Alhurra stays ahead of the curve with tech and content overhaul
Stream broadcast quality live events instantly over the internet with ATEM Television Studio HD and Blackmagic Web Presenter!

Now with ATEM Television Studio HD and Blackmagic Web Presenter you can create professional, broadcast quality television programs from any live event plus instantly stream live out to the internet!

ATEM Television Studio HD is a true professional live production switcher with 4 SDI and 4 HDMI inputs. Simply connect cameras, gaming consoles and computers, then start cutting your show live and in realtime using transitions such as dissolves, dips, wipes, custom graphics, logos and more. You even get a built-in DVE so you can create exciting picture in picture effects for use with interviews and live commentators!

The output of the switcher can then be connected to Blackmagic Web Presenter, which has a built in broadcast quality down converter for easy encodes of the video for streaming. The video is sent to your computer via USB, just like a webcam, so it works with any software. Stream live using services such as YouTube and Facebook Live using software such as Open Broadcaster or XSplit Broadcaster. It even works with Skype for professional remote presentations. Web Presenter is the easiest and most affordable way to broadcast live video on the web!

Content rating is a tricky subject and most of us may have varying opinions on whom ratings should rest with. Should it rest with a service provider, a regional regulator or with us, viewers? I think the regulator should ask for a technical provision that empowers subscribers to make the choice. I have often heard the CEOs of MBC and Starz Play declare that their programmes are a lot safer to watch and designed for a culturally-sensitive MENA audience. Regional executives have also pointed out that local players come under a lot more scrutiny for their content than international streaming services. In fact, I have heard this even more frequently in recent months. But I didn’t quite grasp the gravity of what they said until I came across a programme that a 16-year-old was watching on Netflix that had a 13+ rating and which I personally would not even recommend to an 18-year-old. If a rating does not sync with the sensibilities of this region, it means we are permitting a certain licentiousness into homes that neither have societal nor legal approval in this region. Should there be an option for subscribers to customise ratings to suit the needs of their households or does this open another Pandora’s box? Since we live in an age where international streaming services include a service provider, a regional viewer approve? What is the yardstick by which content ratings are decided, who gets to decide them, and should they vary based on culture?

I know I’m not alone in this query and I don’t necessarily have all the answers. But we do live in a region that has traditionally not permitted resident media entities to broadcast certain types of content. So why has such magnanimity been extended to international services? Should the regulator insist that international streaming services include an interface that allows subscribers to remove content they deem objectionable from their screen if they do not agree with the operator’s ratings? Since we live in an age where international streaming services include an option for subscribers to customise ratings to suit the needs of their households or does this open another Pandora’s box? Since we live in an age where we demand subscription services include an interface that allows subscribers to remove content they deem objectionable from their screen if they do not agree with the operator’s ratings? Should the regulator insist that international streaming services include an option for subscribers to customise ratings to suit the needs of their households or does this open another Pandora’s box?

Let’s create a vibrant online broadcast community!

On this month’s cover...
Alhurra’s brand new facility in Dubai Media City

Subscribe online at: BROADCASTPROMECOM
Welcome to Broadcast 3.0
NETWORK. AUDIO. VIDEO. CONTROL.

RETHINK MULTIVIEWERS
V_matrix vm_dmv64-4
Infinitely Expandable 4K/HDR IP Multiviewer

RETHINK CONVERSION
V_matrix vm_udx
4K IP Up/Down/Cross Conversion

RETHINK AUDIO
A_UHD Core
Ultra-high Density IP DSP Engine

RETHINK CONTRIBUTION
A_line & V_line
WAN-capable IP Audio and Video I/O

RETHINK MONITORING
SMART
System Monitoring and Realtime Telemetry

Join us @ CABSAT #C2.30
www.lawo.com

February 2019
Inside this issue

05 NEWS
OSN chooses SnapLogic for cloud support; MBC ramps up digital efforts, hires ex-Hulu exec, announces new Arabic drama series; TRT Arabi relaunches; New film festivals launch in the UAE

14 TWITTER TALKS SPORTS
Kinda Ibrahim talks about Twitter's ambitious sports strategy and how the platform is enabling partners to engage more meaningfully with their audience

16 CHANGE IS IN THE AIR
When Middle East Broadcasting Networks decided to overhaul its 14-year operations, it started with its HQ in the US and Dubai. We take you on a tour of the Dubai facility.

25 FILM STUDIES IN FOCUS
Middlesex University’s Media & Film Studies professors tell us how they ready their film students for the new age of filmmaking

30 BIG DATA DECODED
AI and machine learning are more efficient than human resources in content discoverability

34 CABSAT 2019
New exhibitors...new features... what to expect... CABSAT Sales Manager Syed Ali reveals all while we bring you a short preview of some hot launches. A lot more will be featured in the March issue

40 AUGMENTING AI
What can AI do for pay TV in MENA? Simon Trudelle
OSN streamlines workflow with SnapLogic

OSN has selected SnapLogic’s Intelligent Integration Platform to modernise its IT environment and support its use of cloud services across the organisation. OSN recently shifted to a new multi-cloud hybrid architecture to become more efficient and ensure a seamless service for customers. Using the SnapLogic platform, OSN has migrated to a new cloud-based system, including Microsoft Azure SQL Data Warehouse, with minimal manual coding requirements. OSN is also using SnapLogic for the ongoing maintenance of its hybrid cloud architecture, ensuring that data across the business is available in the right place with little manual integration effort required. By automating and accelerating system integration, OSN can spend more time responding to changing customer requirements and delivering new value-adds.

Jacques Von Benecke, Chief Digital Officer, OSN, said: “With SnapLogic, we’ve been able to vastly reduce the time and effort required to get this in place, enabling us to develop new features and functionality based on our customer needs efficiently.”

Necrov Shah, General Manager for SnapLogic’s EMEA, added: “We’re proud to be part of OSN’s next technical evolution, which will see the organisation benefit from intelligent integration across the entire business.”

Turki Al Shabanah appointed new Minister of Media as part of Saudi cabinet reshuffle

Turki Al-Shabanah, Chairman of Rotana TV Channels, has been appointed Minister of Media in Saudi Arabia following a major cabinet reshuffle by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in December 2018. He replaces Awad Alawi, who has been appointed a Royal Court advisor. In a separate decree, King Salman also announced that Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Turki Al-Faisal will replace Turki Al-Shabanah as President of the General Sports Authority, while Turki Al-Shabanah will serve as Chairman of the Entertainment Authority.

NOMAD ties with Sony Professional Solutions MEA

NOMAD, an ecosystem being built by the Ahli Holding Group near Dubai Outlet Mall, has partnered with Sony Professional Solutions MEA to develop the media sector within its facility. The MoU was signed by Mohammed Khammas, CEO of Ahli Holding Group and NOMAD, and Rob Sherman, MD of Sony Professional Solutions MEA. This partnership will create opportunities for content creators, filmmakers, artists, freelancers and musicians. Sony Professional Solutions MEA will advise and mentor NOMAD members, while sharing its know-how on technology and production to help facilitate content creation.

“With Sony we provide the tools, and NOMAD comes in with the infrastructure that provides the ideal platform for people to use this technology. It is very important to build and nurture this platform locally to enable the storytellers to have a place and environment to work in,” commented Sherman.

The first phase of NOMAD, due to launch in 2019, will see co-working spaces and production studio resources being built, along with a pilot co-housing community. The second phase will see the rollout of more advanced facilities. NOMAD is working with government partners to develop feasible licensing and visa schemes that can be offered to its partners. Although the terms have not yet been finalised, residencies will be available through NOMAD when it becomes operational.

Better performance, quicker setup, immediate payoff: Digital 6000 was developed to exceed the expectations of audio professionals and business managers alike. Our new professional wireless series delivers reliable performance in even the most challenging RF conditions. Intermodulation is completely eliminated by Digital 6000, enabling more channels to operate in less space.

Digital 6000 utilizes groundbreaking technology from our flagship Digital 9000. Dependability is guaranteed by our renowned Long Range transmission mode and proprietary audio codec. Digital integration is seamless with AES3 and optional Dante output. Monitoring and control of the two-channel receiver is at your fingertips, with an elegant, intuitive user interface.

Digital 6000

Compromise is not an option when everyone is counting on you.

Discover more: www.sennheiser.com/digital-6000
MBC ramps up digital investment, hires ex-Hulu exec to lead Shahid initiatives

MBC Group will prioritise its digital services with a robust investment strategy for the next five years under Johannes Larcher, who has recently joined MBC Group as Managing Director of its Digital & VOD websites. MBC will launch a series of new offerings and initiatives, including Shahid Original productions, global content acquisitions, product and technology investments, and partnerships with leading participants, all aimed at developing Shahid and Shahid Plus.

Speaking about MBC Group’s digital plan, MBC Group CEO Sam Barnett stated: “We reach 1.8m viewers every day across the Middle East, both through our satellite TV channels and through Shahid. What remains fundamental to our business is the ability to produce, package and deliver content to people all the way from Morocco in the west across North Africa to Egypt, the Levant, Iraq and the Gulf. Johannes joins us to lead the next stage in our development plan for Shahid. We are already a destination for the best Arabic content. Now our challenge is to boost the volume of premium video content both from MBC Studios and further afield, to upgrade our technology and to extend our distribution.”

New Nat Geo programme to premiere in MENA

National Geographic premiered Valley of the Boom, a limited six-part series, on January 13. The series tracks the explosive, game-changing birth of Silicon Valley through the 2001 dot-com bust. The series will air at 6pm UAE time / 5pm KSA time every Sunday until 17 February.

Dance FM presenter dies at 28

James Eli Aramouni, a well-known presenter with Dance FM, died on 13 January. In a statement, Cameroon Plant, Group MD of Shock Middle East, said: “James was a much-loved member of the Shock Middle East family and we are devastated to hear of his passing. We will miss his creativity, energy and his contribution to Dance FM. We ask you to respect the privacy of his family during this difficult time.”

AJA expands its openGear line with OG-X-FR, a new 2RU openGear frame designed with Smart Power and Smart Cooling technology to make the most of your high density openGear card environments. OG-X-FR houses all openGear cards, including AJA’s latest openGear cards with Dashboard support which combine the reliability and functionality of AJA Mini-Converters with the high density openGear architecture. Dashboard software support provides convenient and industry standard configuration, monitoring and control options over a PC or local network.

Pick a Card, Any Card

New openGear solutions from AJA

AJA expands its openGear lineup with five cards for audio, video scaling and HDMI conversion.

OG-3G-AMA: 3G-SDI to Analog Audio
OG-UDC: Embedder/Disembedder
OG-4K2HD: 4K/UltraHD to SDI Converter
OG-HA5-4K: HDMI 2.0 Converter
OG-X-FR houses all openGear cards, including AJA’s latest openGear cards with Dashboard support which combine the reliability and functionality of AJA Mini-Converters with the high density openGear architecture. Dashboard software support provides convenient and industry standard configuration, monitoring and control options over a PC or local network.

AJA, and enjoy the speed and efficiency of setting any openGear frame, including the OG-X-FR from AJA, and enjoy the speed and efficiency of setting any openGear frame, including the OG-X-FR from AJA, and enjoy the speed and efficiency of setting any openGear frame, including the OG-X-FR from AJA, and enjoy the speed and efficiency of setting any openGear frame, including the OG-X-FR from AJA.
**TRT Arabi relaunches with new look**

TRT Arabi, the Arabic service of Turkey’s public broadcaster Turkish Radio & Television (TRT), relaunched last month with a new look and feel as well as a completely revamped programming grid. Speaking to BroadcastPro ME, Parkhan Han, Head of Global Digital, Satellite Distribution & Partnerships at TRT World, said: “The channel has gone through a complete overhaul both on the front end and will serve as an international channel, along with TRT World. Alongside TRT’s current broadcasting centres in London and Washington, DC and bureaus all over the world, TRT Arabi will also open offices in key locations for newsgathering and reporting.” The revamp also include a complete overhaul of the broadcaster’s technical infrastructure on TRT Arabi, which has been operational since 2010. TRT Arabi was previously available in HD only on Nilesat and Bangla 4 positions in the MENA region. A HD version is now available to viewers on the same satellite positions with an additional satellite, Hotbird, which has covered Europe since January 7.

**BCE concludes Freecaster acquisition**

BCE has fully acquired Freecaster, an online video service provider that specialises in production and streaming of high-quality content. Raymond Dulieu will continue as CEO of Freecaster. With this acquisition, BCE aims to strengthen its production capabilities and expand its footprint within live and on-demand content streaming. Speaking about the acquisition, Frédéric Lemaire, CEO of BCE, said: “At BCE, we have already developed advanced online video solutions for the market. These will be complemented by the know-how and recent developments of Freecaster.”

**My-HD announces partnerships with Al Majd Network and SPI**

My-HD and SPI International have renewed their channel distribution partnership in MENA for the next three years. Under the new terms of the carriage deal, My-HD subscribers will continue to have access to content, including Hollywood films, live video game tournaments and documentaries. My-HD also recently signed a partnership with Al Majd Network to carry its channels on the My-HD platform.

**MBC Chairman appoints new Al Arabiya editorial board**

Ali Arabya and Al Hadath will now have an editorial board headed by Abdullah Alhajjari. Alhajjari is the founder and Chairman of MBC Group, Waleed Al-Ibrahim, who also owns the news channels. Al-Ibrahim also announced the appointment of veteran journalist Dr Nabil Khathb as the new General Manager of Al Arabiya and Al Hadath. Dr Khathb succeeds Turki Al-Dakhil, who had held the position since January 2015.

**International fest for short films to debut in Dubai**

An international short film festival titled FILM-ED is set to debut in Dubai. Conceptualised as a quarterly festival, FILM-ED will have Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter editions and has been launched in partnership with SAE Institute Dubai and Cinema Akil. Focused on showcasing the best student films from across the world, the festival is accepting submissions for its Spring edition from students all over the world. The last date to apply is March 1, with a fee of $25 per film. There is no age limit for applicants. Festival Director Yaman Al Ghazawi said: “The idea behind FILM-ED is to bring students from all over the world together and offer recognition for their work. Students in the Middle East will be able to compete against other students internationally. We look forward to seeing student entries. So far we have received submissions from Europe, India, Thailand, Germany and Australia, among others. ‘Award-winners from each of our editions will compete for our annual accolades, with all nominated films screened and awards announced during our annual screening event at Cinema Akil in Dubai, UAE in January 2020.’

**Inaugural edition of Sharjah Film Platform attracts regional talent**

The Sharjah Art Foundation hosted the inaugural edition of Sharjah Film Platform (SFP) last month at Al Mureijah Square, Sharjah. The festival featured two of three short films that received a total grant money of $30,000 last year. The first edition showcased 140 films from more than 40 countries, including shorts and features within the documentary, narrative and experimental categories. In a press statement, Sharjah Art Foundation said: “The establishment of Sharjah Film Platform, with its annual film festival and discussions as well as workshops, is a natural result of our increasing work within the medium of film.” SFP included a curated film programme and award, workshops and discussions as well as a production grant for short films. The Short Film Production Grant is awarded with up to three potential awards.
Al Mamlaka TV controls broadcast infrastructure with Lawo VSM

Head of Sales at Qvost Media in Dubai, said: “The major task and benefit of using the VSM system is that it creates a familiar workflow for all operators in all news studios and the MCR. VSM is the only control system on the market able to work in a fully IP-based environment and with third-party equipment. The implementation of VSM across Al Mamlaka TV proves its ability to provide the overall control system, regardless of the hardware used and the overall system design. Thanks to a virtual IP switching layer, the VSM system allows users to set up a workflow in future news studios that is familiar to users by virtue of their established workflows.”

ETL Systems acquires Atlantic Microwave to strengthen RF range
ETL Systems has acquired Atlantic Microwave, a major provider of microwave components and satellite communication test equipment. Ian Hilitch, CEO of ETL Systems, commented: “Atlantic Microwave offers a wide range of complementary RF products and a different customer base. We will be able to use our experience as a global manufacturer to support Atlantic around the world. Atlantic is also very focused on customisation of its RF range, and so it was a well-aligned company to acquire.” ETL Systems operates globally with manufacturing and R&D sites based in the UK, The UK facilities, combined with offices in Washington, DC and Dubai, support the firm in servicing customers in 112 countries.

Tunisia to issue 5G licences by 2021
Anouar Maarouf, Tunisia’s Minister of ICT and Digital Economy, has announced that 5G licences will be available in Tunisia by 2021. Telecom operators in the country are already testing their technical capacities to support 5G. Tunisia Telecom, in collaboration with Huawei, tested 5G in May 2018 in Tunis. The public company reportedly reached a download speed of 138.6Mbps live with a widely used consumer smartphone.

SEVEN plans KSA recreation centre
Saudi Entertainment Ventures Company (SEVEN), tasked with developing the kingdom’s entertainment sector by 2030, has announced the launch of a 100,000sqm entertainment complex in Riyadh. The entertainment complex will include several recreational facilities for sports activities, cinema, art and live entertainment. SEVEN is a recently re-branded unit of KSA’s Public Investment Fund.

Comedy Central’s KSA acts to be broadcast on OSN
As part of Comedy Central’s KSA-based stand-up comedy show called MENNA W FINA, four live shows were hosted in the Kingdom last month. The shows were live taped and will premiere exclusively on OSN in March.

Akamai buys Janrain
Akamai Technologies has acquired Janrain, a pioneer in Customer Identity Access Management (CIAM). This acquisition integrates Janrain’s Identity Cloud into the Akamai Intelligent Edge Platform, and is expected to provide immediate security benefits to CIAM customers within bot management and threat intelligence.

This technology will be designed to enable highly accurate, scalable and secure risk-based adaptive authentication solutions to safeguard against fraudulent account creation and credential compromise.

InMusic appoints NMK Electronics as UAE distributor
InMusic has partnered with inMusic for the distribution of Numark, Rane DJ and Denon DJ in the UAE. InMusic chose NMK for its extensive retail channel experience covering the Middle East and various partnerships within the local DJ community. Commenting on this partnership, Dino Drimakis from NMK Electronics said: “We are delighted to start working in the DJ/music production market and look forward to providing local artists and influencers in the UAE with top-flight services. The product mix within Denon DJ’s, Rane DJ/s and Numark’s product portfolio deliver solutions that continue to redefine the creative process for the aspiring and professional DJ alike.”

Edgeware to buy Cavena Image Products AB
Edgeware will soon acquire Swedish subtitle provider Cavena Image Products AB. Edgeware will acquire 100% shares in Cavena for $89,248 on a cash and debt-free basis. The deal is expected to close in Q1 of 2019.

iflix sells African business to Econet
iflix has sold its stake in iflix Africa to telco group Econet Global Limited. Kuala Lumpur-based iflix, which first entered sub-Saharan Africa in June 2017, said it will now concentrate on its Asian business, particularly the markets of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Edgeware
E Econet
Edgeware
Edgeware to buy Cavena Image Products AB
Edgeware will soon acquire Swedish subtitle provider Cavena Image Products AB. Edgeware will acquire 100% shares in Cavena for $89,248 on a cash and debt-free basis. The deal is expected to close in Q1 of 2019.

iflix sells African business to Econet
iflix has sold its stake in iflix Africa to telco group Econet Global Limited. Kuala Lumpur-based iflix, which first entered sub-Saharan Africa in June 2017, said it will now concentrate on its Asian business, particularly the markets of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Accedo raises $17m in capital
Accedo has raised $17m in equity to further drive its growth over the coming years. This round of financing was led by SEB Private Equity, a Stockholm-based private equity team that is a major investor in Accedo.

Advertise. It works.
It’s what you say and how many times you say it.

InMusic
InMusic appoints NMK Electronics as UAE distributor
InMusic has partnered with inMusic for the distribution of Numark, Rane DJ and Denon DJ in the UAE. InMusic chose NMK for its extensive retail channel experience covering the Middle East and various partnerships within the local DJ community. Commenting on this partnership, Dino Drimakis from NMK Electronics said: “We are delighted to start working in the DJ/music production market and look forward to providing local artists and influencers in the UAE with top-flight services. The product mix within Denon DJ’s, Rane DJ/s and Numark’s product portfolio deliver solutions that continue to redefine the creative process for the aspiring and professional DJ alike.”

Edgeware to buy Cavena Image Products AB
Edgeware will soon acquire Swedish subtitle provider Cavena Image Products AB. Edgeware will acquire 100% shares in Cavena for $89,248 on a cash and debt-free basis. The deal is expected to close in Q1 of 2019.

iflix sells African business to Econet
iflix has sold its stake in iflix Africa to telco group Econet Global Limited. Kuala Lumpur-based iflix, which first entered sub-Saharan Africa in June 2017, said it will now concentrate on its Asian business, particularly the markets of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Accedo raises $17m in capital
Accedo has raised $17m in equity to further drive its growth over the coming years. This round of financing was led by SEB Private Equity, a Stockholm-based private equity team that is a major investor in Accedo.

Advertise. It works.
It’s what you say and how many times you say it.

InMusic
InMusic appoints NMK Electronics as UAE distributor
InMusic has partnered with inMusic for the distribution of Numark, Rane DJ and Denon DJ in the UAE. InMusic chose NMK for its extensive retail channel experience covering the Middle East and various partnerships within the local DJ community. Commenting on this partnership, Dino Drimakis from NMK Electronics said: “We are delighted to start working in the DJ/music production market and look forward to providing local artists and influencers in the UAE with top-flight services. The product mix within Denon DJ’s, Rane DJ/s and Numark’s product portfolio deliver solutions that continue to redefine the creative process for the aspiring and professional DJ alike.”

Edgeware to buy Cavena Image Products AB
Edgeware will soon acquire Swedish subtitle provider Cavena Image Products AB. Edgeware will acquire 100% shares in Cavena for $89,248 on a cash and debt-free basis. The deal is expected to close in Q1 of 2019.

iflix sells African business to Econet
iflix has sold its stake in iflix Africa to telco group Econet Global Limited. Kuala Lumpur-based iflix, which first entered sub-Saharan Africa in June 2017, said it will now concentrate on its Asian business, particularly the markets of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.
Dubai to issue film permits within a day and offer e-option for aerial filming

Dubai Film & TV Commission (DFTC) has announced that it will issue permits for filming in Dubai within one day, effective February 1. Jamal Al Sharif, Chairman of DFTC, pointed out that this announcement aligns with Dubai’s UAE Vision 2021. The Commission is also working on providing permits for aerial filming online this year.

Saeed Al Janahi, Director of Operations at DFTC, said: “Films permits in Dubai were issued within three working days through the Film Commission previously, and this is already the fastest time frame in the world. We have now decided to outdo ourselves by offering this within one day to keep the producers and directors focused on the creativity of their projects.” Last year, DFTC received 953 applications to film in Dubai, including movies, documentation, TV series, commercial and corporate videos.

Starz Play announces 50 new shows in MENA

Maaz Sheikh, co-founder and CEO of Starz Play, said in a press statement: “Starz Play is upping its game in MENA with the launch of 50 new shows in 2019. Starz Play is the number one OTT provider in the MENA region, with a 26% share of the overall regional market – including Egypt and the Maghreb region of Arab- and French-speaking North Africa. By 2022, our data and predictions suggest Starz Play will further increase its regional market share to around six million paying subscribers – positioning the brand as the stand-out leader in the OTT streaming segment,” added Sheikh.

Al Arabiya employs AR tech for Saudi budget coverage

MBC used AR and created a mixed reality environment to present the Saudi budget recently. Al Arabiya transformed its studio into a massive set for the event, using stype’s RedSpy and Vizrt. “Previously, we created an AR studio outside the MBC HQ in Dubai, where we projected all our graphics on the glass of the building and built an imaginary bridge that held all the graphics on a gigantic set. This year, we also teleported the presenter and a video wall onto the virtual environment,” said Fadi Radi, MBC Group’s Head of Creative, adding that mixed reality is the future. “It helps the talent to interact very realistically with the virtual environment, thereby making storytelling better.”
You have undertaken a number of local sports initiatives of late, the most recent being the AFC Asian Cup in the UAE with Goal. What is driving your sports strategy on Twitter? We have been continuously monitoring how our audience interacts and engages with sports content and found a lot of activity on our platform. We partnered with Kantar Media for research to further understand Twitter’s role within sport in Saudi Arabia. They released a study early last year which showed that sports has emerged as a key genre of content on Twitter, with 80% of the respondents saying that they are “very interested” in following football content. The respondents like to keep up-to-date with live scores and updates during a football match, and they turn to Twitter to watch or listen to exclusive content about football during the games. So during the World Cup, we launched a live show called #PlayThatGoal with Goal and the show generated an average of 400,000 viewers per episode. How exactly are you running a complementary or parallel show that engages viewers? Sometimes we partner with rights holders, and sometimes we don’t. For instance, sports media company Perform Group (of which Goal is a part) doesn’t own the rights but brings a lot of external expertise in terms of the data it owns and the repertoire of sports experts and analysts who host its shows and talk about the top moments in a match. Our users are looking for that kind of overview, reviews and expert analysis. We also work with rights owners. We have partnered with beIN Sports on some of their content, and they are the official rights holder for a lot of sports events. If you follow their account on Twitter, you will get all the highlights of the Asian Cup. They are basically re-tweeting all the top score-live highlights of the tournament.

The Kantar Media study that we conducted last year also revealed that people’s top priority on Twitter is to access live streaming content, so we have tried to work on bringing more of these to our platform. We recently partnered with Saudi Arabia’s General Sports Authority, the rights owner of Supercoppa Italia (the Italian Super Cup), to live stream it in Saudi Arabia. That generated almost 300,000 viewers. In parallel, we had three sponsors for content around the tournament, such as behind-the-scenes videos and clips about the players, which created a lot of engagement.

We also partnered with the General Sports Authority to live stream the Superclásico Championship that took place in Riyadh and Jeddah in October, and that generated almost 300,000 viewers.

How did the AFC Asian Cup unfold on Twitter? We started prior to the show. As far back as December, we started with pre-tournament episodes about Dubai, because the show is sponsored by Dubai Tourism. Now, during the tournament, we are really focused on where the most important fixtures are happening. For instance, if Saudi Arabia is playing or the UAE is playing, this will be our focus. There were 2.5 million tweets sent about the Asian Cup during the group stage and the most mentioned teams were Saudi Arabia followed by India, Japan, Thailand and then Iraq. We have seen some peak numbers during key moments – like as soon as the India-Thailand and the Saudi Arabia-North Korea games finished, there was a huge spike in conversations. This indicates that when fans follow people on Twitter, the engagement is all in real time. Our strategy is to work with premium content partners in a complementary role. This has helped us build long-term partnerships with publishers. Globally, our partners are seeing a 60% year-over-year increase in revenue coming from Twitter.

How is their revenue generated from Twitter? Publishers’ revenue comes through in-stream video sponsorship and in-stream video ads. We worked with beIN Sports at the end of last year around the distribution of official UCL premium content. They were not live but near-live clips, sponsored by Apple. We had something similar for the World Cup, and we have ongoing sponsorships that help

"There were 2.5 million tweets sent about the Asian Cup during the group stage and the most mentioned teams were Saudi Arabia followed by India, Japan, Thailand and then Iraq" Kinda Ibrahim, Director of Media Partnerships, MENA, Twitter

publishers get additional distribution and revenue for their content. When advertisers ran six-second pre-roll campaigns around match highlights from beIN for the UCL and the World Cup, they saw a 75-80% completion rate. This means viewers were seeing most of the sponsored video clips. It’s a high metric and shows that the audience is engaged. Publishers get an incremental reach through paid media by brands. They get revenue from these brands through it as a revenue-sharing model.

Which specific game has worked mostly on Twitter, and who is your regional audience? In MENA, it is football and more football. There is also WWE, offering sports and entertainment. Our audience is primarily Arabic-speaking in this region. For the US, golf and NBA content have typically had a lot of viewers.
While the upgrade across MBN’s facilities is ongoing, Alhurra’s Dubai office was among the first to be transformed.

Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc has overhauled its tech and programming across all its brands to stay competitive in a dynamic Arabic news broadcasting environment. Vijaya Cherian tours the brand-new Alhurra TV facility in Dubai, part of the overhaul, and learns more about the network’s strategy from Nart Bouran, Senior VP of News, Programming & Transformation, and Mike Marno, VP of Broadcast Operations.
The first thing that catches your eye as you walk into Alhurra TV’s brand-new TV facility in Dubai Media City is the vast sense of space. Although the facility has a low ceiling, the curved design of the sets, the oval rotating floors and the studio furniture create the illusion of an infinitely larger space. But an aesthetic studio space that can accommodate two sets with multiple configurations alongside an augmented reality (AR) set-up are only a few of the many elements that make the new Alhurra TV facility in Dubai impressive.

Integrated within a tight deadline of just over three months by systems integrator Diversified PXL LLC (formerly TSL Systems), the Dubai facility boasts a Production Control Room (PCR), a Master Control Room (MCR), a Central Apparatus Room (CAR), three edit suites and a newsroom, as well as other elements critical to running a full-fledged TV station. The studio space at Dubai Media City was designed by New York experiential design firm Clickspring Design, and executed locally in conjunction with Dubai firm Zen Studios as a fabricator.

The studio refresh in the Dubai facility included the installation of four new Sony HD studio camera systems.

The first phase of the overhaul addressed the on-air presence, “which relates to the quality of graphics and enhancing the production value”, says Marno. “This required a complete studio refresh, where we changed the technology, sightlines, set elements and finishes as well as the way the shows looked and were directed. Thus far, we have done the actual primary studios as well as the core graphics systems in headquarters and Dubai. We’ve expanded the existing systems as a bridge, in order to support the new graphics and studio capabilities.”

The studio space was designed by New York experiential design firm Clickspring Design, and executed locally in conjunction with Dubai firm Zen Studios as a fabricator.

“The programme grid was one of the first things that was agreed upon and we built the services and production around it”

Nart Bouran, Senior VP of News, Programming & Transformation, MBN

not the only part of this massive transformation. The TV station is part of the larger US government-funded Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc (MBN), which also includes Alhurra-Iraq and Radio Bura, with a big overhaul in the cards for both. The network employs more than 750 people around the world, around 110 of them in Dubai. The mandate from the management at MBN’s headquarters outside Washington, DC was “to bring MBN into the 21st century”, says Mike Marno, Vice President of Broadcast Operations.

“There is an element of institutional legacy in terms of the existing technology, structure and workflow. There was significant legacy as well as the approach to news and newsgathering as well as the design philosophy for the core technical systems. The hardware was outdated, so there was also a need to replace it where applicable and acquire new technical systems.”

So the need of the hour was “a top-to-bottom overhaul” for the 14-year-old network, adds Nart Bouran, MBN Senior Vice President of News, Programming and Transformation. Bouran joined MBN back in April 2018 and has been instrumental in executing the network’s first-ever major transformation, along with other senior executives like Marno.

“It includes everything, from the studios, the creative side and editorial structure, to the workflows, the programming, the content and the digital platforms. Every single aspect that relates to media has been overhauled or is in the process of being so. This includes looking into the future of an industry that is evolving and changing. It’s not just about overhauling the current status but also looking to see what is around the corner and anticipating trends.” Bouran explains.

“The story goes back to a little over a year ago, when Alberto Fernandez took over as President of MBN. Bouran explains: “He had a clear mandate on how to improve MBN both in terms of the on-air look and the content. This transformation was really about making a change that would place MBN in its rightful place in the competitive place by using the editorial balance and openness that we are privileged to have.”

On the technical side, Marno and his team got cracking.

“The initial step was to bring MBN up to current and common technology standards (i.e. HDSDI), subsequently upgrading to the use of future-facing technologies that will be prevalent in the next five years, most specifically in a broadcast news context,” says Marno.

“IP media transport and bonded cellular are examples of technologies already implemented and are proven at international channels such as Fox News, CNN, Al Jazeera and others. MBN additionally has plans to implement IP core routing for video. The purpose of these overhauls is to ensure that we have scalable relevant toolsets, allowing us to be competitive in our space.”

Two layers of ND filters control light and exposure within the studio as required.

The head of the hour was a top-to-bottom overhaul, says Nart Bouran.
In Dubai, this studio refresh included putting in four new Sony HD studio camera systems and LEMO fibre transmission (HEC-F800HL/AT), as well as Grass Valley vision mixers, hybrid routers and associated processing gear, a Rhenushein 9000 wireless microphone system, an SSL audio console using the Dante protocol and others. The ceiling boasts an array of LED lights that keep the studio cool, keeping power consumption low. The studio windows are fitted with two layers of ND filtering to control light and exposure levels depending on the need of the hour for a programme, or even removing the filters to reveal a spectacular view of Dubai.

Jafer Khalil Ahmad Al-Zubi, Executive Producer of the Dubai facility, takes us on a tour of the station, demonstrating the tapeless nature of the production gallery and how the lights and colours in the studio are controlled through an ETC lighting console in the PCR. The ETC system allows MBN to enhance the audio-visual quality of the facility.

The newsroom is divided into different areas where reporters and editors package news for broadcast. “Each editor is self-sufficient in putting together an entire news package once the news arrives at their desk. All the material from our reporters and wire agencies is brought here, where it is prepared by our video, script and graphics. One writer can create the whole news package,” explains Al-Zubi.

The tour takes us briefly into the CAR room, which provides a glimpse of many racks of servers, hybrid routers and associated processing gear, a Rhenushein 9000 wireless microphone system, an SSL audio console using the Dante protocol and others.

“The intent is to migrate the entire network into a posture that mimics all present-day technology platforms in use by those brands that we want to position ourselves against. This will include cloud and composable architecture, IP studio and distribution schemes, centralisation and virtualisation”

Mike Marno, VP of Broadcast Operations, MBN

A walk through the facility makes one thing clear – the channel is self-sufficient. “We have at least 110 people here, half of who are technical experts while the other lot include editorial staff and the operations team. All the expertise we need is available in-house. We have experts for our Autocue and Viart solutions, a Director of TV, editors, lighting experts, a crane/jimmy jib operator, new anchors and more. We had fabulous coverage of the last elections in the US, which confirms that its viewers can move seamlessly from linear screens to mobile devices; during specific news bulletins, they can watch the same story without rotating their devices.

Marno agrees that the team has just gotten started and there is plenty left to accomplish. “We went from a truly legacy technology, AES/SDI, into a hybrid of IP and HEVSDI, and we are not quite fully and completely HEVSDI globally yet. That will be part of the migration going forward. What we did initially was build a bridge to get us from AES/SDI into an IP architecture. We have refreshed all of our ENG kits and we’ve added bonded cellular technologies for newsgathering. We have changed infrastructure, added new gear and built out the capacity of existing infrastructure in order to support the current level of editorial content. Going forward, everything will be replaced holistically, in a unified fashion,” he says, adding that the plan is for all of the most relevant current technology, including cloud, IP and centralisation, to be deployed over the next three years.

“Going forward, we will migrate away from baseband technologies into completely cloud- and IP-based technologies. Those may or may not be centralised globally. The intent is to migrate the entire network into a posture that mimics all present-day technology platforms in use by those brands that we want to position ourselves against. This will include cloud and composable architecture, IP studio and distribution schemes, centralisation and virtualisation. We are specifically looking at the SMPTE2110 and 2022 sets of standards for studio and distribution workflow. Additionally, composable architecture as well as cloud-based announcements. For instance, its reporters will be using bonded cellular technology extensively in the field for real-time reporting. On the tech front, the channel confirms that its viewers can move seamlessly from linear screens to mobile devices; during specific news bulletins, they can watch the same story without rotating their devices.

Mike Marno, VP of Broadcast Operations, MBN

The intent is to migrate the entire network into a posture that mimics all present-day technology platforms in use by those brands that we want to position ourselves against. This will include cloud and composable architecture, IP studio and distribution schemes, centralisation and virtualisation.”

Mike Marno, VP of Broadcast Operations, MBN
Infrastructure and services such as AWS will be utilised for all those platforms that can in fact be virtualised or deployed in the cloud, be they on-premise, off-premise or hybrid. "While the technology refresh has been ongoing in phases in different parts of the world, with Springfield and Dubai the first to be overhauled, fresh new programming is also being revamped in parallel. "There is an Alhurra presence at different levels across the region, including Beirut, Cairo and Jerusalem, in addition to representation in all major Arab cities. Just outside of Washington, DC remains our main HQ, where the management and the bulk of our staff are located. We broadcast 16 hours daily from there," explains Bouran.

The Dubai facility has also added an MCR, a CAR, three edit suites and a newsroom, as well as other elements critical to running a full-fledged TV station. "The Dubai facility boasts a PCR, which is bringing a new dimension to the way we produce our programming," says Bouran. "The programme grid has been rejigged in Dubai, hitting deep analyses and thought-provoking programmes, as opposed to three in the past. Alhurra's morning show is hosted in Dubai, as is a weekly Gulf-based talk show called Gulf Talks. The programmes Debatable, Free Islam and Forbidden, Debatable, are being made redundant. The programmes are being introduced so far – that addresses visual storytelling and dissemination of that content," Bouran adds.

With the initial changes having been made in both MBN's headquarters and Dubai, the network is looking to turn its attention to its Baghdad office. "Basically, all the platforms globally will undergo change. In parallel, we are also looking at centralisation. The architecture for that centralisation is under discussion and is driven by editorial requirements for newsgathering and contribution which are still in flux," concludes Marno.

The aim has been to focus on more news and current affairs programmes, as well as daily appointment viewing for hard-hitting deep analyses and thought-provoking programmes, explains Bouran. "The programme grid was one of the first things that was agreed upon and we built the services and production around it. Therefore, it was one of the first things that came together."

The overhaul expanded to every part of the network, calling for a whole new anchor line-up, and echoed throughout the newsroom with a major restructuring of roles and duties and some roles being made redundant.

"We have added new positions while additional skills were introduced. Moreover, a new newsroom was created in Dubai that required whole new staffing," explains Bouran.

When we sceptically query if being funded by the US government could potentially skew the channel's news agenda, Bouran points out that Alhurra means 'the free one' and that the channel has remained true to that name. "In fact, we are able to talk about topics in ways other media organisations are not able to, we are able to ask the tough questions about the region and have views that might not suit everyone. In these times of deep media polarisation in the region, we see our role in providing fact-based content as extremely crucial," he explains. So far, the primary impact of the transformation has been on Alhurra's linear presence. Bouran and Marno state that in parallel to continuing the technical migration, the team is also reevaluating the network's digital strategy.

"When we talk about MBN's transformation, it includes all platforms. As well as an initial revamp of our digital platforms and its corresponding social media outlets. ElSaha is a digital channel that targets Egyptian youth, both living in Egypt and abroad. The channel provides a platform for them to speak out and have their ideas heard regarding the most relevant issues in their lives. It focuses on expanding horizons and exploring new ideas, as it incorporates the diversity of the Egyptian voice. "It's clear that digital consumption is different from linear TV and finding the balance between the two is very important. We have a very robust digital strategy moving forward – more than what has been introduced so far – that addresses visual storytelling and dissemination of that content," Bouran adds.

"All the material from our reporters and wire agencies is brought here, where it is prepared with audio, video, script and graphics. One writer can create the whole news package" Jater Khalil Ahmad Al-Zubi, Executive Producer, Alhurra, Dubai and launching the new ElSaha, cross-platform promotion and content-sharing is a vital part of our strategy," says Bouran.

The VP is referring to MBN's November 2018 launch of ElSaha, com (Arabic for ‘public arena’)
With films cheaper to make than the average fees a film school charges, regional film schools, both private and government, are staying relevant with curricula geared to a disruption-ridden broadcast industry.

There is a who’s who list of directors who never went to film school, and in the digital age the argument for attending a three-year course to learn filmmaking has never been on more tenuous footing. Digital tools for shooting, editing and even distributing movies have become so accessible that film schools are facing as much disruption in the digital age as the rest of the broadcast industry.

Alive to the challenge that it has never been cheaper to make a movie, Middlesex has put together a curriculum that it believes equips students for 21st-century challenges. And it begins with the faculty, explains Afroz Nawaf, Film Lecturer, Media & Film Studies Department at Middlesex University Dubai. BroadcastPro met with Nawaf; Dr David Tully, Senior Lecturer in Media and Film Studies, Middlesex University Dubai; and their colleague Daniela Tully.

“There is a reason why we are called MDX studios,” explains Nawaf. “We take classic classroom experiences and turn them into a practice with real-world project integration, and partnerships with strategic and corporate partners.”

Located in Dubai’s Knowledge Park, the university’s MDX Studios features industry-standard editing suites with colour grading suites, editing and VFX suites, an ADR booth, 4K
King along with a possible private screening at Roxy Cinema. “*Anyone wanting to participate in the making of the film will have to pitch for it.*” stresses Daniela Tully, also an author and industry veteran who has worked on projects such as *Contagion* and The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Movies start with the verbal pitch, and the Middlesex faculty has made it a pivotal feature of the curriculum. From the elevator pitch to the expanded pitch, Daniela guides second-year students on the art of pitching: “I often play the role of the studio executive. Pitching helps them resolve the gaps in their stories, among other flaws.”

She covers the history of filmmaking, while the course also covers all matters technical and Dr David Tully helps students develop and fine-tune their scripts.

The guiding philosophy at Middlesex, in terms of staging relevant to the modern-day student, is clear—a film education that reads the student for the industry. While the concept of a total filmmaker is still cherished, every film student is not positioned to be a director, explains Tully. “I have a student who has now discovered that he is proficient at producing a movie. We have had students who start as writers and find themselves skilled at directing.”

The three-year bachelor’s programme for filmmaking may not be everyone’s cup of tea. While *There Will be Blood* director Paul Thomas Anderson famously dropped out of film school two days into the course, he is a protégé of the famed Sundance Feature Film Programme, which supports independent filmmakers from development through distribution of their feature projects. Abu Dhabi’s Image Nation has created a somewhat similar year-long mentorship programme with Arab Film Studio. The seven-year-old Arab Film Studio, in the words of Image Nation CEO Michael Garin, aims to train the region’s next generation of filmmakers and to certify my students or anyone in the industry with a Blackmagic end-user certification. By the end of the second year, we cover the entire Resolve 15 book, and on completion, along with the degree, they also receive their certifications from Blackmagic Design.”

Indicating David Tully, Daniela Tully and himself, he adds: “All three of us are actively working in the industry. I have a digital agency. Industry outreach is a core feature of our curriculum.”

An active scriptwriter himself, Dr David Tully elaborates: “We actively seek teaching staff with one foot in academia and one foot in the industry. Virtual reality is currently being taught by Hassan Kiyany, an Emirati filmmaker and entrepreneur himself. He also teaches a course in the third year on entrepreneurship, helping students put their professional portfolio together, among other skills.”

Our visit coincided with the news that well-known author Stephen King had awarded budding filmmakers at Middlesex University Dubai the rights to adapt the short story *‘Stationary Bike’* from his book *Just After Sunset*, for just $1. The story of an ordinary household object assuming otherworldly powers with a terrifying twist, the project will entail the participation of students across academic years one, two and three, with the final DVD of the short film being shared with Stephen

### Technical progression plan for Middlesex students

The technical progression plan for students in the department is mapped out in terms of cameras. “Students start their work with iPhone/Android phones in combination with DJI G-2, for them to gain an understanding of movement and various filmmaking aspects now possible through smartphones,” explains Nawal.

#### Year one

- **Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 1 in combination with cages from Langara and Tilta**
- **Blackmagic Cinema 4K with matte box and cage**
- **Rode mics + boom variations**

#### Year two

- **All of the above plus Blackmagic Pocket 2 (4K)**
- **Blackmagic Micro**
- **Production monitor systems from Blackmagic and Small HD**
- **Glidacam HD 2000**
- **Various rigging systems**
- **Kino Fio tungsten and fluorescent lights**
- **GoPros with magic arms**

#### Year three

- **Blackmagic Ursa Mini**
- **Blackmagic Ursa Mini Pro 4.6K**
- **Wireless monitoring systems from Teradek**
- **Wireless focus pullers**
- **Field audio monitoring systems**
- **Foley elements**
- **Glidacam HD4000 with body pod mount**

#### Post-production

- **Primarily completed on Resolve 15 studio versions [edit, audio, colour]**
- **Audio elements using Ableton Live, Pro Tools and Fairlight**

### LEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year one</td>
<td>Glidacam HD 2000, Various rigging systems, Kino Fio tungsten and fluorescent lights, GoPros with magic arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year two</td>
<td>Blackmagic Pocket 2 (4K), Blackmagic Micro, Production monitor systems from Blackmagic and Small HD, Glidacam HD 2000, Various rigging systems, Kino Fio tungsten and fluorescent lights, GoPros with magic arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year three</td>
<td>Blackmagic Ursa Mini, Blackmagic Ursa Mini Pro 4.6K, Wireless monitoring systems from Teradek, Wireless focus pullers, Field audio monitoring systems, Foley elements, Glidacam HD4000 with body pod mount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“We actively seek teaching staff with one foot in academia and one foot in the industry”

Dr David Tully, Senior Lecturer in Media and Film Studies, Middlesex University Dubai

Protraining

Nawaf outlines the projects completed. “Our students have put together promotions for Jurassic World, Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald and the Universal Studio summit, among others.”

The deal also exposes the students to brands such as Vox Cinemas, Dubai Parks & Resorts and Ski Dubai. Most importantly, they learn to create content for the myriad platforms at their disposal, besides traditional film and linear TV.

“Touting 120% year-on-year growth, Nawaf says: “We started with three students in 2014. We are selective of the students coming into the department, and we are currently at 45-plus students.”

Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.

“Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.”

“Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.”

Nawaf outlines the projects completed. “Our students have put together promotions for Jurassic World, Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald and the Universal Studio summit, among others.”

The deal also exposes the students to brands such as Vox Cinemas, Dubai Parks & Resorts and Ski Dubai. Most importantly, they learn to create content for the myriad platforms at their disposal, besides traditional film and linear TV.

“Touting 120% year-on-year growth, Nawaf says: “We started with three students in 2014. We are selective of the students coming into the department, and we are currently at 45-plus students.”

Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.

“Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.”

Nawaf outlines the projects completed. “Our students have put together promotions for Jurassic World, Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald and the Universal Studio summit, among others.”

The deal also exposes the students to brands such as Vox Cinemas, Dubai Parks & Resorts and Ski Dubai. Most importantly, they learn to create content for the myriad platforms at their disposal, besides traditional film and linear TV.

“Touting 120% year-on-year growth, Nawaf says: “We started with three students in 2014. We are selective of the students coming into the department, and we are currently at 45-plus students.”

Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.

“Actively encouraged to enter film competitions, Middlesex students have won multiple awards at competitions such as the 48 Hour Film Project, and the film Hers Truly, written and directed by current student Sreelakshmi Hers Truly, was one of the nominated films at the Global University Film Awards 2018 in Hong Kong.”
With consumer viewing habits changing rapidly, traditional methods of labelling and logging metadata no longer seem to be keeping pace. Samuel Conway proposes a new integrated method that combines the power of AI and machine learning, for faster content discoverability from multiple sources.

In the broadcast market, where so many applications are mission-critical and audiences are ever more difficult to retain, every position in a broadcast organisation, be it producer, researcher, editor, content programmer or marketer, entails dealing with a tsunami of unstructured digital media and data which must be scrutinised to make decisions, sometimes at very short notice.

Broadcasters are awakening to the age of data overload, as cloud processing facilitates even more sources of information and delivery platforms, while social media, IoT (Internet of Things) devices and smartphones bring challenges of their own. The advantages of more data are clear, of course. It brings the opportunity to provide more content and create more audience satisfaction and engagement. However, it also brings with it all manner of issues when it comes to big data structure management and analysis. How does all this data easily translate into meaningful information that allows broadcasters to provide more engaging, timely and relevant content to audiences and subsequently bring in more revenue?

The structured data that traditionally makes up asset management systems comes with metadata that has a defined structure or taxonomy that rarely changes over time. Standard keyword and search interfaces are then used to access that content, so it can be used within a production or broadcast system. However, new technologies like OTT and social media have dramatically changed the way we consume media, and with the current process of labelling and logging metadata, it is impossible to anticipate future uses for content. And unlike structured data, these large, disparate sources of voluminous unstructured data must be processed and analysed before they can be quantified, understood and then used effectively.

Combining AI and Human Sentiment

Despite being very good at understanding the messy, unstructured nature of the world, the processing performance of the human brain cannot scale at the rate that unstructured data is growing. Broadcasters all know that a content library remains worthless without some means of knowing what is in the archive. This means they need to access much more than titles and an outline of content: an annotation becomes even more prevalent, they need metadata that can provide actionable insight.

The recent avalanche of new data means a new way of thinking is needed when managing a digital archive, one which allows broadcasters to anticipate the arrival of the next disruptive technology or cultural movement. That requires that manual loggers be as exhaustive as possible in the metadata that is captured to anticipate future needs.

Enter artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. These have the capability to consume large amounts of data streaming in from varied sources and, more importantly, to make sense of it all. By leaving tasks like face and logo detection, sentiment analysis, pose and activity. It can also upscale video, remove objects and add colour to video. This makes it especially useful for enhancing existing archives where little or no metadata exists. The best part is that it can be run 24/7 and can be upgraded to new and better machine learning algorithms as they appear.

A Paradigm Shift In Search

Traditionally, exploration and discovery of data have been facilitated by search. Until now, the concept of search has offered one user experience: a single text box where a word or phrase can be typed, with the results all looking the same, i.e., 10 to 50 links in a series of pages. The idea of making big data immediately comprehensible to the human eye, through dynamic interactive visualisations, is a new approach that offers exciting possibilities to the broadcast industry. Engaging both machine learning and human intuition is the key to dealing with this data overload, and is bound to empower people to make decisions more quickly.

The repetitive nature of manually annotating data, to make better use of their higher cognitive functions.

The recent avalanche of new data means a new way of thinking is needed when managing a digital archive, one which allows broadcasters to anticipate the arrival of the next disruptive technology or cultural movement.”

Samuel Conway, CEO, Zegami

They can provide actionable insight. The recent avalanche of new data means a new way of thinking is needed when managing a digital archive, one which allows broadcasters to anticipate the arrival of the next disruptive technology or cultural movement. That requires that manual loggers be as exhaustive as possible in the metadata that is captured to anticipate future needs.

Enter artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. These have the capability to consume large amounts of data streaming in from varied sources and, more importantly, to make sense of it all. By leaving tasks like face and logo detection, sentiment analysis, pose and activity. It can also upscale video, remove objects and add colour to video. This makes it especially useful for enhancing existing archives where little or no metadata exists. The best part is that it can be run 24/7 and can be upgraded to new and better machine learning algorithms as they appear.

A Paradigm Shift In Search

Traditionally, exploration and discovery of data have been facilitated by search. Until now, the concept of search has offered one user experience: a single text box where a word or phrase can be typed, with the results all looking the same, i.e., 10 to 50 links in a series of pages. The idea of making big data immediately comprehensible to the human eye, through dynamic interactive visualisations, is a new approach that offers exciting possibilities to the broadcast industry. Engaging both machine learning and human intuition is the key to dealing with this data overload, and is bound to empower people to make decisions more quickly.
PROTECH

It is possible today to collate information from various sources and present it in a single user interface for the user.

Delivering and Enriching the Moment

The tools currently being used by broadcasters to make big decisions are either aggregated business intelligence (BI) and analytic tools that only deal with numbers and text, or asset management software with no analytics element. Businesses tend to employ multiple sets of teams with specific skills to make sense of all the data at their disposal, but this task can be insurmountable and costly.

So, what if a unique algorithm could be used to draw all of the information from a broadcaster’s structural databases, including MAM systems, metadata, API, statistics as well as unstructured data such as social media and live data platforms, into a single, highly visual user interface using proxies and webhooks? It would provide a highly interactive way of looking at content using visuals such as graphs, scatter plots and media tiles, then pointed to see instantly which players are being tweeted or posted about in real-time. The broadcaster would then know exactly what its audience wants to know at that exact moment. If the programme editor needs to display statistics on a goal scorer, they would not only access the player’s performance stats, but historical facts, images, video and real-time social media influence too – which could also be called up along with a collection of similar players over history, or a collection of similar goals. The possibilities would be endless, as would the number of comparisons that could be drawn in the blink of an eye.

“What if a unique algorithm could be used to draw all of the information from a broadcaster’s structural databases, including MAM systems, metadata, API, statistics as well as unstructured data such as social media and live data platforms, into a single, highly visual user interface using proxies and webhooks?”

Samuel Conway, CEO, Zegami.

“During live sports coverage, media or metadata could be cross-referenced with live social media systems into a single platform and transforming it into valuable and purposeful visual information represents a paradigm shift in search. If an entire collection of information is presented in a single field of view, users can take in the full scope of the data all at once. There is no need for paged interfaces, so users can instantly see the shape of the data and leverage the innate abilities of the human mind to identify patterns.”

Unleashing the power of AI and transforming volumes of data to provide a new level of insight and the ability to dive into and find relevant content in the moment. Such a concept would unlock hidden or previously unutilised content and make it easy for someone without a technical background to embrace AI and explore that content quickly.

“By converging both content search and analysis on the same platform, broadcasters could save time starting from scratch with their archive or asset management system by dropping this type of platform on top via APIs – which would then tap into the existing archive and live systems, to provide a new level of insight and the ability to dive into and find relevant content in the moment. Such a concept would unlock hidden or previously unutilised content and make it easy for someone without a technical background to embrace AI and explore that content quickly.”

With a rapidly evolving media and entertainment industry, are you thriving in the face of disruption?

As the MENA region’s leading broadcast, satellite and content event, CABSAT 2019 gathers the global players in media creation, production and distribution together to power your growth in the rapidly changing digital economy.

With a rapidly evolving media and entertainment industry, are you thriving in the face of disruption?

CABSAT 2019 offers business opportunities across the content creation, production & distribution chain.

Want to grab your slice? Head over to learn how at CABSAT 2019 and network with visitor communities from the media & entertainment industry including TV & Film | Audio | Satellite | Digital Media | Photography | Esports.

*Source: Saudi General Entertainment Authority (GEA) Announcement – Feb 2018
CABSAT 2019 PROMISES CHANGE

CABSAT 2019 will bring together a host of new exhibitors and talent, in addition to launching an esports feature and workshops aimed at expanding its existing visitor database. In conversation with Syed Ali...

Why CABSAT 2019?

According to the PWI-Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2015-2019, the MENA region is forecast to be the biggest global contributor to growth in the entertainment and media industry, growing at a rate of 11.5% per year and expected to reach $66.6bn in value by 2022. As new streaming services such as Spotify enter the MENA market – and content distributors like Netflix and Amazon Prime move into content creation – the industry is pushed to look at the rapidly evolving media ecosystem in a new light. Business models throughout the industry are being reimagined to unleash new revenue streams, and CABSAT 2019 will let these opportunities take centre stage.

The industry has had a bad year. Has this had an impact on the show? How have you tried to leverage other opportunities to make up for it?

The entertainment and media industry is entering a stage of high audience expectation. Consumers are hungry for content, and distributors are tasked with meeting this frenzied demand. Esports is one such example; over the last two years, esports has moved to becoming a global phenomenon, in part driven by a number of broadcasters. Taking the sport from its online origins to a TV format has catapulted the genre into the mainstream, earning its reputation as the world’s fastest-growing sport. Market researcher Newzoo estimates that esports will become a $1.5-2.5bn business by 2020. With money pouring into esports and viewership numbers climbing, a growing range of companies and media are trying to understand the phenomenon and how they can hop aboard in order to connect with a highly desirable millennial fan base.

We will have an esports showcase, which will provide broadcasters … agencies, premium brands and game developers [an] opportunity to understand, learn and adapt these bite-sized formats" Syed Ali, Sales Manager, CABSAT

We have Boya Audio & DSQN with UTURN and Mena.TV; Film; Flix on 86 in partnership with Xtra-link FZCO, Tech Trade, Theo Technologies, Alpha Technology, Investment, Cineom, Amphinicy Technologies, services, applications and markets. It will take place on the first two days and will be a free-to-attend event with presentation-based and panel discussion-focused content at an open-access theatre-style structure situated within the satellite exhibition halls.

Why CABSAT 2019?

The show will continue to support the photographic and imaging sector and feature the latest in photography, including cameras, lenses, equipment, video technology, studio equipment, lighting, data storage, digital imaging, graphic design, photo-finishing and print. New to this sector will be free educational seminars and interactive learning sessions by professionals via keynotes and panel discussions. Photography showcases will cover mobile photography and optimisation for social, photo editing/post-production, lighting, workflow and the perfect stage.

We have a lot of content initiatives in the industry now. Will this be reflected at CABSAT as well?

CABSAT 2019 will focus on content creation, content production and content distribution. We also have the CABSAT Global Meetings Programme, a free-to-use networking service that allows registered visitors and exhibitors to search, connect and meet with key contacts at the show.

We see a lot of content initiatives in the industry now. Will this be reflected at CABSAT as well?

“All industry sectors are moving towards digital content via internet protocol facilitated by revolutionary transitions in satellite technologies, services, applications and markets. It will take place on the first two days and will be a free-to-attend event with presentation-based and panel discussion-focused content at an open-access theatre-style structure situated within the satellite exhibition halls.”

Why CABSAT 2019?

The conference will discuss key challenges and opportunities in the region as it seeks to deliver innovative formats and effective, sustainable business models in the age of disruption. Some of the speakers include Sunjay Rana, Vice President and GM, Fox International, John Saad, CEO – Middle East & North Africa, iflix; Ahmed Abdelhamid, Head of Programming & Acquisitions, Majid Kids TV; Ahmad Abdeltawab, Director, Scriptwriter & Chairman at QHD Media Production; film director Chah Mohamed Rayli; Nadine Samra, VP Digital Business MENA and Africa, Zee Entertainment; and Ghassan Saad, Head Video Services, du TV.

Who are some of the partners CABSAT is working with this year?

CABSAT 2019 is working closer with the industry to deliver educational seminars: photography seminars in partnership with AMT and Fuji Film, Pix on 96 in partnership with UTUSN and Mena TV, Content Congress in partnership with trucko414 and Dubai Film Commission, and the Satellite Summit in partnership with the Global VSAT Forum. CABSAT will deliver an enhanced meetings programme to make the IRIS meetings process easier and smoother this year.

Who are some of the new exhibitors at CABSAT this year?

We have Roya Audio & LRGN Investment, Cineom, Amphinicy Technologies, Alpha Technology, Film; Flix on 86 in partnership with Xtra-link FZCO, among others.

Who are some of the speakers at the Content Congress this year?

The conference will discuss key challenges and opportunities in the region as it seeks to deliver innovative formats and effective, sustainable business models in the age of disruption. Some of the speakers include Sunjay Rana, Senior Vice President and GM, Fox International, John Saad, CEO – Middle East & North Africa, iflix; Ahmed Abdelhamid, Head of Programming & Acquisitions, Majid Kids TV; Ahmad Abdeltawab, Director, Scriptwriter & Chairman at QHD Media Production; film director Chah Mohamed Rayli; Nadine Samra, VP Digital Business MENA and Africa, Zee Entertainment; and Ghassan Saad, Head Video Services, du TV.

Who are some of the partners CABSAT is working with this year?

CABSAT 2019 is working closer with the industry to deliver educational seminars: photography seminars in partnership with AMT and Fuji Film, Pix on 96 in partnership with UTUSN and Mena TV, Content Congress in partnership with trucko414 and Dubai Film Commission, and the Satellite Summit in partnership with the Global VSAT Forum. CABSAT will deliver an enhanced meetings programme to make the IRIS meetings process easier and smoother this year.

Who are some of the new exhibitors at CABSAT this year?

We have Roya Audio & LRGN Investment, Cineom, Amphinicy Technologies, Alpha Technology, Film; Flix on 86 in partnership with Xtra-link FZCO, among others.

Who are some of the speakers at the Content Congress this year?

The conference will discuss key challenges and opportunities in the region as it seeks to deliver innovative formats and effective, sustainable business models in the age of disruption. Some of the speakers include Sunjay Rana, Senior Vice President and GM, Fox International, John Saad, CEO – Middle East & North Africa, iflix; Ahmed Abdelhamid, Head of Programming & Acquisitions, Majid Kids TV; Ahmad Abdeltawab, Director, Scriptwriter & Chairman at QHD Media Production; film director Chah Mohamed Rayli; Nadine Samra, VP Digital Business MENA and Africa, Zee Entertainment; and Ghassan Saad, Head Video Services, du TV.
Telelynx announces world debuts at CABSAT
Taiwan-based Telelynx, a provider of end-to-end solutions for OTT, IPTV, digital TV systems and cloud computing, is a first-time exhibitor at CABSAT. The company will announce two world debuts at the stand: LynxTV and GeCinema.

LynxTV is a three-in-one STR that supports mobile TV, allowing consumers to watch pay or FTA terrestrial TV from their mobile devices, even without network connection. GeCinema enables viewers to watch VOD content on mobile devices, including games and mobile apps.

Stand: AS-20
GatesAir presents the future of television and radio transmission at CABSAT

GatesAir will bring its latest television and radio transmitters to CABSAT. The Maxiva series offers air-cooled and liquid-cooled models for analogue and digital television, at low operating costs. On the FM and HD Radio side, the Flexiva transmitters provide air- and liquid-cooled models to suit any installation of power level across analogue and digital radio. This includes Flaxia FAX COMPACT and low-power models for transmitter models as low as 1W.

The transmitters share a common architecture that optimizes transmit power, weight and infrastructure to keep cooling costs low, labour and maintenance manageable and, where applicable, reduce rental space in shared transmitter shelters. Speaking about the product line-up at CABSAT, Rich Redmond, President and MD, International for GatesAir, said: “GatesAir is positioned to help broadcasters cost-effectively migrate to new technologies on their time frame, leveraging the advances in high-efficiency IP-connected transmission platforms. CABSAT remains the premier venue to meet with all of our regional customers and partners in one place, as well as regions such as Southeast Asia. We have invested in new staff and partner resources to more efficiently serve the region, led by our new regional MD, Andy McCormick. We have also added Peter Timmers for business development in this region.” MENA still offers great potential for GatesAir because the region is still operating with analogue television. GatesAir continues to upgrade existing systems while helping broadcasters plan for a digital TV future. This company has supported several national DTV rollouts worldwide and says it is well positioned to help MENA countries through these challenging transitions. Radio is an important medium throughout the Middle East. For GatesAir, and we continue to help FM broadcasters upgrade existing infrastructure that will support high-quality FM broadcasts well into the future. Digital radio adoption is gradually on the rise as well, notably HD Radio, DMR and DAB Radio. Our latest digital radio innovations will be of great interest to our customers in MENA moving forward.”

Stand: D1-20, Hall 1
As industries across the globe harness the power of data and AI, the pay-TV industry has until now been slow to adapt to this new world. In the past, few were able to properly collect, implement and use data to gain valuable insights or improve their service. Those that did invest in data analytics tools and systems often took a short-sighted, siloed approach where different data sources failed to talk to each other. But today, the need for a fresh approach is growing; we’re now living in a world where OTT and social media platforms like Netflix and Facebook have built their success on capturing, analysing and acting on data and AI.

The many benefits AI can bring to pay TV

Serve more tailored and relevant content, while also allowing the user to pick out content as conveniently as possible,” he said. For Dr Nikutta, AI can also play a key role in improving a service provider’s content portfolio. “Content is the biggest cost item in TV operations, so it’s natural you look how smart analytics can improve economics there too.”

AI can also help deliver better personalisation, way beyond simple recommendations, Nikutta adds: “The model of you saw that, you might want to see this is not really improving the user experience anymore when it comes to content choice. Looking ahead, a lot of different contextual factors will have to be taken into consideration, including mood, needs, standards of living, day of the week and time of the day. These all come into play with more radical personalisation.”

Looking further down the line, Wim Ponnet, Chief Strategy and Commercial Officer, Endemol Shine Group, considers leveraging AI for content creation to be a bridge too far. “We analyse which clips work better or have a more positive consumer sentiment attached to them. It is all helpful feedback, but content production is still a highly creative process that cannot be entirely automated or engineered and, in my view, it will never be.

“We’re now living in a world where OTT and social media platforms like Netflix and Facebook have built their success on capturing, analysing and acting on data and AI”

Technology will help us in developing storylines and will open new ways of storytelling. But I definitely don’t see the age yet where the computer is going to take over and do the whole creative process for us,” he says. But for Bee Lian Ong, Vice President of TV Engineering, StarHub, leveraging AI and data ties in with the broader issue of innovation for pay-TV operators. “I believe we need to take a 360-degree view of innovation,” she says. “A key enabler of innovation in this area is anonymised customer data analytics, as well as other types of analytics and AI applications we can leverage to create a more holistic experience. At the end of the day, the more you understand about your customers’ evolving needs, the better the service you can provide.”

While opinions vary on the impact and possible applications of AI for the industry, executives agree that there’s never been a more critical time for service providers to review their data and analytics strategies. And while there is no one-size-fits-all solution, data and AI can be game-changers for pay-TV service providers, helping them deliver long-term business revenue and success. With the right approach in place, the pay-TV industry is well positioned to leverage all it has to offer.

Simon Trudelle is Senior Director Product Marketing at NAGRA.
The Next Stage of Innovation

• Single and Multi Channel Playout Automation with interactive CG and Graphics
• Cloud Solutions • Traffic Management • Media Asset Management and Archive
  • Newsroom System • Remote Redundant Playout
  • Ad Insertion and DPI • Time Shift • IPTV and Internet TV Solutions

Local Sales Contact: Advanced Media LLC, No. 409, 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 Neo Limited
sales@playboxneo.com • www.playboxneo.com

Join PlayBox Neo
STAND D1-21