Used broadcast equipment is big business.
Three experts tell us how they make it work.
Orbit is the most advanced luminaire ever created with exciting new technology packed into every fixture. Smooth dimming from 100 to 0%. With its changeable optics, Orbit can transform into many different types of lampheads including projection (profile), open face, soft light, and other future possibilities. Orbit is an ultra-bright, tunable, and directional LED fixture from ARRI. All systems in Orbit are gamut and outstanding color rendition across all color temperatures along with industry-leading, illumination | reshaped.
13 November 2019

HABTOOR GRAND HOTEL / DUBAI / UAE

1 day / 1 evening / 6 panels
33 speakers / 18 awards
1 gala awards dinner
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Canon Middle East has teamed up with SI First Gulf Company (FGC) to expand its professional video segment in Saudi Arabia. The partnership serves the larger vision of the Kingdom to develop a smart and sophisticated, digital infrastructure mandated by Vision 2030, to diversify the local economy, attract investors and enhance the competitiveness of the Saudi economy globally. The establishment of a thriving film and broadcast industry forms an integral part of fulfilling the Kingdom’s objectives. Saudi Arabia has earmarked an investment of a little under $1bn for culture and media by 2020, according to Oxford Business Group.

The new showroom in Al Quoz, Dubai. They often visit us at that part of town.

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Sam Barnett, who has been CEO of MBC Group for the last 17 years, has resigned from the broadcast network. In an internal memo, Waleed Al Ibrahim, Chairman of the broadcast network, lauded the “pivotal role” Sam has played since 2002 “in the development and great success of the Group” and added that the network is looking to identify a successor “from a pool of top industry executives with global expertise.”

Sam Barnett steps down as CEO of MBC

Systems integrator First Gulf Company joins hands with Canon Middle East in KSA

“The strong line-up of Canon Cinema Series and the increased new line-up of the 4K range of ENG cameras will fulfill the growing requirement for high-quality content delivery within the Kingdom,” said Eng Naim Saidi, Group CEO at First Gulf Company. “First Gulf Company is a leader in the broadcast and pro AV system integration industry. The partnership with Canon will add important value to our Pro Video division, and we anticipate it will result in both Canon ME and FGC market share growth.”

Advanced Media expands presence in Dubai with Al Quoz showroom launch

UAE distributor Advanced Media has opened a second 1,500sqft showroom next to the company’s warehouses in Al Quoz Industrial 1, Dubai. Edwin Hartounian, Advanced Media’s Technical Manager, has taken on an additional role as Showroom Manager at the new facility. Hartounian said: “Al Quoz is convenient for customers residing in that part of town. They often visit us at our showroom in Bur Dubai to check out the latest products and technologies presented by Advanced Media. The showroom is open from 10am to 7pm Sundays to Thursdays. In the near future, we hope to extend the timing for this location to include operations on Saturday.” Advanced Media boasts a full-fledged service centre at its main showroom in Bur Dubai. It will soon launch a drop-off and pick-up service for equipment at the new unit. The distributor also opened its first showroom in Saudi Arabia last month, to service the professional video community in the Kingdom.
New appointments at ZEE5 Global

ZEE5 Global is scaling up operations across international markets with two new hires. Rahul Vaz will head up the Product team, while Vinay Patodia joins as Head of Technology. Vaz most recently served as Senior Product Director – West and will be based in the ZEE5 Global office in Mumbai. He will be responsible for defining and driving ZEE5 Global’s user experience in international markets as well as ensuring a seamless entertainment experience on the platform for its audiences. He is also tasked with building efficiencies towards a stronger user interface in terms of design, communication and more, while making improvements to the web and app. Vinay Patodia has 18-plus years of experience in driving technology strategy and operations across companies like Hungama Digital and Torchii. He will be responsible for building out a scalable and customer-centric platform.

BBC Studios renews distribution deal with MEASAT through Globecast

MEASAT Satellite Systems Sdn Bhd (MEASAT), in partnership with Globecast, has announced that BBC Studios has renewed its agreement to distribute its BBC channels across Asia via the MEASAT-3 satellite. Globecast provides MEASAT satellite capacity, ground and uplink services to BBC Studios, carrying these channels to viewers across the Asian market.

“The agreement with MEASAT and Globecast provides us with reliable partners for the distribution of BBC channels into Asia,” said Shad Hashmi, SVP of BBC Studios. “MEASAT and Globecast have addressed our business needs, and we look forward to continue partnering with them in the years to come.”

Introducing ATEM Constellation 8K!

The next generation 8K switcher with 8K DVE, 8K SuperSource, 8K chroma key and 8K MultiView!

The new ATEM Constellation 8K is an Ultra HD live production switcher with so many features, you can combine them to make a powerful 8K switcher! You get 4 M/E, 40 x 12G-SDI inputs, 24 x 12G-SDI aux outputs, 4 DVEs, 16 Keyers, 4 media players, 4 multi viewers, 2 SuperSource and standards conversion on every 8K input! Then you can combine everything for a powerful 8K switcher!

40 Standards Converted 12G-SDI Inputs!

You get 40 independent 12G-SDI inputs, with each input featuring its own dedicated up and cross converter. That allows 1080p and Ultra HD sources to be upconverted to 8K on all inputs. You can even loop out audio from SDI inputs 1 to 30 to MAIDI digital audio outputs, so you can hand off the audio from switcher sources to an external audio engineer for mixing.

Professional Fairlight Audio Mixer

With a built in Fairlight audio mixer, the ATEM Constellation makes it possible to do complex live sound mixing. You get 3 audio mixer inputs in a live production switcher! Each input features 6 band parametric EQ, compressor, limiter, expander, noise gate and pan. Plus you can mix in with an external Mackie compatible panel or full Fairlight Audio Console.

Includes 8K Multiview with Audio Meters

The built in multiview lets you view multiple sources in a single monitor. You get 4 independent multiview outputs that can each be individually customized or transformed into a single full resolution 8K multiview when you switch to 8K. Each multiview can be set to 4, 7, 10, 13 or 16 simultaneous views. Each view also has on screen menus including a custom label, VU meters and tally.

Operative appoints Said Bacho as Senior Vice President for EMEA region

Operative, a major ad management platform for many global media brands, has appointed Said Bacho as Senior Vice President, EMEA. With immediate effect, he joins Operative on a full-time basis after engaging with the company as a consultant. During his consultancy period, he contributed to the development of Operative’s go-to-market strategy in EMEA, resulting in new international business opportunities.

He will be based in the UK. Bacho brings many years’ experience working in broadcast media technology. He held senior positions at Snell Advanced Media, Grass Valley and Imagine Communications, prior to joining Operative. In his new role, he will manage Operative’s Business in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and India, with a particular emphasis on growing its regional sales and account management teams.

Operative appoints Said Bacho as Senior Vice President for EMEA region

Raad Haddadin joins Raya TV as Head of Engineering

Raad Haddadin will be responsible for upgradings to TV’s facilities to the latest technologies, maintaining its current system and studios, and undertaking DB upgrades. He was previously Director of Broadcast & IT at HSE24, helping to build the shopping channel’s facilities in Dubai. Prior to that, he worked at AlAan TV.

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Snap expands Discover in the region with 18 new shows

Snap has expanded its state of local content in the Middle East and North Africa. Airing on Snapchat Discover over the coming weeks are eight new shows and nine new seasons of shows available for subscription. The slate includes content from new partners such as TrollIt.ai, bringing two of its hit shows – TopTel and Al Khalat – to the platform. Saudi Broadcasting Authority is bringing highlights from the Saudi Pro League. Dubai TV and Online Lifestyle Network are launching new shows. There are several renewals of popular shows, such as The Tariq Show from Rotana Media Group, House of Comedy from TREND and Without a Filter from Al Aan TV.

The platform now offers more than 450 premium content channels worldwide, with major television networks, entertainment studios and content creators reinventing popular series for Snapchat. Shows are a full screen, made-for-mobile type of storytelling. They feature motion graphics, split screens and quick cuts. Rami Saad, Head of International Content Partnerships at Snap, said: “We reach over 90% of all 13-34 year-olds in Saudi Arabia, so it’s only natural for us to continue to expand what is available here.”

New appointments at VSN EMEA

Sermej Astakhov has been appointed EMEA Sales Manager for VSN, and Alexander Kosushkin has joined as Pre-Sales & Solutions Architect. Astakhov comes with extensive sales, marketing and systems integration work experience in multinational companies, with a focus on professional audio, video and IT solutions in B2B markets. Kosushkin has worked in broadcasting for the last ten years, with experience in systems integration, design and implementation of numerous broadcasting systems in APAC, LATAM and EMEA, with extensive involvement in local work rules and traditions.

Choueiri DMS appointed exclusive MENA rep for ESPN Sports

Choueiri DMS, a Dubai-based asset management firm, has been appointed exclusive representative for ESPN Sports Media, as well as ESPNcricinfo, for the MENA region. ESPN is the broadest portfolio of multimedia sports assets, with over 50 business entities. ESPN claims ESPNcricinfo.com and ESPNcricinfo are the most visited sports websites in the UAE, with the highest page and visit duration figures, attracting over five million visitors from the GCC during the 2019 Cricket World Cup. Cricket is the second most watched sport in the world, with 2.5bn fans globally, and the second most watched sport in the UAE, with 44% of the population estimated to be cricket fans. Nine UAE residents regularly playing the sport. This fan base is skewed towards Asian expats from India and Pakistan.

Michel Malek, COO of DMS said: “With ESPN joining the DMS family of digital platforms, we look forward to furthering the audience engagement goals of our broadcast partners around the region.”

Turkish media house invests in Lawo

Turkuvaz Media Group, which owns television channels, radio stations, newspapers and magazines in Turkey and is part of Cthal Holding, recently invested in a number of Lawo solutions. The investment is part of a major company-wide upgrade to an IP ecosystem amid moving to a brand-new facility in Istanbul. Turkish systems integrator and Lawo distributor Radikal will oversee the supply, deployment and integration of the systems for the media house, which aims to complete testing and commissioning by the end of November, with the aim of going on air from the new media facility by Q1 2020.

“The client has built a totally new system using IP infrastructure with reliability and redundancy options. The Lawo products we have delivered will offer audio-over-IP and video-over-IP, and there was absolutely no competition either in terms of products or reliability,” commented Seha Akbas, Project Sales & Technical, Radikal. Radikal integrated eight mc56 consoles with dual fader option as part of the audio. The installation includes a central Nova7i HD router, which comes with HD/4K support, Dolby-E compatibility and clock-synchronized switching to video frames or internal DSP. The router serves as the main routing matrix for the audio consoles. Also provided are six crystal mixing radio consoles and two V_matrix C100 software-defined processing blades in one V_matrix chassis. V_matrix is Lawo’s IP broadcast video core infrastructure product. It can quickly transform a broadcast installation into a flexible, future-proof production facility, addressing a wide range of workflows while supporting a broadcaster’s transition to a totally IP-based environment.

In a strongly-worded address at the Leaders Week Sport Business Summit in London last month, Yousef Al Obaidly, CEO of beIN Media Group, chided rights holders for not taking strong action against piracy and warned that their silence will negatively impact future media rights valuations. With more than $1bn in sports investments, Al Obaidly’s address was a clarion call that the industry will re-evaluate its sports rights investment.

“We now regard all its rights as non-exclusive and our commercial offers will reflect that. I am also confident that other broadcasters will make similar statements while many once-premium rights will remain unsold,” he warned. He added that the “endless growth of sports rights is over” and decried the silence with which the industry has dealt with the “big elephant in the room”.

In fact, he called it “crazy” and “out of touch” the recent forecast made by Rethink TV, a British analyst – which reported that the total value of global sports broadcasting rights is expected to reach $50bn in 2025, a 77% increase from today. “I simply don’t know where this money is going to come from! This is because every deal needs a combination of at least two bidders in a market, and a level of exclusivity in line with the investment made. And while sometimes there are headwinds outside our control, these two factors do not exist. We now live in a world where exclusive broadcast rights are, effectively, wholly non-exclusive... it rights aren’t exclusive, Facebook and the FAANs won’t be your saviour; OTT channels won’t bail you out going direct-to-consumer won’t help, and established broadcasters won’t write another huge cheque. If you don’t protect your brand, you have nothing.”

He called piracy “a collective problem” requiring “an industry-wide response”. “First, anti-piracy staffing levels, capabilities and budgets should be your biggest priority this year, then... there should be cross-party collaboration on major legal reforms, including the establishment of full copyright in broadcast signal. Third, CEOs of federations, leagues, clubs and broadcasters should all... be engaging their sports ministers and senior politicians on the same. Fourth, consumers should be educated through bold public awareness campaigns. They should know the direct implications of choosing a pirate service. Fifth, the pirates themselves should be shown that piracy cannot pay, and they should be publicly prosecuted.

We added: “If you don’t get your house in order and quickly, the sports rights market could collapse, beyond recognition.”
MENA production houses win awards at Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards

Argosy opens new stock facility in Dubai

Argosy has relocated its Dubai office to Oud Metha in order to hold more stock and deliver faster and more efficient services to its Middle East customers. The larger facility enables Argosy to locally stock higher volumes of its expanding product portfolio, such as cabling and mains distribution units, video audio and data cabling, connectors and patching, SMPTE and fibre assembly equipment, along with KVM and network switches. “Countries like Oman, Bahrain and Lebanon have seen a recent growth in the sports sector, meaning more stadia and arenas have been built for boxing, football and tennis tournaments. This in turn has increased the need to produce local content, so we are positioning ourselves to be able to deliver orders quickly and provide immediate assistance for such projects through our new regional office in Dubai,” commented Chris Smeeton, Director at Argosy.

Headed by Regional Sales Manager Raziullah Baig and supported by Argosy’s sales, technical and logistics teams back at its UK HQ, the new Dubai office brings relevant and critical stock back into the region, offering Argosy clients reduced lead times and a facility to supply to ongoing projects where specific products may be urgently required. “The beauty of holding more stock in the region is that our clients can begin their projects earlier, starting with the readily available products we stock in Dubai, while the rest of their order ships from the UK,” explained Baig.

As the Middle East moves towards 4K, Argosy’s new partnerships with Mellanox Technologies, Canare, Allied Telesis, HamF, IHS and other suppliers will prove indispensable to the region’s content producers and broadcasters as they implement their 4K technology upgrades.

We are the one-stop-shop for all your broadcast requirements. Contact our Middle East team to see how our latest services make aggregating, routing and tailoring content even easier.

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Anas ATHAMNEH
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From left: Ahmed Al Mutawa from the UAE with festival director Alexander V. Kammel. "Due to the numerous high-quality submissions, we also decided to announce shortlisted nominations," commented festival director Alexander V. Kammel. "In this way, creative and excellent productions could be highlighted and receive additional recognition.” For the first time since the establishment of the festival, the Grand Prix, the White Dolphin, went to Germany. The family business Dibbern convinced the jury with the corporate image film Traditional Craftsmanship Meets Contemporary Design. The Blue Dolphin for the most successful production company of the year, went to the British production company RD Content, as they received six trophies during the Awards Gala.

The Awards Days started with the Welcome Evening at the L’Ondine Beach Restaurant. Festival guests had the opportunity to view all submitted productions at the Media Centre and attend workshops on 360-degree production, branded content and licensing music. In the evening, guests attended the Awards, which saw winners from all around the world, including ABS-CBN, British International School of Chicago, LEGO, Media Zoo, PwC, Shell, as well as Swiss International Air Lines and Yakult.

Two production companies from the Middle East, Double Exposure Productions (DXP) from the UAE and Forward Films from Saudi Arabia came out on top of all entries from the MENA region. DXP, run by Emirati filmmaker and CEO Ahmed Al Mutawa took home Silver, Gold and Black Dolphins for various productions including ABS-CBN, British International School of Chicago, LEGO, Media Zoo, PwC, Shell, as well as Swiss International Air Lines and Yakult.

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The Forward Films team from Saudi Arabia took home a Silver Dolphin.
Yalla Yalla acquires Arabic remake rights to *Intouchables*

Yalla Yalla, a joint venture between Dubai film distributor Front Row Filmed Entertainment and international sales and production outfit Rocket Science, has inked a deal with Gaumont for the Arabic-language remake rights to 2011 international box office smash hit *Intouchables*. The project will most likely be a Saudi/Egyptian co-production, with the director and cast set to be announced soon. The Arabic adaptation will be Yalla Yalla’s second production after Perfect Strangers, which is currently in pre-production. Front Row Filmed Entertainment will handle all MENA rights for the title, while Rocket Science will be responsible for international sales.

**Mena.tv launches fundraising campaign on Eureeca**

Mena.tv, an online content marketplace for the MENA region, is inviting industry professionals to become shareholders in the business through the global equity crowdfunding platform Eureeca. The equity raise has already reported significant pre-registration interest, aided by the promise of discounts for early investors. The B2B platform has ties with most major international trade shows and claims more than 600 registered content buyers. It has so far attracted more than 40 regional and international vendors listing over 200 titles.

**Ethiopia gets first dedicated TV platform**

A dedicated Ethiopian TV platform called Ethiopia TV launches in Dubai as the stage for the launch of a new Chinese film distribution platform. At the inaugural China-UAE Film and TV Industry Forum, Wisdom House Cultural Industry Group announced a collaboration with China (Zhejiang) Film and Television Industry International Cooperation Zone – China’s first national film and television platform – to enhance intercultural exchange with the Middle East by introducing films and TV shows from China into the region. The first three productions set for release are *Eternal Love*, a romantic fantasy starring Yang Mi and Mark Chao, which is China’s most-watched TV series; *Red Flowers* and *Green Leaves*, a love story exploring the fledgling romance of a Chinese Muslim couple; and *Rahit*, a 32 children’s animated TV show.

**London-based beoutQ seller brought to book**

A retailer in London has been convicted for selling illegal streaming devices (ISDs), which gave access to unaudenced Premier League broadcasts and other content. Ammar Al Silawi, 39, was found guilty on two charges of copyright and two charges of fraud, having been found to sell ISDs which provided unlawful access to a number of channels, including those of beoutQ, from London. Al Silawi received the maximum 300 hours of unpaid community service and was ordered to pay legal costs to the Premier League. The defendant was also warned that failure to comply with the community order in any way would result in an immediate custodial sentence. This was the first case of its kind, with the Premier League successfully arguing that in selling the set-top boxes, Al Silawi was guilty of communicating infringing copies of copyright works to the public.

**GatesAir announces new appointment for MEA market**

GatesAir is looking to strengthen its global presence with the appointment of Graham Lay as Regional Sales Manager, MEA. Based in Dubai, Lay reports to Andy McClelland, MD, EMEA, with a focus on building GatesAir’s market share and brand visibility in the Middle East and eastern Africa. Lay comes to GatesAir with more than a decade of sales and account management experience in the broadcast and communications industry. He spent most of this time with electrical cable distribution company IEWC, where he consistently took on roles of increasing responsibility. GatesAir has built a reputation for expertly managing high-volume business opportunities and many of the world’s largest digital transition projects," said Lay. “Their recent establishment of a new business and manufacturing centre in Europe, and aggressive sales and business development expansion, has magnified GatesAir’s presence throughout the EMEA region.” Lay expects to fortify GatesAir’s regional service and support presence through expansion of its channel partner network, in addition to working directly with customers to solve problems, reduce operational costs and create new opportunities.

**Former Al Arabiya exec moves to Asharq TV as GM**

Veteran journalist and former Al Arabiya executive Dr. Nabil Khatib has been appointed GM of the upcoming Asharq TV station, based in Dubai International Financial Centre. Asharq TV is the result of a cooperation agreement between Riyadh-based SRMG and Bloomberg, and is intended to be a multi-platform Arabic-language business and financial news service.
Tunisian radio is part of a national strategic plan to capably convincing officials, introducing the technology to digital radio, one that includes a suitable marketing strategy. The importance of developing an Arab model for the rollout of consumers both in and out of the car, Suleiman stressed the right for the radio industry to commit to a digital future.

The importance of getting DAB+ in cars throughout Tunisia, particularly in terms of its offering more value-added services on air by January 2021, and touched on the need to extend national services and have a total of 30 national DAB+ services on air by January 2021, and touched on the need to extend national services and have a total of 30 national DAB+ stations in Europe (over 1,500 stations across 31 markets in the EBU area) and underlining the willingness and effort of Arab states (DAB+ trials on air in Algeria, Qatar and Bahrain, and regular services in Tunisia and Kuwait, among other countries) and countries in Southeast Asia (trials in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam) in driving DAB+ adoption.

Stakeholders from the Tunisian radio industry and broadcast experts from across the Arab world convened in Tunis last month to discuss the opportunities DAB+ brings to the radio, manufacturing, retail and automotive sectors. We bring you a detailed report with the EU’s recent introduction of the EECC directive – also featured among a number of key topics on the agenda, including increased coordination and better use of frequency.

From left: Bernie O’Neill, Project Director of WorldDAB, Diaa Baccouch, CEO, ONT; Abdelrahim Suleiman, ASBU Director General, Basil Zibli, Tech Director, ASBU, and Hichem Snoussi, board member of HAICA.

O’Neill also took the stage to present the audience with an update on the rollout of DAB+ from an international standpoint, emphasising the growing number of DAB+ stations in Europe (over 1,500 stations across 31 markets in the EBU area) and underlining the willingness and effort of Arab states (DAB+ trials on air in Algeria, Qatar and Bahrain, and regular services in Tunisia and Kuwait, among other countries) and countries in Southeast Asia (trials in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam) in driving DAB+ adoption.

WorldDAB France representative Jean-Marc Dubreuil discussed radio’s place in an increasingly IP-dominated world, and reiterated the importance of broadcasters retaining control over their audience in light of growing competition from tech giants. Dubreuil also reiterated the benefits of DAB+ digital radio. Using Norway as an example, he emphasised listeners’ appetite for new and diverse content – as the first country to have completed a digital switchover, 35% of all listening in Norway is on new digital-only stations.

Highlighting the importance of educating listeners on the value of DAB+ digital radio, Dubreuil also reminded the audience of the free marketing toolkit available to manufacturers and retailers via the WorldDAB website, which can be used to promote DAB+ in Tunisia and throughout the Arab world.

A useful case study on Italy’s successful rollout of DAB+ was outlined by the Director of DAB Italia Sergio Natucci, advising that the extreme congestion of FM in Italy has driven take-up of DAB+. With in-car radio listening particularly high, he advised that Italy has passed a law stating that from January 1, 2023, all devices sold to consumers by car manufacturers and retailers via the WorldDAB website, which can be used to promote DAB+ in Tunisia and throughout the Arab world.

In conclusion, Stan Baaijens, CEO of antenna manufacturer Puniké NL., provided an overview of the challenges of including DAB+ in cars already on the road, and outlined some of the key lessons from other DAB+ rollouts that will be helpful to Tunisia as it progresses with the national rollout of DAB+.
Used broadcast equipment is a compelling option for budget-conscious operators globally. Yet, it’s an unregulated market with quality and service standards set by a cluster of industry champions. BroadcastPro ME takes an in-depth look at the markets, the moguls and the metrics in this touchstone sector.

“When quality and reputation are constant, price will determine the sale.”

Philip T. Kotler & Gary Armstrong, Principles of Marketing

At an auction in New York on 26 October 2017, a second-hand Rolex ‘Paul Newman’ Cosmograph wristwatch sold for a world record price of $17.7m. It was a classic example of the pre-owned market being able to appeal to customers on the basis of both rarity value and availability – here was an item that you simply couldn’t get anywhere else: there was no new equivalent. But while a glamorous timepiece sale in New York might seem something very exotic, it’s not a world away from how most second-hand markets work. They make something available in a way that the retail and resale markets simply can’t.

Take used broadcast equipment. It’s a global market worth more than $4bn. Right now, you can visit any number of highly evolved websites and buy virtually any kind of second-hand equipment: from mixers, routers, microphones, patch panels, time displays and storage systems, through to large-scale satellite and VSAT equipment – just about anything you’re looking for. The sellers (generally) offer good-quality, tried and tested goods at prices that might only be 20% of what you’d pay for the item new. You’ll also find spare parts for discontinued systems, or rare legacy pieces (the Rolex Cosmographs of their sector).

BroadcastPro tracked down three extraordinary entrepreneurs in the used equipment business. But before we tell you what they said about the market and how it works, let’s set the record straight on a few myths you might have heard about pre-owned equipment sales.

Myth One: The second-hand equipment sector specialises in emerging markets unable to pay for new equipment. No, it doesn’t.

Myth Two: The second-hand equipment sector isn’t liked by the manufacturers. Wrong – manufacturers themselves often source out-of-stock components from the pre-owned sector. In fact, manufacturers are making money from selling the software and hardware upgrades for the equipment sold by used equipment dealers.

Myth Three: The second-hand equipment sector isn’t used by well-resourced broadcasters who can afford to buy new. Yes, it is – in fact, these are some of the sector’s biggest customers.

Far from being the home of a ‘second-best’ solution, the used broadcast equipment market has industry power, extraordinary product availability and global reach. There’s no better example of that reach than a recent project completed in September 2019 by Skybrokers, a major specialist in used satellite equipment, that brought connectivity to one of the most desolate and isolated places on Earth: Easter Island. Located 3,500km from the coast of Chile, even reaching Easter Island poses severe logistical challenges. No wonder then that for decades islanders have had zero connectivity with world networks – in fact, when a racing yacht from the 2016 Volvo Ocean Race was forced to seek refuge here for repairs, it took four days before anyone knew its whereabouts.

That level of isolation is now a thing of the past. Skybrokers was able to install an 8.1m Vertex antenna, providing an end-to-end service from its storage hub in Europe and managing every aspect of the equipment sourcing, flight logistics and set-up – a delivery trail of more than 20,000km.

So who’s buying?
Muhammad Irfan Gondal is CEO of BS Broadcast MFZE. “Our goal,” he says, “is to be the biggest company in the Middle East providing used broadcast and satellite equipment.”

AS GOOD AS NEW?
Used broadcast equipment is a compelling option for budget-conscious operators globally. Yet, it’s an unregulated market with quality and service standards set by a cluster of industry champions. BroadcastPro ME takes an in-depth look at the markets, the moguls and the metrics in this touchstone sector.
Muhammad Irfan says his web site features 145 brands with more than 1,700 products, some of them with more than 100 units in stock.

“One of the challenges in the region is that it’s not fully aware of the second-hand equipment sector. There’s this idea that used equipment is bought by developing markets, but sales in France, the UK and the Netherlands are massive.”

Muhammad Irfan Gondal, CEO, BS Broadcast MFZE

Professional equipment is international, with 85% of sales made from one country to another; we currently have 7,735 active accounts of professionals in broadcast equipment. To a certain extent, we do indeed help fill the technology gap in some emerging markets. However, we target more developed countries where the use of equipment is mastered already, meaning we don’t have to educate them on how to use the equipment. In such an established market, different suppliers have their own specialisations. For example, the camera market is very much a key niche for Kitmondo.com. “On our site,” says Thomas Bordier, “you can definitely see the general interest in cameras and lenses.” Indeed, as Muhammad Irfan says, “People looking for cameras, for example, know exactly where to source the best deals. We wouldn’t try to compete with those specialists, because there’s such a multiplicity of dedicated lens options – and technology is also changing very fast in this sector. Similarly, you tend to find that because dealing in satellite equipment is a very high capital business, there’s a whole tier of specialist satellite dealers.”

Skybrokers – the company managing the installation on Easter Island – is a classic example. Managing Director Walter van der Plas explains: “We currently have 10-20% of the Earth station antenna market and 10% of the used broadcast equipment market. In general, there are just a few brokers that deal with used satellite equipment and not many companies that deal with used and refurbished Earth station antennas in the way we do. There is a market for used and refurbished antennas now that customers have restricted budgets and cannot afford new equipment. The used antennas that we provide are delivered and installed worldwide, and meet OEM standards when properly installed by professionals. In terms of stock profile, we have an extensive stock of broadcast, RF and antennas from 3.1m to 16m range that we can release quickly after refurbishment.”

“Often, the equipment is outdated but some markets will still be interested. This takes a little longer to sell, but eventually it will move if it’s well-priced”

Thomas Bordier, CEO, Kitmondo.com

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Reaching the market

Irfan continues: “My customers are more often than not experts in what they do, and I ensure that their sales queries are handled by experts too, and supported by an expert website, BSbroadcast.com. Our site features 145 brands, including the likes of Tandberg and Harmonic, with more than 1,700 products, some of them with more than 100 units in stock – and for every single one, we thoroughly detail product reference numbers and features. “To reach our customers, we do a significant amount of email marketing, covering Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. We also pride ourselves on our search engine optimisation (SEO). Given that we always list product reference numbers, anyone who searches on Google for something of this exact type will find our products straight away. Plus we
have a variety of partners based in different countries who both source and sell on our behalf, so we’re working on a commission basis.”

While being a broker with different purchasing dynamics, Kitmondo.com is also well-known for proactively reaching out to its key markets and promoting particular items if they fit a known purchase history. Thomas Bordier explains that here, SEO is again imperative – the quest to come up first in Google Search is a doorway to purchase. “Then there is a sellers’ database which provides a list of professionals that can be actively searched for specific offers, extensive targeted mailing, and paid campaigns on Google based around specific keywords.

Whereas, for Irfan of BS Broadcast, “A priority is to let people know that our stock will often include items that simply aren’t available anywhere else, and people may literally have scoured the Earth to find them. This is why I’m prepared to keep stock for 12 years or longer. If I wondered how I will ever sell it, I’d clearly be in the wrong business.”

“I had a customer who’d searched everywhere for a certain kind of Digit’ard, and he found that we were the only supplier who had it. It cost him $15, but he paid $140 for it to be delivered to Italy!” Another customer has had a Tuxberg 1250 decoder for 20 years, and he wonders how he will ever sell it. “We work with reliable sellers, and people may literally have scoured the Earth to find them. This is why I’m prepared to keep stock for 12 years or longer. If I wondered how I will ever sell it, I’d clearly be in the wrong business.”

Has a track record of customers who are in daily contact with both buyers and sellers with the aim of helping the deals come through.

we keep it for spares. The stock is kept in a cool, air-conditioned environment to avoid any issues with overheating (one of the key risks of working with broadcast equipment in the Middle East). On all our sales, we provide a 90-day warranty, and in some cases, a 180-day warranty. Of course, there is shipping insurance to cover any damage incurred in route.”

Van der Plas concurs. “We provide shipping insurance when we send equipment, and we provide a warranty period with all the equipment we sell. All of our broadcast and RF equipment is tested by professionals in professional test centres. A test report is provided, as well as a warranty period. Earth station antennas, for example, are refurbished to a high level, and all parts and elements are checked out. Critical parts are replaced with new. “We have a professional installation team that installs the antennas and aligns them so OEM specs will always be met. During the installation we involve the client, who can actually witness the alignment and tests. Then, after the purchase, we provide remote support by phone or email. In case of a warranty request, we request the client to return the unit so we can test it and repair/replace. In case of an Earth station antenna, one of our engineers will make a visit to troubleshoot if this cannot be done by phone.”

What guarantees do you get from the leading online broker like Kitmondo.com?” Thomas Bordier explains: “The dealers usually bring much more service and guarantees, but they are, naturally, asking for higher prices. In fairness, final users will be more flexible on the price but expect the buyers to take higher risks. In reality, there is no check-up for the equipment other than the one the buyer arranges for. Of course, we work with many different

"For us the main challenge is to always make sure we work with reliable sellers, protect the interests of all sides and make sure we only have positive feedback after a complicated deal is concluded”

Thomas Bordier, CEO, Kitmondo.com

that they’d pay for new kit.”

What do the manufacturers make of all this?”

“We also sell to the manufacturers,” Muhammad explains, “typically when they no longer have stock of old componentry and can’t service an existing customer’s equipment without it. We’ve seen some of the largest and most respected brands in the world come to us.”

BS Broadcast is downstream of a business like SkyBrokers. As Walter van der Plas comments: “The main challenge is how to source the high demand for parts/systems that will not be available to our clients. We check constantly whether there are still sufficient spare parts around to secure that critical customer support.”

Caveat emptor? “Buyer beware?” Not really. “We’ve had zero returns for three years,” continues Irfan. “When the equipment arrives, we power it up for 72 hours and check it thoroughly. If anything is faulty, we don’t repair it, but if it’s still not working, we’ll go back to the supplier and request the client to return the unit so we can test it and repair/replace.”

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types of sellers and they may offer differing levels of support. In terms of after-sales service, we work on a per-case basis. This usually depends on the sellers and the terms agreed prior to the purchase.”

Kitmondo assists in the communication process. “For example, we have a team of account managers who are in daily contact with both buyers and sellers, help the deals come through, and update the offer. So apart from a few automatic emails, our clients are in touch with a physical person, which is necessary to finalise complex international purchases. We serve as an intermediary, but for us the main challenge is to always make sure we work with reliable sellers, protect the interests of all sides and make sure we only have positive feedback after a complicated deal is concluded.”

Muhammad Irfan also believes provenance is important. “You definitely need to consider where the equipment comes from. We purchase a large percentage of our stock from key broadcast auctions in Los Angeles, New York, London and Amsterdam. It’s been pre-owned by world-class businesses working to the most professional standards. Our international partner network helps us source particular pieces and specific categories of equipment. “This procurement aspect of the business is very important for me personally. Our working day is structured around Western market timings – we are usually up until late in order to deal with procurement or customer issues in the United States or Europe.” Good procurement is a theme shared by the leading players. Van der Plas comments: “We buy surplus equipment from established companies that go out of business, or companies that change their business model and want to get rid of their stock.” Bordier notes: “We work with 1,115 sellers of broadcast equipment, both dealers and final users, out of which 285 have “There is a market for used and refurbished antennas now that customers have restricted budgets and cannot afford new equipment” Walter van der Plas, Managing Director, Skybrokers

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Walter van der Plas, Managing Director, Skybrokers

In terms of how the leading providers in the sector manage their procurement, the reality is we’re actually protecting the environment and helping out with sustainability issues. Many types of broadcast equipment contain dangerous acids and batteries, which can be major environmental pollutants and very hard to dispose of, whereas we ensure that equipment isn’t scrapped unless there is absolutely no other solution.”

Van der Plas says these issues are also paramount for Skybrokers. “If systems do not find another home after a few years, we will dispose of them in an environmentally friendly way and involve professional scrap companies who understand and manage the pollutant risks.”

Interestingly, even a broker like Kitmondo.com – essentially an intermediary, not a stockholder – will work for a sustainable solution where possible.

Thomas Bordier explains how: “Often, the equipment is outdated but some markets will still be interested. This takes a little longer to sell, but eventually it will move if it’s well-priced. Sometimes the equipment is very specific and either a) there is no time pressure, as we can just wait for the need to pop up, or b) there is a time pressure, and in this case we recommend using our auction partner’s network. This guarantees a sale at the current market price.”

Costs and margins
While second-hand dealers might often offer good value, it’s sobering to realise that much of the stock they buy in bulk has cost them virtually nothing. They offer it at a perceived value and add on a margin which is often highly subjective. To be fair, however, the entrepreneurs we spoke to were very open about their margins and how pricing works in this space.

“Bear in mind,” says Irfan, “that in this kind of business, you can make a unique offer – because quite simply, no-one else has the stock that you do!”

Bordier and Walter van der Plas all believe their businesses can source key legacy items that experienced practitioners regard as highly sought-after. This is the one area where the second-hand broadcast market can command high prices for sheer rarity value. “This,” says Irfan, “is a key activity of our partner network; the ability to identify and secure sought-after, iconic items, often in response to a specific customer request.”

Above left is Skybrokers’ ESA storage in Europe and below, the team installs a Viatel 11.3m antenna in Germany.

“The reality is that we need another four or five competitor businesses to come here, to really raise the industry profile and awaken local markets to what we’re offering.”

Muhammad Irfan Gondal, CEO, BS Broadcast MFZE

Bordier adds: “The most challenging part in the legacy market is that if you want to obtain the best equipment fitting your budget, you need to be ready to buy it abroad. This can be stressful for some clients, and we always recommend to visit the seller on-site before confirming a significant investment.”

But one last point... If all this sounds like a case of ‘no far, so good’, and you’re ready to start scouring the market for second-hand equipment, there’s one last factor to consider: customs clearance. This is a key risk for every international purchaser of used equipment. It is the buyer’s responsibility to ensure that customs regulations will not block the equipment they have bought during import. But then again, ensuring paperwork is in order may be viewed as a small price to pay, given that perhaps the buyer has just saved 75% of the cost of buying new. Or even better, the buyer has found exactly what they wanted – without having to go to the ends of the Earth.
As I went through a recent report from the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), a particular insight caught my attention. It’s the statement that 25% spending increase… in a year! That was my initial thoughts were: no wonder the agencies and production houses are becoming ever more important from brands in 2019. The brands are duly complying. Technology continues to replace the traditional model is becoming fragmented digital audience.

If you are going to make content that has a constant cadence and delivers a consistent, well thought-out and structured message that supports the DNA of your brand, you need to commit. And in order to do that, you need a team with proven technical and storytelling abilities to devise and deliver a multi-platform content strategy, with a mind to turn your digital channels into broadcast platforms in your own right.

The idea of an in-house production unit is understandably daunting. It is a language that many speak, but few understand. There are upfront costs in terms of equipment and a commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; and who wants a bunch of needy, commitment in terms of hiring staff; 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Phil Griffiths, founder, Nomad Media, looks at why the idea of an in-house production unit is the office making the place look scruffy? In terms of... Nomad Media, UAE-based Nomad Media. Phil Griffiths is founder of UAE-based Nomad Media. 24-25_Production.indd 29 10/31/19 5:19 PM
The UAE’s first 4K OB van has arrived in Abu Dhabi, and it promises to raise the level of live sports production in the region. BroadcastPro takes an exclusive tour and learns more from senior executives at Mediapro and long-term partner LIVE HD.

Spanish broadcast services provider Mediapro, which has been producing live sporting events in the Middle East for the last 15 years – including the UAE Pro League, the FIFA Club World Cup, the 2019 Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi and the 2019 Asian Cup – has built a new 4K OB van to join its fleet of vehicles for the Middle East market.

Mediapro has an exclusive long-term partnership agreement for the GCC market with LIVE HD, the production arm of Abu Dhabi Media, and is first engaging the OB van for both HD and 4K production during the current UAE Pro League football season, which runs until May 2020. Dubbed OB52, it is one of 60 vehicles owned by Mediapro, and one of three in Abu Dhabi. The firm also has vehicles in Egypt and Turkey.

“This represents a fantastic opportunity to develop 4K live production capabilities in the region, working closely with our valued partners,” remarks Omar Pleite Guerra, GM of Mediapro Middle East FZ-LLC.

With 4K becoming a production standard for several live sporting events and demand for OB projects on the rise, Pleite is confident the vehicle will become a critical requirement for regional productions.

“We realise channels are not yet producing or broadcasting in 4K, but the GCC is teeming with live events and we see a huge opportunity in the live production market for 4K to grow, especially with Expo 2020 drawing close,” he explains. “Likewise, Saudi Arabia is now open for tourism and other economic activities, in line with Vision 2030. A 4K OB unit can amplify that vision by delivering the highest quality audiovisual imagery live to regional and global audiences, to share with the world what is happening on the ground in real time.”

While the OB van, a Mercedes 1848 built by coachbuilder TECNOVE, is dedicated to servicing LIVE HD projects, Mediapro works closely with Abu Dhabi Media and Live HD to pitch for other productions in the region.

The OB van is wired to broadcast in HD formats from 720p to 1080i or 1080p, all the way up to 2160p 4K ultra HD. It is presently equipped with 12 Panasonic 4K camera systems and four special cameras. These include the MiniCam X5A system from 4sky, part of Mediapro Group, as well as a For-A FT-ONE-SS4K, the world’s first high-speed camera designed for super-slow motion acquisition at 4K resolution.

The van is also wired to accommodate a mix of 26 4K and HD cameras.

The interiors of the vehicle are state-of-the-art, with an improved interior to facilitate a smooth workflow for all live and recorded broadcast assignments. For production, it is equipped with a Grass Valley Kayenne vision mixer with...
With the addition of the 4K OB van, Mediapro now has three vehicles stationed in Abu Dhabi.

“With the current set of events we are expected to produce in 4K, it is not likely to be profitable, but as a leading player providing the best broadcast services in the market, we will be expected to have a 4K unit and eventually that will pay off,” explains Pleite. While it may be difficult to justify the cost of infrastructure required to support both 4K and HD live broadcast contribution workflows, Pleite says the investment will pay off in the long run. “With the current set of events we are expected to produce in 4K, it is not likely to be profitable, but as a leading player providing the best broadcast services in the market, we will be expected to have a 4K unit and eventually that will pay off.”

Video transport is also a challenge. “With limited and expensive satellite, three or MPLS links typically reserved for primary video contribution, broadcasters still need to transport video for alternative cameras for backstage interviews, off-field coverage and return and teleprompter feeds. Typically, you need a 12GHz capacity for production and transmission and will need a big transponder even to accommodate one single-4K transmission. We can support the broadcaster for a transmission, although our primary objective is to record in 4K and hand over the signal to a broadcaster.”

Mediapro has a team of ten technical experts to operate the 4K OB van. “A 4K van requires more skills and more infrastructure. First of all, there are more inputs and outputs going in and out from the OB. We need to be well organised on the router and video mixer to avoid mistakes, and that can be a challenge for those who haven’t done it before,” explains Cabaco.

“In addition, bandwidth is a challenge. “The resolution, frame rate and pixel depth needed for 4K UHD content requires far greater throughput compared to HD. Live broadcasters are still struggling to accommodate the bandwidth required.” Mediapro has a team of ten technical experts to operate the 4K OB van.

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“Even while the integration was going on and before its arrival in the UAE, this vehicle was going on and before its arrival in the UAE, this vehicle has already been assigned to numerous projects and events. This 4K OB van is planned to be used in the live production for the UAE Pro League, but we are expecting to provide more 4K services as per LIVE HD’s requirements,” explains Mediapro Technical Manager Nuno Cabaco.

“We have increased the air-conditioning capacity within this truck to ensure it can withstand the heat in this region,” he adds. Integrating a 4K van is not without its challenges, with one critical element being lighting. “Lighting is so important in 4K production. We have been particular that we hire only the best CCUs/HDR operators to take the maximum harnessing from the cameras,” says Cabaco.

With broadcasters choosing between HD and 4K based on the requirements of a shoot, they need to have flexibility and “the ability to switch easily from one format to the other, leveraging their existing infrastructure”, explains Pleite. Technically, such a system is possible with the addition of a 4K OB van.

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Anas Tolba (on the left with specs) is an Egyptian/American filmmaker whose works are mostly linked with social causes.

Between Two Seas, a film by Egyptian director Anas Tolba that champions women’s rights, has captured international attention by bagging awards at film festivals around the world. Tolba explains the experience of shooting his first feature-length film

Between Two Seas shot to fame at the Brooklyn Film Festival 2019, where it bagged Best Feature Film and Best Screenplay.

The film has won four other awards: Best Feature Film and Best Screenplay at the Arewa International Women’s Film Festival, and Best Director and Best Script at the Cinéma De La Diversité Taza (Morocco).

The film, directed by Egyptian filmmaker Anas Tolba, is the result of a collaboration between Egypt’s National Council for Women, UN Women and Axeer, a production company, as well as other development partners.

Between Two Seas follows a woman named Zahra. While on a short visit to her village, a small rural island near Cairo, her daughter is involved in an accident that leaves Zahra devastated. Following this incident, Zahra fights for her daughter’s rights and insists that she continue her education.

The film sheds light on different societal issues faced by women, especially in rural areas.

Tolba says the main aim of the collaboration was to produce a film for a mass audience in Egypt and the Arab world.

“The film talks about many inter-related issues, but the most glaring problem and the cause for most of the issues facing women today is the lack of education and awareness. So the film tackles this by telling the stories of three different women and how their lives have been affected by education or the lack of it.”

“The title of the film has a close connection to the location.

“The feature was shot on an island which its inhabitants informally call Between Two Seas. So I saw that as an opportunity to also reflect the state of being stuck between ignorance and awareness, which is the overall theme of the project,” Tolba explains.

Since Between Two Seas was his first full-length feature, he admits it wasn’t all smooth sailing.

“The whole process has been very challenging. It was my first time working on the writing process, working with actors, directing a set of almost 200 people. The whole film was shot on an island, so for the period of pre-production and the 18 days of filming we would go back and forth to the island every day, which was physically and logistically very challenging.”

The director adds that without the support received from Executive Producer Abdulrahman Garawany and his team, the project wouldn’t have been half as successful.
Anas Tolba, director, Between Two Seas

Tolba wanted the film to be “visually competitive to mainstream films”, so he invested in an ARRI Alexa Mini with Master Anamorphic lenses.

“The filming process was done in 18 days. We shot the whole film on an island in Cairo, and on the island we had about 25 locations. “For editing we used Premiere Pro, for colour grading we used DaVinci Resolve. I don’t remember how many hours of footage we had, but the first draft of the film was edited in about three weeks and the whole post-production process took about three months.”

He explains that the most important element in the production of this film was the support of a great team.

“We wanted our film to shed light on the major issues women face in underprivileged societies and give them hope and direction about how to deal with these issues”

Anas Tolba, director, Between Two Seas

“I was keen on having certain crew members that had a lot of experience in feature films, so the entire directing team (first, second and third assistant directors) were all experienced and had worked on many feature film sets before. The production manager as well had a lot of experience in feature films, and that helped us a lot in logistics, budgets and so on. “The cinematographer, Fawzy Darwich, is a very skilled DP and we have worked together on so many projects before, but this was also his first feature film. Having him on board was amazing because we already have a good rapport with each other, and he understands my vision. And his fresh eye was a great addition and made the film look extremely beautiful.”

Despite the project having the backing of UN Women as a main financial supporter, Tolba says, “The budget for the film is below average relative to the Egyptian film market. However, we were able to pull it off because over the past nine years we have worked on various projects of different sizes and resources, so as a production company, Axxeer was able to manage that budget in a very efficient way.”

Another key component of the film is music. Tolba chose to have a single melody throughout, “to change the different moods of the film.”

“The music composer for the film is a young Egyptian musician called Khaled Kammar. I’ve known Khaled for some years now, but I hadn’t had the chance to work with him. When I started to work on the film, even in pre-production, I knew I wanted to work with Khaled because he is very passionate about his work.

“During the filming process, I would sometimes send him shots from the film or roughly edited scenes so that he could get a feel of the film. Once we had a full rough cut, we watched the film together and he started translating the scenes into music.”

Tolba started his career in 2010 by co-founding media production company Axxeer. He has directed music videos for singers and artists from across the Arab world, including Zap Tharwat, Hamia Namira and Caireen.

“This project gave me the drive and passion to dig deeper into narrative work. As a filmmaker, I love storytelling, and I love human-driven stories”

Anas Tolba, director, Between Two Seas

“Some other projects that I’ve worked on with Axxeer and UN Women included a music video called ‘Nour’ which went viral on social media, and a short film called Mariam and the Sun, which won several international awards. This collaboration model was the inspiration to do something on a larger scale that would reach the masses.”

In 2014, he directed and produced his first 30-minute documentary, Extracurricular, which features a mother who believes in the power of travel to educate her children. In 2017, Mariam and The Sun was recognised by the Jury Selection Awards in the Accolade Film Competition and the Hollywood Film Festival.

Working on several music videos allowed the director to experiment with different techniques. He explains that he transitioned to narrative work when he shot ‘Nour’, which got about 10m views on YouTube and champions the cause of women’s empowerment in the workplace. The music video is based on “a dramatic narrative story”, says Tolba.

“This project gave me the drive and passion to dig deeper into narrative work. As a filmmaker, I love storytelling and I love human-driven stories.”

Between Two Seas was more than just a feature; it was a transformational journey.

“Professionally, I learned a lot from this experience. I learned about the relationship between the director and the writer and how it should be managed. I learned a lot about directing actors and the room that is given for actors to improvise and give input which was extremely beneficial for the film. And on a personal level I saw how I could learn from every single person around me, and that there is so much yet to learn in life,” he concludes.

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The Neumann NDH 20 is Sennheiser’s new closed-back set of headphones, combining isolation with carefully balanced sound image and resolution.

Eng Zaher Al Tamimie is the sound engineer at the private studio of HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, and is also the founder and owner of Hajeer Film & TV Studio. He puts the headphones through their paces.

As a long-time user of Neumann studio microphones and monitors, my interest was piqued when I heard that the brand had introduced its first ever pair of studio headphones. With the Neumann brand having the backing of Sennheiser – which already has an established track record in the headphone market – I was keen to see how the NDH 20 would differentiate itself from the likes of iconic Sennheiser models like the HD 280 Pro and the HD 650, or some of the other brands I have in my studio.

At the outset, at a $500 price tag, the NDH 20 sits in the upper tier of the studio headphone price range, so it’s no surprise that the design and aesthetics reflect this premium positioning. The orange colour on the inner part of the earcups is an eye-catching highlight. Unlike the HD 650, however, Neumann has gone with a closed-back design for the NDH 20, so that’s the first differentiation that comes to mind when you have a quick look.

Given that these are designed for studio engineers who are likely to wear the headphones for hours on end, I was happy to see that the weight and the pressure while wearing them were well balanced. The earcups have been designed to swivel, which isn’t something I personally like, but this is only an annoyance when one is not actually wearing the headphones. The circumaural memory foam ear pads ensure your ears don’t heat up, so once they’re on they feel extremely comfortable and I could easily use them for hours without pressure on my ears or any discomfort.
As a long-term user of Neumann monitors and microphones in my personal studio, I have very high expectations in terms of the sound quality from these new studio headphones. Fortunately, they do not disappoint and the sound is both clear and balanced. The NDH 20 performs especially well in the mid to high frequency ranges, but performance is a bit wanting in the lower frequency range, with a very flat frequency response. This is a challenge if you are working with Arabic music.

I work a lot with Arabic music and Arab musicians, and we prefer products that can capture low frequencies as we tend to use the tarabuka, cello, counter bass and other traditional instruments a lot. There are three or four different kinds of bass in Arabic music that you don’t generally find with Western instruments. So we require headphones that can capture those different bass nuances.

It’s clear that Neumann has done its best to ensure the most accurate replication of sound, rather than boosting superficial characteristics for a more pleasurable listening experience. I therefore find the NDH 20 to be ideally suited as a tool for monitoring and delivering true replication. Noise isolation has also clearly been another area of focus, evident in the fact that Neumann has even listed the amount of sound isolation these headphones are capable of in the very detailed data sheet that accompanies them. While the fact that they vastly outperform open-back headphones in terms of sound isolation was expected, they are also among the best closed-back headphones in terms of sound isolation. All in all, the NDH 20 is a strong and compelling entry into the crowded studio headphone market for Neumann. I’ve been impressed with the choices the brand has made, as they help differentiate the headphones from other offerings. If you’re looking for closed-back headphones with great isolation and accurate sound replication, they hit the mark.

Eng. Zaher Al Tamimie has a range of headphones at his studio to cater to the varied tastes of his high-profile clients.
FROM DEFEATISM TO VICTORY: A SEA CHANGE IN EGYPTIAN CINEMA

As we come to the close of a decade, it is fascinating to see the many ups and downs in the Egyptian movie market with all the political changes in the region, and how it has set itself on a path of self-correction in the last four years.

Production trends are highly influenced by external and internal factors, and several domestic factors have contributed to changes at various levels, including movie production, in Egypt. As we step out of this year, we look at two production trends: one started at the beginning of the decade but has moved to the back, while the other is gaining traction as we head to 2020.

In the last decade, we saw a handful of producers, writers and directors emerging from a non-specialised movie background and producing low-budget independent movies. While these films did not make much money, they did make a lot of noise. However, they remained low-budget and addressed a very limited audience. They were more into creating a buzz in the city in certain circles, and did not necessarily target the entertainment interests of the Egyptian public. Their interest lay in creating a buzz at film festivals, and some of them won awards. The Egyptian audience calls them ‘festival movies’.

Sadly, this collection of independent cinema also had an air of defeatism. Movies like Cairo 678, Clash, Microphone, Amaas and Rags and Tatters come to mind. Moviemakers questioned why Egyptian cinema had never been confined to low-budget movies and topics that Egyptian society could not identify with. Those movies served certain elite circles and did not bring any addition to the commercial movie industry as a whole or to mass moviemakers. They focused mainly on humanitarian issues and were not made for mass appeal.

This wave came to an end in 2016, with Clash, the last of the movies following this train of thought. Recent years have seen some good productions that bring the glory of Egyptian cinema back to the fore.

Movie production has started to pick up pace. One of the positive features of this decade’s commercial Egyptian movie production is that it has brought Egyptians from all walks of life together again to the cinema. Production trends are uniting walks of life together again to the Egyptian movie production is that it has brought Egyptians from all walks of life together again to the cinema. Production trends are uniting walks of life together again to the Egyptian cinema. Despite a few unpleasant detours with an air of defeatism at the beginning of this decade, it is ending with amazingly positive news and great announcements for new movie productions.

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“The new movie productions for 2020 are building on the success of the last three years and are once again raising the profile of Egyptian cinema,” says Rasha Shokr, writer, movie critic and vlogger directed by Marwan Hamed, raking in a record-breaking $6m. Comedies are still of big interest, especially those starring Tamer Hosny, Mohamed Emam and Karim Abdel Aziz, but action movies are finding a strong audience as well. Stars like Mohamed Ramadan are considered phenomenal. The Cell (2017), starring Ahmed Ezz and directed by Tarek ElBris, was a huge hit and started a new modern trend in the Egyptian movie industry, one that highlights the interest of the Egyptian public.

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“The pressure is on broadcasters to find ways to produce more content, more affordably, without compromising quality”

Remote production offers a win-win for broadcasters

Live events are a huge and critical driver in the global TV and video landscape, but the terrain continues to change, as the increasing cost of rights – especially sports – combined with the evolving interests and habits of audiences, is forcing content providers to adapt.

The trouble with live sports events is that as the cost of producing more coverage is being driven up by surging demand, it is not being met by the price that consumers are willing to pay. When you add in the rising outlay for hotly contested rights – the global rights market is expected to be worth $55bn by 2021 – the pressure is on broadcasters to find ways to produce more content, more affordably, without compromising quality.

The good news for broadcasters, OTT services and others feeding consumer demand is that the globalisation of TV and the proliferation of viewer choices has unlocked new potential. Growing audiences for sports crossing into new markets – such as English Premier League football in North America and NBA basketball in the Middle East – means there are opportunities beyond broadcasters bidding for big domestic rights contracts. What’s more, niche sports and now esports are reaching new audiences through syndication and direct-to-consumer models.

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