, to revisit the way sports rights have been sold thus far in the region. The scenario has left many sports fans disappointed and one of the ways to avoid that in the future may be to look at how other countries have addressed this.

In the UK, for instance, a ruling by the European Commission ensures that no single broadcaster has the rights to all of the matches within a championship. The rights are broken up so there is a cap on the number of games to which each broadcaster can have the rights. This means that there is greater accessibility to sports from different bidders.

In our region, however, this poses some challenges, primarily because the countries do not all come under one common jurisdiction and there is no single legislative body that represents all of them for sports rights. I recall the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) actually brokering a deal on behalf of a number of public broadcasters and making a game available in different parts of the region, but that was a one-off.

In the absence of a regulatory body, increased bidding would push up the price of the rights of the matches and the lack of a solution would make all of us vulnerable. In turn, regional sports rights would become even less commercially viable.

Another challenge with breaking up the rights would be that consumers could be forced to purchase one box to watch one-third of the matches and another to watch the rest of them. This is also not appealing unless broadcasters collaborate to allow consumers to use one box.

The current situation, however, offers local sports authorities the perfect opportunity to give serious thought to sports broadcast rights and the need for a regulatory body within the region.
BroadcastPro ME Summit & Awards is our annual flagship event to promote and celebrate excellence in the broadcast and satellite industry across the MENA region. Featuring extensive networking opportunities, seminars and awards presentations by key industry and government leaders.

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Dubai telco launches new teleport facility at Al Qudra

UAE telco du has announced its new teleport facility, located at Al Qudra in Dubai. The new upgraded facility covers an area of 75,000sqm and has been built to cater to the growing needs of du’s broadcast customers. The facility is built to accommodate 56 earth station antenna systems with room to expand further.

Through its teleport, du serves regional and international broadcasting customers. The number of TV channels being uplinked by its current teleport facility has grown by 600% since it started operations in 2004. The new site has larger antennas ensuring robust signal levels in transmission and reception.

“In order for du to meet the growing requirements of customers in the region and internationally we have come up with our new teleport facility,” said Ahmed Al Muhaideb, Vice President, Broadcasting and IPTV services.

“Du is one of the top ten independent operators in the world. As broadcast requirements continue to proliferate, we will endeavour to innovate and offer our customers new broadcast solutions that will deliver on superior quality of service.”

The initial planning of du’s new teleport site started in 2010 and after intensive checks in terms of the location, the technical design phase began. This included civil and electromechanical works and satellite transmission systems.

The building of the teleport began in 2012. The facility will be scaled up further to cover all broadcasting operations, including TV signal processing and TV playout services, to cater to the growing needs of broadcasters.

In5 partners with UTURN to help media startups

Tecom Group’s in5 has partnered with UTURN to offer export guidance, industry training, and workshops focused on technical skills, and digital content development.

The partnership will seek to leverage UTURN’s vast experience in creating digital content for regional audiences, focusing on diverse content formats with parallel modules on business and media strategies, market research, audience engagement and branding.

Commenting on the partnership, CEO of Tecom Business Parks, Malek Al Malek, said: “We believe our partnership with UTURN places us in a unique position to enable success for digital media entrepreneurs.

“UTURN’s vast experience and reach makes them an excellent partner for our in5 community.”

“UTURN is a technology leader that helps media startups embrace the current industry-wide digitisation trend and equip them with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate the rise of the digital media ecosystem and establish a new benchmark in innovation and creativity.”

SAM names Eric Cooney as President and CEO

Snell Advanced Media (SAM) has appointed former Tandberg Television President Eric Cooney as President and Chief Executive Officer.

Cooney, who has over 20 years of experience in the technology, media and telecommunications (TMT) industry, has created more than $2bn of additional enterprise value in his two previous CEO roles.

He was CEO of Tandberg Television, leading its merger with Ericsson Group in 2007, and subsequently resigned to accept the CEO role at NASDAQ-listed IT services provider Internap Corp.

During his tenure at both businesses, he delivered significant increases in value after transforming the strategy, investing in new products, sales and world-class customer support.

In his role as CEO of SAM, he will continue to drive the growth and development of the group across its core markets and build upon the significant sales growth the business has achieved in the last two years as a result of its investment in new products.
Jordan Media City (JMC) recently upgraded two of its studios with Grass Valley solutions to better service a local channel with whom JMC has a multi-year contract. As part of this project, JMC’s two studio new boast LDX 90 series cameras, ME Karreva K-Frame switchers, an NVISION 8144 router, GV Kaleido multiviewers and all related software and hardware. Broadcast & Audio Solutions, a Grass Valley systems integrator, helped facilitate the installation. Grass Valley’s LDX series cameras were specifically chosen because they use the latest digital CMOS capture technology, as opposed to analogue CCD technology. In combination with the GV eLicenser system for seamless upgrading from any lower model to any higher model of the range, the LDX series cameras claim to deliver the most future-proof solution of all HD productions available on the market.

“We knew that in order to create the best environment for the channels and future tenants, we had to embrace new solutions and technology, but in a smart way with innovations that will stand the test of time,” commented Paris Abdulrah, Chief Technology Officer at JMC. “Grass Valley showed the ability to seamlessly integrate its complete solution.” JMC moved into the newly updated studios earlier this year and is already creating quality content in Jordan.

Abu Dhabi central location for Mahabharata

Abu Dhabi will be the first location for the filming of ambitious Indian mythological epic Mahabharata, starring Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, producer Dr BR Shetty announced last month. Shetty, an Abu Dhabi-based Indian film producer, has pledged $155m for the project, which will include creating palatial sets and even a forest, with the aim of bringing to life the tales of the Mahabharata. The film is based on the 1986 Malayalam novel Ramayana by celebrated Indian M T Vasudevan Nair, who has also written the screenplay. The six-hour plus film will be rolled out in two parts, with the second part released three months after the screening of the first. Mahabharata will be made in three languages – Malayalam, English and Hindi – and dubbed into most Indian languages. The film is scheduled for release in 2020.

AFI invites entries for post-production grant

As part of the efforts of the Dubai-based Arab Film Institute (AFI) to support its members at any stage of their projects, its post-production support fund, which provides colour grading and online facilities to feature-length projects in both fiction and non-fiction films. The deadline for submission is August 1, 2017. Filmmakers, producers and production company members of the AFI are eligible to apply. Those who are not yet members and would like to benefit from this opportunity may complete a membership registration prior to submitting their project. The grant enables beneficiaries to avail of a variety of post-production services months after the screening of the first. Mahabharata will be made in three languages – Malayalam, English and Hindi – and dubbed into most Indian languages. The film is scheduled for release in 2020.

Alscence launches Ramadan TV schedule generator

Ramadan offers a slate of programmes for television viewers, who are spoilt for choice and unable to keep track of their favourite programmes. Egyptian online lifestyle magazine Alscence.com resolved this issue with the launch of its first Ramadan TV schedule generator. Alscence.com worked with M64 Network’s team of in-house developers to create this feature, which allowed viewers, in four simple clicks, to create a schedule customised to each user’s preferences and the times of day they’re free to watch.

“An ideal content veterans, M64 Network puts its full weight behind innovation in an ever-changing media landscape,” commented Italia Awd, Innovation Director at the media agency. “With Alscence.com’s custom Ramadan TV schedule generator, the Arabic platform provided a bridge between online and traditional media. By leveraging the popular online quiz format and applying it to popular culture in the Middle East, the features played into the global trend of individuals choosing the content they consume,” she added. Ramadan TV viewers are known to create their own handwritten watching schedules. Alscence.com’s schedule generator eliminates this manual process.

Introduction of ATEM Television Studio Pro HD

The new ATEM Television Studio Pro HD is the first all-in-one production switcher with integrated hardware control panel designed for both broadcast and professional AV users. You get an ATEM TV control panel, along with 4 SDI and HDMI inputs, multiview, DVE, talkback, an audio mixer and more. It’s the perfect for traditional and web broadcasters, as well as AV professionals covering corporate events, seminars, and even large worship services!

True Professional Switcher

ATEM Television Studio HD is a true professional switcher with transitions such as cut, dissolve, dip, wipes, graphic wipe and DVE transitions. The DVE can be used for picture in picture effects, making it perfect for interviews and live commentaries. The flash-based media pool holds 20 RGBA still frames so you can add custom graphics and logos.

Connect up to 8 Sources

With 4 HDMI and 4 3G-SDI inputs that support all formats up to 1080p60, you can connect up to 8 cameras, game consoles, computers or other sources. There is no limit to the number of sources you can use. ATEM TV control panel is included free!

Learn more at www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae

Broadcast Quality Effects

You get an upstream keyer with full color keying for green screen and blue screen shots so you can add weather maps, graphics, and more behind on-screen talent! You also get 2 downstream keys for adding graphics, logos and bugs from the built-in media pool, or you can use input video with fill and key overlay graphics in real time!

Professional Hardware Control

The built-in control panel features illuminated buttons for switching sources, mixing audio, adding transitions, using keys and more. You get one touch access to the most important switcher functions so you can work quickly and confidently! When used with the included free software control panel, you can even have multiple people controlling the switcher on the same program!

ATEM Television Studio Pro HD

US$2,295*
Advanced Media appointed exclusive distributor of NiSi

Dubai broadcast and photography equipment distributor Advanced Media has been appointed the exclusive distributor of NiSi Filters in the GCC region.

The distributorship covers the entire GCC region except Oman. "We are very happy to offer NiSi filters to customers in the region. It's a well-known brand in the industry and there is a high demand for these products in the region, especially the acoustic filters. NiSi's strong portfolio and extensive experience will be a great addition to our product range," said Rishan Ahmed, Account Manager – ME at Advanced Media.

NiSi Filters offer a complete range of solutions to broadcast and media professionals. The distributorship covers the entire GCC region except Oman.

UBMS to distribute EZ Acoustics' products

Dubai-based broadcast systems integrator and solutions provider, United Broadcast and Media Solutions (UBMS), has signed an exclusive distributorship contract with Spanish manufacturer, EZ Acoustics. This partnership covers the entire GCC region except Oman. "We are very happy to offer EZ Acoustics' strong portfolio of products in the region. It's a well-known brand in the industry and there is a high demand for these products in the region, especially the acoustic filters. This portfolio complements our existing brands and enables us to offer a complete range of solutions to broadcast and production companies," said Erich Plageger, Managing Director of UBMS. "Representing EZ Acoustics, UBMS will provide sales support, training and service to its products on its customer's site. The distributor will be hosting a one-day EZ Acoustics workshop on July 19 at UBMS Training Academy in Dubai. EZ Acoustics' Managing Director Marc Viadiu will be speaking at the event."

Archiware appoints Dataguard as new Middle East distributor

Software company Archiware has appointed Dataguard Technologies LLC as its distributor in the Middle East. The regions covered encompass the entire Middle East, with potential to expand in the future. Archiware’s collaboration with Dataguard was signed this year and covers end-to-end product distribution, support and after-sales service support by the distributor. UK-based vendor, Archiware, a distributor of software products and state-of-the-art technology, which has been distributing content for Archiware in the region since 2013, will continue to represent Archiware. Archiware’s key customers in the Middle East are companies in the media and entertainment industry, with recent projects at Etisalat TV and Al Dafrah TV.

"The Archiware suite (with special focus on PS Archive) and the brand-new Archiware Pure (OMS) are licensed to Dataguard for both target broadcast and production companies. We offer end-to-end solutions to customers including pre-sales, sales and after-sales sales support as well as technical deployment and training," said Rishan Ahmed, Account Manager – ME at Dataguard Middle East.

Netflix invests in its first Turkish original series set for 2018

As part of its efforts to expand into global markets, Netflix has invested in its first original series from Turkey. 'Wearing a hero-driven action story with Ottoman and Turkish legend and historical, the 10-episode series will be written and produced in Turkey and is expected to launch on Netflix subscribers around the world in 2018. The drama premiered on SKY on a young man who discovers that he has special powers. When dark forces threaten to destroy Istanbul, he must team up with a group of kind friends to harness these powers to defend the city and all of mankind. The show will explore the rich cultural history of Istanbul and promises to take the audience on a journey into the heart of this city.

The series is produced for Netflix by Istanbul-based O3 Medya, with Omer Guvenat as Executive Producer. The series will expand the broad offering of Turkish content currently available on Netflix, which includes licensed shows such as Magnificent Century, East and Lovebird that are already very popular around the world. "We’re thrilled to confirm that we will be producing our first original Turkish series and are very happy to be working with O3 Medya on this project, which is young, bold and believes that Netflix will be the perfect global platform for this great Turkish production and we can’t wait to share more details later this year," said Erik Barmack, Vice President of International Original Series at Netflix. Speaking about the deal, Omer Guvenat, co-owner and Producer at O3 Medya, said: "We are extremely proud to be producing the first original series in Turkey. We are confident that this new genre will be a milestone for our market and it will not only resonate with the Turkish audience but will also travel globally."

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Sennheiser sets out on demo tour with Digital 6000

Sennheiser has commenced its Digital 6000 demo tour in the Middle East, with the aim of giving customers a chance to get extended hands-on experience with the new wireless microphone system. The audio specialist is accepting requests from rental companies, production houses, large venues and broadcasters across the region that are interested in experiencing first-hand the capabilities of the Digital 6000.

Sennheiser’s System Solutions team, with the support of UAE distributor Venuetech, will provide an on-site introduction and feature orientation on the wireless microphone system, after which customers will be able to trial the Digital 6000 at their premises or test it in the field. “The summer period offers rental companies time to spring clean, take stock and prepare for the upcoming season. This means that most sound teams are working at their HQ rather than onsite, and so have a bit of breathing room to try out new equipment. We have decided to take advantage of this and get the Digital 6000 into the hands of the people who are at the forefront of the events industry,” explained Ryan Burr, Technical Sales Manager at Sennheiser Middle East.

Starz Play partners with Ooredoo Algeria

Starz Play has partnered with Ooredoo Algeria. The agreement, which saw the SVOD service being provided to Ooredoo Algeria customers for the first time, launched during the holy month of Ramadan. Ooredoo Algeria customers enjoyed a 30-day free trial to Starz Play, allowing them to access thousands of blockbuster Hollywood movies, same-day-as-the-US TV series, documentaries and children’s entertainment – plus dedicated Arabic content. During Ramadan, new premium series and movies was also added to Starz Play’s library. The content includes a large number of newly-released series, such as Kahlil Aswad, Qalb Abyad, Caramel and Ward Jouri.

VERSATILE 4K CAMERAS

Datavideo introduces a new 4K camera lineup that is both versatile and cost-efficient. Both 4K cameras are perfect companions for the KMU-100 signal processor, effectively turning 1 camera into 4 different angles.

**BC-200**
4K block camera
Available in HDMI and HDBaseT
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**PTZ-200**
4K PTZ camera
Available in HDMI and HDBaseT
Joystick or IR remote controlled

For more information, look for Datavideo on Facebook or visit www.datavideo.com

The Ultimate Nodal Camera Support

The light-weight LAMBDA 25 Fluid Head can be mounted on any Tripod, Dolly or used in underslung position from Cranes, Jib arms or for Aerial Shots.
**UAE company to deal in used broadcast equipment**

UAE-based systems integrator Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA), which is headed by CEO Irfan Gondal, has launched a sister company that buys and sells used broadcast equipment. The new company, BS Broadcast, already boasts an inventory with more than 650 products from 60 different broadcast manufacturers. The two companies operate independently. The equipment has mainly been procured in Europe and the US. The equipment auctions held in the UK as well as from used equipment auctions held across Europe and the UK. The company's target buyers include small-budget TV, radio and cable companies as well as media schools and training centres. “We have invested more than $450,000 to set up BS Broadcast and also offer a trade-in programme to TV and radio stations as well as production houses for broadcast equipment,” commented Gondal. “We have had a positive response from countries such as Egypt, Iraq, India, Jordan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Philippines and Turkey, so we are very keen to invest more in this business. We are also discussing partnerships with some European and American used equipment dealers to deal in the Middle East region,” he added. BS Broadcast offers a three-month warranty to buyers. All of the equipment sold is in working condition and tested by the company’s in-house engineers prior to sale. BSA handles the installation and integration of equipment sold through BS Broadcast for customers requiring it. “Technology is moving very fast in Europe and the Middle East, but many parts of Asia and Africa still use SD equipment as they can’t afford new HD/SD/HD equipment. We are targeting such regions by offering them new technology at a lower price. When companies revamp or upgrade their facilities, a lot of old equipment is made redundant. We buy that equipment and then try to find a new home for it. This kind of recycling also avoids waste generation and contributes to the reduction of the carbon footprint.”

**OSN renews multi-year deal to bring MMA to MENA**

OSN has renewed a multi-year deal with Electus International to bring Viacom’s Bellator MMA to the MENA region. Under the leadership of veteran promoter Scott Coker, Bellator MMA is one of the fastest rising global sports franchises. This year, Bellator is averaging about one million viewers per event on Spike TV, a 26% increase over last year. In the last 12 months, the burgeoning league has enjoyed record attendance, increased sponsorship and top-notch additions to its roster. Commenting on the deal renewal, Eddie Dalva, Executive Vice President, Content, said: “OSN has been a loyal strategic partner for Bellator that has played a key role in Bellator’s explosive international growth.” Andy Warman, SVP Sports and Production, OSN, added: “Our focus is on providing exclusive and exceptional content for our customers. The partnership with Electus to bring Bellator to the region will be a true treat for action and mixed martial arts lovers in MENA. It is a perfect fit to the unexpected content that Spike provides, which has made it popular, especially among youth. We will continue to provide added value for our subscribers through our global partnerships.” Bellator is owned by American global mass media company Viacom and is available in more than 91m homes on Spike TV, as well as over 500m homes in 150 countries worldwide. The partnership with Electus played a key role in Bellator’s explosive international growth.” Andy Warman, SVP Sports and Production, OSN, added: “Our focus is on providing exclusive and exceptional content for our customers. The partnership with Electus to bring Bellator to the region will be a true treat for action and mixed martial arts lovers in MENA. It is a perfect fit to the unexpected content that Spike provides, which has made it popular, especially among youth. We will continue to provide added value for our subscribers through our global partnerships.”

**IBC announces Startup Forum**

IBC is launching Startup Forum, an initiative for IBC 2017 that brings together innovative digital media startups, media houses and investors for a day of keynote presentations, panel discussions, pitches and networking. The event, which runs on 17 September 2017, is held in association with Media HoneyPot, organiser of the eponymous international conference that helps media executives identify new business opportunities with emerging technology companies. “IBC has been established as a leading media technology event. In 2017, the media and entertainment business is being transformed by innovative and entrepreneurial Startups. For this reason, established media houses and investors are actively seeking out the new technologies that will lead the next wave of growth,” said IBC CEO Michael Crimp. “IBC2017 is embracing this opportunity by launching the IBC Startup Forum. IBC’s industry knowledge, combined with Media HoneyPot’s matchmaking expertise, ensures that the IBC Startup Forum is a must-attend event.”

With the new family of G-Technology™ Thunderbolt™ 3 devices, you get high capacity, fast data transfers, and the ability to daisy-chain up to five additional devices for lightning-fast output through a single port. Combined with Enterprise-class 7200RPM hard drives and a 5-year limited warranty, you get reliable storage that saves time at every stage of your workflow.

**PROnews**

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Kwesé TV launches Zee's Wion, announces telco deals

Zee Africa has announced the launch of its global English news channel WION (the World Is One Family) on African pay-TV network Kwesé TV. WION will premiere on Kwesé TV’s current satellite markets on channel 771 and will reach viewers in Ghana, Zambia, Rwanda and Lesotho through its multi-platform broadcast offering which includes linear TV, the Kwesé mobile app and web streaming services.

Commenting on the deal, Harish Goyal, CEO of Zee Africa, said: “With WION, we commit to deliver to the African viewers authentic information and a local perspective to what is happening in our world today.”

This will be the third channel from Zee on the Kwesé platform, which already beams Zee Bollynovva on channel 150 and ZeeBollywood on channel 155, both added early this year.

“A premium news offering is one of the key things consumers look for on television. The addition of WION to our line-up not only grosses our news and actively ongoing, but also adds further diversity to our bouquet,” said Joseph HundaB, President and Group CEO of Ecomet Media.

Kativa has signed distribution agreements with African mobile network operators, establishing a significant pan-African distribution network for its core products. With the recently announced partnerships with MTN, Safaricom, Tigo and Vodacom in specific territories, the network has widened its reach to more than 400m subscribers who can access Kwesé TV with data packages.

The service is available in most African countries through the Kwesé app.

Many of these partners are also to become official resellers of Kwesé TV’s satellite dish and set-top box, while the mobile operator’s 3G/LTE and Wi-Fi infrastructure will be used by Kwesé to stream its premium programming.

The content offering includes sports and entertainment programming like the NBA, English and Brazilian football, and cricket, as well as exclusive entertainment from Rejoll, AMC Networks and Veekland.

Kwesé Free Sport has also signed distribution agreements with African mobile network operators (MNOS).

MBC launches channel on Snap

MBC has launched its Discover Channel on Snap. Targeting users in the region, MBC will publish content on Discover Channel every day, covering its core entertainment business on platforms in the new channel, Fadil Zahredine, MBC Group Director of Brand Management & Digital, said. “This shows MBC is not limited to one platform. We offer visual, digital and even audio media, loved by audiences across the MENA region. We expand our experience in content and news to offer content on new mediums to reach out to viewers across all age groups.”

MBC is leveraging the popularity of the platform, which has more than seven million daily active users on Snap in KSA, and one million daily active users in the UAE.

Aims releases white paper on transition to IP

The Alliance for IP Media Solutions (AIMS) has released a white paper aimed at helping broadcasters transition to IP with minimal disruption. The paper, titled ‘AIMS Guidelines to Preparing Broadcast Facilities for IP-Based Live TV Production’, presents basic methods broadcasters can follow to make the shift from SDI to IP as trouble-free as possible, with confidence that the products incorporating AIMS-endorsed protocols can be mixed and matched to the future-proof the operation. The white paper is available for download at aimsalliance.org.

There is considerable ongoing technical change in our industry which is why we’re issuing this AIMS white paper. The technical community needs guidance, and the white paper offers some important information, directly from the experts,” said Michael Cronk, Chairman of the AIMS Board.

Facebook ready to launch original series

In its quest to create a robust video ecosystem on its social platform, Facebook has big plans to launch a roster of scripted original series. It is near a deal to revive Loosely Naked Nicole for a second season, according to media reports. The scripted comedy was previously on MTV but was cancelled after the first season due to poor ratings.

The Facebook team is planning to launch online video programming, with plans to have more than ten shows for this initial push, and has approved multiple shows for production according to sources. The social media giant announced its video strategy to dive into long-form scripted content with minimal disruption. The paper, titled ‘AIMS Guidelines to Preparing Broadcast Facilities for IP-Based Live TV Production’, presents basic methods broadcasters can follow to make the shift from SDI to IP as trouble-free as possible, with confidence that the products incorporating AIMS-endorsed protocols can be mixed and matched to the future-proof the operation. The white paper is available for download at aimsalliance.org.

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Palestine TV has expanded its tiny OB fleet with the addition of a new SNG vehicle developed and integrated in-house. The vehicle was most recently used to cover President Trump’s visit to the country and will continue to play a key role in covering live productions in Palestine. In an interview with Vijaya Cherian, Bassam Alsaqqa, Broadcast Engineer at Palestine TV, who designed and developed the SNG van with his in-house team, shares more details about the vehicle.

Palestine TV recently invested in its second SNG van, following a similar investment in 2015, to help the state broadcaster expand its coverage of live events in more parts of the country. The van, which was available from April, helped Palestine TV cover President Trump’s historic visit to the country last month, and will be used for more live news coverage in the future.

“Our objective has been to expand Palestine TV’s live coverage and we have traditionally rented an SNG monthly for this purpose,” says Bassam Alsaqqa, Broadcast Engineer at Palestine TV. “It was becoming increasingly important that we owned our own SNG to save on the monthly rentals. It will help reduce our expenses by at least $10,000 each month. This has become possible because Ahmed Assaf, the CEO of Palestine TV, has always encouraged us to push the limits. He has always been very supportive and has been able to secure the funding for the projects. Without that, this would not have been possible.”

Unlike most broadcast engineers, Alsaqqa, who has
“That [older] van is primarily used for small live productions. The more recent addition is presently operating as a single-camera SNG, although it can be fitted with a vision mixer and accommodate four cameras”

Bassam Alsaaqa, Broadcast Engineer, Palestine TV

previously worked at Ramattan News Agency, Gaza and Egypt, particularly on the OB and SNG side of the business, is well versed in coach building and integrating vans. Alsaaqa has previously built two SNG vans and one OB van, the most recent being the third SNG. One of the challenges of a politically volatile country is that engineers need to be as self-sufficient as possible and integrate technologies without relying on systems integrators. In the case of Palestine TV, Alsaaqa says the entire project was undertaken in-house under his technical leadership. The team not only procured the equipment internally, it also built the coach at a local workshop in Ramallah, under the supervision of Alsaaqa. The senior engineer says that besides satellite broadcast and OB engineering, the in-house team is also skilled in technologies related to electricity, sound, carpentry, metal work, road safety standards and even vehicle balancing. Alsaaqa himself designed the coach using 3ds Max, AutoCAD and SketchUp, following discussions with Eng Mazen Hamarsheh, GM of the Engineering sector. Once approved, Alsaaqa then worked with a local company for the coach building.

“This is the second truck we have built, and we used the same company again as I am now aware of what their capabilities are. As a result, things moved a lot faster this time. The first time around, we built a four-camera OB van based on a 2015 Chevrolet Express, along with an SNG vehicle. That van is primarily used for small live productions. The more recent addition is presently operating as a single-camera SNG, although it can be fitted with a vision mixer and accommodate four cameras. This Chevrolet Express 2016 SNG is primarily for live news coverage, as this is a priority in our country,” Alsaaqa points out, adding that Palestine TV itself served as the systems integrator. “We bought these vans as empty shells from the manufacturer and retrofitted them,” he explains. Both vans are HD vans with 1080i 50Hz as the main format.

“The vehicle was fully tested by the Transportation Authority here. We provided them with a detailed layout and design for the new vehicle. All aspects of the vehicle were tested by the authority in terms of engineering, safety and so on before we could take it out on the road”

Bassam Alsaaqa, Broadcast Engineer, Palestine TV

Kit list: Van 1

- Video switcher: Broadcast PIX MICA
- Audio mixer: Roland M200i (digital audio mixer)
- Antenna: SVS SDO 120KU (1.25m) – fully automated with controller
- HPA: 400W TWTA CPI – with controller
- Encoder/modulator: Harmonic Ellipse 3202 SD/HD/3G-MPEG2/4-DVBS/S2
- IRD: Harmonic Preview 7100 SD/HD/3G-MPEG2/4-DVBS/S2
- Generator: HONDA eu30is
- UPS: Gamatroniq 3KVA Rackmount UPS

Van 2

- Video switcher: none
- Audio mixer: Rackmount analogue audio mixer Behringer (EURORACK PRO RX1202FX)
- Antenna: SVS SDO 120KU (1.25m) – fully automated with controller
- HPA: 400W TWTA CPI – with controller
- Encoder/modulator: Harmonic Ellipse 3202 SD/HD/3G-MPEG2/4-DVBS/S2
- IRD: Harmonic Preview 7100 SD/HD/3G-MPEG2/4-DVBS/S2
- Generator: HONDA eu30is
- UPS: GAMATRONIC 3KVA Rackmount UPS
RX1202FX), a fully automated SVS SDO 120KU (1.25m) antenna with controller, a 400W TWTA CPI HPA with controller, the Harmonic Ellipse-3202 SD/HD/3G-MPEG2/4- DVB/S2 encoder and modulator, the Harmonic Preview T100 SD/ HD/3G-MPEG2/4-DVB/S2 IRD, the Honda eu30is generator and the Gamatronix 3KVA rackmount UPS. In addition, Palestine TV has a large collection of Sony XDCAMs and Ikegami cameras, all supporting HD.

“We chose the SVS antenna because they have a very good product line. We’ve been using their antenna for years now without any problem. The Harmonic solutions were an expansion of what we already have from them. We use them for fibre (stream point-to-point). We also have other encoders from Harmonic to live broadcast our channels. All Palestine TV HPAs are from CPI, starting from 2006. The Honda generator is the best in the market because of its robustness and reliability,” explains Alsaqqa. Although Alsaqqa makes it sound simple, there were several factors to keep in mind while building and integrating the van, such as the weather requirements of the country. With heat, cold and rain dominant features on the Palestinian terrain, the van was designed with heat and rain resistance in mind.

Palestine TV faces other challenges that are not technical. With live news coverage being paramount and journalists constantly operating in danger zones, clashes, tear gas and gunfire are common in the country. “The Israeli army sometimes targets live broadcast vehicles to prevent them from covering news stories. We never have enough engineers for the live news coverage,” explains Alsaqqa. The broadcaster employs more than 500 staff, with around 15 people working on OB operations. Following the delivery of the new van, Alsaqqa was appointed Head of the SNG section in the Department of Outside Broadcast. It took two months to import the equipment, two to build the coach and two weeks to test it. The vehicle was on the road in April. “This vehicle was fully tested by the Transportation Authority here. We provided them with a detailed layout and design for the new vehicle. All aspects of the vehicle were tested by the authority in terms of engineering, safety and so on before we could take it out on the road.”

This van, however, is just a teaser for a larger VW Crafter OB van with eight cameras (CCU HD) being designed by Alsaqqa, again to be built in-house.

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“Go live over multiple network connections from anywhere in the world with the new Bond broadcasting solution. Stream to unlimited video destinations simultaneously, transcode your footage, and remotely manage your system, all from the cloud.”

— Bassam Alsaqqa, Broadcast Engineer, Palestine TV
Dubai-based producers Teneille Saayman and Nina Sargsyan of Fat Brothers Films test the DaVinci Resolve Mini and Micro colour grading panels and give us their verdict.

Blackmagic Design has always paid close attention to technical details and customer requirements simultaneously. With the release of its two new colour grading control panels, the DaVinci Resolve Mini Panel and the DaVinci Resolve Micro Panel, Blackmagic has given its users two of the most efficient and affordable control panels, capable of transforming any workflow from on-set production to post, giving us complete control.

At our company Fat Brothers Films, we rely hugely on on-set colour grading through our mobile workstations while shooting a scene, rather than taking it to our colour grading suite in post. These panels can make our mobile workflow more efficient, saving us an incredible amount of time that is otherwise wasted in post if footage is not gradable.

DaVinci Resolve Micro Panel
The DaVinci Resolve Micro Panel is a great tool for those constantly on the move and working live on set. Whether it’s doing dailies or just colour grading footage, the size and weight of this panel makes it easy to take with you wherever you go. What's great about the Micro Panel is that its compatible with any system as long as you have DaVinci Resolve 12.5.5 installed. No additional drivers need to be installed on the system, and so users can plug into the panel and get to work right away. The Micro Panel is powered via the USB cable, so all users have to do is plug the control panel into a workstation and get started.

For a panel this size, it has an impressive set of controls. The panel is equipped with 12 knobs, each with 4,096 steps per rotation, three high-resolution weighted trackballs with their own control keys, 18 dedicated navigation keys and three parameter keys. The body is made of aluminum and has rubber grips on the bottom of the panel, making it safe to use on any surface. The panel has a sleek and elegant look with a great layout – each trackball has enough hand space for users, and the control parameters are laid out within reach of each other.

Upon connecting to DaVinci Resolve, the backlight of the panel comes on, indicating it's connected. Users select the panel from the preferences menu in DaVinci Resolve, allowing them to get started right away.

The knobs respond to various grading parameters on the colour page. DaVinci Resolve in itself is a YRGB grade, so the first three knobs starting from the left of the panel adjust the YLift, YGamma and YGain. As any grader knows, these three parameters are essential. As the user turns the knob, the
“The Micro Panel packs a punch compared to other small-sized panels in the market, which come with just trackballs and a few buttons. It provides a variety of essential tools needed to colour grade with ease”

Teneille Saayman, Fat Brothers Films, Dubai

Users can easily make adjustments in LOG space. The centre ball of each trackball controls the tint of the RGB levels and corresponds directly to the colour wheels, and the ring surrounding the ball controls the balance between the RGB levels of an image. The ring and the ball have a good weight to them, which is ideal as they don’t move uncontrollably, allowing the user great control when making adjustments.

Above each trackball is a set of three soft buttons: LOG, OFFSET and VIEWER. These offer great mobility when working via a control panel. When a user opens the colour page, by default the primary colour palette is active. The LOG button allows the user to quickly switch over to the LOG colour wheels palette and make adjustments via the trackballs and appropriate knobs.

Users in LOG mode or primary mode don’t have control over the OFFSET parameter – for that, Blackmagic has added the aptly named OFFSET button. Once the user clicks this, the first two trackballs are disabled and only the rightmost trackball is active, corresponding to the OFFSET parameter in the colour wheels. By assigning OFFSET to its own trackball, Blackmagic has given users the ability to make adjustments solely to the OFFSET values without any hassle.

The VIEWER button allows users to view their work in fullscreen mode and make adjustments while in this mode. The three trackballs in the middle of the panel are well crafted and have a good weight to them, the movements are fluid and quite sensitive, giving users the power to finely adjust their colour wheels and primary parameters. The three trackballs correspond to the traditional DaVinci Resolve format of Lift, Gamma and Gain when in primary grading mode. However, as mentioned before, clicking the LOG button activates the LOG colour wheels, and the trackballs correspond to the shadows, midtones and highlights.

Users have the ability to simultaneously adjust various colour grading and image-related parameters available on the colour page. These include colour boost, shadows, highlights, saturation, hue and LUM mix. Users have the ability to constantly make adjustments in LOG space. The centre ball of each trackball controls the tint of the RGB levels and corresponds directly to the colour wheels, and the ring surrounding the ball controls the balance between the RGB levels of an image. The ring and the ball have a good weight to them, which is ideal as they don’t move uncontrollably, allowing the user great control when making adjustments.

The DaVinci Resolve Mini Panel comes with two five-inch high-resolution LCD screens.
panel itself is extremely user-friendly, even if you are a first-time user, the panel is easy to understand and fast to use. At an affordable price, this panel has a good variety of options and is a perfect size for travel.

DaVinci Resolve Micro Panel

The DaVinci Resolve Micro Panel is suitable for those who need a portable and versatile panel. The panel comes with two five-inch high-resolution LCD screens with their own soft knobs and soft buttons, 12 knobs with 4,996 steps per rotation, 48 dedicated navigation and transport keys, and three high-resolution weighted trackballs.

Just like the Micro Panel, it does not require any additional drivers and only needs DaVinci Resolve version 12.5.5. The back side of the panel has a dedicated power supply port. However, Blackmagic does not ship the power cable with the panel, just the USB-C to USB-C cable. That said, the power supply cable is a generic AC input power cable found anywhere.

Users also have the option to connect via a four-pin broadcast supply power cable. What’s great about this panel is the ability to connect via Ethernet, allowing users to connect to a network, it also supports PoE (power over Ethernet), meaning it can be powered via the network connection from a PoE compatible router. There is also a USB-C port to connect via USB.

Upon turning on the product, upon a fast press of a knob and the left and right arrow buttons, the Palette chosen by the user is then displayed on the LCD screens and users can use the soft buttons and knobs to make adjustments to the parameters. Users can even access menu items for the palettes via the soft buttons above the screens, and navigate through the various colour palettes using the left and right arrow buttons. The first two buttons are Home and Network, allowing users to select the network they would like to join. What’s great is that users can do all of this on the panel itself.

These buttons comprise all the palettes available, including the Window palette, allowing users to make various masks right there on the panel. They can select the type of mask they want via the soft buttons above the screens, adjust the size and position of the mask via the knobs below the screens, and even add or delete masks by simply navigating to the menu via the soft buttons. Users can select the Curves palette and navigate using the soft buttons above the screens. Through the use of the knobs below the screens, users can easily add points to curves and make adjustments as needed right there on the panel, eliminating the need to go to the computer. These buttons provide a lot of mobility and increase the speed of any workflow.

The right side of the upper deck consists of another set of 15 soft buttons, the Quick Selection buttons. The first eight correspond to the Node tree on the colour page and provide great mobility. Users can add nodes via the Serial node button, or with a window directly via the Node-Circle button. The Copy and Paste buttons allow users to copy and paste grades to different nodes with a few simple clicks.

The rest of the buttons correspond to various aspects of the colour page. These include the Pull Viewer button, which enlarges the screen and still displays the timeline and transport controls on the bottom. Users can also very easily toggle between key frames in the timeline with the Prev KF and Next KF buttons. These add great efficiency to a workflow, giving users great control and the freedom to work on the panel itself without the constant hassle of going back and forth from panel to computer.

The lower half of the panel is exactly the same as the Micro Panel, with the same control buttons and three weighted trackballs. This panel gives users the mobility within the colour page when they combine the buttons on the upper deck lower half. For example, users can navigate through nodes with the Prev Node button on the lower half, and then add a new node anywhere in the node tree with the Serial button on the upper deck. As far as small-sized panels go, the Mini Panel has everything one would need, and is affordable for those looking for a top-of-the-range industry-standard panel.

Both control panels are a great addition to any workflow. However, the Mini Panel stands out. It is more advanced in terms of controls, and gives users the ability to navigate and control numerous aspects of the colour page. This panel is ideal for first-time colour graders, and even those who are used to the Advanced Control Panel by Blackmagic. The controls available in the Mini Panel provide a vast array of controls – those who have used the Advanced Control Panel won’t find anything lacking. That said, the Mini Panel comes at a slightly steep price, at $2,995, it may not be ideal for student filmmakers. If you were to buy the Micro Panel, it would cost you the same premium.

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As far as workflow goes, users can be confident that by using these Blackmagic panels, their workflow speed and efficiency will increase significantly. The real-time grading response is tremendously helpful – what’s great is that users can add a new node anywhere in the node tree with the Serial button on the upper deck. The Mini Panel won’t find anything lacking.

As far as workflow goes, users can be confident that by using these Blackmagic panels, their workflow speed and efficiency will increase significantly. The real-time grading response is tremendously helpful – what’s great is that users can add a new node anywhere in the node tree with the Serial button on the upper deck.
In large part, we can do this because we benefit from the much larger IT industry and its colossal investment in R&D. This has ensured the continuing compliance with Moore’s Law, that the power of processors doubles every 18 months. Coupled that with vastly improved data connectivity, and it is clear that we are ready to move to new architectures. What is important is that this be a managed transition, not a headlong rush. There is no need to throw out traditional broadcast hardware if it is still doing the job and it is not life-expired. But equally, if you are looking for future investment, then it is important to understand not just the shift to software-defined products and IP connectivity, but also the new options in how your infrastructure is hosted, and indeed financed.

The traditional architecture of broadcasting had to be on-site, so every broadcast facility had a machine room or a central apparatus room. There was no alternative. The new paradigms see most broadcast functionality implemented in software running on standard computing architectures. It is perfectly possible to host this software-defined functionality as a single-purpose appliance – a box, like traditional hardware – and put it in a rack on your premises. During the transition, a lot of systems will certainly grow like this. If the device is providing a function which is in constant use, then this may be the future solution, too. But increasingly, we are identifying functionality that is important to the capabilities of the media enterprise, or maybe adds to the capabilities, but which is only needed some of the time. This makes it ideal for virtualisation to run as required, as a virtual machine, on shared hardware in a data centre.

On a simplistic level, virtualisation is seen as the route to the cloud, and indeed it is a critical design requirement. But the cloud, with its effectively limitless resources, offers further capabilities than simple virtualisation in your data centre. You hear people talking about ‘cloud-native’ and ‘cloud-enabled’, and you could be fooled into thinking they are the same, and simply another way of saying virtualised processes. But we are talking about very different propositions and you need to think about precise meanings.

A cloud-enabled application is a software-in-a-box appliance from which the software has been removed and adapted to run on a virtual machine rather than a physical one. Such applications can of course run in the cloud, but they struggle to benefit from the infinite scalability and other inherent capabilities of a genre-dispersed environment. Cloud-native applications, on the other hand, are written with the cloud in mind, ready to seize all its opportunities. And while software-in-a-box applications may not get the best out of the cloud, the converse is not the case. Good cloud-native software performs extremely well in local virtualisation or in dedicated devices.

Microservices When designing a broadcast infrastructure, engineers have always adopted a best-of-breed approach, at least a best fit to requirements and budget. A recent IABM survey of broadcasters found that 80% still regard best-of-breed as important in their decision-making.

The nature of the cloud allows product designers to move away from monolithic devices and break their offering down into much smaller applications. These applications can be called as necessary, released when finished. Because they each provide a small component of a workflow, rather than a major block, they are known as microservices.

The elasticity of the cloud makes it ideal for microservices. You define in a workflow precisely what you need to achieve; the appropriate microservices are called, the necessary processing power is reserved. The user, whether designing or implementing a workflow, does not need to know what resources are required, just to have the confidence that the cloud will scale to provide it.

An important question to ask when you are evaluating whether an offering from a vendor is genuinely cloud-native is whether its internal design is based on microservices. If it is, then you can have a degree of confidence that it will not only perform well in the cloud, but that it will perform efficiently. And to bring us back to the best-of-breed point, in a well-designed architecture the microservices need not come from a single vendor. An open source solution even encourages engineers to develop their own microservices, if the specific functionality they need is not readily available.

Efficiency The microservices approach to software development increases the efficiency as well as the power and flexibility of an application. Each part of the process is now effectively a separate unit, which can be upgraded or replaced if your requirements change.

If, say, you need to move from H.264 to HEVC encoding, in the traditional approach you unbolted a big box labelled ‘encoder’ from the rack and – having justified the capital expenditure – you bolted a new one in. In a cloud-
native microservices architecture, you simply update the encoder application with the new codec. This also plays into another of the key shifts from traditional to software architectures. Using broadcast hardware, systems were defined, implemented, installed and then largely left untouched for seven or ten years. In software, we expect continuous improvement and regular updates, adding new functionality and boosting performance. Again, by compartmentalising the architecture into microservices, such continuous improvement can happen at the modular level, minimising risk and making improvements immediately available.

One of the biggest benefits put forward for cloud infrastructures is the ability to try new things – to deliver to new devices, to launch pop-up channels, to experiment with ultra HD (UHD). Being able to instantly start services in the cloud also makes it ideal for disaster recovery; media companies on multiple continents are working with Imagine Communications to build a business continuity playout centre in the cloud.

What makes these applications practical is the ability to spool up the right microservices to achieve your goal, as you need them. You only pay for the processor cycles you use in the cloud, so the solution is both highly cost-efficient and directly tied to the usage of the functionality. In addition, and despite some assertions to the contrary, microservices-based solutions are able to deliver deterministic service. Microservices design is now an essential platform for software coders and engineers, and understanding is growing through systems designers and integrators. The other group which needs to understand the concept, if not the detail, is senior management. Without microservices, the true efficiency and flexibility of the cloud can never be achieved.

In the Focus Forward 2017 Media & Entertainment Industry Survey, sponsored by Imagine Communications, improved agility was identified as the top benefit of cloud-based services by more than 60% of respondents. The IABM survey of broadcasters found that 85% of those responding thought they would be using the cloud in the next two to three years, with 28% already doing it. But the cloud is not a magic cure-all. Only with the right software products, cloud-native and using microservices, will the benefits of flexibility, scalability and efficiency be fully realised.
What is your 2017 content strategy for the Middle East and Africa?

In 2017, our strategy across CEEMEA (Central & Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa) is to strengthen our global franchises and introduce new local formats and global programming events, while continuing to super-serve our passionate fans with even more content from their favourite returning series.

Globally, we have an ambitious line-up of content planned for the year, including the new Discovery Channel scripted anthology series *Manhunt: Unabomber*, which tracks how FBI agent Jim ‘Fitz’ Fitzgerald brought down Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber; and the three-hour global event *Diana: Tragedy or Treason?* for TLC, which will detail the theories behind Diana’s untimely passing as we approach the 20th anniversary of her death.

These noisy programmes will sit alongside our locally acquired series, which for the Middle East includes two new series from the Supernanny herself, Jo Frost, on DLife, *Family Matters with Jo Frost* and *Family SOS with Jo Frost*; even more smart fun on DKids with all-new episodes of the popular animated series *Earth to Luna*; plus yet another strong line-up of new local commissions for Fatafeat from the channel’s roster of new and existing celebrity chefs.

For us, it is about finding the right stories that work for the right audience, and we look forward to presenting this comprehensive mix of must-watch entertainment, scripted, kids and lifestyle content to new and existing viewers across the region this year.

Do you plan to do original programming targeting the Middle East? What kind of programmes are you planning?

We produce over 150 hours of original local content each year for our flagship Arabic food network, Fatafeat. This Ramadan, Fatafeat fans saw the results of our investment with a fantastic line-up of new and returning local programming, including a new season of *Matbakhik Mreytik* hosted by Chef Leyla Fahalhah, as well as a brand-new series with new chef Wafik Belaid, who presented the best in North African cuisine in *Nakahat Al Maghreb Al Arabi*. We also welcomed Chef Manal Al-Alem to the Fatafeat family, whose show *Manal Al-Alem* featured as one of our Ramadan highlights.

In general, Discovery has a long history of filming content in the Middle East and taking it to audiences around the world, and this year TLC® will broadcast a special episode of the global hit show *Cake Boss* featuring content filmed in Saudi Arabia, as Buddy and his team sample the traditional food and patisseries of the region.

We are always searching for interesting local stories that will work for our global audience, and look forward to announcing more in the coming weeks.

Fatafeat has been a big success in the region. How do you plan to build on that success?

Fatafeat is the leading and most loved Arabic food network in the MENA region, with an army of dedicated fans across the region, thanks to the talented team we have on the ground in Dubai managing the channel. They have taken Fatafeat from strength to strength since Discovery acquired the network in 2012. Over the last four years, we have invested heavily in the brand, acquiring more shows, bringing in new on-screen talent and expanding its off-air presence.

Fatafeat now boasts a loyal fan base thanks to its multiplatform experience, which offers audiences extra off-screen through a mix of exclusive content and immersive brand experiences, whether that be through its popular website (over 1.2 million unique users per month) and social media platforms (reaching over five million
PROINTERVIEW

fans across the region); its VOD offering Fatafeat Play (over 500,000 video views); or its successful on-the-ground activations.

In 2017, our goal is to get closer to the consumer through bigger and better regional on-ground activations, enhanced digital experiences and more content, including the introduction of new Arabic chefs to our talented line-up.

So far this year, we have already conducted two successful consumer activations for the channel, bringing the popular Fatafeat Kitchen live exhibit to audiences in Dubai. This Ramadan we saw the launch of a new mobile app for Fatafeat fans on the go, featuring user-generated content and additional recipes, and we will be producing even more hours of short-form content for Fatafeat.com and Fatafeat Play VOD service.

On top of this, we were also hugely excited to add chefs Walid Belaid and Manal Al-Alem to the channel this Ramadan. Chef Manal – or the Queen of the Kitchen, as she is also known – comes with a wealth of experience and credibility in the food industry, and our viewers will be entertained and inspired by her culinary creations this Ramadan and beyond, only on Fatafeat.

Which CEEMEA territories are your main focus areas, and why? How do you plan to grow your reach in those areas?

Lee Hobbs, Vice President, Brand and Content, CEEMEA, Discovery Communications

“Discovery has a long history of filming content in the Middle East and taking it to audiences around the world. We are always searching for interesting local stories that will work for our global audience”

Digital space, in other markets such as Africa, where pay TV and TV households in general are poised for growth, we are forging new partnerships with local operators, launching new linear channels for the continent’s emerging population of content consumers. In the MENA region, we successfully managed to expand our presence through strengthening our long-standing partnership with OSN. In this region, our strategy is to continue to work closely with our existing partners to offer enhanced viewing experiences to their subscriber base, while also looking into new partnerships and strategic investments that will allow us to reach new audiences in a more direct and personalised way.

Apart from the linear channels, which OTT platforms are you engaging with? Can you share details of your OTT strategy for the region?

Discovery was founded on disruption, and over the last few years we have evolved our traditional linear business, leveraging our premium content to drive scale in this multi-platform environment through the launch of various direct-to-consumer digital platforms.

In CEEMEA, Eurosport Player is our leading subscription-based sports OTT app, giving fans an all-access, on-demand digital pass to their favourite sporting events anytime on any device in 52 countries. Following significant investment in the platform, including our new deal with BAMTech plus even more premium sports rights, we have reached more people than ever before – most recently generating 41% extra subscribers during the Australian Open.

Another significant development in our digital strategy is our new partnership with Germany’s number one commercial broadcaster, ProSiebenSat.1, to create a next-generation OTT platform. This will see the creation of a Hulu-like partnership in Europe, with true local relevancy and content. The venture is expected to launch later this year with an AVOD and a low-SVOD offering, featuring our local German FTA channels DMAX and TLC, plus ProSieben’s seven broadcast channels. We are also welcoming discussions with other media companies to include their content and join the joint venture. These platforms sit alongside our other global digital offerings, including our TVE streaming service Discovery Go in the US, which has seen 20 million streams and 225% growth since disaggregation in August 2016, our Discovery Kids app in Latin America, and our partnership with Amazon, which includes three dedicated channels featuring on-demand crime, paranormal and wedding-themed content.

In CEEMEA, Eurosport Player OTT sports app and other investments in the
EVS XStore integrates Harmonic’s Mediarid

EVS has partnered with Harmonic to deliver the new XStore high-performance nearline storage solution. Designed to be flexible, XStore is optimised for use in studios, broadcast centres and major host broadcasting facilities. EVS has united its three XStore products into a single storage platform. The nearline platform benefits from a fully redundant technical architecture and comes in various form factors, starting at 4RU with redundant and highly available metadata servers and 2RUB (or 550 hours of HD content) capacity. When higher capacities are needed, XStore can scale up to petabytes using four or five RU chassis of up to 500TB. The platform’s high-density form-factor maximises capacity and minimises rack space. The XStore system will be rolled out in a number of installations including several upcoming major sporting events in 2018. One of the first public demonstrations of the system will be at IBC2017 where the in-house TV channel, IBC TV, will use it for the live production of content throughout the show.

Veritas prepares for multi-cloud environment

Veritas Technologies has announced new solutions that provide organisations with multi-cloud data management, bi-directional cloud migration for critical workloads and snapshot-based data protection optimised for multi-cloud environments. These latest technologies build on recent alliances and partnership announcements with a variety of cloud providers including Google, IBM and Microsoft. “The Middle East faces the challenge of high volumes of unstructured data that create additional risk and raise concerns around governance, especially in this rapidly changing regulatory environment,” said Johnny Karm, Vice President, Emerging Markets, Veritas. “Our new solutions help support customers in the Middle East as they migrate to a multi-cloud world, providing vital data visibility, protection and management of data as organisations across the region accelerate their digital business transformation and ready themselves for GDPR. The time for these advancements in multi-cloud technology has never been more relevant. IDC estimates that 90% of enterprise organisations plan to use multi-cloud architectures.”

NEC launches 4K laser projector

NEC has announced the launch of the NC3541L, a high-level brightness cinema laser projector for large screens. It offers 35,000 lumens of brightness output using red and blue (RB) laser technology. NEC has brought this technology to market, providing a display solution for large-format cinema installations up to 32m wide. The NC3541L offers colourful images via the RB laser system, delivering a 4K cinema experience. The new laser system features red and blue lasers paired with green phosphor to produce a rich colour spectrum for the ultimate movie-going experience. This combination of both laser phosphor and RGB laser technology delivers benefits in terms of operational efficiency and immersive image quality. Central to the NC3541L is image quality with full 4K resolution (3840 x 2160 pixels) support and a wide colour space that combines to deliver a homogeneous and contrast-rich laser image quality to showcase the latest 4K cinema content to its fullest extent, particularly in larger cinemas.

Waze Digital integrates TrackVia into live services

Waze Digital has incorporated TrackVia’s low-code application platform into the Waze Digital media hub and related services. As a result, customers that use live event services can integrate real-time scoring data into their live-event workflows, giving both on-site production teams and remote operators instant information that can help them make editorial and production decisions about how to use the live content.

Telestream reaches Lightspeed 2.0

Telestream has announced version 2.0 of Lightspeed Live Capture, its multichannel video capture and processing system. Designed for content creators and owners with large tape archives, Lightspeed Live Capture 2.0 is said to be able to simplify the process of converting existing tape libraries into file-based formats, for better long-term storage and faster monetisation. With decades of content sitting in tape archives, there is growing concern regarding the longevity of magnetically recorded tapes. With perfect storage conditions, tapes can last for decades, but with heat and humidity and less than ideal conditions, magnetic tape longevity suffers. Transferring master tapes to a file-based format also makes them easily accessible and a potential source of new revenue. “The latest features in Lightspeed Live Capture are targeted at organisations wishing to convert large tape libraries into file-based assets,” said Paul Turner, VP of Product Management at Telestream. “To do this cost-effectively, it’s imperative to automate as much of the process as possible, including capture, analysis and QC, and conversion.”

Brainstorm’s modular approach

Brainstorm’s Asto media editors combine requirements from 2D graphics with data-driven digital, video and picture elements, 3D objects and external data coming from a variety of sources. Asto allows designers to create, manipulate, animate and perform last-minute changes, even in on-air operation. Asto seamlessly imports a variety of standard 3D movie and picture formats, MOS-compatible and dual channel ready, the Asto integrates seamlessly with collaborative environments such as newsroom systems, video servers, NLEs and other third-party applications to quickly and easily produce graphics in a wide range of demanding requirements, from fast turn-around news to branding and finance.

Canon introduces new EOS cameras

Canon Middle East has introduced two new DSLR cameras to the EOS family – the EOS 77D and the EOS 800D, including a 24.2MP APS-C CMOS sensor and DIGIC 7 processor. Alongside the cameras, Canon has also added the EF-S 18-150mm f/3.5-5.6 IS STM – the smallest non-retractable DSLR kit lens of its focal range – as well as the remote controller BR-E1, perfect for remote capture with no line of sight up to five metres away. For low-light shots from sunrise to sunset, the cameras let you shoot up to ISO 25,600 – extendable to 51,200. With 65 cross-type AF points, the cameras focus quickly, track moving objects accurately and capture sharp images. Both cameras also include 7.680-pixel RGB+IR metering to detect fine details such as skin tone and offer accurate exposure. The cameras capture detail and smooth motion in movies as well as stills, catching fast-moving subjects in full HD 60p and HDR movie shooting.

VSN brings Wedit

Wedit is a new web-integrated editing tool that journalists and video editors to manage and edit all their video clips in the cloud from a unique interface and without switching tabs to any third-party NLE. The integration of this new web-based editor within the VSNExplorer MAM system will enable new and advanced workflows. “Our new web-based video tool breaks ground in allowing editors to manage and edit all of their assets in the cloud from a single interface, which streamlines editing and enables new, advanced workflows,” said Jordi Capdevila, VSN Marketing Director. “In effect, Wedit is a cloud content editor, because it allows users to access and edit files in the cloud.”

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PROPRODUCTS

Cinegy unveils Multiviewer 12

Cinegy has unveiled Cinegy Multiviewer 12. Using Cinegy Multiviewer 12 software, users can marry professional yet inexpensive servers with mid-range NVIDIA graphics cards and effortlessly decode 24 channels of HD. Cinegy co-founder and Managing Director Jan Weigner said: “With the advanced power and increasing efficiency of CPUs and, more importantly, GPUs such as those produced by NVIDIA, it’s very effective to build a software-based multiviewer. The ability of Cinegy software to offload most processing onto the GPU to take full advantage of its power really sets it apart.” Cinegy Multiviewer 12 can also share RAM with all relevant Cinegy software running on the same machine. Previously, if users wanted to take the output from Cinegy Air PRO, Cinegy Live or Cinegy Capture and display it anywhere else, they still had to jump through an RTP hoop, i.e., create an MPEG transport stream then compress and decompress it.

Panasonic launches new Lumix DC-TZ90

Panasonic has introduced the Lumix DC-TZ90 as a new model in its travel zoom TZ series. The latest camera has an upgraded resolution of 20.3MP, and boosts a 30x optical zoom (35mm camera equivalent: 24-720mm) in a pocket-sized body while enabling 4K video/4K photo shooting performances. Additionally, the new tiltable rear monitor lets users enjoy a high-resolution QFHD 4K videos in 3840x2160 at 30p (60Hz) /60p (30p) in MP4. Taking advantage of 4K technology, users can capture flowing photo opportunities at 30fps in 8-Megapixel equivalent resolution as a 4K PHOTO. More practical functions based on the 4K technology are also available.

Black Box expands video wall processor

Black Box has announced the expansion of its Radian video wall processor line with the new 1000 series (RWP-1040). Designed primarily for business applications, this Radian helps users create video walls that display digital signage in boardrooms, sports venues and other professional and public spaces. Operators can freely place content anywhere on up to 24 displays of large-scale, multi-window walls. They can also drag, drop, resize and scale windows to any size. The Radian 1000 series can also be managed from any PC over a network, making it easy to achieve real-time control. It’s also compact enough to be deployed outside the server room and quiet enough to be used in a conference room.

The new series supports AKBR/DH and is compatible with ultra high-definition displays. With six universal slots, the system VO can be expanded as needed to support up to 250 IP video streams, or up to 24 displays.

Qualcomm’s next-gen audio amplifier

Qualcomm Technologies has introduced its next-generation Qualcomm DDFA audio amplifier technology for high-resolution audio devices including wireless speakers, soundbars, networked audio and headphones amplifiers. Traditional class D amplifiers, though power-efficient, typically don’t deliver the audio quality of traditional linear amplifiers. DDFAs all-digital PWM (pulse width modulator) and patented closed-loop architecture compensate for nonlinearities of power supply and output stages, and are designed to deliver much higher fidelity audio and design flexibility while retaining the advantages of class D amplifiers. The next-generation DDFA will be available on the CSR4422i SoC, a highly integrated platform which includes a DDFA controller with eight channel inputs, two channel outputs, microcontroller and configurable audio processor all of which help OEMs to integrate best-in-class amplifier performance in a less complexly costly/effective way than was previously possible. The new CSR4422i platform is available as a 3mm x 4mm 16QFN package, suitable for smaller form factor products.

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The Ramadan Phenomenon

"There was a 163% increase in viewership during the first six days of Ramadan in the new areas of Dubai, with general entertainment and series channels recording the highest jump in viewership minutes"

The Ramadan TV phenomenon is unique to the MENA region, where a typical TV viewer tunes into their favourite drama, switches channels during the ad break and watches the same drama on at least two other channels.

A total of 1.367 hours of Arabic language series based on all regional dialects was produced this year for Ramadan viewing. There are more than one thousand channels on Nielsen alone, most of which rely on this time of year for a spike in ratings.

Based on ChannelSculptor’s research, there was a 163% increase in viewership during the first six days of Ramadan in the new areas of Dubai, with general entertainment and series channels recording the highest jump in viewership minutes. The same trend extends to internet delivery: an Egyptian Ramadan drama on YouTube typically records from three to 60m views.

Why are broadcasters buying the same drama for Ramadan? Is it a case of insufficient supply or does the issue lie with the high cost of production? If we group Ramadan 2017 series production costs by language across all regional dialects, we get a similar proportion of all Khaleeji commissioned to Synergy Media, and of the Egyptian productions were or in classical Arabic. A quarter the remainder are mixed dialects are Egyptian. 23% come from the genres, 56% of the series produced production companies, with Eagle Plans, Shamyana, and Golden Line taking the lead.

A popular title such as Beekelk / Eagle Plans’ La Tofit’ El Shams has been broadcast by at least seven different FTA channels. With the exception of MBC, who usually air a share of exclusive content every year, most FTA channels here work with the same production companies and share the same titles.

Spreading production costs amongst several broadcasters is the only way producers can recoup their very high Ramadan production costs. As a result, some interesting categorizations of territories, platforms, and time frames come into play, creating a rather complex framework of broadcasting rights.

For example, a drama series such as Al Zubeih is sold exclusively to ON TV for Egypt, but is also airing on other FTA channels such as Abu Dhabi TV. Both are FTA channels broadcasting across the whole MENA region, but with audiences predominantly in different territories. Production companies are also using innovative ways to create more value for their assets. While some have non-exclusive policies all around, others categorise exclusive and non-exclusive rights based on platforms and territories combined. A TV asset could be sold exclusively to an FTA broadcaster including digital rights, but also non-exclusively to multiple OTT platforms.

“Who is the buyer?” is the first question to answer when establishing the price of an asset. When it comes to pricing of the asset in Ramadan, the two most prominent factors that have an influence on the price seem to be the perceived audience size of the prospective buyer and the urgency of the deal (how many days left to the start of Ramadan).

So the more an asset is sold across, the more viability it gets and the more it’s being watched, right? Not necessarily. YouTube stats show that the Egyptian Ramadan drama with the most recorded views (exceeding 60m), is airing on only two channels. While linear TV viewership definitely increases during Ramadan, on-demand and OTT viewing cannot be ignored. That’s probably why iflix caught on the trend and is hosting Wahdiosha Wahle, a popular Ramadan production exclusive for the first time ever on an OTT platform.

There’s a lot of great content out there, but it’s not always easy to find for newcomers. Content deals take place in an ad hoc way, relying on personal contacts and experience. The MENA TV industry would benefit from greater transparency and easier ways for content buyers and new content producers to find each other.

This would generate more sales, create more variety and help to establish clearer standards for content pricing. 121

Additionally, DIGITAL 9000 offers control functions that make system setup simple and fail-safe. The highly intuitive user interface provides a complete overview of system performance offering peace of mind in challenging live situations. A pinnacle of innovation, DIGITAL 9000 is the best-in-class digital wireless system available and represents a future-proof investment. We’re lifting the curtain. You’ll get to know it DIGITAL 9000 – The Wireless Masterpiece.

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