Blink brings animated characters into our world with mixed reality

RAISING THE STAKES
Al Aan TV streamlines workflows and goes social

MAKING OTT WORK
MIKE LANG ON THE HULU STRATEGY

WHERE REEL MEETS REAL
Blink brings animated characters into our world with mixed reality
Hi, Dynamic Range!

The new hDK-73
3-CMOS HDTV Camera System
HDR-ready

www.ikegami.eu

Ikegami Electronics Europe GmbH
V is for VENICE

The VENICE servers help us by reliably digitizing the various input media and preparing them for further processing.

Ove Sander, Technical Manager – Digital Cinema, Berlin International Film Festival

VENICE provides a winning solution for today’s workflow challenges. It is unrivaled as a flexible ingest and playout platform. Our customers are highly satisfied using this champion in their environment. We let them speak for themselves:

www.rohde-schwarz.com/ad/venice

Rohde & Schwarz Technology Day
“Scene to Screen”
Riyadh, November 29th, 2017
Register now: www.rohde-schwarz.com/sene-to-screen-mea

Rohde & Schwarz

November 2017

Inside this issue

05 NEWS
PLC ties with Sportradar, Al Dafrah upgrades to HD, OSN and Dubai Customs combat piracy, Eutelsat acquires Noorsat, BBC Minute launches in Beirut and more

14 GOLF FOR BROADCASTERS
We bring you highlights from the BroadcastPro Masters Cup

20 POLE POSITION WITH VR
From storyboarding to modeling and rendering, the Blink team shares the “frustrating” journey to creating Karim and Noor

32 BLAZING A TRAIL
Dave Armstrong of Blaze on carving a niche beyond leveraging the ARN brand

36 26°E WITH ARABsat
An overview of the robust debates on 4K and more at the two-day customer forum

42 CREATING hULU IN MENA
“Broadcasters have to come to the table as equals,” advises Mike Lang, one of the founders of Hulu

48 AL AAN TV UPGRADES
CTO Raad Haddadin walks us through the technology upgrades

53 TECHNOLOGY TRENDS
Launches from Shure, Dolby, RED and more

56 PAY-TV DELIVERY
The game is far from over for sports broadcasters, says Stuart Ferriera-Cole of Ostmodern
A2Zarabia.com launches shopping channel for MENA

Online portal A2Zarabia.com launched a shopping channel, A2Zarabia TV, on Nilesat last month. Co-founder Parvez Ahmed described the free-to-air channel on frequency 11938V as a complementary platform towards creating brand awareness for the year-old classified and shopping portal. The 24-hour channel is currently being uplinked to Nilesat through the Samacom teleport in the UAE, and is played out of the UK. Speaking to BroadcastPro ME, Ahmed said: ‘We are working towards having targeted content at specific times catering to various demographics. For instance, the morning hours would focus on beauty and fashion, targeting women between the ages of 25 and 45. Later in the day, we will have content on property and automobiles, largely targeting a male demographic. Eventually, we are looking at offering a platform for day-to-day lifestyle events as well.’

The channel plays out to a potential MENA audience of 380 million, but the aim according to Ahmed is to focus on certain countries in the initial four to five years of expansion. ‘We are speaking to du, Etisalat, Batelco, OSN and others to see if our channel can be hosted on their platforms. A set-top box typically comes with preset channels, and not all the FTA channels find space. We are looking at maximising our visibility,’ Ahmed said.

Based in Dubai, A2ZArabia TV shares a platform. The channel’s management and media services are broadcast from its broadcast affiliate network across Fox’s global distribution hub in Abu Dhabi. As part of the deal, Ericsson will encode the channels for distribution across Fox’s global affiliate network from its broadcast and media services hub in Abu Dhabi and Hilversum, using Ericsson’s secure internet distribution platform.

The world of professional multi-camera video moves fast. That’s why we build every NewTek system with the future firmly in mind. So our solutions are software upgradable to make the most of your investment. You can mix legacy SDI with cutting-edge IP. And, every NewTek solution gives you more than you expect for less than you think. Simply, with NewTek, you can go as far and as fast as you want.

Learn more about NewTek solutions in person at The Westin in Dubai, visit http://new.tk/5b to find out more.
MENA coalition helps shut down 30 pirate channels

The MENA Broadcast Satellite Anti-Piracy Coalition, which held its 11th meeting in Amsterdam recently, celebrated the shutting down of 30 Arabic and western pirate TV channels since the summer, in their latest meeting. Another 20 other channels have recently stopped violating copyrights.

Sam Barnett, MBC Group CEO, said during the meeting: “With this latest series of actions, the satellite broadcast industry in the region has effectively cleansed itself of the piracy scourge that has previously would not have happened due to piracy.”

Members of the coalition also discussed the growing threat from illegal internet streaming and downloads, and agreed to work together in order to strengthen their relationship with authorities in their context.

Omar Al Hammoud, Head of the Legal Department of the MPA in Europe and the Middle East and Africa, added: “We need to build on the great successes achieved by the coalition so far. We now need to solidify our efforts in tackling satellite piracy and open a new front into online, such as IPTV and illicit streaming device piracy.”

In a joint commitment, the coalition members also agreed to collaborate and develop an online site-blocking IPTV strategy.

Elsaidat’s Senior Manager for Mobile and Satellite Products, Abdulaziz Al Naami, revealed the existence of an IP blocking tool in coordination with the authorities within the UAE and promised their full commitment towards the coalition.

Intellectual Property (IP) Specialist, Office of the U.S. IP Attaché for the MENA, Raed Al Hout, added that “we will continue coordinating with relevant IP enforcement agencies, including the U.S. National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center in establishing the important work of the MENA Broadcast Satellite Anti-Piracy Coalition, and look forward to building upon our collaborative endeavors in future initiatives.”

OSN launches anti-piracy game with Dubai Customs

A content protection game was launched at KidZania Dubai, to boost awareness of the threats of content theft.

The 60-second game, Copycat Combat, was the result of a collaboration between OSN and Dubai Customs, who have worked together previously to combat the import of illegal satellite and IPTV devices, and have championed intellectual property rights (IPR).

OSN’s 60-second game, Copycat Combat, was launched at KidZania Dubai, to boost awareness of the threats of content theft.

In a “Matrix-style” world, content thieves zap OSN’s content and assets with powerful laser rays. The game player must shield the collection with armoured gloves during an assault that requires fast reflexes and accuracy. Commenting on the choice of medium and target audience, Sophie Moufleh, Chief Legal Officer, OSN, stated: “OSN is the first in the world to launch a content protection game that helps children to understand the massive threats that the entertainment industry faces from content theft.”

BBC World Service in Beirut launches video packages

The BBC World Service has launched new video versions of BBC Minuta – dynamic, 60-second news bursts aimed at younger audiences around the world – and signed new broadcasting agreements with radio stations in Egypt and Jordan. The BBC Minuta team was in Beirut last month to mark the launch of BBC Minuta Video, broadcasting for 12 hours from the studios of partner station, Radio One Lebanon.

The launch of BBC Minuta Video comes at the same time as BBC Minuta signs up two new partner stations – Nisa FM in Cairo, Egypt and Mood FM in Amman, Jordan – who will take audio versions of BBC Minuta, bringing the BBC’s journalism to new audiences in the Middle East.

MyContent to attract media professionals from 50 countries


More than 150 companies from around 50 countries are expected to attend. Participants will include representatives from TV stations and broadcasters, production companies, distributors, agents, licensees, investors and government officials.

Making their debut this year, will be media companies from Romania, Estonia, Cambodia, Spain, Russia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Running parallel to the exhibition, MyContent 2017 will feature speakers who will share their insights on social media, content creation in the UAE, Esports, infight entertainment and other topical issues.

TSL to set up facility for MBC-HSE24 joint venture

Systems integrator TSL Middle East will undertake the systems design and installation of the studio for HSE24, a German home shopping network, in Dubai Studio City.

Earlier in the year, HSE24 Group and MBC signed a joint venture agreement to establish a home shopping company in the GCC. HSE24 holds a 60% stake in the Dubai-based company, while MBC owns 35%. The new venture will focus on the sale of fashion, beauty and jewellery items across the MENA.

The JV will initially focus on the establishment of a head office, logistics, and TV production facilities in Dubai. Its launch is expected to take place in 2018, starting in KSA and the UAE, followed by a gradual roll-out in other GCC countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman.

Speaking to Broadcast Pro ME, Suhail Ahmed, Chief Technology Officer, TSL, ME, said: “We participated in a tender and, among the four system integrators that participated, I am happy to say we won. “We signed the contract in the first week of September 2017. The project is underway currently.

“The project will see a few consolidations of workflows. There will be technology innovations that we will be bringing to this project. Hopefully we are able to meet the expectations and deadlines of both MBC and HSE24.”

UAE’s ProLeague Committee ties with Sportradar

The UAE’s Pro League Committee for football has signed an agreement with Sportradar, a sports data and technology company. According to the deal, PLC will house Sportradar’s regional office and serve as the company’s regional partner for the Middle East. Sportradar, in turn, will provide statistics for all PLC competitions and contribute to its efforts to engage UAE society in football and expand the PLC follower base through social media, in addition to revitalising fan passion for the game through advanced media content and spreading information that contributes to attracting more fans across the country to attend games.

The signing ceremony was attended by PLC Acting CEO Waleed Al Hosani and Sportradar representatives Alex Inglot, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, and Roko Coko, Director Digital Sports APAC and ME.
Eutelsat acquires Noorsat

Eutelsat Communications has acquired satellite service provider Noorsat from Bahrain’s Orbit Holding Group. Established in 2004, Noorsat is the distributor of Eutelsat capacity in the Middle East, providing services for more than 300 TV channels almost exclusively from Eutelsat’s MENA neighbourhoods at 7/8° West and 25.5° East.

Eutelsat Chief Commercial and Development Officer Michel Anibert said: “Noorsat’s capabilities and market knowledge will further consolidate our longstanding position in the dynamic Middle East video market.”

Eutelsat has acquired 100% of Noorsat for a consideration of $75 million, debt-free and cash-free. The acquisition will reportedly add upwards of $15 million to Eutelsat’s consolidated revenues on an annualised basis after the elimination of the capacity leased by Eutelsat from Noorsat.

Globecast has announced the appointment of Juliet Walker as Chief Marketing Officer effective immediately. In her role, Walker will focus on Globecast’s customer value proposition and driving profitable revenue growth.

Globecast has announced the appointment of Juliet Walker as Chief Marketing Officer effective immediately. In her role, Walker will focus on Globecast’s customer value proposition and driving profitable revenue growth.

Best show: USA
Best encoding and multiplexing: Germany

Trusted German engineering: encoding and multiplexing solutions from Rohde & Schwarz

The R&S AWHE100 encoding and multiplexing solution’s all-software architecture has been engineered to provide the highest picture quality for OTT/OTT and conventional broadcasting. Designed for near 100% reliability, only the R&S AWHE100 with CrossFlow® technology can be trusted to always deliver your content.

To learn more about this unique reliability concept, check out our new website with groundbreaking content, news and stories: www.rohde-schwarz.com/3dencoder

Fighting Fit Dubai secures distributor

Limonero Films has teamed up with Nomad TV Media to distribute two seasons of lifestyle series Fighting Fit Dubai. Winner of Best Amateur Sports Event in Dubai (2014 and 2017), Fighting Fit Dubai has been commissioned for a third season and has aired on GSN Sports and Econet in South Africa. The reality show aims to transform the lives of a cross-section of the public.

Nomad is a video production company and Limonero Films is an independent boutique distributor of factual programming based in London.
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.

**Go fast. Save Time.**

Disney and E-Vision extend SVoD agreement

E-Vision, a MENA content aggregator, and The Walt Disney Company Middle East have announced the signing of a new second pay window deal for movies and series, in addition to the renewal of a multi-year agreement for Disney library content. Disney content coming to eLife TV subscribers includes The Good Dinosaur, The Finest Hours and Inside Out. TV series include Secrets and Lies, Quantico and Black-ish.

“We believe the access to Disney content will continue to drive the uptake of our service and cement our partnership with The Walt Disney Company even further,” said Humaid Sahoo, CEO E-Vision.

Du subscribers offered free OSN Wavo trial

Dubai telecom operator du has signed a deal to provide free exclusive subscription to OSN’s online and mobile app entertainment platform Wavo, until the end of the year. The content deal provides du customers with 14 channels of general entertainment, five for movies and six for sports, available in bundles or separate packs. Premium content includes HBO hit series Westworld and Big Little Lies.

Facebook opens regional HQ in Dubai

Marking a five-year milestone in the MENA, Facebook has opened the doors to its brand new regional headquarters in Dubai. The 20,000-sq-ft space features an open office concept, and showcases regional cultural inspirations through the various designs and artistic cues.

Since launching a local presence in the region in 2012, Facebook reportedly has 164 million monthly active people. With more than 60 employees, Facebook has grown its MENA user base by 264%.

Jonathan Labin, Managing Director, MENA & Pakistan at Facebook, said: “Across Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon and many more countries in the region, we are seeing users, content creators, and brands use Facebook in new and innovative ways, unlike anywhere in the world. We are only 1% finished in our journey here, and we are excited about what lies ahead in this young, connected, and mobile-first region.”

Anevia powers triple play in Cairo

Anevia has announced its all-in-one headend, Flamingo, has been selected by Sodic to launch their GoSmart services including triple play and smart homes, in Egypt. Sodic West boasts 4,000 residents and can accommodate up to 40,000 people and offers a range of services. Flamingo is an all-in-one modular solution that captures TV and radio signals from various sources such as satellite, DTT, cable, fibre and HDMI, to stream video content directly to Sodic West homes.

Icflix premieres first original Moroccan production

Icflix premiered its first original production across theatres in the country last month. Burnout is directed by Nour Eddine Lakhmari and co-produced by NBL Films. Nour Eddine Lakhmari’s fourth feature and the third in a series that includes Zero and Casanegra, the film focuses on social issues, depicting the struggle of the characters and their quest for love and humanity. Burnout will be Icflix’s first original Jawzaa (Arabic) production from Morocco and will join a line-up of titles such as WOH!, Dunia and Al Makida.

Facebook opens regional HQ in Dubai

Marking a five-year milestone in the MENA, Facebook has opened the doors to its brand new regional headquarters in Dubai. The 20,000-sq-ft space features an open office concept, and showcases regional cultural inspirations through the various designs and artistic cues. Since launching a local presence in the region in 2012, Facebook reportedly has 164 million monthly active people. With more than 60 employees, Facebook has grown its MENA user base by 264%.

Jonathan Labin, Managing Director, MENA & Pakistan at Facebook, said: “Across Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon and many more countries in the region, we are seeing users, content creators, and brands use Facebook in new and innovative ways, unlike anywhere in the world. We are only 1% finished in our journey here, and we are excited about what lies ahead in this young, connected, and mobile-first region.”

Anevia powers triple play in Cairo

Anevia has announced its all-in-one headend, Flamingo, has been selected by Sodic to launch their GoSmart services including triple play and smart homes, in Egypt. Sodic West boasts 4,000 residents and can accommodate up to 40,000 people and offers a range of services. Flamingo is an all-in-one modular solution that captures TV and radio signals from various sources such as satellite, DTT, cable, fibre and HDMI, to stream video content directly to Sodic West homes.

Icflix premieres first original Moroccan production

Icflix premiered its first original production across theatres in the country last month. Burnout is directed by Nour Eddine Lakhmari and co-produced by NBL Films. Nour Eddine Lakhmari’s fourth feature and the third in a series that includes Zero and Casanegra, the film focuses on social issues, depicting the struggle of the characters and their quest for love and humanity. Burnout will be Icflix’s first original Jawzaa (Arabic) production from Morocco and will join a line-up of titles such as WOH!, Dunia and Al Makida.
PROnews

Cartoon Network celebrates
7th anniversary with Ben 10

Cartoon Network has announced a new Ben 10 Challenge, a live-action game show giving children from across the Middle East an opportunity to become Ben 10. The challenge, launched on Cartoon Network Arabic last month, marked the seventh anniversary of the launch of the channel.

Hosted by Emirati presenter Ahmed Khamis, the live-action game show features a range of physical and mental challenges testing participants’ speed, strength and other Ben 10 villain-conquering skills. Filmed in August in Madrid, eight versions of the show were produced, to create content tailored exclusively for children in several key markets including the Middle East. Speaking about the airing, Darine El Khatib, Senior Director of Creative Strategy and Brand Development for Turner Middle East, North Africa and Turkey, said: “We were delighted to be able to give a number of children from across the Middle East the opportunity to take part in this exciting global venture, which truly complements our wider Ben 10 content offering across the linear channel, websites, apps and games.”

Nart Bouran to step down as CEO of SNA

Nart Bouran will step down as CEO of Sky News Arabia in January 2018. He will join The Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc. (MBN) as its new Senior Vice President for News, Programming and Transformation in early 2018. In this new role, Bouran will direct global programming operations for all MBN TV, radio and digital properties. He will lead MBN’s programme strategy across all its platforms, including Alhurra, Alhurra-iraq, Radio Sawa, Raise Your Voice, Maghreb Voices, and new initiatives.

Datavideo

INSTALLATIEGEMAK OP IEDERE LOCATIE

Datavideo introduceert een kit van HDBaseT apparatuur die het leven van een mobiele producent ofverschijnlijk eenvoudiger maakt. HDBaseT zorgt er voor dat alle signalen, zowel voedings- als video- en controle-signaalkanalen via een enkele netwerkkabel reizen. Datavideo biedt een totaaloplossing met hoge kwaliteit camera’s en een veelzijdige, eenvoudig te bedienen beeldmenger.

HS-1500T is een eenvoudig te bedienen mobiele studio met ondersteuning voor 3 HDBaseT bronnen. Deze worden direct op de mobiele studio aangesloten zonder tussenkomst van voedingsadapters. Hiermee is het aansluiten een eenvoudig karwei en klaar in een aantal minuten.

PTC-150T is een full HD pan/tilt/zoom camera met een groot zoombereik van 30x. Deze camera laat zich veilig via HDBaseT bedienen. Het video- en audiozignaal is verborgen in een enkel kabelnetwerk en wordt door de mobiele studio direct verwerkt. Daarbij heeft de mobiele studio een grote, heldere 7 inch monitor voor het visualiseren van het gesneden materiaal, waarmee de camera eenvoudig te bedienen is voor het live verslaan van sportevenementen, congressen en seminars.

Blackmagic Video Assist 4K adds professional monitoring, scopes, and HD and Ultra HD recording to any camera!

Now it’s easy to add professional monitoring and scopes, along with HD and Ultra HD recording to any camera! Blackmagic Video Assist 4K has a large super bright 7 inch monitor so you can see your shot clearly, making it easier to frame and get perfect focus! Featuring two high speed SD card recorders that save HD and Ultra HD video as 10 bit 4:2:2 ProRes or DNxHD files, you get superior quality than what most cameras can record.

On Set Monitor with Professional Scopes

The super bright 7 inch screen is bigger than the tiny displays found on most cameras! You get video monitoring and a highly accurate vector scope, RGB parade, waveform monitor, and histogram. With support for up to six 3D LUTs, focus assist, exposure tools with false color overlays and more, you’ll always get perfect looking shots!

Broadcast Quality Connections

Blackmagic Video Assist 4K includes HDMI and 6G-SDI inputs so you can record from virtually any camera or SDI input. The HDMI and SDI video outputs let you view shots on larger screens or even projectors! You also get a built in speaker, headphone jack, LANC, 12V power and two LP-E6 battery slots for non-stop power!

Non-Stop HD and Ultra HD Recording

Now you can bypass the lossy compression used on most DSLR and video cameras! With 2 high speed UP15-8 recorders that save commonly available SD cards, you’ll never miss a shot because when one card is full, recording automatically continues onto the next! You get 10 bit 4:2:2 ProRes or DNxHD files that work with all editing software.

High Quality Audio Recording

Get better quality sound recording than your camera! Blackmagic Video Assist 4K has a low noise floor of -128dBV so you can attach professional microphones. Audio is embedded in the same file with the video, so you don’t have to worry about syncing separate files.

Learn more at www.blackmagicdesign.com/ae

Learn more at www.broadcastprime.com | November 2017

Blackmagic Video Assist 4K

US$895*

*SRP excludes duties, shipping and sales tax.
Dubai production house hosts master class in cinematography

Behind the Scenes, a Dubai production house, hosted a master class for cinematographers with the support of Dubai Culture, DIFF and Dubai Film and TV Marches. Tanna had to revamp an existing studio. Tanna said: “There is an amazing amount of work to be done in Dubai, despite what the sceptics say. A lot of the work has shifted to digital. We have clients who have two-week campaigns and they are not looking at a typical $200,000 commercial that will run for six months; they would rather spend 10-15% of that budget for a short period of time.”

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME about his homecoming, Kinjal Tanna said: “This partnership with Orange Egypt and Starz Play will allow Orange’s customers to binge-watch TV series or stream their favourite movies on the go. We have tied up with a Ukraine-based distribution company that is interested in Arabic content and put us in direct touch with the authorised rights holders. Now we will also begin marketing international shows to MENA buyers. “It’s great to see the global industry understanding what we are doing. The lack of transparency and liquidity in the MENA content market has stifled investment and growth for too long. The mena.tv Content Hub aims to make it easier to license great TV to and from the region,” commented Nick Grande, MD of ChannelSculptor.

Dubai producer revamps studio

After a six-year working break in Mumbai, where he produced around 65 commercial films, Kinjal Tanna is back at his home base, Dubai, that has a newly revamped studio. Kinjal Tanna is back at his home base, Dubai, that has a newly revamped studio. Kinjal Tanna is back at his home base, Dubai, that has a newly revamped studio. After a six-year working break in Mumbai, where he produced around 65 commercial films, Kinjal Tanna is back at his home base, Dubai, that has a newly revamped studio. Tanna is back at his home base, Dubai, that has a newly revamped studio. Tanna said: “There is an amazing amount of work to be done in Dubai, despite what the sceptics say. A lot of the work has shifted to digital. We have clients who have two-week campaigns and they are not looking at a typical $200,000 commercial that will run for six months; they would rather spend 10-15% of that budget for a short period of time.”

Speaking to BroadcastPro ME about his homecoming, Kinjal Tanna said: “This partnership with Orange Egypt and Starz Play will allow Orange’s customers to binge-watch TV series or stream their favourite movies on the go. We have tied up with a Ukraine-based distribution company that is interested in Arabic content and put us in direct touch with the authorised rights holders. Now we will also begin marketing international shows to MENA buyers. “It’s great to see the global industry understanding what we are doing. The lack of transparency and liquidity in the MENA content market has stifled investment and growth for too long. The mena.tv Content Hub aims to make it easier to license great TV to and from the region,” commented Nick Grande, MD of ChannelSculptor.

The mena.tv Content Hub, a ChannelSculptor initiative, won international recognition at Cannes last month when it was awarded “Best Distribution Initiative of 2017” at the TBI Content Innovation Awards, held on the eve of MIPCOM 2017 in Cannes. Speaking about the recognition it has received, Heba Korayem, Client Director for mena.tv said: “mena.tv is already marketing content from 15 regional power houses. There is a mix of high quality, original first run productions such as Big World and Rijal Arrasool and major shows such as Bassem Youssef’s America Red Arabi but that is just the beginning. MIPCOM was a busy week for us, and our registered users in the broadcast community. Presentations focused on next-gen broadcasting. The Professional Seminar Series returned to the Middle East last month with the theme of ‘How to maintain simple and powerful operations in a transitioning industry.’ Experts from TSL Products, New Zealand and Dolby shared leading-edge knowledge with the broadcast community. Presentations focused on IP in a significant detail.
The unique highlight of the day-long event was the first ever Golf Academy for those broadcast professionals wanting to learn to play golf. Pro golf player Alex Shedden conducted the academy.

Prizes were given away at the evening dinner, an annual tradition at the popular industry event. With a score of 60, the winning team included: Chris Darnley, Graham Barrett, Orjan Myklebust and Ian Houghton. The prize was a complimentary 18-hole round of golf, courtesy Selevision. The second place went to Paul Wallis, Graham Lay, Andy Jackson and Stefan Cebula who won vouchers from The Meat Company. In third place were Tony Fernando, Mohammed Ghafar, Tomas Delden and Dipesh Makwana. The nearest to the pin winner was Neil Stewart and Dipesh Makwana, who recently moved to 7 Productions, won the longest drive. Both received Sennheiser Momentum Red Bull Limited Edition noise cancellation headphones. Hassan Ghoul, Fabrice Praino, Tomas Delden and Graham Lay won some prizes including headsets from Sennheiser and three-month memberships at the CRYO health wellness services centre. The event was sponsored by Selevision, Fox Networks Group Middle East, Sennheiser and The Meat Company. Photographs of the event can be viewed at http://www.broadcastprome.com
From December 6-13, Dubai International Film Festival will celebrate international cinema and honour the legends of MENA filmmaking

**Arab Lifetime Achievement Award for Egyptian screenwriter Wahid Hamed**

This year’s Arab Lifetime Achievement Award will recognize illustrious Egyptian writer Wahid Hamed, celebrating his achievements in screenwriting and outstanding contributions to the industry. One of Egypt’s most acclaimed writers, with a career that spans four decades, Hamed has an impressive list of credits to his name. His breakthrough came in the television series Dreams of the Fly Boy (1978), which started his long collaboration with distinguished actor Adel Imam. Iconic work was created when the pair came together, including Al Erhab (1983), a black comedy about government corruption and Muslim Brotherhood politics, Al Ghoul (1983) and Toyour El Zalam (1995), which saw Hamed’s son Marwan take the director’s chair. Other films include Syrian filmmaker Feras Fayyad’s Last Men in Aleppo, Lebanese filmmaker Rana Eid’s Panoptic, Iraqi filmmaker Mohammed Jaffar Al-Daradji’s The Journey and Kurdish director, Suhim Omar Kalil’s Zagros.

**‘Cinema of the world’ programme**

ArabLifetime Achievement Award will be awarded to the world's greatest film actors, writers, directors and producers. Previous winners include Gabriel Yared, Samuel L. Jackson, Sami Bouajila and Omar Sharif. Muhr feature category showcases regional storytelling whose work highlights and explores the traditions and culture of the diverse Arab world. The first feature film shortlisted comes from Algerian filmmaker Yasmine Chouikh with Until the End of Time. It tells the story of the Ziara, a time of year during which families visit their dead. Egyptian filmmaker Hala Elkoussy presents Cactus Flower, which follows the journey and personal struggles of a visually-impaired woman. Also included in the shortlist are Nabil Ayouch’s Moroccan thriller Astra, directed by Nidhal Guiga, and the Syrian documentary hit The Journey and Kurdish director, Suhim Omar Kalil’s Zagros.

**The Muhr Short category**

Three Arab films set to impress at DIFF

Three Arab films that impressed audiences at the BFI London Film Festival come to DIFF. As one of the few Palestinian films not to focus on political issues, Anemarie Jacir’s Wajib offers a rare look at the Christian Palestinian community in Palestine today. Moroccan director Nahil Ayyouch’s Baziya is a multi-story narrative drama that explores different – yet thematically coherent – stories that explore the Moroccan identity and highlight unique stories of minorities in Morocco. Iraqi filmmaker Mohammed Al-Daradji’s The Journey focuses on an encounter between two strangers in Baghdad’s central atatun. From Saudi Arabia, Hajar Alshnaib brings Detailed. Joining Alshnaib is Fadi Al-Abed with The Last Days of the Man of Tomorrow, Tunisian filmmaker Abdelhamid Bouchnak’s Le Bonheur, Jordanian-Palestinian director Yasmina Karajah’s Rupture and Lebanese filmmaker Marwan Khoury’s The Saviors.

**Cat Blanchett to Head IWC Filmmakers Jury at DIFF 2017**

Cate Blanchett will head the IWC Filmmakers Jury for the sixth IWC Filmmakers Award. A $100,000 prize will be awarded to one feature-length film project in development, to help the winning filmmaker bring the idea to fruition on the big screen. Previous years have seen winning scripts from Emirati directors Abdulla Hassan Ahmed and Layla Kulti, Kuwaiti director Abdullah Bousaibah and British-Iraqi director Maysoon Pachachi.
There is something about the animated characters Karim and the lantern, Noor, on the wooden floor of Blink Studios, beside a manic vending machine spewing chocolates, that blurs the distinction between a hard-nosed trade journalist and a six-year-old at Comic-Con in Dubai.

“What is he doing?” his mother asked, surprised to see her son trying to pick invisible stuff off the floor,” recalls Nathalie Habib, creator and Executive Producer at Dubai-based Blink Studios. “The boy looked up at his mother and said, ‘Mom, I am trying to pick up the sweets falling out of the vending machine.’

That the boy could see his mother while still engaging with the animated action on the floor of Comic-Con was the prime reason Producer and Director Hani Kichi and his team at Blink, including Habib, decided on the medium of mixed reality (MR).

“With virtual reality, the child enters another world and can move around, potentially hurting himself. Mixed reality allows the child to engage with content within his or her own real environment,” says Kichi, in conversation with BroadcastPro ME.

MR is just the newest technical vehicle for Blink to take forward an idea conceived by Habib in 2016, to convey social, emotional learning, through animated characters Karim and Noor. What started as a linear animated series has now morphed into an MR series supported technically by Microsoft’s HoloLens, described as the first self-contained holographic computer, enabling users to engage with their digital content and interact with holograms in the world around them.

BroadcastPro ME met the Blink team at a very busy Microsoft stand during GITEX 2017. As a steady stream of trade visitors are wowed by the virtual world of Karim and Noor, Habib briefs us on how the collaboration came about.

“A chance meeting in Abu Dhabi in 2016 with Playing Forward, a Los Angeles-based technical development company, started it all. We had just completed the first linear animated season of Karim and Noor and we were prepping for the second season. When they watched the episodes, they were keen to have the series on their global platform as mixed reality content. We were then introduced to the world of the HoloLens. The company was working on mixed reality and enhancing what Microsoft had already built.

“The revenue-sharing, co-production deal that we struck required us to do the production, with Playing Forward taking on marketing and distribution. Season 2 of Karim and Noor is one of the four intellectual properties for global.
The Bond Backpack is an all in one HEVC bonded cellular broadcasting solution that helps you go live from even the most difficult locations.
Karim and Noor was conceived by Nathalie Habib in 2016, to convey social, emotional learning, through animated characters.

“Driver Dan’s Story Train, among others. However, when it came to script writing for mixed reality, the learning curve was steep but fun.”

The questions the two script writers hired from Ireland asked were the first indications that the team at Blink was not just looking at new technology, but a mental shift in story telling. Kichi says, “Mixed reality is a new way of consuming content. It is a new way of producing content. It is a new way of storytelling. The international writers we hired for the second season came back with a list of questions that appeared laughable. But the questions were completely valid, considering we were grappling with new technology where virtual characters engage the viewer in his or her own environment. Where do they come out of frame? How do we start? Can we cut to another scene? Can we fade in and fade out? Can the character go out of frame? Is there no frame. Can the time pass quickly? Can you fast forward to another scene?”

A typical six-week timeline for each two-minute episode of Kevins and Noor in the linear world stretched to two whole months of Skype sessions between the Blink team and their counterparts in Los Angeles. On the back and forth across continents, Habib says: “While the script writers grappled with questions as to whether Karim can shower or not, we had to get our 3D artists who had worked on Maya and 3ds Max up to speed. The technical team from LA cross-checked our work, advising us on how to deal with the production challenges. “The team had to deconstruct their traditional approaches and start with basic building blocks. Initially it was frustrating, but then there was the mental switch. The production pipeline started to emerge. Our first episode took the longest time because it was trial and error, with a lot of back and forth to get it right from the visual perspective, story perspective, production perspective and so on.”

The 10% that the Blink team takes pride in investing in internal projects was spent largely on training its 3D artists to restructure their thinking in terms of rigging, texturing and modelling for mixed reality while introducing them to software such as Unity and Microsoft Visual Studio.

Understanding the technology was centre stage, but Kichi and Habib knew they still had a story to tell. Only now, in mixed reality, the curious Karim and the lantern robot Noor were imparting their values in the viewer’s living room or bedroom. On the radial shift in canvas, Kichi says: “When we started working with the team in LA, we did not know much about the HoloLens. And while they knew the technology, what we discovered was because it was the first time they were tackling storytelling, our questions posed challenges we both needed to find answers for.”

Mixed reality is defined as an extension of VR and AR, creating environments in which digital and physical objects can interact. This definition was cold comfort for the scriptwriting team faced with issues of Karim having to shower or the need for time to pass, issues that are solved easily in any linear production. Habib explains the production conundrum: “For example, Karim and Noor can’t just come out of nowhere. You can have Karim drop into space, but you have to write, ‘He drops into space and lands on the ground.’ While there are limitations, new avenues of storytelling opened up. For the passage of time, we could not have the character say, ‘Oh, see you at three in the afternoon.’ The dialogue-free nature of Karim and Noor placed an extra burden on us. Time lapse was used to show passage of time. ‘At the end of the day with mixed reality, if you are not engaging with your reality, why do it? You need a story that makes sense in your reality. Mixed reality is not a gimmick. The 3D props we created saved the day for us. Our characters engage with the props, taking the story forward”

Nathalie Habib, Creator and Executive Producer, Blink Studios
The original two months, began to emerge – albeit a workflow with no post-production, Hani explains. “We don’t have traditional post production with mixed reality. In linear production, you have compositing software. Here, you are doing real-time 3D rendering. Everything needs to be prepared ahead of time. Your texturing is the final texture. Real-time rendering is the final render. Noor, the lantern robot with light emerging from his belly, posed a particular challenge for us. Light is a visual effect that we normally do in post-production. With mixed reality, we need to do it as part of the programming.”

While the world of AR, VR and MR is set to become a $165 billion industry by 2020, with MR described as a paradigm shift by experts, not many fully understand this fast-developing digital phenomenon. Describing the process as plunging into the abyss with just questions and more questions, Habib says: “I told Hani we need to switch off the light in the script. However, unless the viewer switches off the lights, there is no light to switch off. It is weird. There are tricks you can deploy. Light is projected through the screens in front of the eyes, and if you add a darker colour, the light can be dimmed for that segment. The technical roadblocks did take time and effort in figuring out.”

From a technical point of view, producing in mixed reality means the team has to walk the fine line between normal TV production and gaming technology.

Kichi elaborates: “When you go into normal production, the computers with their massive RAM can handle any modelling object regardless of resolution. With modelling for mixed reality, you need to be careful – with a high polygon count, you will hit the ceiling imposed by the current Hololens technology. Polygons, in modelling parlance, is the number of faces inside the topology of an object. You need to be specific and smart in using polygons and where to put an extra polygon. If you exceed the limit, the content will run with difficulty on the Hololens.

“At the same time, we are not producing a game. In gaming, people don’t really care about the characters. With Karim and Noor, we are still producing an episode where the character needs to engage with the audience through storytelling. So there is that fine line we need to walk. For instance, texturing has to be more enhanced than what an average game demands. Texturing is the process of colouring and laying the details on top of the 3D objects. Questions such as what is the type of material, is there a reflection, is it rough, in normal production, it is left to a traditional rendering process. With mixed reality, it needs to be done in real-time render as the audience engages with the virtual character.”

Badro adds: “With the 3D nature of the action, script writing is not typical. When you are writing that Karim is doing one thing, you need to write how Noor is reacting as well. The storyboard artist needs to be aware of all the characters at all times.”

Experts say believability is a core design principle in mixed reality. Transparent lenses, spatial sound and an understanding of the physical environment, Kichi explains, allow holograms to look, sound and behave like real objects, evoking an emotional engagement from the viewer. As we don the Hololens and watch Karim and Noor grapple with the vending machine, we could choose to sit on any of the seats, stand by the door, resize the characters or bend down on the floor and watch the action. There is no telling what we will do as a viewer and therein lies the challenge, according to Habib.

“The number one challenge of
mixed reality is you don’t have a camera with you. The child can decide from which angle he or she wants to watch the action. He can put the content wherever he wants. He can place the characters on the dining table, on the floor or on the bed, and watch the content. While we can add some virtual elements as props, the kid is seeing everything in his environment.” Mixed reality brings into play the critical concept of spatial mapping and spatial sound, says Kichi. “If a virtual ball drops into the scene, it can first bounce on your table before touching the floor. A real-time scan by the HoloLens allows the unreal to become part of the real. As the viewer moves away from a sound-producing virtual object, the sound will lower in volume. Spatial mapping and spatial sound allow the experience to be immersive.”

Mixed reality sounds and looks like magic, but Kichi assures us that it is all down to analyzing data via the HoloLens. “The HoloLens scans your environment and creates a 3D model of your reality. In this model, we know where our holographic character is and where the virtual objects are: When the person wearing the HoloLens moves in his environment, a virtual camera literally replicates his movement — so when he gets closer to the holographic character, the virtual camera goes close to its 3D model.”

“The HoloLens is a computer, and kids, the average housewife and blooming that you need to get your HoloLens working will become second nature soon. Forget gasmen and kids, the average housewife will end up wearing some sort of headset in the very near future to watch her favourite cooking show.”

From our design to medical education, the HoloLens is already being applied in various fields even as the team at Blink is poised to launch Karim and Noor on an immersive journey into space. There are constraints, Kichi admits, citing a limited field of view and RAM space, among others. He, however, points out that the HoloLens is still part of a developer’s kit and is being improved. Happily, MR now comes on different platforms and devices. Google Tango is a different way of experiencing MR through tablets and phones, Habib says. “You can project Karim and Noor from your phone on to any device and you can watch it as enlarged as you want. You are still experiencing mixed reality, but without the headsets, making it ideal for a younger audience. Imagine the child projecting Karim and Noor on his bed and watching an episode the potential is endless.”

With commercial interest already buzzing around MR, the team at Blink has decided to take the plunge even as the technology is still evolving. “With commercial interest already buzzing around MR, the team at Blink has decided to take the plunge even as the technology is still evolving. The highly intuitive user interface provides complete overview even in stressful live situations. A pinnacle of innovation, this is the digital 9000 is currently on tour with the world’s most renowned sound engineers and artists. As a reliable and innovative companion for broadcasters and theatres for many decades, we know what world-class sound engineers expect from our digital multichannel system for highest demands. This is it, and it’s in a class all by itself. DIGITAL 9000 offers uncompressed digital audio transmission, safe from intermodulation, with a stunning cable-like purity of sound and dynamics and control functions, that make the system setup fail-safe. No wonder, Digital 9000 is currently on tour with the world’s most renowned sound engineers and artists. Contact us: ME-info@sennheiser.com www.sennheiser.com/digital9000
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.

14 November 2017
HABTOOR GRAND / DUBAI / UAE

1 day / 4 panels
25 speakers / 16 awards
1 gala awards dinner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Sponsors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>selevision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irdeho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ENTERTAINER*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eutelsat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS Broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPITRADE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.broadcastpromeawards.com">www.broadcastpromeawards.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raz Islam +971 50 451 8213 <a href="mailto:raz.islam@cpitrade.com">raz.islam@cpitrade.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijaya Cherian +971 55 105 3787 <a href="mailto:vijaya.cherian@cpitrade.com">vijaya.cherian@cpitrade.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheena Sapsford +971 4 375 5498 <a href="mailto:sheena.sapsford@cpitrade.com">sheena.sapsford@cpitrade.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A radio pedigree has helped Blaze carve a name for itself in the unforgiving world of video production, where clients demand stellar visuals and a viral social media presence. Creative Director Dave Armstrong reviews the first year

With the UAE’s biggest radio brand, ARN, as the parent company, doors opened readily for its video production team at Blaze when it made its foray into commercial films in August 2016, admits Creative Director Dave Armstrong. Speaking to BroadcastPro ME in his Dubai Studio City office after a year in business, Armstrong recalls the early days.

“Our first job in August 2016 was filming Will Smith for the premiere of his movie ‘Suicide Squad’. We did not have a team or equipment, but just a lead to be the official film crew for Will Smith’s trip to Dubai. And the first rule in the industry is you should always say yes, it can be done. We quickly put together a team and delivered. And a couple of jobs came out of that and we have not looked back.”

While the ARN name provided the foot in the door with organisations such as Emirates, Dubai Holdings, Jumeirah, Global Village and du, the challenge was high expectations from the outset, Armstrong says: “The radio network is built on more than 15 years of fantastic reputation. We had the challenge of having to deliver incredibly high quality from day one.”

The need for a video production house, Armstrong explains, emerged in early 2016 when there was a constant demand from the radio stations for video content, mostly for the social media platforms.

“Over time, we saw an opportunity to build a business that we believed would be sustainable. So while we service our radio channels, we bring in a lot of additional clients as well.”

Armstrong cites hiring the right people and keeping ahead in the ideas game as his biggest challenges in his year at Blaze.

“The way we have approached recruitment in the last six months is to look for experienced TV talent, because they have a much better understanding of the workflows and also have the ability to turn things around quickly.”

Keeping ahead in the ideas game is a new-age challenge as skills and technologies become more accessible, he says. “More and more people are learning to edit video, which can even be done well on the latest smartphones. And if it is a strong enough video, it will be seen by over two million people. At the same time, we have clients coming to us and saying we want our video to be seen by the same number. So you need to have strong ideas and original concepts to stay ahead and make an impact.”

Producing content in a city that puts great expectations on everything has not been easy, he admits. “We are not interested in just pulling in clients, but also helping to build brands. Social media analytics have helped us enormously. Just observing when a person stops watching our video has helped us hone our content creation and delivery skills.

“We have done some interesting 360-degree filming projects and clickable video content. The premise of the latter is while you are watching video and you see an item of interest, you click on the screen and another video plays, giving purchase details. This is a very interesting tool, still in its infancy, and it’s great to be leading the way with these innovations.”

An ex-Avid and Sky Sports manager, Armstrong is a self-confessed technology geek; now that he is an end user of equipment, he believes technology is ahead of the appliances.

“One of the biggest challenges we face with technology is the gap between the person that makes the product and the person that presses the button. Before you design and manufacture the next product, you should go to your top 50 customers and learn exactly what it is they love and hate. Ultimately, no matter how good the technology is, the person who presses the button will influence the buying decision. Similarly, the challenges with VR, 360 clickable video and other cutting-edge technologies, are that the appliances and platforms for the end user are not user-friendly enough.”
The days of spending half a million dollars or more on large-scale productions with dozens of people sitting in meetings are over, he says. Social media production houses are no longer “quick and nasty” production places, with technology now enabling high-quality content with fewer resources.

“It is an exciting time in the industry. Quality productions can be delivered faster. We were filming artists such as Demi Lovato and Sean Paul at RedFestDXB for Virgin Radio, and we were getting high-quality, fully produced content online faster than people filming with their mobile phones could.”

Despite the strength of the parent company, the route to acquiring equipment was cautious and need-based with an eye on the bottom line, Armstrong emphasises.

“We keep it simple. We have time-lapse cameras especially for shooting construction sites, as we do in the UAE. For clients who want cinematic quality, there is a plan to move to RED shortly. We use DGI Ronin equipment for stabilisation. For everything from motion graphics to editing, we find the Adobe platforms versatile and reliable. Cinema 4D is also becoming very popular on our animation projects. Over the months, we have had to come up with ingenious ways of keeping our equipment working in hot conditions.

“Express’ is a word you will see on the Blaze website and in the Armstrong universe – it makes complete sense with creativity and quality.

*Clients do not want shaky mobile phone footage of their wonderful event to get the million hits. What we can do is set up a video production unit on-site, take the content from camera, have graphics ready beforehand and post it immediately on social media.

“RedFestDXB was a good example. We would recut the first couple of minutes of every artist and post it straight to social media, and the whole point is, with the power of our radio network and social media, we were able to sell tickets for the next day.

“One of the cool innovations at Blaze is we are moving into the live sphere. We will go live to Facebook, YouTube and other platforms, with TV-quality production. The content will go straight from our cameras to a mixing desk, to an encoder and straight to the internet, with live graphics, animation, VTs and other relevant content – exactly what TV does, but in this case live with an event.

“We are not saving lives. We are just making videos and having fun.” Armstrong insists, even as his team works to engage your fleeting attention on an infotainment system, on the metro, or with any of the 100 videos to be produced this season for Global Village.

“We are not saving lives. We are just making videos and having fun.” Armstrong insists, even as his team works to engage your fleeting attention on an infotainment system, on the metro, or with any of the 100 videos to be produced this season for Global Village.
The annual Arabsat customer forum, Atheer, was held at Salalah Oman and hosted more than 180 delegates with two days of robust panel discussions and insightful presentations, ranging from audience measurement and advertising trends to disruptions and disruptors.

The ninth edition of Atheer, Arabsat’s annual customer forum in Salalah Oman, took place on October 3-4, 2017, and began with a welcome address by Khalid Balkheyour, President and CEO, Arabsat. In the presence of Omani ministers and dignitaries and more than 180 delegates from across the MENA region, he recounted the various achievements of the satellite operator in recent years and outlined the path forward. From Hellas Sat 3 delivering DTH to the large Arab diaspora in Europe and the new technologies at 44.5 degrees East that include satellite services on aircraft, Balkheyour’s speech provided an overview of the satellite operator’s range of projects.

Commenting on the vision forward, he stated: “We are aiming to make 26 degrees East the best destination for the Arab viewer.” He highlighted the important battle against piracy in the region and the critical need to partner with broadcasters. In conclusion, he spoke of the new structure for customer service and the social media platforms established by Arabsat to enhance understanding of the customer.

Among the dignitaries who spoke, Her Excellency Dr Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, Under Secretary-General, Head of Media & Communication.
Sector, League of Arab States, lauded Arabsat’s success and emphasised the need for closer collaboration between various stakeholders in the region.

Wael Al-Buti, VP and CCO, Arabsat, illustrated the satellite operator’s penetration in the region and its ambitions for the future: “We are now carrying 40-plus Arabic FTA channels over Africa and we aim to be the provider of the largest bouquet of channels to the continent.”

With a whopping 78% of homes in the GCC receiving satellite TV from 26 degrees East, Buti highlighted the acquisition of exclusive rights to the popular Saudi football league as a major milestone.

A presentation by Vidya Subramanian Nath, Research Director at Frost and Sullivan, showed that the MENA region has been slower to adopt 4K technology than the global average. However, the sale of 4K TV sets is expected to exceed 3m in 2017 – from 200,000 in 2014 – with the UAE emerging as the biggest consumer.

Commenting on the challenges faced by the industry in the MENA region, Nath highlighted falling oil prices, sinking advertising revenues and a diverse audience demographic that is changing its viewing habits, among others. A panel discussion on what drives a broadcaster’s choice followed, with specific reference to 26 degrees East, offering interesting insights into the decision-making process.

Moderator Robert Lakos, founder of Deleel TV, offers an insightful summary (see box).

The tone of the final session for day one of Atheer, ‘Broadcasting in MENA – Outlook and Opportunities’, was set by Sarah Messer, MENAP Director, Neilsen. Stressing the need for a transparent and reliable audience measurement system, she said: “The audience should be in the middle of every decision. With an increasing trend towards one-to-one broadcasting, channel operators need to know their audience and be nimble to respond quickly.”

She concluded by saying that the industry is sitting on a minefield of audience information, and that traditional data has to merge with current real-time data going forward.

The need for audience measurement was echoed by Jacques Bajon of iDate. Dr Riyadh Najm, a Saudi-based media expert, stated: “If we don’t measure audience, how do we plan programming?”

The day ended with moderator Chris Forrester asking what the industry believes will happen in three years. While Dr Najm believed the audience will look for viewing experience, whether HD or 4K, Giorgio Giacomini, Oman Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, believed that audience measurement will be the key answer.

Khalid Balkheyour, President and CEO, Arabsat, illustrated the satellite operator’s penetration in the region: “We are now carrying 40-plus Arabic FTA channels over Africa and we aim to be the provider of the largest bouquet of channels to the continent.”

Wael Al-Buti, VP and CCO, Arabsat, highlighted the acquisition of exclusive rights to the popular Saudi football league as a major milestone.

A presentation by Vidya Subramanian Nath, Research Director at Frost and Sullivan, showed that the MENA region has been slower to adopt 4K technology than the global average. However, the sale of 4K TV sets is expected to exceed 3m in 2017 – from 200,000 in 2014 – with the UAE emerging as the biggest consumer.

Commenting on the challenges faced by the industry in the MENA region, Nath highlighted falling oil prices, sinking advertising revenues and a diverse audience demographic that is changing its viewing habits, among others. A panel discussion on what drives a broadcaster’s choice followed, with specific reference to 26 degrees East, offering interesting insights into the decision-making process.

Moderator Robert Lakos, founder of Deleel TV, offers an insightful summary (see box).

The tone of the final session for day one of Atheer, ‘Broadcasting in MENA – Outlook and Opportunities’, was set by Sarah Messer, MENAP Director, Neilsen. Stressing the need for a transparent and reliable audience measurement system, she said: “The audience should be in the middle of every decision. With an increasing trend towards one-to-one broadcasting, channel operators need to know their audience and be nimble to respond quickly.”

She concluded by saying that the industry is sitting on a minefield of audience information, and that traditional data has to merge with current real-time data going forward.

The need for audience measurement was echoed by Jacques Bajon of iDate. Dr Riyadh Najm, a Saudi-based media expert, stated: “If we don’t measure audience, how do we plan programming?”

The day ended with moderator Chris Forrester asking what the industry believes will happen in three years. While Dr Najm believed the audience will look for viewing experience, whether HD or 4K, Giorgio Giacomini, Oman Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, believed that audience measurement will be the key answer.
Managing Director of Globeast, believed three years was too brief a period for extensive deployment of 4K, though sports and gaming will push the resolution.

Robert Lakos, founder of Deleel, believed or hoped that $7 set-top boxes will run 3G modems offering the broadcaster audience feedback, which would be “something better than nothing, that in turn would go a long way in helping build business plans”.

The evening ended with a gala dinner set to scintillating live Omani music.

The second day at Atheer began with a panel discussion on ‘Broadcasting Technologies’ moderated by Hassan Sayed.

“We are now carrying 40-plus Arabic FTA channels over Africa and we aim to be the provider of the largest bouquet of channels to the continent”

Wael Al-Buti, VP and CCO, Arabsat

Hasan, MD of Master Media.

Asked to highlight technologies having an impact on the industry, Alberto Via, CEO, Ovieron, spoke of the cloud and the shift to IP as allowing broadcasters to make massive deployments with minimal cost. He also said 5G will happen, driven by the IoT, and will help bridge the gap to last-mile connectivity across the MENA.

Complementing the need of broadcasters to shift cost-effectively to HD, Yaser Hassan, Director of Transmission Operations at Arabsat, highlighted operators’ use of spot beams enabling broadcasters to have dedicated coverage. He also highlighted the capabilities of the new generation of satellites, Badr 5 and Badr 7, which allow broadcasters greater bandwidth.

Hassan Ghed, Director MEA of IABM, pinpointed efficiency and cost reduction as primary concerns for the industry and said the increasing use of AI will help broadcasters improve workflows.

In response to an audience question, he said IP infrastructure helps future-proof the production facility in terms of expansion, but conceded that the workforce will need to upgrade their skills.

Johan de Noël, Product Manager of Netvr, spoke of VR and the need for the industry to prepare to accommodate more negatives per second. He also highlighted the latest technological evolution in news gathering that allows a seamless shift between satellite, 3G and 4G.

An impactful presentation on “Advertising in the MENA” by Elie Aoun, CEO MENAP for IP&S Connect, highlighted the Ion’s share of advertising enjoyed by television. The graphics-intensive presentation offered a country-wise breakdown of advertising spend, throwing light on the disproportionate share of advertising around TV serials versus other programmes, among other issues.

The final panel discussion brought together disruptors in the region. Moderated by industry analyst Chris Forrester, Nadine Samara, VP Digital Business of Zee, spoke of penetrating markets across the MENA with South Asian content dubbed into Arabic and African languages. Sub-Saharan Africa and southern Africa are big markets for the channel.

Karmi Saade, Senior Director of Intigral, said the company was not shooting for the billion-dollar deals and was focusing on sports properties in the MENA, such as the popular Lebanese basketball circuit. On the difficult question of monetisation, Saade said advertising and B2B with telcos is the way forward for regional players, unlike in Europe, which is driven by subscription.

Day two closed with Wael Al-Buti, Vice President and CCO, Arabsat, thanking the moderators and delegates for attending Arabsat’s ninth customer forum.
Do you think the rationale for the creation of Hulu applies to the MENA region? I was with Fox Entertainment when we helped to found Hulu with David Zaslav (now President & CEO), Discovery Communications) and JB Perrette (now President and CEO, Discovery Networks International), who was with NBCUniversal, the other people involved included Bruce Campbell and Peter Chernin. The core concept was media partners coming together to aggregate content in a digital-first approach.

When we started Hulu 10 years ago, the other alternative was YouTube. Today, the other alternatives are significantly more and include Netflix, Facebook and Amazon. While all of us have great content as individual media companies, there is strength in coming together and aggregating content. More importantly, consumers in the digital space think along these lines. They don’t go to one channel and consume content – they want to go to one place to be able to access as much as possible. And so we believe that concept not only works in the MENA, but all across the world. It depends on whether you can get the right partners to work together, committed to building a business and committed to really competing to have a very strong offering. You may have heard that we have recently signed an OTT joint venture with ProSieben, a market leader in Germany. So clearly, we think there is an opportunity to do a Hulu-like joint venture in the MENA.

You had challenges when you expanded Hulu in international markets. Do you see the same challenges in this region? We believe the MENA has more challenges in some ways and fewer in other ways. There is more because, as I said earlier, there is much more significant competition. When we launched Hulu, people were amazed that they could get that much content in one place. Today, with Netflix, YouTube and Amazon, there is more opportunity out there, so you need a really strong product out of the gate. You cannot think that you can win with something less than that. Secondly, in today’s world, differentiation is achieved when local content is combined with international content. It is a challenge to get local broadcasters and local content providers willing to contribute their content, but doing that will not only be mobile devices is significant. When we started Hulu, smartphone penetration was less than 10%. The fact that you can go to your device and access online content was only an idea 10 years ago. Now it is the norm in many parts of the world. So there are a lot of factors that make it easier to launch a Hulu-type offering across many regions.

With some networks bigger than others, how do you allocate equity between partners? What is the business model? It is a very complicated question, and it is probably why there have only been a few of these joint ventures. You have to accept that you are going to allow equal partnership and equal governance between the partners. Because if there is no equality between the partners, it will never work. Everyone will always feel as if their agenda or their desires are being squashed by someone with a different agenda. So you have to find a way to have equal governance and equal participation. Whether that means everyone has the same equity is a different question. What that means is everyone who is seated at the table is a partner. The way that we solve that in all of our deals is ensuring content gets paid based on how it is consumed. The more content each of the partners bring, and the better the content they bring, the more money they make. So there is a structure of the venture is around equal governance and equal partnership, but the economics is based on whose stuff works.

When we set up Hulu, I was at Fox. We were the number one network in the United States with American Idol, The Simpsons, Family Guy and so on. The first deal we did was with NBC, the next was with Disney. We were very confident that the Fox content would dwarf them and do incredibly well. The Fox content would dwarf everyone else. We were very confident that this would happen. And what we found out when we...
PROINTERVIEW

launched was it was all pretty equal. Sometimes content that people don’t believe will work in a digital world actually works a lot better. People are able to explore and search in a Google-like way, and the content that they would have never ever seen, that gets very low ratings in the linear world, suddenly becomes a big hit on digital.

So you almost have to take away the biases, take away the perceptions of what works bigger and better, and say we are all in this together. We all have a say, but in the end, good luck to whoever makes the most money. It gives us the incentive to create more content on our site that will do better.

This sounds a little idealistic, but in the end, this approach actually does work. It works on Hulu, it is working with our joint venture with ProSieben, and we are hopeful that it will work on other networks around the world.

So do broadcasters have to wear two hats – investor and content licensor? Do you negotiate separately?

Clearly, there has to be an arm’s length relationship between those two roles. There are two key levers in the success of these joint ventures. First and foremost is like-minded partners putting all their content in, and second is hiring a world-class digital product-centred management team that drives the business on their own.

You have to hire people that can build great digital technology products that can compete against Netflix, Amazon and Hulu. You have got to give the team the confidence that they will be given the resources and tools to be able to build that.

We were very fortunate when we did Hulu. We hired a world-class executive who had come from Amazon – Jason Kilar. It was probably the most difficult hire in my career. He took on Hulu with the sole purpose of building a world-class digital product-centred business. He wasn’t worried ever about getting a job at Fox, NBC or Disney. He wasn’t worried about helping the individual broadcast brands. His sole focus was on the consumer and building a great product.

The individual networks have to let go and accept the fact that in order to compete against digital players, it is probably going to have to be someone from outside that you have to hire.

What was Jason’s role? Was he responsible for strategy?

First and foremost is the product’s digital experience. The irony of the digital world right now is that as media executives, we think of content on an exclusivity basis. Most of the content on YouTube and Netflix is available everywhere. They provide a great product experience for you, and you feel comfortable to go back to what works.

You need an executive that can firstly help to build that product, and then identify and develop that unique exclusive content that goes on top of that. Those two things are very critical.

In terms of marketing, we are big believers that you need to have both free and supportive tiers that enable consumers to come in without paying a subscription to be able to access some level of content. Then you need a paid tier that you funnel people into over time.

In Hulu, we did not launch the paid tier for three years. In ProSieben, while not on day one, we are looking to potentially offer both tiers to consumers. For a company like Spotify, they have used their free tier to drive consumers to the paid tier.

You need to have both – not just to draw advertising dollars, but subscription dollars, and also drive marketing. Clearly, you need to have an executive who is focused on content acquisition, marketing and lifetime value, all those things that traditional media companies may or may not have.

So I believe that the way to the next level is marketing the brand of the joint venture and not marketing the brands of the individual channels. In a way, OTT is a natural extension of what the paid television world is, only with more aggregated content.

“Since launching Hulu, the core linear business for the broadcasters has gone up and not down. It is not a zero-sum game. We believe what we are trying to do with these ventures is to drive more content to people that are not watching linear content”

Mike Lang, Discovery
Would you agree that in a Hulu-type offering, you only see the content and you don’t see the brand supplying that content, whether it is Fox or any other studio? There are definitely things you can do to identify the individual networks in the digital world. You can put watermark bugs on the video to tell that identity the network. As you click on it, you can have marketing around it.

So we hired this executive, put $100 million capital in Hulu through third parties, and put up all our content there. During one of the first meetings, the CEO said “I have an idea. I want to create my own search bar on the site so that anyone searches any content in the world, we will send them to that site. So if we don’t have it, we will send them to where that is.”

Clearly we were surprised by his request. People in the room were thinking: we just built this business, and we now start sending people to other sites to access content? But that is the kind of product experience and product availability that you have to offer in order to compete and be relevant.

So retaining the identity of the broadcaster in a Hulu-type offering is irrelevant? I think it is important. There are certain branded content providers that drive people to their sites on the strength and relevance of their brands. In Germany, ProSieben is a major player and was very excited to partner up with us because of the Discovery brand and the content we offer. This differentiates not only the partnership, but also the service: The brand does matter.

Almost all major MENA broadcasters today have their own VOD and streaming platforms. Would you advocate that they shut down these platforms and enter into a more collaborative initiative such as MENA Hulu?

I don’t know if a pan-regional service would be successful. In Europe, it has been challenging to make that work. Local markets are different not just in content distribution, but also marketing.

So if a network such as Discovery initiated a collaboration, how would it work with three other local parties such as OSN, MBC and DM? Discovery would be the fourth partner then. We would bring our content, our expertise, and we might even bring our technology platforms. We might be a good third-party broker, although four partners right out of the gate seems a little complicated to me.

This is not a cheap initiative. We cannot put this together overnight. Also, an entity such as Discovery Channel that brings experience, technology capabilities and content, is very helpful to jump start these efforts.

We also discovered that in some regions, a channel such as Discovery becomes the objective third party in the room. All the local broadcasters have their own priorities. We are outside of that.

Would you then recommend two partners as an ideal number?

No, I think the more the merrier. The critical question is can you reach a consensus, a common ground for the strategy and vision for the business. If you can do that with two, three, four or five partners, it is great.

My experience shows that getting two to three out of the gate is easier, with more partners further down the road. I know a little bit about your market, so trying to get five to six people together in a room to agree on anything is challenging.

Finally, since launching Hulu the core linear business for the broadcasters has gone up and not down. It is not a zero-sum game.

We are offering up the market to people that have decided to spend all their time on mobile phones or TV-enabled devices. We are not trying to force people off our existing platforms. I think if you sit back and don’t do these things and you want, it might be too late when you finally act.

But I do want to say we are very optimistic about the linear business in the MENA, and we do not see a Hulu-type offering as a repudiation of that. If anything, it helps drive business for both.

Do you think a regional Hulu would be able to charge consumers, given the region is dominated by free channels?

We believe in a combination of free ad-supported and paid offerings. There isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach. It should be tailored according to market needs.

“When we started Hulu, smartphone penetration was less than 10%. The fact that you can go to your device and access online content was only an idea 10 years ago. Now it is the norm in many parts of the world”

Mike Lang, Discovery
ENGINEERING SEAMLESS WORKFLOWS

Al Aan TV has upgraded its studios with new equipment and additional features, to create a more engaging viewership experience while reducing the complexity of current workflows. In an exclusive interview with Clayton Vallabhan, Raad Haddadin, Head of Engineering and Support at Al Aan, talks about the upgrades undertaken at the Dubai facility.

With an increasing viewership base, phased HD upgrades and a fully integrated social media interaction platform, Al Aan TV is gradually taking the steps necessary to encourage its audience to make the transition from passive to more engaged viewing. Raad Haddadin, CTO of Al Aan TV, says a tech refresh and content updates are crucial to retaining the network’s viewership.

“Our aim is to take full advantage of new technologies in the market, and in parallel to exploit the potential of social media to encourage our viewers to engage and interact more closely with us, our programmes and each other. Alongside this, we are involved in a number of technical changes, some of which are completed and some of which are in various states of progress,” says Haddadin.

Big changes have come to Al Aan, with one of the key aspects being a comprehensive review of the power distribution at the network to allow true A/B power distribution across all areas. This also required replacement of the existing CAR A/C, which had grown organically over the years as required and could no longer support the needs of the area.

In addition, Al Aan recently sourced hardware and software from Imagine Communications to replace its existing main playout chain, with the existing main chain equipment serving as the back-up. This solution includes the delivery of a new Imagine storage system, which includes both hardware and software and replaces the existing playout server and storage. The existing main chain equipment will be reused to replace the existing back-up chain equipment.

The new SAN provides 18 bi-directional HD-SDI ports across three Nexio+ AMP servers with a fibre switch configuration. A new Nexio PRX transcoder and Media gateway, also attached via fibre channel, are part of this revamp.

“The fibre channel switches were provided by Al Aan and are those currently in use in the existing system. The 2x Imagine Versio IOX chassis supplied from the SAN storage and consist of a single core chassis with fibre channel host bus adaptors and a single storage expansion chassis. Both chassis are fully loaded with 12 x 8TB drives each, for a total usable storage capacity of 128TB usable storage. The total bandwidth provided by the SAN system is 6.000MB/s,” explains Haddadin.

The deployment includes a new Nexio PTP server, a Nexio Proxy transcoder, the Versio 10X Storage, a new

**Snapshot**

- **Objective:** To achieve a new 3G/HD playout and news system with a file-based workflow on the technical side while expanding viewership on social media.
- **End user:** Al Aan TV
- **Location:** Dubai
- **Key solution providers:** Imagine Communications, Avid and Vizrt
Imagine ADC CHP device server and a Nexio PXD transcoder, which reads all Nexio-supported high resolution, HD and SD formats and can automatically transcode four or eight independent, simultaneous streams up to four times faster than real time. Once transcoded into low resolution, all MP4 proxy files are stored on storage arrays where they can be viewed.

The New Nexio Media Gateway provides a typical multi-stream transfer performance of 2,500Mb/s over the 10Gb Ethernet network connection, within a range of 1,500–4,000Mb/s. A single ADC CHP replaces the back-up chain device server, while the existing Imagine storage solution replaces the current back-up playout server and storage.

“This investment will increase the number of playout ports, thereby giving Al Aan TV the ability to transmit new TV channels while increasing the redundancy for all the current channels. In addition to this, a third HD back-up chain will be created should any of the main or back-up chains fail. The third and separate back-up chain will immediately take over to ensure zero downtime,” explains Haddadin.

Imagine Communications will also provide its professional services as part of this update. The entire project was done house by the Al Aan engineering team and completed in September this year. In parallel, Al Aan has now embarked on two additional projects. One entails securing a new 6Mbps space on Eutelsat to be used by its news team to receive feeds and by its services department to lease the capacity. Alongside this, Al Aan has undertaken a complete newsroom revamp with Avid, investing in an automated monitoring system from SAM as well as a new TV server from Vizrt.

According to Haddadin, most TV channels invest in a number of Avid servers because they are required for redundancy. However, this requires a lot of rack space and cooling and involves high power consumption. SLA is also very expensive because the hardware and software is provided by Avid directly. Now, however, Avid has circumvented this issue by providing clients with virtual servers from a third party: “Being free of hardware allows for lower power consumption, cooling costs and more free rack space, while still providing us with the latest technology from Avid. It also means we have triple the storage space. We can upgrade to the latest releases from Avid, creating a totally new hardware environment,” explains Haddadin. “Removing the dependency on Avid IT hardware is in itself an attractive proposition. The new system is also very easy to update to the cloud. The cost reduction for SLA are massive. Plus there is better uptime for the new system when you start it from scratch. It loads within a few minutes compared to the previous set-up, where it used to take at least half an hour.”

Furthermore, with social media increasingly important, interaction with viewers has become a top priority for Al Aan. This led to the recent procurement of the Vizrt Social TV server, a multilayer graphics generator with a social media broadcast engine for TV production. Haddadin says it collects and collates all messages from viewers on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms in real time. “This Social TV solution can be integrated with existing Vizrt environments or provided as a one-box solution where data is harvested, moderated and triggered to air by with custom graphics in a simple workflow,” explains Haddadin. “Producers in the newsroom can use the Social TV solution to harvest, moderate and create social media content with the same tools and the same workflow they use for all other content. Data can be captured from any social media outlet, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Picasa, YouTube and any RSS/Atom or JSON/XML feed.

There is even a link to our YouTube channel, or a preconfigured image for that particular show.”

“Our viewers are increasingly important. On our Twitter account, we have a particular show at a particular time, it can immediately send a tweet showing viewers that this is what will be on air at a specific time, with a particular presenter. There is even a link to our YouTube channel, or a preconfigured image for that particular show.”

On the satellite front, Al Aan has signed a new contract with Eutelsat for its own occasional use space segment. This is used by the news team to receive feeds and the service department for lease. “For the last three years, we had a contract with Arabsat for 3Mbps. Right now, the market requirements are changing. We lease SNGs, OB vans and production equipment. A lot of times, the clients are not happy with 3Mbps because everyone wants to transmit in HD. This is why we now have 6Mbps with Eutelsat. We have two space signals now, one for occasional use and another for Al Aan to go HD.”

With an updated workflow, Al Aan TV is poised to retain and engage its viewers.
EXHIBITING AT CABSAT WITHOUT ADVERTISING IS LIKE THROWING A PARTY WITH NO INVITATIONS.

YOU KNOW ABOUT IT, BUT NOBODY ELSE DOES.

BroadcastPro Middle East is the official media partner of CABSAT 2018

Utilise the print and digital advertising platforms to get your message to the region’s broadcast, satellite and digital entertainment professionals. Invite them to learn more about your products and services at your exhibition stand during CABSAT.

Contact us to know more about CABSAT advertising packages.

Advertising: Farah bin Hamid, +971 4 375 5471, faham@cpitrademedia.com
Editorial: Vijaya Cherian, +971 4 375 5472, vijaya.cherian@cpitrademedia.com

DJI launches Zenmuse X7 for aerial filming

DJI, a manufacturer of civilian drones and aerial imaging technology, has introduced the Zenmuse X7, a 35mm digital film camera for professional aerial cinematography. Designed to work with the DJI Inspire 2 drone, the company claims the Zenmuse X7 delivers superior image quality, interchangeable lenses and a new DJI Cinema Colour System for post-production, to give film and video professionals more creative freedom.

The Zenmuse X7 is equipped with a Super 35 video sensor featuring 14 stops of dynamic range for more detail in low-light conditions. The camera is priced at $2,699. The Zenmuse X7 will start shipping in early November 2017.

www.dji.com

Red Digital Cinema launches Monstro 8K VV

Red Digital Cinema has announced a new cinematic full-frame sensor for Weapon cameras, Monstro 8K VV. Monstro is a step beyond the Dragon 8K VV sensor, with improvements in image quality including dynamic range and shadow detail. This newest camera and sensor combination, Weapon 8K VV, offers full-frame lens coverage, captures 8K full-format motion up to 60fps, produces 35.4 megapixel stills and delivers data speeds of up to 300MB/s. Weapon shoots simultaneous Redcode Raw and Apple ProRes or Avid DNxHD/HR recording and adheres, as per the company spokesperson, to the company’s dedication to obsolescence obsolete, a core operating principle that allows current RED owners to upgrade technology as innovations are unveiled and move between camera systems without having to purchase all-new gear.

www.red.com

Globecomm Launches Vector

Globecomm has announced the launch of Vector, a virtualised video headend system able to support multiple channels and deliver content across multiple platforms. Vector’s IP-centric platform simplifies the processing, packaging and customisation of video content, from acquisition and contribution to playout and distribution significantly reduces rack space, cabling and power.

It reportedly simplifies multiple inter-dependent processes, including near real-time compression technologies, multiple video standards and encoding advances such as adaptive bitrate - into software and data storage in an all-IP environment.

www.globecomm.com

Shure launches Axient Digital Wireless System

Shure has debuted its Axient Digital Wireless System. Axient Digital builds on the benefits of the company’s UHF-R, ULX-D, and Axient wireless systems to create an advanced wireless platform that is designed for all professional production environments.

Axient Digital features a receiver that is compatible with its two transmitter offerings, the AD Series and ADX Series. Axient Digital ADX Series transmitters incorporate ShowLink, which provides real-time control of all transmitter parameters with interference detection and avoidance.

The AD Series will be available in late summer 2017 and the ADX Series will be available in early 2018.

www.shure.com

November 2017 | www.broadcastprome.com | 53
Trivendi debuts SLA verification

Trivendi Digital is unveiling a service-level agreement (SLA) verification feature for its StreamScope RM-50 monitoring system for broadcasters. Using the monitor, broadcasters participating in a channel-sharing agreement can successfully verify SLAs. It provides broadcasters with instant notifications.

Panasonic boosts product range with EVA1

Aiming to regain ground in the cinema market, Panasonic has launched the EVA1, a compact cinema camera featuring a newly-designed Super 35-size sensor with 5.7K resolution.

With low-light performance, the EVA1 is built around a dual native ISO with an edge of dynamic luminance range that a digital camera can capture. Compact and lightweight, the AU-EVA1 is suited for handheld shooting, documentaries, events, commercials and music videos. Also of interest to the broadcast industry is the 360-degree Live Camera System AW-360C10, capable of producing 360-degree video in uncompressed 4K. The system generates 2:1 equi-rectangular format 360-degree video by stitching the output of four cameras, giving the spectator a sense of immersion in live broadcasts of sports, concerts and other stadium events.

Apantac launches 120 SDI multiviewers

Apantac has launched 120 SDI multiviewers. The Mi-8 family is based on the Mi-16 platform, with the addition of 120 SDI support for monitoring UHD video signals.

The Mi-8 multiviewers accept eight 120 SDI (2SI) or four 120 (quad-link) inputs. There are three models to choose from, sharing the same 1RU hardware.

The Mi-8 is an 8x1 multiviewer with a dual set of identical HDMI and SDI outputs. The Mi-A+ consists of two 4x1 multiviewers where the output of each is available as both HDMI and SDI. The Mi-8 is an 8x2 multiviewer with two sets of HDMI and SDI outputs; any input can be displayed on one or both outputs.

Customers who are looking for a straightforward path to UHD migration can use the Mi-8 multiviewers for 120 SDI content monitoring in multiple applications, as per the official release. Apantac has also launched a new 8x 120 SDI input board for the modular T4 multiviewer series. The new 120 SDI board expands the range of formats that T4 supports.

Trivendi debuts SLA verification

Trivendi Digital is unveiling a service-level agreement (SLA) verification feature for its StreamScope RM-50 monitoring system for broadcasters. Using the monitor, broadcasters participating in a channel-sharing agreement can successfully verify SLAs. It provides broadcasters with instant notifications.

Panasonic boosts product range with EVA1

Aiming to regain ground in the cinema market, Panasonic has launched the EVA1, a compact cinema camera featuring a newly-designed Super 35-size sensor with 5.7K resolution.

With low-light performance, the EVA1 is built around a dual native ISO with an edge of dynamic luminance range that a digital camera can capture. Compact and lightweight, the AU-EVA1 is suited for handheld shooting, documentaries, events, commercials and music videos. Also of interest to the broadcast industry is the 360-degree Live Camera System AW-360C10, capable of producing 360-degree video in uncompressed 4K. The system generates 2:1 equi-rectangular format 360-degree video by stitching the output of four cameras, giving the spectator a sense of immersion in live broadcasts of sports, concerts and other stadium events.

Apantac launches 120 SDI multiviewers

Apantac has launched 120 SDI multiviewers. The Mi-8 family is based on the Mi-16 platform, with the addition of 120 SDI support for monitoring UHD video signals.

The Mi-8 multiviewers accept eight 120 SDI (2SI) or four 120 (quad-link) inputs. There are three models to choose from, sharing the same 1RU hardware.

The Mi-8 is an 8x1 multiviewer with a dual set of identical HDMI and SDI outputs. The Mi-A+ consists of two 4x1 multiviewers where the output of each is available as both HDMI and SDI. The Mi-8 is an 8x2 multiviewer with two sets of HDMI and SDI outputs; any input can be displayed on one or both outputs.

Customers who are looking for a straightforward path to UHD migration can use the Mi-8 multiviewers for 120 SDI content monitoring in multiple applications, as per the official release. Apantac has also launched a new 8x 120 SDI input board for the modular T4 multiviewer series. The new 120 SDI board expands the range of formats that T4 supports.
According to PwC, the global sports industry is undergoing more disruption than ever before. In its 2017 Sports Survey, the consultancy firm paints a bleak picture, predicting that the growth rate will slow by 32% in the next three to five years. The struggles of sports television have been fueled by the steady shift away from linear TV, which has created an entirely new set of consumer habits and expectations. A recent study by Nielsen reveals that 60% of respondents from more than 60 countries watch some kind of VOD content, showing how pervasive OTT video delivery has become.

While sports television was once king, it has struggled to keep pace with the changing demands. Part of the problem is that sports broadcasters have traditionally carried out video distribution with a single approach, not adjusting the experience for different viewing devices. With young people increasingly turning away from live sport, broadcasters must adapt their offerings to remain competitive. As more tech giants muscle in, broadcaster embrace personalisation, intelligent recommendations and fresh approaches to UX (and regrouped and recategorised to reflect changing viewer preferences, time of day or major events). It can be easily grouped and categorised into easily grouped and categorised

Content should be carefully curated and present the content so that it is relevant, easy to discover and of course maximum ROI for the broadcaster, viewer, but also to present this in a manner easily navigated by the end user. Content should be carefully curated at the back end, with a system that allows different programmes or clips to be easily grouped and categorised (and regrouped and recategorised to reflect changing viewer preferences, time of day or major events). It can also be enhanced with the addition of social media feeds and editorial articles, offering viewers a service which goes beyond simply feeding them video.

Going for gold: how sports broadcasters can thrive in the age of OTT

“A successful sports VOD service will not only give viewers a choice … but will curate and present the content so that it is relevant”

Sennheiser’s best performing analogue and digital receiver system in one compact pack.

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

One Receiver
Fits All

Stuart Ferriera-Cole is Commercial Director at Ostmodern

Sennheiser ME-info@sennheiser.com

sennheiser.com

PROGUEST

Executive Vice Chairman Ed Woodward

Facebook, for example, must adapt, or risk even more young people switching off altogether.

This landscape is driving social networks and others to look to break the mould. Facebook, for example, signed a deal with the NFL to bring game recap and highlights to its platform, while Manchester United Executive Vice Chairman Ed Woodward told investors he expects both Amazon and the social network to “enter the mix” for Premier League TV rights.

As more tech giants muscle in, broadcasters must adapt their offerings to remain competitive. A single feed and single narrative commentary simply won’t cut it any more. Consumers want more than a one-size-fits-all viewing experience; it is therefore vital that broadcasters embrace personalisation, intelligent recommendations and fresh approaches to UX and content discovery.

Broadcasters should go beyond just launching an OTT offering and should leverage platforms that allow viewers to browse and access multiple feeds, including point-of-view camera angles, dedicated coverage of a particular player from a given country, interviews with sports personalities and a range of commentators.

In addition to creating an enhanced experience for the viewer, this approach drives maximum ROI for the broadcaster, gaining audiences for content that would otherwise go unseen.

However, with any change comes risk – broadcasters should tread carefully and assume a managed, considered approach to any new or updated content service. Providing multiple feeds of a sports event can be overwhelming to a viewer, who may spend more time navigating an OTT service for suitable content than actually enjoying it. According to a recent study, Netflix viewers in the US spend an average of 17.8 minutes searching for content before finding something to watch, almost equal to the length of an entire sitcom episode. In particular, this risks disengaging millennial viewers, widely considered to be time- and attention-poor.

An OTT platform, therefore, needs to allow a broadcaster to be creative with content and offer more choice to the viewer, but also to present this in a manner easily navigated by the end user. Content should be carefully curated at the back end, with a system that allows different programmes or clips to be easily grouped and categorised (and regrouped and recategorised to reflect changing viewer preferences, time of day or major events). It can also be enhanced with the addition of social media feeds and editorial articles, offering viewers a service which goes beyond simply feeding them video.

A successful sports VOD service will not only give viewers a choice over which stream they watch, but will curate and present the content so that it is relevant, easy to discover and of course engaging. For sports broadcasters, the game is far from over.
From a Single Channel Playout Server to a Multi Channel Turnkey Broadcast Centre

CloudAir Next Generation Ecosystem for IP Channel Playout
This highly innovative Cloud Solution is all about speed of channel set up and management, with unlimited scalability, affordability and easy to use.

PlayBox Neo Channel-in-a-Box & Workflow platform
A powerful evolutionary new version with plenty of new features, ensuring you will continue to enjoy using the world’s best-selling playout & channel branding product line.

Local Sales Contact: Advanced Media LLC, No. 410, 4th floor, Al Khaleej Center, Bur Dubai, Dubai, UAE
P.O.Box: 44156, Dubai-UAE, Tel.: +971 4 352 99 77, Fax: +971 4 352 99 76, E-mail: info@amt.tv, www.amt.tv

PlayBox Technology Limited • sales@playboxtechnology.com • www.playboxtechnology.com