MENA industry stakeholders take united stand against piracy

THE POWER OF MANY

MENA industry stakeholders take united stand against piracy

ANTI-PIRACY CONFERENCE 2019 SPECIAL ISSUE
PROINTRO

How time flies! BroadcastPro Middle East will be nine this July and SatellitePro seven. I thought this would be a great opportunity to look back on the years gone by.

We started off with just a magazine and a website in 2010; in 2011, we announced the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit and Awards, which has become one of the most attended events for the MENA broadcast industry; our anniversary parties became an excuse to get the industry together for a networking evening; our social media accounts have grown slowly but steadily; we have done exclusive roundtables and speed dating exercises for some of our clients; we have hosted golf days for the industry annually; and more recently, we have managed large-scale events for our clients in other parts of the MENA region.

We have had the exclusive privilege of attending launches and showcases around the world and interviewing some of the biggest names in TV, whether back in 2011 when Canon launched its first video camera in Hollywood, with Martin Scorsese sharing how digital cameras would change the face of filmmaking; more recently, with David Attenborough at the BBC World Showcase; covering remote production at the Australian Open; or interviewing Oscar-nominee Nadine Labaki.

Being on the judging panel of the much-coveted IBC Innovation Awards since 2013 has been another honour, and an opportunity to see how the industry is innovating globally. It’s a role I cherish. To celebrate our milestones and the industry, let’s get together at The Plantation Lounge at Sofitel JBR in Dubai on June 24. Please do register to attend.

Last month, SatellitePro ME had the opportunity to visit the satellite show in Washington, DC for the first time. We travel extensively with the intention of ensuring that the stories from this region travel with us and that MENA becomes an important region for both manufacturers and service providers worldwide.

It’s the reason we will be at ConnecTechAsia in Singapore again this month, as we have been for the last five years.

Vijaya Cherian, Editorial Director
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Image Nation Abu Dhabi, Majid Al Futtaim and MBC Studios ink landmark deal

Image Nation Abu Dhabi, Majid Al Futtaim and MBC Studios have entered into a major production partnership for film and TV projects across the Middle East. The partnership will support several projects annually and will have a special focus on Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. The first film supported by the partnership is Three Four Eternity, a vampire family drama produced by Mohamed Hefzy (Clash, Shields Jackson). PROJIN, currently in development, is a feature film adaptation of a Saudi Arabian novel from author Ibrahim Abbas. “This partnership will have a significant impact on the scale of the region’s industries, enabling more creatives to bring their ideas to life and deliver the content that audiences want to see. The trio of companies will facilitate the creative process at every step of a project’s development, and this is a major step towards our vision of creating dynamic content for the Middle East that will not only engage locally, but also play to the rest of the world,” commented Ben Ross, Chief Content Officer at Image Nation. Majid Al Futtaim will contribute to the partnership through its cinemas arm, as both an exhibitor and distributor of films. Peter Smith, Managing Director of MBC Studios, added: “We’re bringing together, for the very first time, a 360-degree Arab film entity that covers all aspects of content creation, including development, production, theatrical exhibition, televising on the Middle East’s leading broadcaster and (SVOD) platforms, as well as international sales. We want to create premium Arabic-language feature film content from across the Middle East to connect with audiences in the region and internationally. This partnership, in essence, creates a fully integrated studio.”

Front Row and Rocket Science team up to launch Yalla Yalla entertainment company in Dubai

Middle East film distributor and producer Front Row Filmed Entertainment and international financing, production and sales firm Rocket Science have entered into a joint venture to launch Yalla Yalla, a film and television company targeted at Arabic-language entertainment. Based in Dubai, Yalla Yalla will develop, package, produce and finance TV and film projects for MENA. The team has been actively acquiring remake rights as well as developing original content for both theatrical and TV, with the aim of having four feature films and two TV series produced within the first eighteen months. Rocket Science will leverage its talent, producing and financing relationships in the US and Europe, while Front Row and its partner, Kuwait National Cinema Company, will harness their regional relationships with filmmakers and financiers.

Film piracy giant Egy.best shut down

Egy.best, one of the most-visited movie piracy sites in Egypt, shut down last month following a growing number of complaints from original content producers, regarding the violation of their intellectual property. In a message on the site’s official Facebook account, which has since been removed, the admins said that several Egyptian ISPs had started to block the site, as a result of which it shut down.
Dubai Studio City recognises filmmakers at ceremony

Dubai Studio City hosted an exclusive felicitation ceremony last month and handed out certificates to all attendees of the third season of its content development workshops. During the ceremony, Dubai Studio City renewed its commitment to the filmmaking community via its platform CineMENA, which is set to organise events to celebrate content creation and nurture local talent in the field.

The content development workshops drew the participation of more than 500 amateur and professional filmmakers and content creators in Dubai-based distributor United Media, said: "These workshops served as a step forward to CineMENA, a platform that has generated high interest since it was announced last year. We look forward to supporting the region's creative talent more effectively with its diverse activities when it officially gets underway in Q4 2019." Hosted in collaboration with Zimnati production house Behind The Scenes, the workshops took place at Aria Media, which supports entrepreneurs and startups in the media domain with production facilities to grow within this field.

Epson appoints NMK Electronics as AV distributor

Epson Middle East has appointed Dubai-based distributor NMK Electronics to distribute its Pro AV solutions. The new deal will see NMK add Epson’s portable, short throw and installation projectors to its product portfolio. With major events in the local market including Expo 2020, NMK foresees the demand for Pro AV solutions growing.

Majed Al Suwaidi, Managing Director, Dubai Studio City.

UBMS to offer Tiffen Company’s Steadicam M-2 modular camera

The Tiffen Company has debuted its Steadicam M-2 modular camera stabiliser at the Cine Gear Expo, hosted from May 30 to June 1, 2019. The Steadicam will be available with Dubai-based distributor United Broadcast & Media Solutions (UBMS). Designed for several camera operating requirements of modern broadcast and cinema applications, it features a sleek new top stage that integrates Steadicam Volt horizontal stabilization technology for reduced weight and height, and simplified rig design.

SoundKraft invests in Sennheiser ew IEM G4

AV rental company SoundKraft LLC has added Sennheiser’s latest generation IEM G4 wireless in-ear monitoring system to its portfolio. Mithesh Bhatia, owner of SoundKraft, said: "We work closely with a number of international bands and artists. It was the high demand from these customers that prompted our decision to enhance our rental offerings with Sennheiser's latest IEM system. While seldom apparent to audiences, IEMS are absolutely critical to live performers. Because the system is so easy to set up, it is extremely reliable, allowing artists to focus on their performance." SoundKraft has been using Sennheiser’s equipment for over five years and works closely with Venuetech, the audio manufacturer’s UAE distributor. Since adding the system to its rental offering, SoundKraft has successfully used the Sennheiser ew IEM G4 for several live concerts and award shows, as well as a number of large-scale weddings.

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Image Nation Abu Dhabi’s film Rashid & Rajab has been acquired by international sales agent AGC International in a deal signed at the Cannes Film Festival in France. The Emirati comedy will now become available to markets and potential audiences worldwide, following its release across the GCC this Eid Al Fitr.

AGC International, the international sales and distribution division of AGC Studios in Hollywood, will provide Rashid & Rajab with a platform to be distributed to exhibitors, broadcasters and streaming platforms globally. The comedy already has MENA distribution by Tanween Films, with an Eid release date throughout the GCC and an Egyptian release scheduled for later in the summer.

Shot on location in Dubai, the UAE production is the first live-action feature film from Emirati director Mohammed Saeed Harbi. The film was produced by Emirati filmmakers Ali Mostafa (The Worthy, From A To B) and Majid Alansari (Zinata), alongside Breakout Film's Rami Yains (Shahab Sheyab).

The deal follows other recent successes from Image Nation Abu Dhabi, with a local series (legal drama Justice) picked up by Netflix as a Netflix Original, with a local series (legal drama Justice) picked up by Netflix as a Netflix Original, and an Academy Award for Best Documentary for its international co-production Free Solo.

UAE-based Icon Art Production (IAP) will invest approximately $4m over the course of this year to upgrade its facilities and expand its inventory of film, TV and broadcasting equipment. The move follows an increase in demand for local and international production of feature films, TV programmes, music videos, event productions, studies and post-production facilities in Dubai, the company said in a statement.

The investment will include the expansion of state-of-the-art studio facilities for indoor shoots for TVC, TV programmes and feature films, with a studio size of 15,000sqft, inclusive of all post-production facilities.

Commenting on the investment plan, Zakir Hussain, CEO of IAP, said: "Our team understands the niche requirements of the industry based on which we design a feasible budget for any type of project to assist directors and producers. This has enabled us to be industry leaders in supporting international filmmakers coming to Dubai from Hollywood and other regional and international film industries.”

Image Nation film Rashid & Rajab secures international sales agent at Cannes

The Egyptian Foundation for Strategic Studies & Research (EPSSR) has announced the launch of a three-year project titled Cima Masr, which aims to produce eight to 10 original films a year and to construct 55 street cinemas with affordable tickets across 27 governorates, as reported by local dailies.

Commenting on the initiative, Hany Gloneim, EPSSR founder and Chairman, stated: “The foundation research conducted by us at EPSSR shows a profound lack of entertainment areas, as 250 film theatres were shut down over the last decade and were replaced by commercial or residential projects. Our target audience, 15- to 45-year-old Egyptians, represents some 15m citizens, which is around 10% of the population in each governorate, who remain in need of affordable, well-equipped means of entertainment.”

"The information we gathered drove our collective enthusiasm to revive the role of Egyptian cinema in our society, as well as its contribution to the development of the Egyptian identity.”

Construction of the first phase of the three-year project, which will comprise 20 theatres, is scheduled for August 2019, with the grand opening of all 55 components set for Q1 of 2020.

EFSSR to build 55 new cinemas in Egypt

Italian broadcaster Mediaset has launched a new season of a documentary series on ancient Egypt in partnership with the Egyptian Tourism Ministry. This venture is part of the ministry’s strategy to diversify into new promotion platforms and modernise techniques of marketing Egypt.”, it said in a press statement.

The first season of the documentary series was broadcast on the Freedom Otra II Confiné (Freedom Beyond the Border) programme, with each episode drawing nearly 1.5m views, according to Egypt’s Tourism Minister, Rania Al-Mashat. The new season, hosted by presenter Roberto Giacobbe, will feature 13 episodes set in the ancient cities of Luxor and Aswan, the village of Abu Simbel, Sehag Giza and the ancient site of Saqqara.

Mediaset to broadcast season 2 of documentary series on ancient Egypt

La Liga announces revenue of $5bn

La Liga’s clubs posted a revenue of $5bn, representing growth of 20.6% over the previous season. Commercial deals and revenue from transfers have been chief annual growth drivers in addition to broadcasting revenues. For commercial revenue (without ad turnover), the annual increase was 34.1%, amounting to a turnover of $937m. Player transfers led to an annual increase of 104.3%.

The audiovisual turnover received by the clubs surpassed the $1.68bn mark for the first time and will become the central role from the 2019/20 season as a result of the new audiovisual cycle negotiated for the national market and the international agreements that have been signed.

The investment will involve IT COULDN’T BE MORE FLEXIBLE IF IT DID PILATES

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Saudi animation studio Manga Productions has teamed up with Japan’s Toei Animation to produce anime film The Journey, based on Saudi folklore. It will cost approximately $10m-15m and will be directed by Shizuno Kobun, whose credits include Godzilla: City on the Edge of Battle.

The collaboration will see Manga and Toei cooperating on the pre-production and creation of the story and the character design, with Japanese and Saudi artists working together, the companies announced in a joint statement. The co-production stems from a pact the two companies made in November 2017, a month before Saudi Arabia lifted its 35-year ban on cinemas.

Commenting on the collaboration, Bukhary Essam, CEO of Manga Productions, said: “The Journey is a milestone project for Manga. What we are doing here with The Journey is representative of our larger role in creating an ecosystem throughout Saudi Arabia and the Arab world in which young talents are given opportunities and are supported, and high-quality work representing our culture is produced.”

Toei Animation Managing Director Shinji Shimizu noted that it was “a great honour to cooperate in making Saudi Arabia’s very first animation film based on the history and culture of ancient Arabia”.

The animation work will be done in Japan and Saudi Arabia. Manga has two branches – one in Riyadh and another in Tokyo – and both will have teams working on this project alongside the Toei team.

Manga Productions is an affiliated company of the Prince Mohammed bin Salman ‘Misk’ Foundation. Manga will fully finance the relatively low-budget project, its biggest to date, and has retained worldwide distribution rights.

Screen International will launch the third edition of Arab Stars of Tomorrow at Cairo International Film Festival 2019 (CIFF), which will take place from 20-29 November 2019. The first two editions spotlighted 10 emerging talents from the region, including Moroccan director Alaa Eddine Aljem, who premiered his first feature, The Unknown Saint, in Cannes Critics’ Week this year. Other past participants include directors Mounia Akl (Lebanon), Amjad Al-Rasheed (Jordan) and Ayman Al-Shatri (Iraq), all poised to shoot their debut features.

Screen International’s Middle East correspondent Melanie Goodfellow will shortlist promising talent from the MENA region over the coming months, ahead of the final list, and recipients will be announced during this year’s festival.

CIFF is one of only 15 festivals granted category A status by FIAPF, and is the Arab region’s oldest and only internationally accredited annual film festival. Last year, acclaimed Egyptian producer Mohamed Hefzy was appointed President, with a mandate to reinvigorate and relaunch the Festival.

National Geographic Abu Dhabi will release a new short documentary film series focused on Sharjah’s biodiversity, in partnership with Sharjah Government Media Bureau and Sharjah Broadcasting Authority.

The series consists of eight episodes of about three minutes each. Each episode follows Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Al Qasimi, Chairman of Sharjah Media Council, and a team of experts as they focus on one aspect of the unique flora and fauna species and habitats of the Emirate.
At the second edition of the MENA Anti-Piracy Conference, hosted by BroadcastPro Middle East on April 23 at the Ritz-Carlton JBR, Dubai, piracy was discussed extensively across three key panels – Strategy, Technology and Legal. In each discussion, the business experts, the technology strategists and the lawyers called for out-of-the-box thinking and a radical amendment to our notions about the new-age consumer of television content, if we are to fight pirates. We bring you details of the discussions from some upcoming voices in the industry on their successful business models and modus operandi in a region ravaged by piracy.
In the last couple of years, the Middle East has been caught up in the biggest piracy storm ever, with content rights stolen from under the noses of broadcast rights owners and the rest of the world watching but remaining tightly lipped. Piracy remains a huge concern in the MENA region, costing it more than $500m annually, but piracy last year, in combination with the launch of several OTT services, saw traditional broadcast media suffer exceptional economic losses that compelled media executives to urgently consider collaborative methods to ensure their collective survival.

Addressing this from a strategy point of view was the keynote panel, moderated by Robert Lakos, founder of Deleel TV. This panel brought together Manoj Abraham Mathew, Territory Head MENA, Pakistan and Turkey for Zee Network; Zahra Zayat, VP MENA at YuppTV; Farah Ramadan, Digital Planning Manager at MBC Group; Frank Poppelsdorf, VP Product Management at Deleel; and Ahmed Abbas, CEO of Digisay. Lakos chronicled some important moments that saw spikes in piracy in the region, starting with the 1990s when Canal Plus pirate decoders were popular in North Africa, moving on to the digital movement, when pirates took to hacking into the systems and pirate decoders that impacted Showtime, OSN and ART; to a third phase where internet keyword sharing was rampant; and to the current period, with illegal streaming the biggest cause of piracy.

Zahra Zayat pointed out that the biggest advantages an OTT platform has over a linear service are “economies of scale” and the ability “to upgrade faster and more efficiently”.

“I do not carry the burden of cost that traditional pay-TV companies carry. Where pay-TV companies offer their content at $40, we can offer it at $10 with a richer portfolio. Where they offer 50 channels, we can offer 200, in addition to 3,000 movies and catch-up and cinema content, transaction EVD0 content and so on. Technology, digital transformation, AI and IoT have disrupted content consumption and have given us the tools to offer a personalized experience to the customer.”

Lakos then quoted Abbas on Digisay’s role in combating piracy. “We are an MCN; we are one of those companies who partner with YouTube. We realised during our research that pirates have very professionally packaged content; they down 240 pirate channels since 2014 through the Broadcast Anti-Piracy Coalition. On the digital front, MBC has taken down millions of pirated content with the help of CMS on YouTube and social media partners over the last three years. She pointed out, however, that pirate sites were not just making money by having advertisements served on their platforms but also luring their pockets off subscriptions.

“We believe in working with Google on this, while also creating awareness among advertisers, asking them not to place ads on pirated sites. I believe we will be able to cumulatively succeed if we cut off their revenue and involve all regulatory and value chain parts of this industry, including government legislation, media agencies, advertisers and so on.”

When asked the same question about YuppTV, which has a strong Bollywood offering and therefore serves as a fertile ground for piracy, Zayat commended that her team quickly preempted certain challenges within that context and addressed them.

“When launching in Kuwait, where the systems are not so robust, we looked at how much the pirates were charging for their service. We decided to charge a similar amount and launched our whole Bollywood package at $11. We did take a hit, but the feedback from customers was that when they invested in pirated packages, there was no guarantee on the quality, the number of channels or the continuity of the broadcast, especially in the case of sports. We as a legal platform were able to guarantee a quality service for the same price as the pirate. We have found that if customers are given a reasonable option, they will opt for a legal platform over an illegitimate service.”

In fact, when the cricket season began, YuppTV advertised on pirate sites that were running its content to attract people to its website – a move that was successful, she said.

“People may pay for one or two channels or the continuity of the broadcast, especially in the case of sports. We as a legal platform were able to guarantee a quality service for the same price as the pirate. We have found that if customers are given a reasonable option, they will opt for a legal platform over an illegitimate service.”

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Zahra Zayat stated that economies of scale and the ability to upgrade faster are the reasons why OTT platforms have an edge over linear services. Operators at similar pricing points. YuppTV’s Zayat agreed with Mathew that technology is a great enabler, adding that the platform tracks the behaviour of its subscribers and targets them with ads that fit their profile and viewing habits. "In the US, for instance, we target subscribers by zip code." Lakos then moved on to strategies to contain piracy. With consumers in the continent devouring Indian content, he asked how Zee manages this. Mathew commented that the challenges are especially major in hugely pirated markets like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, where pirates buy multiple set-top boxes to create a small headend and charge a small subscription fee to distribute content to consumers in their townships. He says Zee incentivised legitimate players to move over from the dark side: "Typically, content owners and platform owners would go raid them and shut them down, but ten others would mushroom in their place. We reached out to them and offered them a special pricing to become a legitimate operator. In this way, we managed successful operations in all these three very difficult markets." Frank Poppelsdorf pointed out that to succeed against piracy, an operator must align good technology with proactive services and a very good business model. "Some pirates are very good at marketing their services and make it attractive or confusing for consumers. Technology with proactive services an operator must align good strategies to contain piracy." He also remarked that 2019 will be the year we see more Android TV boxes managed by operators, not retail Android TV boxes. "This is a very real example of how operators are ensuring their boxes are consumer friendly on an Android platform. However, you still need to take steps to ensure proper security on Android TV and consider third-party apps such as Kodi. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has cited that over 70% of the consumers using Kodi will do so for piracy. This is where Intels comes in to ensure the security of Android TV for an operator. We are ensuring that operators have the highest levels of security on Android TV by providing them services that enable them to monitor and get insight into pirate content sources through a two-way connection." He pointed out that it is equally important to measure the level and extent of piracy in a region before responding with appropriate technical or business solutions. "You can take action by shutting the malicious plug-ins down on your managed Android TV boxes, or you can choose a different pricing model for your service. We work closely with operators in this new world where it is mostly about OTT and being consumer friendly. We have to move with that flow, so staying in a world where you have your own managed STB that is confined and controlled at a very high cost does not work anymore." With people moving away from STBs to integrated television sets, IPTVs and so on, Lakos enquired what solutions different countries were exploring. Citing examples from other regions, Poppelsdorf said: “We have looked at ways to make it easier for consumers to receive their content. One of the areas where we have been leading is providing a solution for a USB-form factor for CI Plus 2.0.”
They have a long history in Europe, where every single TV has to support CI Plus using PCMCI. That didn’t work with the rest of the world, because it had costs attached to it. “However, CI Plus has changed the specs for TV to support USB. So this will be available in all their TVs going forward. What it allows you to do is have a very cheap form factor of a USB dongle. It has its limitations in terms of UI control, but there is no security concern as it provides content in a secure manner, with security integrated based on Irdeto Cloaked CA.”

In essence, the panellists agreed that all barriers to accessing a legitimate service across different parts of the chain, especially cost, must be kept in mind.

In a concluding question, Lakos asked how the panellists defined winning the battle against piracy, and what their key metrics to that achievement would be.

Ramadan pointed out that MBC had secured small wins by using data to see what content people are watching on pirated sites and trying to cater to that demand. “As a content buyer, MBC and Shahid started researching the needs of our viewers more – and based on that, we started offering exclusives and first runs.”

However, she expressed reservations about relinquishing full control to the viewer, stating that MBC would provide a much safer, better and more reliable experience to attract and retain its viewers.

Matthew stated that his basic metrics would be “more subscribers, better ARPU’s and more money at the top line.” Poppelsdorf stated that it is important for content owners to differentiate themselves to compete with professional pirates. “We know how difficult the battle is to eradicate piracy. Professional pirates are relatively easy to find, because they market their products just as extensively as operators do to attract subscribers. Tracking them is easy. Shutting them down is not. The solution is to identify them and make their lives difficult by ensuring their service is unreliable at crucial moments of broadcast. As an operator, on the other hand, you must ensure that your service offers a reliable and enhanced user experience. The other important thing is developing technology that enables you to scientifically try, test and measure the methods that will give you the best results.”

Zahra added that with the definition of content having evolved over the years, service operators need to offer as much flexibility as possible to consumers. “We have to deliver the right content at a price fit for their pocket and be able to view anytime, anywhere without restrictions. We also need to offer flexible modes of payment to facilitate easy payment on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. People have different capabilities and the more flexible the payment options, the greater the opportunity to win over a subscriber.”

Abbas added that while it is difficult to find one secret ingredient to successfully deter pirates, a collection of different methods will help the cause. But he also pointed out that operators and content owners sometimes deliberately use piracy to hook people on a programme and then get them onto a legitimate service. He cited Game of Thrones, saying that data showed that the pirated version of the series was watched ten times more than a legitimate service. “I hear that Netflix deliberately protects titles only for a limited period of time and then they leak it out so they can get new subscribers.”

With everyone in the game to hook more subscribers, it seems to be a case of by hook or by crook. Lakos concluded with a round-up of the key themes discussed such as the need to revisit business models to access a wider consumer base, and ways to collaborate to combat illegal content distribution.

“We realised during our research that pirates have very professionally packaged content; they rank very high on Google Search... are really good with SEO and market their products very well”

Ahmed Abbas, CEO, DigiSay
With the threat of piracy evolving alongside the rapid pace of innovation, protection of valuable content has become far more fundamental than ever before. If broadcasters are to combat illegal content distributors, they must rely on advanced mechanisms and create windows of disruption to oust pirates from their position. This was echoed by the tech panelists at the BroadcastPro ME Anti-Piracy Conference last month. Titled ‘Fighting Back: Using Technology to Shield Media Assets’, the second panel discussion, moderated by Ahmed Abbas of Digitplay, addressed the need to shield media assets using technology. The panelists for this session were Dr Guillaume Forbin, Director of Platform and Content Security at OSN; Sumit Suri, MD & CTO of U-TQ Solutions; Dr Naser Refaat, CTO of Rotana Media Group; and Frank Poppelsdorf, VP of Product Management at Irdeto.

Abbas opened the discussion by asking Poppelsdorf to elaborate on how Trusted Execution Environments (TEE) and conditional access have been used in a scalable way at Irdeto. Poppelsdorf commented at this point that in the past, “it was about trying to compromise the link between smart card and chipset, but now we’ve moved to cardless solutions, making it even harder for hackers”. 

Abbas then turned to Dr Forbin, asking him to elucidate OSN’s strategy and security approach. “It’s crucial to deploy state-of-the-art security to make sure STBs, apps or other receiving devices – including third-party distribution devices – are well protected. There are several ways to protect devices and premium content, but adopting a comprehensive approach addressing all distribution end points and investing in the best technology to combat piracy are essential to protect a distribution platform,” he stated.

Forbin added that OSN has created its own solutions to help detect and take down pirated materials. “The OSN approach includes advanced piracy detection and enforcement tools, usage of the best possible technologies to protect the OSN platform and devices, but also anti-fraud measures to deter pirates from accessing and redistributing OSN premium content.”

When asked to propose the most efficient method for companies to track down pirates, Suri of U-TQ Solutions said: “Taking down all the pirates at one go is a Herculean task. It’s about categorising a piece of content as illegal and trying to cause disruption within it.”

Suri added that the paradigm has shifted from peer-to-peer sites to illegal streaming services, and recommended a multi-tiered approach. 

“Now pirates have largely moved to illegal content distribution on the internet, so we’ve focused on finding pirate sources using watermarking technology.”

Citing panelists’ previous points relating to the crucial need to trace the source of pirated content and then employ effective measures, Poppelsdorf said: “To end the cat and mouse chase between provider and pirate, you need to have secure countermeasures in place. The security of STBs today can be at an extremely high level when you have a high-quality conditional access system and a secure execution environment for it. If you put the bar low, then piracy can occur. But beyond having secure STBs, you still need to be active against content redistribution piracy.”

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“In the past, operators often preferred to install security on site, such as a licensed DRM system in their data centre. We’re now being asked to help operators move such operations into the cloud. From their point of view, it’s the same level of security or more, at a shared cost”
Frank Poppelsdorf, VP of Product Management, Irdeto

Dr. Naser Refaat emphasised the necessity for a central rights registration and ownership certification platform.

“Presently, there is no central platform to deal with pirates. To fight pirates, we need to rely on metadata, cast a wide search net with AI and use blockchain to cause disruption.”

The moderator asked whether the tech industry had a way to identify illegal sources of content, and Dr. Refaat said Rotana uses MUSO.

“It helps us locate where our online content is available illegally. If we see a certain illegal platform distributing our content, we take it down. However, this process could be simplified if we had a platform that has metadata that we can easily use to combat piracy,” he pointed out.

“Currently, there is no central platform that deals with the certification and registration process of the legality of films, documentaries, clips and news feeds. If we manage to build a central platform responsible for the ownership and rights certifications, we can take that metadata to the technologists, which will enable them to help us protect data. But such a platform is absent in the Middle East.”

Suri added that metadata plays a key role in this exercise.

“U-TO is steering towards something similar, with our entire focus being content-centric. Whether it’s trying to work with the marketability of content or detecting where there’s piracy, metadata serves as the starting point. We use metadata to identify a potential link, then trace our way backwards using fingerprinting to identify an audio-visual match on that, so it’s a tiered process.”

Dr. Forban commented that in terms of piracy detection and enforcement, OSN undertook the work internally, as it needed to protect a large collection of assets that were under threat on several distribution channels, “such as the web, illegal IPTV STBs, social media or pirated FTA channels.”

“Investing in our own anti-piracy tools was a cost-effective way to address piracy. On the platform security side of things, conditional access systems, DRMs or technologies such as watermarking have a cost, but these are key to combating pirates, controlling the OSN distribution network and complying with rights holders’ content protection requirements.”

Poppelsdorf pointed out that the feasibility of investing in security is equally important.

“The main cost burden is usually borne by the operator. In the past, “Investing in our own anti-piracy tools was a cost-effective way to address piracy. On the platform security side of things, conditional access systems, DRMs or technologies such as watermarking have a cost, but these are key to combating pirates”

Dr. Guillaume Forban, Director of Platform and Content Security, OSN
operators often preferred to install security on-site, such as a licensed DRM system in their data centre. We’re now being asked to help operators move such operations into the cloud. From their point of view, it’s the same level of security or more, at a shared cost. Having bespoke OTT services has become too expensive. What we’re providing is a few key security capabilities in the cloud, including multi-DRM management and even watermarking. You can tick the boxes you want, and you’re basically done in terms of protecting your content."

He explained that since operators seek to reduce their costs, it’s necessary for security service providers to offer complete coverage for the OTT part and for broadcast conditional access. According to him, a trusted security partner can enable operators to outsource non-strategic tasks and save costs.

Commenting on the need for an efficient monitoring system, Suri said: “India is in an enviable position where they’re invested in a team consisting of broadcasters and OTT providers to do this work. We operate out of one to a thousand channels in many different countries; we use ten different measures about how things are done. It’s about the value of the content. We operate with our partners to identify and monitor the content. It’s not about monitoring a thousand hours of content; it’s about the hundred where piracy is rampant that need to be monitored. It’s about time we go back and work with operators on a strategy about what is critical. It’s about time we say the infrastructure is created and five to ten people can use the same infrastructure for cost balance.”

While agreeing that the proposed ways to balance costs raised by his co-panellists were essential, Dr Refaat raised a pertinent regional challenge: “The question to ask is how worthy is the content for protection and the cost of going legal. Netflix has 118m subscribers in 190 countries, nearly 6,000 movie titles, 1,000 drama series and makes $15bn a year. Rotana has approximately 2,000 movie titles. Where’s the comparison? Netflix has the assets to protect its vast receivable revenue, while smaller MENA platforms don’t. Only if this market is legally regulated with a proper blockchain central registration and rights certification platform can we genuinely increase our security measures,” he commented.

The discussion concluded with Abbas summing up some of the protection strategies for key media assets, tools to disrupt piracy and new ways to harness technology to manage security efficiently - Rachel Dawson
As global demand for content continues to boom, piracy remains a perilous problem for the industry. Our legal panel brought together high-profile lawyers representing media houses from the UAE, Egypt, India and the UK to address some of the key issues that plague the industry.

Titled ‘The Rules Book: Combating Piracy with Legal Experts’, the discussion, moderated by Jon Parker, Partner/Head of IP at Gowling WLG, addressed the threats faced by businesses and the counter measures the industry must initiate to render piracy ineffective.

The panelists were Addy Verma, Senior Legal Counsel at OSN; Ameet Naik, Founder and Managing Partner of Naik Naik & Company; Nicki Schroeder, Senior Director at OSN; Ameet Naik, founder and Managing Partner of Naik Naik & Company; Walid Abdel Mohsen, Senior Legal Counsel at Rotana Media Group.

Jon Parker began by highlighting some positive developments in the industry in terms of sentences handed out to criminals in the UK for the sale of illegal set-top boxes (STBs). He also highlighted significant wins regionally, where OSN had again secured a jail term for a person selling illegal STBs, as well as the closure of their business.

Parker first asked OSN’s Addy Verma to share his observations on developments in the region in the last 12 months.

“We’ve seen further progress from both a legal and business perspective, whether it is in the courts or in the business point of view, whether it is in the courts or in the business point of view,” Verma acknowledged. “Content owners have invested more in content protection activities. Collaboration between owners has improved, because everyone is impacted at some point or the other.

“In this region, people are not used to paying for content. There’s a diverse population, especially in the GCC, that come from different countries and have different ways of accessing the content they like. We don’t want to go to the courts in the first instance. We consider other options such as administrative enforcement, where we create awareness without initiating a criminal complaint. We resort to criminal action when we identify a pirate who has committed a technological breach or uses their activities to make money.”

In some cases, cracking down on pirates can be a complicated process with above-normal costs involved in safeguarding assets, Verma explained.

“Back in 2014, a subscriber pirated a popular movie from our platform and uploaded it on a pirate torrent website for monetary gains. Our initial challenge was to identify the pirate and ensure that identification would hold good before the courts. There were cross-border issues as well as challenges to establish jurisdiction. The evidence was dynamic, and interpretation of the laws was untested in that territory. However, in the end, we were successful in obtaining judgment against the pirate.”

“The UAE is making efforts to establish specialised IP courts which provide for expert witnesses to review complaints and evidence. Over the years, we’ve seen more of this kind of action across the region, whether it be Jordan, Egypt, the UAE or Kuwait. The courts have interpreted the law in the right spirit.”

Parker then turned to Ameet Naik, whose company reportedly represents some of the highest-profile players in Bollywood, and asked him how India, which ranks fifth globally for online piracy, has addressed this menace.

“Before responding to the query, Naik set the stage by sharing some statistics with the attendees.

“India is a country of 1bn people; the penetration is huge and the average viewer online is between the age of 15 and 25. Therefore, India ranks #5 in online piracy. The country produces 400 mainstream films and 400 regional films annually, and it appears that broadband will soon be free in the country. Despite these issues, we see a big change coming to India, which started with the Indian music industry, whose revenue loss was colossal at approximately $670m every year. Now, the OTT players are following suit,” Naik stated.

“Indian courts, like all other courts, are not used to paying for content. There’s a diverse population, especially in the GCC, that come from different countries and have different ways of accessing the content they like.”

Naik pointed to three fundamental changes taking place within the Indian context, from an industry, legislative and judicial point of view, and explained that India is witnessing the coming together of these three critical elements.

“From an industry perspective, we have the Broadcasting Federation in India, and the Television and Producers Guild – I represent both entities. Both are collaborating as guilds should in every country. These players have come out with strong regulations and have the ability to admonish people.

“The second is statute. I was part of a select committee of the Parliament in 2012 in India, where we brought about a change to the certification act. A change to the copyright act is on the anvil, with the ability to take both civil and criminal action against offenders.

“The third is judicial intervention. We were recently about to get a dynamic injunction, where we were allowed not just to block a website but block any recurrence of it without having to file a fresh case. This is where the judiciary has an all-important role to play in outsmarting piracy.”

Naik acknowledged that the legal system is indeed dealing with clever pirates, but they could pre-empt their moves and bring laws to counter that.
PROANTI-PIRACY

Nicki Schroeder highlighted the role of static and dynamic injunctions, adding that the latter was particularly useful during live streaming events.

"We don’t want to go to the courts in the first instance. We consider other options such as administrative enforcement, where we create awareness without initiating a criminal complaint”
Addy Verma, Senior Legal Counsel, DSNG

With Avengers: Endgame on the threshold of being released during our conference, Naik pointed out that teams across the globe should remain vigilant to ensure that the movie was not pirated.

"There are jurisdictions, where there were going to be 24-hour screenings for a film, so when you understand the appetite for a particular content, you must take anticipatory action. Even Hollywood studios out of India in different jurisdictions went out and got protection early on. My advice is to go to the courts and take anticipatory action. Even a particular content, you must understand the appetite for that motion. We don’t want to go to the courts in the first instance.

"What I have seen over the course of the last three months is a number of significant criminal enforcement actions in the Netherlands, the US, the UK, Spain, South Korea, Germany, Thailand and China. All of that is very encouraging. In terms of criminal enforcement, there are a range of options in the region, including administrative action by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). In some parts of the region, there is also the option of site-blocking injunctions."

She distinguished between static and dynamic injunctions, explaining that the latter can be amended if the URL changes and are very useful for live streaming of content, particularly live streaming of sporting events.

"I think there are 30 or 31 countries where it’s possible to get a dynamic injunction or static injunctions. Thinking about the political arena and changes in legislation, Article 17 of the EU Copyright Directive is something that’s been debated at length in Europe over the past months,” she remarked.

The panelists agreed that the area most affected by technology is the legal dimension, and Parker asked Mohnen of Rotana to share his views on the authentication and licensing processes in Egypt in terms of proving ownership of data.

"In the past, asset authentication and rights holders, as a measure to reduce the cost of protecting assets and prosecuting pirates. The panelists agreed that the area most affected by technology is the legal dimension, and Parker asked Mohnen of Rotana to share his views on the authentication and licensing processes in Egypt in terms of proving ownership of data."

Verma pointed out here that “the idea behind forming coalitions is to overcome challenges, which primarily relate to documentation and proving ownership of being a licensee”.

"There’s always the issue of jurisdiction, which might be a limiting factor for us to act against pirates situated across the globe. However, we have taken down several illegal content providers’ sites via forms available on Facebook, YouTube, etc. Some of the coalitions we are part of include IPTV Taskforce and Asian Pacific American Media

Walid Abdel Mohsen, Senior Legal Counsel, Rotana Media Group

“Today, the Egyptian Chamber of Cinema is instituted as the one source responsible for the authentication of movies, while the Ministry of Culture oversees the authentication of Arabic content. So, pirates cannot escape with... fake licences”

Walid Abdel Mohnen, Senior Legal Counsel, Rotana Media Group
PROANTI-PIRACY

Jon Parker asked the panelists to propose effective legal ways in which businesses can deal with piracy.

Coalition (APAMC). Through Audiotelion Anti-Piracy Alliance (AAAPA), we work with Interpol and Europol, where we deal with issues not based in this region. It's important to work within coalitions because this helps to engage everyone in bringing best practices to this region." Schroeder agreed. "From an enforcement point of view, working within coalitions such as the Movie Pictures Association (MPA) IPTV Taskforce has enabled rights holders to mitigate costs. Some sorts of work we do with rights coalitions involve landscaping work and research. For example, the Internet and Television Association (NCTA), which Discovery is a part of, has done a huge amount of work in terms of research behind why people consume pirated content, what are the drivers of demand, what kind of things you can do to stop credential sharing, how to structure your service to make it less attractive, and also what kind of measures we can apply to take pirates down. The third piece of work we try to do as a coalition of rights holders is to work with governments and in the political sphere." Mohsen cited an experience where a content provider was unaware that he had bought pirated content. "Our primary aim is to spread awareness about IP rights in the region. In Tunisia, theatres have been closed down because of rampant piracy. Now people don’t visit cinemas; they prefer to take pirated CDs from street vendors and watch it at home. Coalitions must work with countries such as Tunisia where the public have no awareness about copyright infringements," he remarked.

"We need to find ways to differentiate the legal offers from the pirate offers in a way that doesn’t come down to price and range of content, because that’s not a level playing field" Nicki Schroeder, Senior Director, Global Anti-Piracy, Discovery, Inc

in maintaining exclusivity." Mohsen added that one of the big concerns still is convincing judges that content theft is just as big a crime as stealing anything else. "I once worked on a copyright case where we had a judge who thought he couldn’t punish someone for pirating movies. He said he can put him behind bars if he stole a bicycle, but how can he put someone in prison for pirating a movie? Nowadays, we coordinate with the Egyptian Governor and have a new IP law including 40 articles and prison sentences. This is a small win, but more needs to be done." Everyone agreed that things were changing, with courts and judges becoming more aware of the situation.

Parker concluded the discussion by asking each

"Business houses need to ensure their content remains sanitised, and the challenge is often at the last mile" Amreet Naik, Founder and Managing Partner, Naik Naik & Company member to share how they could better enforce their clients' rights. "There’s a need to extend the ambit of administrative actions. Currently, in the UAE and Kuwait, we’ve worked on an administrative process for site blocking. We are now trying to extend that to cyber laws," Verma said. "We believe safeguarding content should be any content owner’s top priority, just like revenue generation. Have a dedicated cell of people who do only this," Naik recommended. "We need to find ways to persuade viewers that these pirate services are not interchangeable with the legal offer and that it’s not a victimless crime," said Schroeder. Mohsen concluded that the focus should be on educating content providers. "If you manage to protect the first release of a piece of content, you may have saved it from piracy. Nilesat recently proposed to movie producers in Egypt to broadcast their movies via satellite to protect their content. Most producers refused on grounds of cost, but they could potentially incur even bigger losses."

The panelists concluded by agreeing that a multi-pronged strategy with content providers collaborating with courts, lawyers, tech experts, coalition groups and regulatory authorities, is required to institute stricter rules to fight piracy. - Rachel Dawson
After six months playing around with the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K, Yusuf Thakur tells Garima Rawat his first experiences of using the much-anticipated camera. Read on to find out if it made the cut...

Dubai-based filmmaker Yusuf Thakur, who has been filming wildlife across the world since 2003, was thrilled to be the first in the Middle East to receive the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera. From his six months using the camera, Thakur has many lessons to offer on getting the best value and utility from it. He shares his journey of hits and misses, and what really makes it tick.

Blackmagic recently released version 2 of the camera with the new Blackmagic Camera 6.2 update, which added support for Blackmagic RAW (BRAW). BRAW allows filmmakers to record for a longer duration and change parameters such as exposure and saturation. BRAW offers a record time of more than two hours of 4K DCI footage on a single 500GB SSD card.

Version 2 differs from its predecessor only in the recording format. The earlier variant sported Cinema DNG, while the new version offers BRAW. The Cinema DNG format was not as popular among users, which is probably why Blackmagic needed to introduce the BRAW update.

Thakur gives us his take. "The original camera released with Cinema DNG as its RAW recording format. It's container-based and cumbersome, unlike a single video. The good thing about it is that in a still frame, the latitude to grade is so vast, and you can use anything from Photoshop to a high-end grading software," he says.

"I have shot extensively now on BRAW and I am more impressed with what this can do. BRAW offers recording in RAW, and in post-production, there is so much scope to grade and work with the footage. BRAW is user-friendly and allows ample data to be recorded, which can be stored on internal and external drives. Cinema DNG, by comparison, is not an easy format for beginners and you need a lot of practice and patience to work with it."

All good things come to those who wait, and the Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera is just that for photographers and filmmakers, says Thakur.

"You get a super bright five-inch screen and two in-built microphones, while the external buttons have been designed to offer quick and seamless access to all functions. The image quality and BRAW recording features let you shoot images that rival professional digital film cameras costing tens of thousands more. Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K version 2 is no longer a pocket camera, but it is the only camera in the form factor that does internal 4K RAW recording."

"As a filmmaker, this is really important to me. This is what sets the Blackmagic camera apart from everything out there in the market. It’s no longer pocket, it is in a DSLR form factor and is unique in its design."
The Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K is lightweight, which makes it a viable option for wildlife photographers. It has a compact design that makes it easy to carry around. The camera is capable of recording RAW internally, which is a huge plus for filmmakers. It also features a dual native ISO feature, which allows filmmakers to capture high-quality footage in varying light conditions. The camera has a 5-inch monitor, which is large enough to see the footage being captured. It also has RAW recording capabilities, which are essential for filmmakers who want to have complete control over their footage.

Pros:
- Compact all-in-one body
- RAW recording format
- Lightweight and easy to use

Cons:
- Only one USB port

Wishlist:
- A 6K or 8K version
- Articulating monitor
- Canon or Nikon lens mounts

The Blackmagic Pocket Cinema Camera 4K is a compact video camera that's able to capture movie-quality footage at a variety of resolutions and frame rates. It's ideal for filmmakers who want to have complete control over their footage and want to record in RAW internally. The camera is lightweight and easy to carry around, making it a perfect option for filmmakers who want to travel light. It's also great for wildlife photographers who want to capture high-quality footage in varying light conditions.
RECASTING TRADITIONAL TV’S ROLE IN THE AGE OF ONLINE AND MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT

ConneCtechAsia2019 Summit speaker Ed Barton, Chief Analyst – TV and Entertainment, Ovum, outlines the next step in television’s evolution and mobile televisions to amplify their traditional offerings and cater to the evolving demands of audiences and advertisers. These include offering new services online or in the lead-up to the start of a new season on TV, and targeted, cross-platform campaigns across broadcast, OTT and mobile for a single campaign buy.

Remaining competitive in today’s landscape demands more than just the newest technologies or the best content, but a strategy that addresses the varying demands of audiences around the world and across all age demographics.

Television’s new era

New technologies such as 5G mobile networks and artificial intelligence (AI) are also offering possibilities for the revival of traditional television. With its exceptional bandwidth, low latency and high data speeds, 5G enables innovation of video in multiple areas. Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) elevate the viewing experience to provide a more immersive, 360-degree viewpoint that gives audiences a greater degree of control over the entire experience.

For broadcasters, AI can help automate existing workflows, driving down operating expenses while enabling innovations and efficiencies in audience insight, content recommendation and predictive analytics. Though still in its infancy, we are already seeing it at work with content recommendations, ad targeting, automatic captioning and subtitling, scheduling and even AI newscasters.

While these evolving technologies provide interesting possibilities for traditional television, it is crucial that broadcasters themselves augment their offerings by ensuring the quality of the viewing experience is maintained across online and mobile devices, focusing on the content which is critical to their audiences, and working with partners to address gaps in the content and service proposition.

With Disney+, Disney’s direct-to-consumer streaming service, set to enter the market later this year, traditional television players will need to consider their competitive positioning. Picking your battles and leveraging deep understanding of the viewing needs and habits of local audiences will be critical to surviving in an increasingly competitive OTT landscape, which we expect will drive the consolidation, or exit, of smaller players.

Amid these new technologies, industry changes and evolution of audience tastes, television at its core must retain its focus on the critical factor making shows which people want to watch. The allure of good content – whether premium dramas, live sports or the allure of good content – whether premium dramas, live sports or

A crowded marketplace

While the television has grown to become a mainstay in most households around the world, its reign in the living room is being challenged by a number of technologies, trends across content, business models, networks and devices that are forcing traditional television players to re-examine their role in the modern household.

One key trend is the ubiquity of high-speed Internet, as well as the rise of OTT and mobile video platforms which are fundamentally changing the way people watch content. This has had a profound impact on audience viewership and preference. Compared to the traditional pay-TV model offering a package of channels at a relatively high price for long commitment periods, online and mobile audiences enjoy the freedom to pick and choose from a variety of services, often at low to no cost with availability across multiple devices.

While television broadcasters have been quick to adopt OTT and other video-on-demand (VOD) platforms, many have struggled to compete effectively against the native digital video platforms. The most successful broadcasters are using online and mobile entertainment platforms that stream content directly to audiences via the public internet.

Yet despite its enduring dominance, television’s viability is at a critical juncture due to the rise of over-the-top (OTT) video platforms that stream content directly to audiences via the public internet.

Last year, OTT streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime overtook pay-TV subscriptions in the UK for the first time, with average daily broadcast TV viewership continuing its decline, down 38 minutes since 2012. Additionally, OTT’s unabated growth saw its revenue total $13bn in 2018 in APAC, and it is projected to more than double to $32bn by 2024, increasing by $4bn in 2019 alone.

Compared to the traditional pay-TV model offering a bundle of local audiences will be critical to surviving in an increasingly competitive OTT landscape. While these evolving technologies provide interesting possibilities for traditional television, it is crucial that broadcasters themselves augment their offerings by ensuring the quality of the viewing experience is maintained across online and mobile devices, focusing on the content which is critical to their audiences, and working with partners to address gaps in the content and service proposition.

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For broadcasters, AI can help automate existing workflows, driving down operating expenses while enabling innovations and efficiencies in audience insight, content recommendation and predictive analytics. Though still in its infancy, we are already seeing it at work with content recommendations, ad targeting, automatic captioning and subtitling, scheduling and even AI newscasters.

While these evolving technologies provide interesting possibilities for traditional television, it is crucial that broadcasters themselves augment their offerings by ensuring the quality of the viewing experience is maintained across online and mobile devices, focusing on the content which is critical to their audiences, and working with partners to address gaps in the content and service proposition.

With Disney+, Disney’s direct-to-consumer streaming service, set to enter the market later this year, traditional television players will need to consider their competitive positioning. Picking your battles and leveraging deep understanding of the viewing needs and habits of local audiences will be critical to surviving in an increasingly competitive OTT landscape, which we expect will drive the consolidation, or exit, of smaller players.

Amid these new technologies, industry changes and evolution of audience tastes, television at its core must retain its focus on the critical factor making shows which people want to watch. The allure of good content – whether premium dramas, live sports or even the allure of good content – whether premium dramas, live sports or the allure of good content – whether premium dramas, live sports or
**More control with G&D’s IP matrix switching system**

Guntermann & Drunck (G&D) GmbH will be presenting KVM technologies for broadcast professionals at BroadcastAsia, which will run from 18-20 June 2019 in Singapore. G&D will demonstrate how to efficiently deploy large, distributed, IT installations to achieve a high degree of flexibility and scalability for TV stations, post-producers or OB vans. A key focus will be the new ControlCenter-IP. This all-new 1GB KVM-over-IP matrix switching system offers pixel-perfect video transmission and ultra-low latency. The system enables highly scalable and flexible distributed switching of computer signals via standard IP-based networks and over existing network infrastructures. G&D’s new KVM-over-IP matrix switching system offers broadcasters platform-independent operation and extensive interoperability. The full IP-based system consists of all the ControlCenter-IP and the recently released IP extenders that form a powerful matrix to transmit KVM-over-IP. By using standard 1GB network components, existing or new IT structures can now be implemented and scaled easily with added design flexibility. Just as network infrastructure takes over the transport of IP packets, the ControlCenter-IP contributes the system management logic. The new G&D system for KVM-over-IP extends real IP over IP and promises pixel-perfect video transmission for DisplayPort 1.2 signals for resolutions up to 3840 x 2160 at 60 Hz. In addition to solutions for DP 1.2, the company also offers modules for DP single and dual link, as well as DP 1.1 with support for all common resolutions. All use G&D’s technologies for maximizing latency while still providing lossless images. G&D will also present its extensive classic KVM portfolio. The KVM matrix switches, ControlCenter-Digital and ControlCenter-Compact create the backbone of the computer infrastructure by allowing flexible, distributed access of producers to outsourced computers – remote, pixel-perfect and free of latency and delay.

Stand: 4F2-07

**Vitec sheds more light with Gemini 1x1 Soft LED**

The new Gemini 1x1 Soft from Litepanels will make its APAC debut at BroadcastAsia 2019. Gemini 1x1 Soft is an all-in-one, cine-quality LED light that is easy to transport and quick to rig in the studio or on location. The new LED offers the highly accurate full-spectrum white light associated with all Litepanels fixtures and — as a full RGBWW light — delivers every-color-in-the-360° color wheel and plus/minus green adjustment all in a single, lightweight, and easy-to-control fixture. Gemini 1x1 Soft builds on a foundation of day-light-to-tungsten light, reportedly providing accurate white light together with flexible and precise color adjustment. These features make Gemini 1x1 Soft ideal for lighting talent and rendering skin tones, giving users the ability to match a broad range of ambient lighting conditions quickly and easily. Weighing in at just 11.7 pounds (5.31 kilograms), and with a maximum draw of just 20W, Gemini 1x1 Soft is an agile light for on-the-go filmmakers. The compact power supply ensures that Gemini is fast and easy to rig with fewer cables, and users can instantly switch the light from AC power to battery power — using V-Mount, Gold Mount, or ARRI supplied batteries — while retaining similar lighting intensity. Dave Donoghue, VP of Sales, EMEA and APAC — Vitec Production Solutions said: “The Gemini 1x1 allows independent filmmakers and smaller studios to have access to the same high-end functionality and features that traditionally reserved for large production houses with big budgets.”

Stand: J2-08

**Etere to demo better end-to-end management**

Etere will demonstrate its latest solutions in the Etere Media Enterprise Resource Planning (MERP) framework. These solutions enable the management of end-to-end broadcasting and media workflows of companies. Etere MERP solutions include Etere’s NAM digital content management solution, which is designed to streamline the process of ingest, indexing, storage and retrieval of digital assets. As an end-to-end software solution, this NAM solution optimises assets through a centralised management of digital content.

Stand: 6F4-01

**AVIWEST to showcase Pro3 series, AIR series, MojoPro app at BroadcastAsia this year**

AVIWEST will be demonstrating its latest video content contribution and distribution technology, including the Pro3 series, AIR series, HE, 4K UHD and 3G/4G LTE encoder and MojoPro app, at BroadcastAsia 2019. AVIWEST will demonstrate its Pro3 series, which includes an integrated H.265/HEVC encoder and is 1U-compliant. With up to 12 network links (light cellular modems, Wi-Fi and Ethernet) and a custom player engine, plus AVIWEST SafeStreams Technology, the new Pro3 series allows broadcasters to deliver videos while consuming less data. The company will also showcase the AIR series, which combines hardware encoders and supports 5G networks for video production. The uplink system includes up to six network links (light cellular modems, one internal Wi-Fi, one Ethernet, a three-hour internal battery and AVIWEST’s SafeStreams Technology), allowing broadcasters to stream live video, store and forward recorded content under usual network conditions. AVIWEST will also showcase the HE4000 4K UHD HEVC encoder, which supports real-time delivery of UHD and HD content over unmanaged IP networks. The last IP encoder from AVIWEST, the HE4000 encoder combines 10-bit and 4:2:2 HEVC encoding with the SafeStreams Technology for delivery of live video content over IP at low latencies and bit rates. The company will showcase AVIWEST’s recent QuadCell, an external 3G/4G LTE cellular transmission solution that embeds four last-generation 30/60 LTE cellular modems with their SIM cards. It can be mounted on a tripod or directly on the roof of a vehicle. Together with the HE4000 encoder, it supports broadcasters in critical conditions for live video transmission over bonded cellular networks.

Stand: 4F1-01 - 4F2-20

**x-dream-distribution to partner with ModernTV at BroadcastAsia 2019**

x-dream-distribution GmbH has partnered with ModernTV to showcase its IPTV/OTT solutions at BroadcastAsia 2019. ModernTV’s primary solution provides a complete end-to-end ecosystem for pay-TV operators offering IPTV/OTT services.

x-dream-distribution CEO and Managing Director Jutta Schonhaas said: “We are happy to have ModernTV on board and bring their products to BroadcastAsia 2019. We like ModernTV’s enthusiastic approach and their solution fulfilling all customer needs for building IPTV in one ecosystem. As a software distribution and integration company, we are looking for the best solutions for our customers in the pay-TV industry and ModernTV is definitely one of them.”

ModernTV’s complete end-to-end solution includes a Customer Management System, Device Management System, Content Management, and Analytics & Statistics.
Leader Electronics will display the new LV5900 8K waveform monitor and a new 8K option for the LT4610 sync generator. It will also introduce a new 4K IP-compatible option for the LV5600 waveform monitor and additional options for the LV5600 and LV7600.

The new LV5900 8K waveform monitor provides full support for SMPTE ST2082-12 in 8192 × 4320 and 7680 × 4320 resolution, plus 12G-SDI quad link. Features include an 8K colour bar and test pattern generation, as well as a four-input simultaneous display of HD video from HD to 3G-SDI and 4K video. The audio interface is compatible with MADI.

The LT4610SER24, a new 8K option for the Leader LT4610 sync generator, provides 12G-SDI 8K pattern generation when integrated with the established LT4610SER02 expansion option. Leader’s LV5600-SER06 is a new 4K IP-compatible option for the LV5600 waveform monitor. Option LV7600-SER06 is its equivalent for the LV7600 rasteriser. Both options provide full conformance with the SMPTE 2110 standard for transmitting 4K content in a non-compressed format at up to 250G per second. ST 2110-20 audio, ST2110-40 auxiliary data and ST2059 PTP sync specifications are all fully supported.

Another new option for the LV5600 and LV7600 is the LV5600-SER32/LV7600-SER32 25G IP test signal generator option. Supporting transmission standards of IP corresponding to SMPTE ST 2110-20/30/31 and /40, the video signal can generate test patterns of HD through to UHDTV (3840 x 2160). Stress testing of network infrastructure is possible through the addition of packet errors and packet jitter. The LV5600-SER32/LV7600- SER32 is another new function for the LV5600 waveform monitor and LV7600 rasteriser. This feature is designed for camera noise measurement, displaying the video noise included in the luminance channel or RGB components of an SDI source.

Masayoshi Ishihara from Leader’s APAC office and Umesh Tyagi, Country Manager for its India and MEA office, will be at the show to meet attendees.

Pixel Power will be showcasing CREATE, an app for building graphics templates, and StreamMaster PRODUCE, which fulfils and delivers graphics in real time, alongside its full range of creation and playout automation systems designed for services are linear, OTT and VoD.

These new products add to the solution set, which is based on Pixel Power’s technology platforms, namely StreamMaster for Media Processing and Gallium for Workflow Orchestration. These platforms are constructed using a flexible function-block architecture, allowing solutions to be compiled which precisely meet the needs of each individual user while providing the optimum use of processing power for maximum efficiency. The architecture is completely virtualisable and can be implemented on dedicated appliances in the machine room, in a corporate data centre or in the cloud. This allows the creation of systems that precisely suit the needs of the user, right up to full premium channel playout in the cloud. It also means that they can be reconfigured should those needs change, for instance to add 4K or HDR ultra HD. Pixel Power systems draw on modules from the two core platforms, StreamMaster and Gallium, to create solutions that are tailored to requirements with new pricing models to suit user preferences for capital or operational expenditure. Gallium PLAYOUT multi-channel automation is an integrated scalable scheduling, asset management and automation system that provides the intelligence for complete channel playout, channel-in-a-box or enterprise-standard automated transmission. Gallium FACTORY is a file-based content packaging solution that automatically generates clips, promos or trailers through the use of graphics templates, eliminating unproductive manual work.
Adder makes a mark with dual-head 4K IP KVM matrix

Adder Technology will unveil the ALIF4000, the world’s first dual-head high-performance 4K IP KVM matrix over a single fibre connection at BroadcastAsia. Delivering pixel-perfect picture quality, audio and USB to simple or dual 4K screens, the ALIF4000 is designed for the broadcast industry, in particular VFX, post-production and colour grading applications, as well as air traffic control and healthcare organisations.

The ADDERLink INFINITY 4000 Series (ALIF4000) is fully compatible with the existing ADDERLink INFINITY range. It can be phased into an existing network without disruption, downtime or the costly need to rip and replace. By introducing the ALIF4000, customers can add 4K functionality into their infrastructure at a time that is right for them and their business. Alongside the ALIF4000, Adder will demonstrate the new ADDERLink (pep) and the world’s smallest IP KVM transmitter, the ADDERlink INFINITY 100T (ALIF100T) Series. The ALIF100T is a space-saving transmitter designed for compact production environments, and seamlessly integrates with the rest of the ADDERLink INFINITY range.

Appear TV to bring the X factor to BroadcastAsia

Appear TV will be showcasing updates to its multi-functional X-Series platform. The X10 and X20 support digital video broadcasting satellite (DVB-S2x) systems and digital satellite newspapering (DSN) with a new S2x contribution modulator and demodulator. The company will also highlight how its X20 platform is suitable for low-latency video-assisted referee (VAR) applications. The X-Series (X10/20) offers the complete spectrum of encoding codecs and helps broadcasters adopt the many benefits of an IP-centric operation in their own timeline. The modulator also has an RF input that can be connected to a back-up transponder, which can then be routed to the main output in case of a hardware failure on the main transponder. The X10 and X20 can each output two transponders featuring switchable L-band or Intermediate Frequency (IF) along with 72 Mbaud bandwidth.

In addition to the new modulator, the X-Series also features an update to its hardware design for its DVB-S2x contribution demodulator, a platform that supports the DVB-S2x DSM2 and professional services profiles.

Stand: AE3-04

Interact Systems announces seamless control with QC, monitoring & classification solutions

Interact Systems will demonstrate its content quality control (QC), monitoring and classification solutions for the media industry. Its solutions can be deployed in the cloud, on-premises or in any combination of both.

Designed to simplify content management, improve efficiencies and provide seamless audio-video quality on every device, these solutions allow content creators and distributors to respond to the increase of video streaming through a pragmatic approach best suited for their organisation. The company’s BATON ABR, QC and ORION-OTT perform deep QC checks and monitor VOD and live content from ingest to distribution points. By carrying out exhaustive checks at pre- and post-transcode stages, along with comprehensive, delivery-specific, checks and monitoring, this solution ensures QoS for every stream on every device.

Interact Systems will also demonstrate its ORION-OTT solution, which can monitor many streams for ABR compliance and audio-video quality checks in real time. The solution suite supports closed captions, ad verification/compliance and DRM on both Windows and Linux operating systems. Providing an aggregated view and status collected by ORION and ORION-OTT monitoring points, ORION Central Manager gives unprecedented visibility and power for proactive monitoring. It offers a real-time view of linear and OTT services, alerts and QoE information for each video, ensuring fast and efficient resolution of issues. When complemented by the company’s BATON QC and ORION for 26/7 linear workflow monitoring, BATON AER and ORION-OTT product suites provide broadcasters with a total solution for streaming superior quality services.

Stand: AE3-04

2019 ANNIVERSARY EVENT CELEBRATING WOMEN IN MEDIA

As BroadcastPro ME marks its ninth anniversary, we celebrate the women who have been outstanding in the broadcast industry. At our popular annual networking event, we will host key female broadcast executives and their male colleagues.
The pay-TV and over-the-top (OTT) subscription markets in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have followed divergent paths during the last two years. The first, heavily affected by piracy and the blockade of BeIN Media, is struggling to return to normality, while the second is clearly on a growth spurt.

The regional pay-TV market is still trying to recover from the two big developments of 2017: the blockade of BeIN Media in KSA, Egypt and Bahrain, and the launch of pirate TV network BeoutQ.

The blockade deprived BeIN of access to its largest and third-largest markets, KSA and Egypt. Between 2010 and 2016, the MENA pay-TV market had the highest regional growth rate globally, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17%. This pattern was reversed in 2017 as a result of the blockade. In 2018, market subscriptions grew around 6%, reaching 4.5m people, up from 4.2m in 2017. This growth was mainly driven by STB operators. While subscriptions grew in 2018 relative to 2017, overall revenues fell 8%, for two main reasons. First of all, the 2017 figures were artificially inflated because BeIN Media was receiving revenues until the end of 2017 as the countries that imposed the blockade. Second, 2018 was the first full year where the slashing of package pricing by OSN took full effect.

Piracy remains a major threat, amplified in 2017 by the launch of BeoutQ and the lack of a robust regulatory framework. The blockade has cost BeIN 4% of its subscriber base. IHS Markit estimates BeIN’s lost revenues to be on the scale of $600m, solely from home subscriptions, from mid-2017 to the end of 2018.

One of the most interesting developments is the recent change in KSA’s media business strategy. The country wants to implement a media policy that is more outward-looking and addresses the future challenges of the sector.

The MENA OTT subscription video market continues to grow impressively. Paid subscriptions are set to rise to over 2m by mid-2019, having reached 1.7m in 2018. Revenues have also reached a record height of nearly $1.4bn. Such figures represent growth of over 40% year-on-year and will continue to rise, reaching 4.7bn paid subscribers and around $4bn in revenue by the end of 2021.

The market is led by three providers – Leogate-owned Starz Play Arabia, MBC’s Shahid Play and Netflix, – which together claimed more than 70% of subscriptions and revenues in 2018. Starz Play remains in the lead as it continues its aggressive expansion strategy in MENA. At the forefront of this strategy are the partnerships it has entered with local operators for distribution and direct-carrier billing. In 2018, more than 20 such deals entered across the region between Starz Play and providers ranging from trans-regional telcos, Orange, Vodafone and Zain to local Saudi electronics retailer eXtra. Starz Play has seen unprecedented user base growth in the region, thanks to these deals. However, converting this vast user base into paying customers will depend on future investment in content, especially as other services deploy their content options.

The gap between Starz Play Arabia and Netflix narrowed in 2018, with the two providers separated by just 5% in paid subscriber market share, and revenue share level at over 30% each. This competition is set to continue as Netflix begins to localise properly, now providing local currency payment options in its two strongest markets, the UAE and KSA, as well as establishing local distribution deals with regional pay-TV operator OSN and local providers in the UAE.

This, on top of the launch of Netflix’s first original Arabic series, has, in the recently announced second series of Al Rainb School for Girls and the third, Panamoon, will help propel Netflix into more homes around the region, including outside the Gulf states. However, many services have lost market share. Leogate-owned local provider Ifflix has fallen from a near 40% subscriber market share four years ago to less than 5% in 2018. Recent revenue figures also have struggled to gain traction following its market entrance with Zain in 2018. Pay TV provider OSN’s WAVO, set to emulate the success of British TV provider Sky’s virtual pay-TV service Now TV, has seen slow adoption in the Middle East, with just 35,000 subscribers after more than a year of operation.

Constantinos Papavassilopoulos is Associate Director at IHS Markit Technology

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