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BQA expands operations

UAE-based Broadcast Systems Arabia (BSA) has signed reseller agreements with C-Com Sat satellite systems and Elenos, a manufacturer of FM transmitters. The agreement will enable the systems integrator to sell the products of these companies in the Middle East and Pakistan.

In an exclusive interview with BroadcastPro ME, Hitesh Vekaria, CEO of BQA said: “This is our first foray into direct sales. Now we have a three-member strong dedicated sales team who will be responsible for these products that include FM transmitters and SNG equipment. Our main focus for sales will be on Libya and Syria, where we have already established a strong footing.”

The company has been operating in the region especially in war-torn countries to deploy broadcast equipment and set up TV and radio stations. In the three years of its operations, this is the first time that BQA has entered a master agreement with a vendor.

“We are expanding and this is the first step in reaching out in order to grow our business. We have more such agreements in the pipeline, which will be announced closer to CABSAT,” revealed Gondal.

“The region has a very high concentration of TV channels and we are looking at establishing a base in Dubai,” commented Hitesh Vekaria, Director at Phoenix 7, who was in Dubai recently to oversee the Zeus installation at Physique TV.

“This is a showcase project that gives us a foothold in the Middle East. We are interested in a bigger presence in the region and Dubai appears to be a good gateway to achieve that. We are open to discussions with agents who might like to offer our solutions in the region. We also intend to have a presence here to cater to local needs,” he explained.

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Media Digital Space debuts in Dubai

Hassan Chahine, former CEO of Glocom, has set up a company in Dubai Media City, BroadcastPro ME can reveal. Chahine’s newly established company, Media Digital Space, offers consultancy and engineering services to broadcasters and telecom operators.

The new company offers project management in technology, operations and distribution. It also claims to provide engineering and managed services to support telecom and broadcast networks going through migration phases while also helping to fill any gaps during that migration. This support includes providing new broadcast technology that can be integrated with the existing infrastructure to ensure internal efficiencies.

“The broadcast and media industry in the region is going through a major phase of change that needs an external view on how to approach that migration from a technological side and investment side; Media Digital Space offers these services,” Chahine explained.

Chahine is presently working as a consultant with a number of entities including an Egyptian TV channel, a UAE-based radio channel, a satellite and telecom operator as well as an international consulting firm although he declined to provide names.

“One of the projects I am working on is to bring an enhanced TV viewing experience to viewers,” he explained.

“This capitalises on broadcast hybrid capabilities and the high penetration of free-to-air, direct-to-home satellite TV in the region. It is a combined technology solution to further propel the growth of the broadcast satellite industry in the region.”
**ADVANCED MEDIA ADDS FREEFLY TO PORTFOLIO**

Dubai-based distributor of broadcast equipment, Advanced Media, has added a new handheld 3-axis digital stabilised camera gimbal from FreeFly systems to its portfolio.

With the MOVI M10, Advanced Media introduces Freefly for the first time to the UAE, adding yet another brand to the already existing stabilisers from Glidecam and Manfrotto.

The MOVI M10 boasts Freefly’s proprietary high performance IMU and brushless direct drive system among other features.

A key feature of the product is the Majestic Mode, which allows for a single operator to intuitively control the pointing of the gimbal by moving the handles without compromising the stabilisation of the image. The gimbal takes the operator’s movements and intelligently converts them into stabilised pan and tilt movements. The system features patent-pending translation compensation, whereby the system will automatically adjust the camera angle to maintain a consistent frame.

Alaa Al Rantisi, Managing Director, Advanced Media LLC said “Freefly Movi M10 camera stabiliser is the only GPS enabled, 3-axis, digitally stabilised, handheld camera gimbal in the new world of stabilised cinematography. This is a high performance inertial measurement device interfaced with a brushless direct drive system which can replace so many other camera tools.”

**MGI brings SIENNA to the region**

Systems integrator Media Group International (MGI) has announced a partnership agreement with Gallery SIENNA to offer its broadcast customers in the Middle East seamless integration and next generation workflow.

SIENNA software offers an end-to-end digital media infrastructure for news, sports and production featuring a tightly integrated MOS connection to ENPS. The SI claims that the new partnership will bring enormous benefit to MGI’s customers by giving them easy access to the latest systems for news, sport, live event and multi-camera television production.

Mark Gilbert, CTO of Gallery SIENNA added: “We are delighted that MGI has made a strong commitment to Sienna, and MGI’s experience and reach will make Sienna accessible to a new audience in the Gulf region. Local support is fundamental to our vision, so MGI’s formally trained Sienna engineers are a welcome addition.”

As well as becoming official Sienna distribution partners, MGI recently sent its Senior Solutions Architect Jim White and Tyrone Donnelly on a weeklong intensive Sienna training programme in London. The programme is designed to give MGI self-sufficiency in implementing and supporting Sienna Systems and affords MGI the Approved Sienna Systems Integrator status.

**Algeria considers partial TV deregulation**

After years of speculation, the Algerian Parliament will vote on the audio-visual bill, which will license private sector TV channels if passed into law. Private channels will be able to broadcast their programmes through the Algerian Television Broadcasting Company (TDA) after the new legislation comes into force, so long as the channels are “established under Algerian law”.

**Abu Dhabi Film Festival invites Sanad Fund submissions**

Abu Dhabi Film Festival has announced the call for submissions for the Festival’s SANAD grant which aims to support filmmakers from the Arab world.

Submissions are open from January 26 to February 28, 2014.

The SANAD fund supports projects in the development or post-production phases for Arab narrative and documentary feature-length films.

Each year, SANAD awards grants to Arab filmmakers in two categories: development funds of up to US$30,000 and post-production funds of up to US$80,000 per project.

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**CNN revamps Arabic website**

CNN International announced the re-launch of CNNArabic.com, its online Arabic news offering, as the website marks its 12th anniversary. The reinvented CNNArabic.com includes a range of new features providing a seamless user experience across all devices as the website embraces rapidly evolving consumer needs.

At the heart of the re-launch is the new concept of responsive design.

Peter Bale, VP and General Manager CNN Digital International: “The Middle East is one of the fastest growing mobile Internet markets and the ideal place for a site built around evolving news consumption habits.

“The leading international multipurpose news brand, CNN is bringing the most modern design and technology to the Arabic language market, with the new CNNArabic reflecting our ambition to be quick to embrace relevant new formats while also listening carefully to the needs of our consumers.”
**GRASS VALLEY EXPANDS REGIONAL PRESENCE**

In an attempt to establish a stronger footprint in the Middle East, Grass Valley has made a number of announcements in the run-up to CABSAT next month.

The company has announced three new hires for the Middle East operations in Dubai, which include a regional sales manager, a customer services engineer and a marketing coordinator. The names of the new recruits will be revealed later.

Grass Valley is also installing a new demonstration facility in its Dubai office for customers and end users to see and experience the very latest broadcast and media technologies brought to life. The facility will be launched during CABSAT 2014, where the company will have a strong presence with a two-deck stand.

To serve its Arabic-speaking customer base in the Middle East and around the world, Grass Valley will launch its first Arabic web site: http://www-ar.grassvalley.com. The site will be complete with product information and video tutorials to further promote Grass Valley’s dedication to the growing broadcast market in the Middle East.

Said Bacho, Senior Vice President EMEA, Grass Valley said: "2014 is an important year for us in the Middle East as we are further strengthening our regional team and investing in additional local resources to provide unparalleled opportunities for leading broadcasters in the region, especially after our very successful year in 2013 achieving double-digit growth in the Middle East."

The GV Director Nonlinear Live Production System will be introduced to the Middle East at CABSAT. GV Director integrates several features such as video switching and graphics in a single, intuitive system, and the new LDX Compact series of small footprint advanced imaging cameras.

"It’s very exciting for us to participate in CABSAT 2014 because it serves as the perfect venue to introduce GV Director and our LDX Compact camera series to the Middle East region for the first time – an area where we see great potential," added Bacho.

**Bechara to lead Avid Middle East as GM**

Avid has promoted Mounzer Bechara to the position of General Manager for the Middle East. Bechara previous served as Sales Manager for the Middle East, supporting Avid’s growth and business development in the region. With more than 12 years of expertise in the broadcast and technology industry, Bechara will be responsible for continuing the company’s ongoing momentum and growth in the Middle Eastern market.

Report ing to Christopher Brennan, Managing Director of Central & Eastern Europe, Middle East and Turkey, Bechara will continue to be based in Avid’s Dubai office.

"The Middle East is a very important region for Avid and having the right person to ensure its continued expansion is key," said Brennan.

"I am delighted to see someone of Mounzer’s calibre take the lead in growing Avid’s footprint in the area. I am confident that his experience in the industry and knowledge of broadcasters and media organisations will generate significant opportunity for the company." Bechara added: “I am pleased to take on this role. The region is gaining more market share and influential power, attracting international investor attention and focus.”

**83% growth for MENA pay-TV by 2020: Digital TV Research**

A recent report by Digital TV Research has revealed that pay-TV revenues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) will grow by more than 83% between 2010 and 2020 to USD 5.6bn.

From the $1.49bn in pay-TV revenues to be added between 2013 and 2020, Turkey will supply $359m, Egypt $362m and Saudi Arabia $257m.

Satellite TV will continue to dominate pay-TV revenues, taking two-thirds of the 2020 total (similar to the 2013 proportion). Satellite TV revenues will reach $3.74bn in 2020, up by $1bn on 2013 and nearly double the 2010 total.

In terms of platforms used – and despite a transformation to IP-based video services such as over-the-top (OTT) in countries such as Qatar and the UAE beginning in 2012 – satellite TV will continue to dominate pay-TV revenues, taking two-thirds of the 2020 total, similar to the 2013 proportion.
Al Jazeera Arabic joins Freesview

Al Jazeera Arabic has launched a digital television service in Turkey.

The new channel will join several European broadcast rights of several top European sports properties. beIN Sport holds the digital service on the Freeview platform in the UK. Al Jazeera Arabic becomes the first non-European Arabic service on the Freeview platform in the UK.

The new channel is an important new member to the Al Jazeera Network, serving a key geopolitical market. To launch on digital first continues Al Jazeera Arabic’s tradition of innovation.”

According to Hussein, Al Jazeera Arabic offers a one-stop shop to cater to the production and post production needs of local as well as foreign producers. “With more than seven years’ experience in this industry, our team understands the requirements of the industry, based on which we design a feasible plan for any type of project to assist directors and producers,” explained Hussein.

Al Jazeera Sport renamed belN Sports

Al Jazeera Sport was rebranded belN Sports on Jan 1, 2014. The rebranding indicates that the channel will now be part of belN Sports, a global network of sports channels, jointly owned and operated by Qatari Sports Investments (an affiliate of Al Jazeera Media Networks). belN presently operates three channels in France - belN Sport 1, belN Sport 2 and belN Sport MAX - and launched two channels in the United States (English and Spanish) in August 2012. The channel also holds Canadian broadcast rights to several sports properties.

belN Sport holds the broadcast rights to several top European football leagues among others.

ICON ART PRODUCTION INVESTS IN NEW EQUIPMENT

Dubai-based production and rental house, ICON Art Production (IAP), has upgraded its equipment by adding an extensive array of high-end production cameras, dollies, jibs, lights and cranes. The company has invested more than USD 2.7 million on the latest equipment.

“The decision to buy new equipment was based on an increase in demand for local and international production of feature films, short films, TV programmes, music videos, TV commercials and live event productions in the UAE, according to Zahir Hussain, CEO of the company.

IAP invested in state-of-the-art kit last year to support seven feature films, 30 TV commercials, 10 music video and several corporate films. Hussain claims that the company was also instrumental in the production of the big-budget Bollywood film Welcome Back.

“Presently, we are quite busy with that film. We will also begin work on at least two more big productions from India very soon. In fact, we are expecting to shoot 10 Indian films in 2014, with support from Dubai Film and TV Commission. This will also include an action thriller,” he added.

Three Arab films nominated for Oscars

DIFF opening film and Palestinian thriller Omar, directed by Hany Abu-Assad, is up for Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards this year.

The nomination for Assad’s Omar is the second for a Palestinian film, following the nomination for Paradise Now in 2006.

Omar is among the five nominees in the category that includes Belgium’s The Broken Circle Breakdown, Cambodia’s The Missing Picture, Denmark’s The Hunt, and Italy’s The Great Beauty. The film was selected from a shortlist of nine films that had been whitelisted down from 76 submissions.

A tale of love, betrayal and struggle in the Israeli-occupied territories, Omar received the Un Certain Regard jury prize at last year’s Cannes film festival. The film won Multi Awards for Best Film and Best Director at the tenth Dubai International Film Festival held in December last year.

Egyptian film The Square has been nominated for Best Documentary. Throughout the Best Foreign Film category’s 58-year history (AMPAS introduced it in 1956), Egypt has never been nominated but holds the record of submitting the most films to the competition without ever getting a nomination.

Directed by Jehane Noujaim, The Square won accolades at DIFF 2013, Sundance Film Festival held in December last year.

A third film from the region, Karana Has No Walls will be in the running for Best Documentary Short.

Learn more today at www.blackmagicdesign.com/me/smartscoopedu4k

*Excludes duties, shipping and taxes.
**Abu Dhabi to invest in Time Warner HQ**

Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, one of the world’s biggest sovereign wealth funds, is investing alongside Singapore’s state fund GIC Pte in Time Warner Inc’s headquarters in New York City.

Reports said that the sovereign wealth fund was part of a $1.3bn deal, which is now in the final stages.

The buyer, led by real estate firm Related Group, has secured money for this from Abu Dhabi and Singapore, which agreed to finance more than 80% of the purchase. It was reported in The Wall Street Journal.

The deal is said to be one of the biggest in a surge of businesses involving foreign investors in US commercial real estate.

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**Benghazi TV deploys OAYS Chameleon**

OAYS Automated Playout has announced that Benghazi TV has launched a new HD channel using its integrated playout platform, Chameleon. Broadcasting on Nilesat, Benghazi TV is the first non-state channel in Libya.

OAYS was commissioned to provide an integrated playout solution by UMC, Libya as part of an end-to-end tapeless workflow.

Commenting on the deployment, Omar Abuhatwa of BYT said: ‘The nature of the channel meant that we needed a fast turnaround of content and a workflow capable of handling both SD and HD.

OAYS enabled us to manage graphics and overlay features as well as the ability to edit on the fly. The provision of a redundancy system added up to a complete, cost-effective solution.’

Mike Kenna, Sales Director, EMEA at OAYS, said: ‘We are delighted to increase our installed base in Libya and thus our footprint in the Middle East with the addition of Benghazi TV.’

The OAYS install was the first phase of the project; the second phase being the addition of additional infrastructure within the 500 sq m studio.

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**Dubai TV launches football reality show with Maradona**

DMI has announced the launch of the first football sports reality show in the Arab world titled The Victorious. The show, which will be aired on Dubai TV and Dubai Sports channels, will scout for local football talent under the supervision of football legend and Ambassador of Dubai Sports Council, Diego Maradona.

Commenting on the initiative, Ali Khalifa Al Rumaithi, Director of Dubai TV said: ‘this show offered a good opportunity for Arab talent to be known internationally.

The show will be filmed in Dubai Sports City as a first logistical production. Al Rumaithi added that the new programme will rank among the best shows in terms of the concept, preparation and production. The Victorious will also highlight the main sports features in the UAE through a series of activities and events about the participating training programmes.

Weekly episodes will also feature the daily activities and training undertaken by professional players under the supervision of experts in health, nutrition and fitness.

Each week, the show will also host an Arab or international football star, in addition to featuring a group of professional trainers and supervisors led by Diego Maradona.

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**MBC Hop Awards announced**

MBC Hope – MBC Group’s Corporate Social Responsibility arm hosted its ‘Do Good Awards’ recently to recognise the contribution of Arabs to various fields.

Five winners were picked through a careful selection by the jury comprising eminent figures in the Arab world.

Engineer Hosni Al Shafei from Egypt won in the category of “Energy & Environment”. Director Mohammed Abou Said from Morocco was awarded for her participation in a documentary called Pirates of Sella from Egypt, which was a joint project with British filmmaker Rosa Rogers. Mashal Al Nahari, from Saudi Arabia, won for his project “Saudi HR Solutions”, which was based on starting up a HR company to train young people in various skills. Dmaa Saama, from Egypt, won the award for her contribution to humanitarian causes and MBC Hope and were also promised access to MBC Group’s media platforms to highlight their projects as well as their progress and results.

Arab World’s Mohammad Assaf made a guest appearance at the awards ceremony to congratulate the winners.

Outstanding was awarded to Sara Shatila from AIESEC, Lebanon.

Each of the winners received USD 26,666 and were also promised access to MBC Group’s media platforms to highlight their projects as well as their progress and results.

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**GIC Pte in Time Warner Inc’s headquarters in New York City.**

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**The cameras have exceptional networking technology too – built-in live streaming engine, FTP and 3G/4G connectivity enables live HD transmission – while embedded Zixi network support ensures your story gets home, even under difficult network conditions.**

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RTS introduces its first generation of OMNEO-compatible matrix products, marking the first deployment of this breakthrough media networking architecture in the intercom industry.

TECHNOLOGY
RTS+OMNEO media networking is a major step forward in bringing AVB-compatible, low-latency, and IP-based media networking options to professional intercoms, providing unprecedented device interconnectivity, signal quality and common control for networks of 2 to 10,000 devices.

FLEXIBILITY
RTS ADAM professional intercom products can be deployed with a full IP infrastructure using currently available standard IP network hardware and to interconnect with a wide range of other RTS and third-party devices.

COMPATIBILITY
Only RTS+OMNEO media networking provides backward compatibility with RTS ADAM hardware, giving ADAM users the ability to grow into IP at their own pace. OMNEO will interoperate with AVB and Dante devices, providing access to a growing number of compatible products to integrate with RTS ADAM systems.

RTS+OMNEO = the ultimate IP solution for intercom...

Nile TV appoints new head
Egyptian broadcaster Nile TV International has appointed a new head after the satellite channel mistakenly televised a report on the achievements of former president Mohammed Morsi, who was ousted on July 3, 2013.

Moriz Moton has been replaced by Samir Rouaj, who now heads Nile TV as its General Manager.

Mohammed Morsi is presently on trial for inciting the murder of protesters, while the Muslim Brotherhood, the political party he led, was declared a “terrorist organisation” by the Egyptian authorities in December 2013.

Nile TV International, which launched in 1994, is broadcast as a terrestrial channel within Egypt, and via satellite across the Arab world, Europe, and the US.

DUBAI PRODUCER TAPS NANOTECH TO PREPARE AND DELIVER FILM IN 4K

Dubai-based content producer Global New Age Media (GNAM) has entered into an agreement with US-based NanoTech Entertainment’s 4K Studios to convert its sci-fi thriller Merveille (Man Transformable into Robotic Armour) to 4K Ultra HD.

The deal includes a global distribution agreement that will see NanoTech distribute the film through UltraFlux, NanoTech’s streaming 4K Ultra HD service.

UltraFlux will deliver the film at four times the resolution of full HD on a variety of devices including NanoTech’s Nuvola NP-1. 4K Ultra HD streaming media player.

Nuvola NP-1, which debuted at the International CES show last month, is powered by the NVIDIA Tegra 4 and can stream 4K UltraHD movies such as the film Merveille.

The NP-1 can also stream videos in HD, SD and 3D formats as well as 4K. With streaming capabilities, users don’t have to wait for downloads or use up the capacity of their drives to store large files.

First released in 2012, Merveille was filmed in Dubai, Moscow and Kuala Lumpur, giving it broad international appeal. The action-packed film combines CGI (computer-generated imagery) and live action to tell the story of a brave young man who saves Mavra from falling into the wrong hands.

“By working with 4K Studios to convert Merveille to 4K Ultra HD, we’re providing viewers with a new and more exciting entertainment experience,” Fayez Sabbagh, Chairman of GNAM said.

“Merveille combines CGI and live action; and when we saw a preview of the film that was converted to 4K, the results were amazing. There’s just no comparison between CGI HD and CGI Ultra HD.”

Speaking about why 4K Studio’s conversion process doesn’t just involve up-scaling, Alexander “LX” Rudis, Vice President of Development at NanoTech said: “Up-scaled content is muddy and full of artifacts. It’s just not acceptable for consumers who pay for and expect the true 4K resolution experience.”

Lebanese production house chooses Argosy for OB truck

UK-based infrastructure solutions provider, Argosy, recently supplied most of the cables, racks, patch panels and other infrastructure required to kit out the first High Definition (HD) Outside Broadcast (OB) truck in Lebanon. The NP-1 can also stream videos in HD, SD and 3D formats as well as 4K. With streaming capabilities, users don’t have to wait for downloads or use up the capacity of their drives to store large files.

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SYRIAN FILM HONOURED AT SANDANCE

The World Cinema Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2014 went to Syrian documentary Return to Homs. Directed by Talal Derki, the film chronicles the life of a national football team goalkeeper, who becomes a demonstration leader and singer, and then a fighter. Doctors, a 24-year-old reviewed citizen conservation, is critical, a poet, and ironic until he is detained by the regime.

Argosy engineers were able to provide expert advice on the optimal choices of matched cables and connectors, as well as delivering the location cable reels ready to go. All the material that was supplied by Argosy came direct from the company’s Middle East distribution centre in Dubai.

“Our customers look to us as a one-stop shop for projects like this”, said Mike Purnell, Director of Development at NanoTech. “We can work with the systems engineers to ensure that all the requirements are covered, with the right materials and the right quantities. This is a great new outside broadcast unit: we are proud to have played our part in it and we wish the team at Hedgehog great success.”
Heart of Gold.

With a lovingly hand crafted gold-sputtered capsule the sE X1 is designed to capture your creativity – beautifully.


A large number of the technological innovations being promoted in our industry today involve the elimination of jobs and are purposefully promoted that way. But, what’s wrong with creating professional jobs and sustaining a class of experienced and savvy broadcasting and production professionals?

Jeff Bonni, CEO of Amazon, has recently begun to promote the concept of using robotic drones to deliver packages to the doors of customers, thereby potentially eliminating FedEx, UPS or the postal system. Setting aside the futuristic wonder of such an approach, what does it say about the elimination of a paid workforce that can then afford to buy the products that Amazon is selling? So, I am taking the unpalatable, perhaps radical, position that we need to maintain employment to sustain society and in turn pay for the technology we want. While there are many benefits from doing things cheaper, where does real quality come in? My point is does anyone stop to consider the full impact of innovation?

The industry panicked in 2008 and the ensuing years cut itself to the bone, starting with a massive downsizing. One of the least attractive aspects of the worldwide recession was the veritable bloodletting in reducing the professional ranks it stimulated. But, unlike many previous recessions where a policy of ‘last in, first out’ was typical, this recession saw the largest cuts among middle to upper level managers. Why?

They made more money and accounted for use of greater benefits. So, as networks made hundreds, sometimes thousands of experienced workers redundant, they didn’t spare the managers. Cuts to news divisions were particularly severe. These cuts are still occurring, particularly in Europe. One really negative, and shortsighted result has been an extreme reduction in investigative journalism.

The careers of an entire generation of younger would be media professionals, often fresh from university, have been effectively put on hold. In fact, many young people have steered away from the very idea of a career in any form of journalism or media, except for blogging or virtual imaging, etc. Yes, some of these have been quite beneficial and I would agree that there is no going back. However, as we embrace more innovation, let’s consider their impact on jobs. Our industry not only rises and falls on efficiency but also on savvy management, good content and quality engineering. In that regard, trained and experienced workforce is essential to its growth.

Recent decades have seen the arrival of the last in, first out, even seemingly more efficient, or even seemingly more cheaply, or even seemingly more cheaply, merely whether something can be done more cheaply, or even seemingly more efficiently, but whether or not that is even desirable in the first place if it threatens jobs. My thesis is that profits should be balanced with the need for and the desire to maintain good people. People invented technology and offer paid internships. Generally, the industry should foster the employment of both younger and more mature and experienced professional men and women with the target of rebuilding capabilities by expanding employment.

The careers of an entire generation of younger would be media professionals, often fresh from university, have been effectively put on hold. In fact, many people have steered away from the very idea of a career in any form of journalism or media, except for blogging or virtual imaging, etc. Yes, some of these have been quite beneficial and I would agree that there is no going back. However, as we embrace more innovation, let’s consider their impact on jobs. Our industry not only rises and falls on efficiency but also on savvy management, good content and quality engineering. In that regard, trained and experienced workforce is essential to the future of our industry.

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Physique TV, which claims to be the MENA region’s first health and fitness channel, underwent a significant revamp in terms of both format and content under its new management team. Vibhuti Arora takes a tour of the channel’s new facility

The channel’s infrastructure is built around five pillars namely the Oasys Chameleon automated playout, a Phoenix7 Zeus channel management system, QNAP storage, Adobe editing systems and One Connxt’s content delivery system

Dubai-based health and fitness channel Physique TV was officially launched in December 2013, promising a host of healthy lifestyle programmes and fitness-oriented reality TV. In existence since 2009, the channel was overhauled last year with brand new kit and a newly appointed team to run it.

Starlight General Trading, a company dealing in health products and other commodities, is the main investor in the channel. It was a natural progression for the company to launch a health and fitness channel to further its growth in the region.

The Farsi-speaking audience was the prime market of interest for the channel when it was initially launched in 2009. In March 2013, however, the channel refocused its business to target the Middle East. It was also migrated from Hotbird, from where it was previously beamed, to Arabsat. Physique TV is now available on the My-HD platform as well as through Du (CH-412) and E-Life (CH-577) networks. The channel transmits HD 1080i with both English and Arabic sound tracks along with Arabic DVB subtitling.

Peter Einstein, General Manager of Physique TV, says that the launch of Physique TV shapes up!
Physique TV’s programming includes a variety of entertaining, inspiring, and informative shows and dramas, alongside instructional and informative shows that cater to such needs. Companies and products encourage health and fitness are our partners in launching shows and dramas, alongside instructional and informative shows that can accommodate any type of sponsorship opportunity. We provide advertisers with a diverse array of partnerships options, including product integration into the programmes that are produced in-house,” explains Einstein.

“The channel’s infrastructure is built around five pillars, namely the Oasys Chameleon automated playout, a Phoenix7 Zeus channel management system, QNAP storage, Adobe Adobe Premier CS6 editing suites and One Constant’s content delivery system. The content is delivered to the station on flash drives or via our FTP site,” explains Constant. At the heart of Physique TV’s transmission lies the Oasys Chameleon automated playout, which has been integrated with Zeus channel management system from Phoenix7, a UK-based company. Physique TV that encompasses one video channel, two audio channels, DVB subtitling, graphics and conversion to ASI. The ASI is sent over a fibre

Transmission and playout
Alan Constant, who led the technical upgrade at Physique TV, says the channel was revamped from SD to a state-of-the-art full HD facility with renewed programming.

“The channel’s infrastructure is built around five pillars, namely the Oasys Chameleon automated playout, a Phoenix7 Zeus channel management system, QNAP storage, Adobe Adobe Premier CS6 editing suites and One Constant’s content delivery system. The content is delivered to the station on flash drives or via our FTP site,” explains Constant. At the heart of Physique TV’s transmission lies the Oasys Chameleon automated playout, which has been integrated with Zeus channel management system from Phoenix7, a UK-based company. Physique TV that encompasses one video channel, two audio channels, DVB subtitling, graphics and conversion to ASI. The ASI is sent over a fibre
“Our mantra for the channel is ‘be your best’. In order to keep the viewers engaged, we offer a good balance in terms of content including entertainment shows and dramas alongside instructional programmes.”

Peter Einstein, General Manager, Physique TV

Peter Einstein, Partner and General Manager, Physique TV

Peter Einstein was the founding President and CEO of Showtime Arabia (now OSN), a direct-to-home, digital satellite pay-TV service for the Middle East/North Africa owned by Viacom, Inc and the Kuwait Investment Project Company. For 10 years, Einstein had overall responsibility for platform strategy, development and operations. He oversaw the successful growth of the company from start-up to profit with turnover of $250 million and over 600 employees serving 16 territories across the MENA region. Einstein is the Founder and Managing Partner of Eclipse Media Group, Inc. a firm specialising in advisory and operational expertise in the Technology, Media and Telecommunications (TMT) sector. He is also Chairman of the Board and non executive Director of GINX TV (www.ginx.tv) a TV channel/internet portal targeting the lucrative video gaming consumer and is distributed globally. He has worked in an advisory capacity for a number of Media/Technology companies across the MENA region including Rotana Media Group, Doha Film Institute (DFI) and The Lebanese Broadcast Corporation (LBC). He is also a sworn “Expert” to the civil court of Abu Dhabi, UAE providing mediation and conflict resolution services for Media and Technology litigation.

“Prior to the revamp, Physique TV used to be played out from Italy over Hotbird. The acquired content in the previous setup was in MPEG2 SD as very highly compressed files as opposed to the HD MPEG4 format it uses now.

Oasys Chameleon consolidates relevant software into a single optimal configuration for a variety of channel playout requirements. Using proprietary software, the Chameleon setup adapts to the broadcast workflow environment in which it is deployed to ensure that operating parameters for that specific environment are seamlessly configured.

“We chose the playout transmission equipment with most of the options including high-powered graphics and automatic twitter feeds among other features. It’s transmission in a box, an all-in-one unit. This enhanced the internal production and upgraded the backhbone from a semi-professional 1G to 10G broadcast solution,” adds Constant.

Chameleon, as one integrated playout solution, replaces the need to engage with multiple vendors. Oasys servers can be quickly reconfigured and Chameleon can be adapted to its broadcast workflows as they change and evolve.

“Presently, we don’t have a fibre link between our headquarters in Oud Metha, Dubai and the uplink site in Tas (near Sharjah, about 50km from Dubai). Owing to this, the workflow had to be changed to allow us to operate and manage the playout in Dubai before onward transmission to their new distribution channel link, and reconverted at the transmission facility for up-linking.

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Peter Einstein, General Manager, Physique TV
to make room for the altered workflow. When the parameters changed during the implementation period, the automated playout had to be adjusted to the configurations of the systems very quickly to meet the new requirements of the channel.

The workflow
All material is ingested into Chameleon, where it is converted to Physique TV’s in-house standard of MXFOP1a XDCAM. Once ingested, the Zeus system automatically detects that the material has been ingested and updates the media database.

“Zeus was deployed because of its ability to automatically update the media files and generate work lists. The work lists are used to prioritise the schedule of individual processes,” explains Constant.

As the dubbing and subtitling of the content is outsourced at the ingest stage, a low resolution version of the content file is created and sent to the audio dubbing and subtitling company. In the present setup, one cannot switch off the subtitling but once the fibre goes live, the channel will have that option as well.

When the subtitling PAC file arrives back, the media is married and readied for quality control (QC) for compliance. Zeus automatically detects that the file has been checked for compliance and again, updates the media library.

Post QC, the editing is done with Adobe editor. The three Adobe editing systems are connected to the QNAP storage and are used for promo production, which is undertaken on-site.

The final stage includes technical quality check. This is required to ensure that the English, Arabic sound tracks along with the PAC file are present.

Only programmes that do not have an Arabic sound track are subtitled.

At every stage, Zeus automatically detects that the process has been completed and updates the media library. It has been an industry-wide requirement that this was a manual process. It would have been easy for the system to have automatically loaded it, according to Constant.

“Once the fibre is in place, we will stop using One Connxt for our main broadcast path but will use it for our live content. The plan, next year, is to have live contributions from our studios as well as other gyms from around the UAE.”

Alan Constant, CTO, Constant Consulting

An industry veteran, Alan Constant has worked in the television industry for more than forty years. He is widely respected as an industry authority in most major broadcast, distribution and media production areas, and has worked in both managerial and technical design capacity on satellite, terrestrial and cable TV networks, combining a strategic insight with a practical understanding of the technologies involved. He has been a senior technical and commercial manager of a number of prominent broadcast organisations, including Sky, Skywave and AMC.

Recently, he was responsible for the project and product management, and much of the technical design of a major internet/satellite TV system, which incorporated VOD, NVOD, download and play, and hybrid technologies. Although broadly based, his particular interest has been in the assessment and implementation of CA systems from a wide variety of vendors, and is now actively applying this expertise to the growing problem of content security for OTT and IP networks.
Beyond distributing broadcast equipment, First Gulf Company is a major force in the broadcast systems sector in the region with the most significant achievements in HD TV Production and Post-Production facilities and studios.

FGC’s capabilities cover the design, implementation, integration and support of the most sophisticated systems. Additionally, FGC provides turnkey solutions in all systems including high-capacity Media Asset Management and Digital Archiving systems.
main broadcast path but will use it for live content. The plan, next year, is to have live contributions from our studios and other gyms from around the UAE,” adds Constant.

For live contributions, the channel will require an IP delivery system to get the signals back to the studio. This will be enabled with the portable One Connext system on location.

The in-house programmes are shot either at Physique TV’s purpose-built studio and gym located several miles from the transmission facility or at various locations in and around Dubai. The studios are equipped with flyaway kits, which are used for shooting at other locations as well. “Our location production uses up to three HD cameras. We record the output of each camera on to flash drives and edit them back in Physique TV’s facilities,” says Constant.

Physique TV is in the process of upgrading its key kit, which, at present, comprises five Sony HK-275 cameras and a good collection of lighting equipment. The systems and the facility are both scalable. There is a central storage system to handle files coming from post production, which can cater for multiple channels if required. To add more channels, Physique TV must add a new playout server for each channel, and backup can either be dedicated playout servers, or shared servers.

The channel is presently using some of the simplified graphics processes for branding, but will be expanding its use to include more complex features including now/next promotions, end credit squeeze backs, and other metadata-based graphics.

**The road ahead**

Since its official launch, the channel has been vying for advertising opportunities. For advertisements, the channel is available to any brand that would like to associate itself with healthy living and active lifestyle. Do and Blackberry have come on board as the first advertisers for the channel.

Einstein concludes by saying that even small steps can lead to a big change in terms of health which is what the channel aims to achieve.
OTT: The wild frontier

OTT offers innumerable opportunities that also come with a host of challenges. With more viewers taking to the second and third screens, broadcasters want to grab a share of the OTT pie while they still can but many of them don’t know how.

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Anyone who has owned a cat or studied cat behaviour has probably noticed how they like to sit on a newspaper you are reading, or on a book you have on your lap. When the cat hops up and sits there, it's because it wants to be right where your attention is strongest.

The cat is now where the OTT provider wants to be. Several recent surveys have declared that a large number of television viewers spend a lot of their viewing time with another device on their laps -- a tablet or a smartphone. Is this because the interaction with these devices is more involving than the essentially passive experience of television? Whatever the reason, broadcasters want to grab that focused attention and they do it with OTT services.

OTT is a wild frontier. Everyone wants to grab some of the territory while they still can, and nobody knows yet what is the best way to do it. Existing broadcasters may try to use OTT to reinforce their TV brand by offering live and on-demand access to their content, while non-broadcasting entrants (where the mobile device can be used to complement and extend the content being shown on TV) is another way that broadcast signals, and IT tools are only for analysing IP traffic, and when the two domains are combined in a hybrid for OTT, the traditional tools are inadequate.

If the OTT provider attempts to build a monitoring system made up of specialised broadcast and IT tools under the umbrella of a network management system, this creates inherent inefficiencies. With one set of tools for monitoring the RF signal from satellite, another set of tools for IP and yet another for OTT, technical staff will find it difficult to get a coherent picture of behaviour across the network as a whole. Faults that develop in one part of the network may have their root cause in another part, but if the monitoring tools cannot see the other part and collate data from it, this creates an obstacle when trying to trace and rectify the fault.

For most broadcasters, getting an OTT operation off the ground requires the recruitment of a new team of IT engineers, because very few technicians understand both broadcast and IP technologies.

Simen Frostad, Chairman, Bridge Technologies
With the right planning, an operator can create an integration of OTT into the other services it provides, and use monitoring and analysis systems designed specifically for the hybrid environment to achieve efficiencies throughout the business.

Siden Frostad, Chairman, Bridge Technologies
With the MENA region being the stronghold of FTA channels, pay-TV has not found much favour thus far. Cliff Nelson, CEO of MY-HD speaks about how affordable platforms can potentially change the dynamics of the pay-TV industry in the region.

What is unique about the MY-HD platform? MY-HD is the first ultra-low pay DTH platform in the Middle East. Through MY-HD, we aim to introduce HD TV to MENA households at a price anyone can afford. You buy an approved MY-HD receiver such as Humax, and you get to watch the channels for one year at no extra cost and then after one year, you pay the equivalent of USD 54 each year to renew your subscription.

Our model is similar to the HD Plus model in Germany. The consumer buys the HD set-top box and gets 15 HD channels with the box for a year, all of which are also available free-to-air (FTA) in SD. MY-HD is already offering more than 37 HD channels as well as several exclusive HD channels, the majority of which are not available FTA.

Our platform offers an extensive bouquet of encrypted satellite channels including nine MBC HD channels, two of which are exclusive to MY-HD; MBC3 HD with dual Arabic and English audio as well as the newly launched MBC Plus Variety HD, which offers western content with no commercial breaks. It is the first MBC channel not available on satellite in SD FTA.

What is the current reach of your subscriptions? We already have in excess of 100,000 DTH subscribers even though we are still in the soft launch phase. We believe that the premium pay-TV model is finite; premium pay-TV in the Middle East has a very niche audience. The existing premium platforms cater to less than 5% of the population, which hasn’t grown more and we don’t expect it to grow further. We are targeting the remaining 95% plus of the satellite households that have no pay-TV. These households can’t afford it or are not willing to pay for the premium-priced products available in the market and that’s where our product fills the gap.

When we launched our first ethnic package, MyGMA, in April 2011, our partnership with the GMA network gave us access to two-and-a-half million overseas Filipinos in the region. You have a special offering for the Filipino population residing in the region. Do you have plans to woo the Subcontinent population also? Our Filipino ethnic package comes with three premium channels, which were previously on OSN.

With regards to the business from the Subcontinent, frankly, given the massive pay-TV piracy penetration of Dish TV India in our region that has already been sold to up to a few million households here, it’s an extremely tough market for a legitimate Asian pay-TV platform in the Middle East to survive.

How does your platform work? Which smartcards are you deploying? We have two conditional access systems from Irdeto and Conax. Our conditional access systems are based in Dubai but we uplink with Arabsat in Jordan Media City, Sama Com in Dubai, Tas in Sharjah Etisalat and more recently from Spain.

We have licensed at least five manufacturers in the region to supply set-top boxes via their distribution network. Our newest addition is the hard drive PVR box, which has been received very well. We offer built-in internet connectivity in some of our new licensed set-top boxes.  

“…One of our key strategies is to never force the consumer to do something, instead let the market do the work; customers are smart and don’t like to be forced” Cliff Nelson, CEO, MY-HD
The future of the set-top box industry is the hybrid box or smart box. A hybrid box offers satellite-linear TV and is also IP-enabled with Wi-Fi, providing the consumer with the best of both worlds. Video via IP/OTT will enhance the viewer’s experience. People like to watch TV at their convenience, and we will adopt whatever technological tools are practical to meet the consumer’s objectives.

We don’t buy the boxes ourselves but let the existing manufacturers and their respective distribution networks do what they do best. We follow a retail model, where consumers decide what they want. It is no different than what the Microsofts of the world have done with enormous success. One of our key strategies is to never force the consumer to do something, instead let the market do the work; customers are smart and don’t like to be forced. If a company is unable to provide a product people want to purchase at the right price, cheap tricks will not keep them as customers in the long run.

Our boxes are not proprietary boxes; the end users are free to choose whatever channels they want to watch. Our boxes even work with the new beIN sports cards provided beIN sports allows it.

We are confident that we will be able to offer premium HD channels at a value never seen before in the MENA region. This will drive sales and renewals without adopting consumer-unfriendly policies.

What is unique about this region?

There are several, one of them being that the region has a high concentration of under-30 youth. The young generation, as we know it, is technologically adept and very well-informed and this changes the dynamics of the entertainment market to some extent.

Secondly, satellite TV has one of the highest penetration levels among TV households in the world. Many households in the Middle East have multiple screens with different members of the household watching different content. Kuwait, for instance, has an average of three TVs per household and possibly more than seven screens. Top networks, MBC, Rotana, Al Nahar and MTV Lebanon rank among the most watched channels in the region.

The content in this region caters to a very diverse audience; expats in the Middle East live in large communities and maintain their own culture, which, in turn, gives rise to the need to cater to these communities separately.

That said, we are lucky that the overwhelming dominance of one common language and similar religious beliefs across this vast and complex region simplifies our business a bit as compared to Europe’s vast diversity.

How is My-HD translating the unique factors of this market to its advantage?

Television is a hugely popular medium of entertainment in the region, not to mention in the world. Most MENA households have large families as the culture promotes multi-generational families, which means that there is a lot of demand for television in the house.

The demand is often for three different generations with different age-groups watching different content. Through our large selection of channels, we are trying to cater to that demand.

There are gaps in the market that need to be addressed. For instance, out of the approximately 40 million DTH households, only about 400,000 have an electronic

“...The existing premium platforms cater to less than 5% of the population. That hasn’t grown more and we don’t expect it to grow further”

Cliff Nelson, CEO, My-HD

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programming guide (EPG). How are the rest of them supposed to navigate through the thousands of channels or even 50? People watch TV in a relaxed mode and don’t want to be struggling without what to watch. Spending 15-30 minutes just to find something interesting to watch via surfing, is not natural. My-HD is readying an EPG, which will be available to our customers at no extra cost.

We often hear about the demise of satellite with IPTV taking over. Do you see that happening any time soon? Satellite will be around for a very long time. We are witnessing new developments where Arabsat will become the hotspot for IPTV in the region. Satellite is still the most effective way to deliver bandwidth hungry HD channels to the mass market and even in Europe and the U.S. where internet speeds are superb. Of course, IP OTT delivering video content will continue its aggressive growth path as well. In the present scenario, satellite is definitely more affordable and reliable than IP for HD delivery. HD content is big with six to 12 Mbps a sec. Per channel, it consumes a lot of bandwidth, and most of the countries in this region don’t offer that kind of bandwidth via IP.

I am not aware of any telco that wishes to clog its network with a lot of OTT video content and unnecessarily invest billions in expanding its infrastructure to cope with it. Hybrid boxes are just entering the arena. We will be introducing the easy-to-set-up hybrid boxes this year— ‘My-HD Smart Boxes’. With the increasing use of multiple screens, bandwidth issues are bound to arise. If I were a telco, I would be encouraging hybrid boxes to ease the pressure on the bandwidth of linear video services that consume my precious fibre capacity.

What is your view on 4K and higher resolution TV? At present, 4K is being driven by TV manufacturers. People were sceptical about HD when it was newly launched and asked if they really needed it. Today, however, it’s a different story. HD is almost everywhere now and most of us agree that even higher resolution TV is on the cards. Having said that, it’s still early days for 4K and I would give it at least five to 10 years before becoming a mass market proposition in the form of 4K channels. Eventually, 4K might just end up as a niche, catering to specific genres of broadcasting such as live sport. I wouldn’t be surprised to see a sports channel launch the first 4K feed in the MENA region within a year.

What’s new on the cards for My-HD? In addition to a seven-day full EPG as well as catch-up TV service for most of our channels, we are developing our revivified EPG service, powered by Shoutin. These services will come free with the hybrid boxes, ‘My-HD approved Smart boxes’. Although our core markets are the Gulf countries, we are also targeting Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and hope to be able to offer Egyptians our package as well. We will be launching three exclusive channels with Rotana soon. We are also in the process of signing exclusive deals for HD content with Al Nahar and MTV Lebanon.

All of our channels are on Arabsat with whom we have an excellent relationship. Arabsat recently concluded a strategic alliance with the Qatan Satellite operator Erthsat, which is co-located with Arabsat. It is in the process of launching all beIN Sports’ (formerly Al-Jazeera Sport) existing HD and new HD channels on that platform.

How do you see the road ahead for TV, especially pay-TV? Trade pundits had predicted the end of linear TV some time ago but that never happened. Linear TV is stronger today, with more channels being launched than ever before.

One can’t help but think that TV is almost like the walk paper now, viewers engage themselves with multiple screens while TV plays in the background.

“TV is almost like the wall paper now, viewers engage themselves with multiple screens while TV plays in the background”

Our CEO, CEO, My-HD

PROINTERVIEW
The OTT challenge

With an increasing consumer appetite for OTT services, broadcasters face numerous challenges to deliver uncompromised picture quality. Here’s a look at some of the challenges of OTT delivery and ways to overcome them.

By now, broadcasters and media enterprises everywhere are grappling with one of the hottest industry trends of the decade — delivery of high-quality HD content over IP networks to a wide range of user devices and platforms. This is the essence of over-the-top (OTT) video services, and it’s creating daunting challenges for broadcasters whose infrastructures are steeped in more traditional, linear content delivery.

Building a successful framework for delivering the OTT and multi-platform services of today and tomorrow boils down to bandwidth: how to conserve it and control network costs, but without compromising the consistently high HD picture quality that discerning viewers expect. With new formats such as ultra high-definition (UHD) on the horizon, operators will have to tackle the bandwidth question and readily embrace new compression codecs as they become available. One such standard is High Efficiency Video Coding (HEVC), the successor to today’s state-of-the-art H.264/MPEG-4 Advanced Video Coding (AVC). For the most part, HEVC-compatible products are still in development, but they offer strong potential for the next generation 4K distribution networks that will be required for UHD delivery. In fact, HEVC tests have already shown that the new codec can deliver a bit-rate reduction of up to 50% over H.264.

The market opportunity

It behooves the operators to develop an effective strategy for multi-screen delivery, and to do it quickly. Consumer demand will only grow stronger for content that can be accessed on a galaxy of user devices from gaming consoles to smartphones and tablets, PCs and smart TVs. For operators who can latch on to these new paradigms quickly and cost-effectively, the rewards will be great: access to lucrative new audiences such as younger viewers, reduced churn in pay-TV services, and increased revenue streams through more targeted advertising. However, OTT can only deliver on its promise if it can operate as an extension of conventional broadcast television. Operators must be able to provide the same quality levels and viewing experience that people are accustomed to on their home TVs, including HD resolutions, support for multiple languages and subtitles, and a consistent graphical user interface.
“Advanced encoding technologies will be a must for media enterprises as they begin to embrace HEVC for next generation OTT delivery. In order to help broadcasters realise the maximum potential of their OTT services, encoding/transcoding solutions should include several key attributes.”

Alain Pellen, Marketing Manager, IPTV & OTT Markets, Thomson Video Networks

OTT barriers
In order to reach the widest audience, OTT services must support every possible platform. This requires supporting the full range of adaptive bit rate (ABR) streaming technologies including HTTP Live Streaming (HLS) and smooth streaming for mobile phones and tablets as well as PC, Mac, and Linux browsers. At present, operators must reserve enough bandwidth to accommodate each ABR protocol variation. That will change, however, with the emergence of the Dynamic Adaptive Streaming over HTTP (DASH) standard. Also known as MPEG-DASH, this standard offers great potential for harmonising high-quality ABR content streaming while reducing network storage costs and bandwidth requirements. OTT delivery will be greatly simplified as more device manufacturers embrace MPEG-DASH.

Another barrier to OTT delivery is its unicast, point-to-point distribution mechanism, a stark contrast to traditional broadcasting that uses a multicast workflow to send a single stream to many viewers. Since every 1,000 viewers represents 1,000 streams, unicast delivery presents obvious bandwidth challenges as the number of users multiplies. Large-scale OTT providers that rely on content distribution networks (CDNs) to deliver their services over the open internet suffer the most from these inefficiencies, since most CDN providers base their fees on user volume. This especially affects non-subscription, pay-per-view OTT services: the more popular they become, the more expensive and less profitable they are to operate unless bandwidth usage is somehow reduced. The answer here is HEVC compression, since it will enable operators to send the same streams using half the bandwidth. OTT will not only become more profitable but the picture quality will be able to keep pace with consumers’ ever-evolving expectations.

Encoding for today and tomorrow
Advanced encoding technologies will be a must for media enterprises as they begin to embrace HEVC for next generation OTT delivery. In order to help broadcasters realise the maximum potential of their OTT services, encoding/transcoding solutions should include several key attributes. First and foremost, the encoding platform should support today’s H.264 delivery via all major ABR streaming formats, but also provide extensibility to accommodate HEVC, MPEG-DASH, and other emerging standards through software upgrades. In addition, the encoding solution should enable operators to approach bandwidth efficiency from two perspectives: maintaining current levels of video quality while using less bandwidth, or improving video resolution at the same bit rates. The best systems can encode live content as well as pre-recorded files for delayed streaming via services such as VOD and catch-up TV, and they provide content protection features with support for subtitles and multiple languages. Of course, the encoding solution should deliver pristine picture quality to satisfy the most discriminating viewers, and reliability is a critical factor since every second of downtime in an OTT operation represents a significant loss of revenue.

Glimpsing the UltraHD future
The OTT future looks bright for broadcasters and content providers, now that chip manufacturers are beginning to introduce 4K HEVC decoder chipsets. This is driving the emergence of encoding platforms with built-in HEVC functionality, offering multi-screen video encoding/transcoding system. Since HEVC will allow operators to send the same streams using half the bandwidth, OTT will not only become a more profitable venture but the picture quality will be able to keep pace with consumers’ ever-evolving expectations as UHD delivery appears on the horizon.

With such technology advances, widespread commercial adoption of HEVC and UHD delivery over 4K networks is on its way. Soon, we’ll see HD and UHD content delivery on any type of device and network – especially when HEVC is combined with exciting new technologies such as MPEG-DASH, SMIL, and LTE. In the near term, the bandwidth savings afforded by these technologies can reduce operating expenses, while smoothing video delivery in our increasingly multi-platform world.

Alain Pellen is Marketing Manager for IPTV & OTT Markets at Thomson Video Networks.

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Ismi – My Name is

Dubai-based filmmaker Wassim Beydoun made a documentary about thalassaemia using a Sony NEX-FS700. In an exclusive interview with Vibhuti Arora, the filmmaker talks about his experience of working on the medical documentary.

“Although things have drastically improved from what they were a decade ago, more awareness needs to be created to quell myths about the disorder” Wassim Beydoun, Filmmaker

In his film, Beydoun pays tribute to thalassaemia patients, who live happy, wholesome lives despite the challenges they face in everyday life owing to the blood disorder. It’s a positive film according to Beydoun, who wanted to show that patients suffering from the condition can lead a normal life.

“They look normal and have dreams and aspirations just like us. Most importantly, they have a passion to live life to the fullest, to make the most of what they have,” he says.

“The disorder has a taboo attached to it, which makes it worse for those suffering from it. Although things have drastically improved from what they were a decade ago, more awareness needs to be created to quell myths about the disorder, which is the reason I made this film,” he adds.

Beydoun began researching the subject to make a film at the behest of a friend. He had just completed a black-and-white medical documentary about breast cancer, and had expressed a desire to make more medical documentaries.

With no knowledge about the disorder, Beydoun started reading about it on the internet. To his dismay, while there was a lot of medical and scientific information about the disorder, it was hard to find what it meant to live with the disorder.

“There was expansive information in medical and scientific terms but for a lay person trying to learn about the condition, there was very little available on the internet. I struggled to find more,” he says.

That’s when Beydoun contacted his uncle, a pathologist in the U.S. He

Wassim Beydoun is a filmmaker and photographer who specialises in making medical documentaries.
helped him get a backgrounder on the disorder and gave him better insight into what the treatment entailed.

The former First lady of Lebanon, Mouna Haroui who happens to be a family friend of Beydoun advised him to contact the Ministry of Health in Dubai to tell his story. She guided Beydoun and put him in contact with the right people to approach for the film.

“I got a mixed feeling, the people that I approached for the film encouraged me but did not promise any support. That stemmed from the taboo attached to the disorder. It’s a common misconception that thalassaemia patients look sickly and weak. It was also politically difficult to approach government hospitals to have access to the patients,” he says.

After several months of trying, with no breakthrough in sight, Beydoun almost gave up the idea, when Haroui told him about the Shaikh Sultan Thalassaemia Awards.

“She even called them up on my behalf and fixed a meeting with HH Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan Humanitarian and Scientific Foundation. “I had a meeting with the Head of Public Relations, Saeed Al Awadhi. Our meeting lasted four hours, wherein I explained to him my vision for the film. Al Awadhi is a thalassaemia major himself and was very keen to help make the film.”

After the initial hiccups, the film received the necessary support it needed and the project finally took off. Beydoun was given an official letter saying that the film was made in cooperation with HH Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan Humanitarian and Scientific Foundation. This was the moment he had been waiting for. With the story board and script in place, Beydoun approached Dubai-based distributor of broadcast equipment, Advanced Media for the equipment. Sony NEX-FS700 was the main camera he wanted to use in the film for its proven ability to shoot in slow motion. He owns a Sony DG-900, and the complimentary lenses – Zeiss 24/70 and Zeiss 85mm, which he used to shoot Ismi.

“I have previously worked on ARRI, RED and FS700 and, of course, Sony DG-900 but I believe no other camera would have captured the essence of Ismi like the FS700,” he explains.

According to Beydoun, the FS700’s slow motion capture was the main reason for his choice. He calls it a simple-to-use, idiot-proof camera, which leaves little scope for error. The camera was deployed for both indoor and outdoor shooting without many additional lights.

“The film was to be shot around the lives of 10 Emirati thalassaemia patients who were receiving treatment in Thalassaemia Specialty Hospital in Fujairah. The film, however, did not focus on their suffering or what they had to go through at the hospital. Instead, it was about what these brave men, women and children did outside the hospital.”

Wassim Beydoun, Filmmaker
The compact R&S®AVHE100 is setting new standards for audio/video headends. It is based on professional IT hardware, and the entire range of functions has been implemented using an innovative software architecture. The integrated headend management system supports touchscreens for intuitive operation of the R&S®AVHE100. Special CrossFlowIP technology developed by Rohde & Schwarz maximizes range of functions and maximizes availability. The R&S®AVHE100 keeps you on air 24/7.

The filming had to be as non-intrusive as possible. It had to be a pleasant experience for those working in the film, says Beydoun. This was the reason why Beydoun shot the entire film alone.

With just one camera, Audioteknic micro, and a couple LED panels, Beydoun set out to shoot.

He used zoom recording, which was a good way to not let the subjects get distracted with the camera. The FS700 offered a lot of dynamic range and worked well in low-light besides being a super slow motion-camera.

Working with non-actors comes with its own set of challenges, says Beydoun, and it’s up to the filmmaker to make it work for the viewer.

“I made friends with them first to ensure that they had a certain level of comfort when they spoke to me. They were going to have a significant part of their lives that hadn’t been talked about earlier. I asked them what they liked doing in their free time and was quite amazed with the answers I heard.

“One of the patients I interviewed is an avid swimmer, another one is a runner. I weaved a story around them and captured their activities. It was a very enriching experience for me, a life altering one,” he comments.

The shoots were conducted around a football field, swimming pool and even inside a car.

“We also went to Latifa Hospital following a patient who needed a bone marrow transferation. I shot it in black-and-white with only the blood in red.”

The colour grading of the film was done using Da Vinci Resolve and the film was edited with Adobe Premier CC.

The introductory music piece was done by John Phillips at J6 Studios in Studio City. The studio belongs to Majid Hussain, who owns a recording studio and record label with Youseff Islam formally "Cat Stevens", Hussain’s father-in-law.

The film was exclusively premiered for His Highness HH Sheikh Sultan Bin Khalifa Al Nahyan in October last year and it is due to be released in May this year to mark the World Thalassaemia Day.

Beydoun filming at Latifa Hospital (l); a screenshot from her among one of the patients playing football on the field.

“...I want my film to reach out to as many viewers as possible,” he says.
As digitisation of television becomes more widespread, the focus is now shifting on achieving impeccable transmission. We look at some of the prerequisites for delivering quality and choice to the viewer in a cost-effective way.

It is common knowledge in the broadcast industry that all television transmission will eventually move from analogue to digital, and in many parts of the world this transition has already been completed. The technologies available to achieve this are maturing, so we should now be considering how we can deliver the best viewer experience in digital transmission.

We can define three fundamental requirements for any transmission system. The first and foremost requirement is quality. Audiences perceive digital transmission to be the route to consistently good images and audio. Wherever possible these should be available in high definition, accompanied by surround sound.

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“Terrestrial transmission is still hugely popular because it is relatively simple for consumers to receive through a rooftop aerial”

Helge Stephansen, Senior Solution Architect, Nevion

After 60 years of analogue television, audiences also expect digital to be seamless and flowing smoothly, not beset by freezes and judders.

The second requirement, which is often used as a justification for analogue switch-off, is increased choice. While maintaining our first goal of quality, we want to pack as many channels into the available bandwidth as we can.

The third most important requisite is that we should do both these things cost effectively. Budgets are not expanding, so we have to find ways of delivering choice and quality without increasing operational costs.

We should also remember that various delivery platforms are now in competition. Ease of use and added functionality like the ability to record on PVRs, extra data and “red button” services are also important. One critical element of usability is to include the full service information (SI) on all multiplexes. Known as cross-SI, this enables viewers to browse the electronic programme guides (EPG) on other multiplexes, while still watching their choice of programme, for example, in a picture-in-picture window.

What follows are some suggestions of how these requirements can be achieved by optimising the implementation of DVB-T2.

“Terrestrial transmission is still hugely popular because it is relatively simple for consumers to receive through a rooftop aerial. Apart from extreme topographical areas – deep narrow valleys, for instance – it is practical to reach close to 100% of the population. Extra television receivers in the home can be served with no additional equipment. Typical transmission networks will have distributed hardware. Individual channels will be delivered from broadcasters to a national headend. There may be regional headends to allow for the insertion of localised content. A regional headend may feed a group of transmitters, or it could be located at a single transmitter.

Delivering the best quality signal to the headend allows the processor to be more aggressive with the delivery compression without degrading the viewer experience. We recommend using JPEG2000 compression for the circuits from broadcaster to headend to get the best quality for the bitrate. It gives you the option to squeeze harder in the headend, and thereby push through more content.

Multiplex

At the headend, a number of channels are multiplexed together into a transport stream, along with other data, such as EPG information, for example. Critical to operational efficiency is to use as much of the capacity as possible, without any content packets being squeezed out.

The traditional technique was to allow a significant part of the stream for stuffing packets to ensure sufficient headroom whatever happened. The result was the transmission of a large number of null packets: packets containing no data. In some systems this could result in as much as 1 Mb/s of null packets, which in a transport stream of 40 Mb/s is a big loss in efficiency and waste of available resources.

We developed a technique, originally for broadcasters in the UK, which intelligently manages SI data in the form of SI packets in the headend. It interprets the data and calculates, according to defined rules, when it must be sent and how frequently it needs repeating. EPG information for the next 24 hours will be repeated more often than information for seven days ahead, for example.

An opportunistic data inserter then feeds SI information into the multiplex as soon as null packets appear. The result is a typical bitrate saving of 3 to 5% thanks to having virtually no null packets.

For the JPEG2000 signal from broadcaster to headend, and for the DVB-T2 stream from the headend to the transmitters, it is now standard practice to use IP networks. This is a significant operational cost saving over dedicated transmission of a large number of null packets: packets containing no data.

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To combine this with satellite distribution is clearly a poor use of bandwidth as the common services will need to be sent multiple times. A better option is to use a deterministic multiplexing solution which can allow local insertion.

Senior Solution Architect, Nevion.

“...”
CANON TO SHOWCASE EOS

AT CABSAT 2014, Canon Middle East will be directly targeting key vertical market players and engaging with them to yield future business and grow the pre-video business. Canon’s 10 m x 10 m stand will showcase an extensive range of professional video products, allowing visitors first-hand experience including Canon’s first 4K cinema camera. 4K cinema workshops and seminars will also be available at the Canon stand.

There will be a showcase of the full range of EOS C-series including C500, C300, C100. The key USPs for these models include low light ISO, full 4K workflow solution along with AJA/CODECS for recording and Blackmagic Design for post editing and colour correction.

The new range of ENG cameras including XA20/ XA25 and will also be showcased at the stand, which will clearly highlight EOS features in addition to displaying the comprehensive range of cine lenses.

Hendrik Verbrugghe, Marketing Director, Canon Middle East said: “CABSAT has cemented its position as the must-attend regional show within the industry. Our participation at this year’s show will showcase our strongest ever professional video line-up. The EOS C range has been developed with the needs of professionals in mind, empowering our customers to be more creative than ever before. This year, we will concentrate on educating visitors about our technology through dedicated seminars and also create awareness on the strength of Canon’s core technologies. Visitors to our stand will be able to sample the company’s strongest ever professional range, underpinned by its industry-renowned expertise in broadcast lens design.”

Recently, MBC ordered the flagship Canon EOS C500, EOS C100 and XF 305. This was also followed by a deal for 10 units of EOS C500 for a major production company in Kenya. We also signed a major deal with Qatar Broadcasting company for XA series - Canon’s ENG range of cameras.

Canon has already announced the availability of a new firmware update for EOS C100, EOS C300 and EOS1Ds users, which enables users to get more creative and provides them the flexibility and enhanced operability.

MORE STABILITY WITH FILMOTECHNIC

Filmotechnic LLC will display its latest range of broadcast products for the first time at CABSAT. The highlight of Filmotechnic’s stand will be engineered gyro-stabilised heads and mobile camera cranes.

Gyro-stabilised head series will feature Flight Head FH-5, FH-Compact 3 and FH-Compact 4, FH-Apex, FH-TV, FH-XL and FH-XXL, designed and developed for extensive use with cameras weighing between five and 30 kg as well as for 3D rigs.

Also on display will be the Flight Head Mini 1, Mini 2 and Mini 3, suitable for extensive use with cameras weighing between 3.5 and 10.5 kg, for use with lighter cameras between 0.5 and 15 kg.

ETL BUILDS THE MATRIX

ETL Systems, a manufacturer of RF equipment, will showcase the Vulcan Matrix, a part of the V-Series matrix range at CABSAT. The Vulcan routers’ architecture focuses on compactness (routing up to 128 inputs x 128 outputs in a single 14U chassis). Vulcan can also be used in conjunction with splitters and combiners to configure larger systems such as 128 x 256 in a 45U rack and 128 x 512 in two raxs. It is designed to offer an extremely compact form factor, and compliments the Enigma range of high resilience routers. The matrix offers redundancy of some critical components and hot-swap of active parts, providing a high-performance solution to frequent signal routing changes.

Along with this, ETL will be showcasing the new passive splitter/combiner component mounting system. This unit offers an easy-to-use, cost-effective, and compact mounting system for ETL’s Scorpion range of passive L-band splitter/combiner components in a 1U 19” chassis.

ETL’s RF solutions have been successfully implemented at a number of sites in the Middle East. The 4X4 X4 switch matrix/routers one of ETL’s newest additions to the V-series range, was installed to provide TV content for Al Jazeera children’s channel.
BLUEBELL OPTIMISES BROADCAST OFFERINGS

Bluebell Optics, a manufacturer and distributor of fibre optic transmission equipment for the broadcast, telecommunications and satellite industries, will introduce a new signal transport platform for OB and infrastructure applications at CABSAT with the drive to 4K and 3G systems the PW140 series from Bluebell offers a universal SDI signal transport over fibre in a compact 1RU frame. At the heart is a processor which provides simultaneous multiplexing and de-multiplexing of the signals presented to it from the input/output cards. The initial base configuration provides six x bidirectional HD-SDI signals over two fibres or 10G Ethernet. When used with CWDM optical multiplexing 96 x HD-SDI signals can be transported over a single fibre. Bluebell will display Net Caddie, a new compact camera interface which allows HD-SDI to be injected directly into a standard network environment, bringing IP to the camera.

The company will also launch an extensive range of stand-alone products, including the new BlueLite and Caddie-LB 3G, specifically designed for OB and deployable applications. Also on show will be the BC series, a complete suite of fibre optic interfaces, for all current and projected broadcast standards.

THE NET RACER CHARGES AHEAD

EReca, a producer of systems for signal transmission over optical fibre, will be present as part of the French pavilion at CABSAT. The company will introduce its latest NET RACER product line with remote or steady camera transmission and powered and multiplexed HD SDI bus or ring optical transmission, among other features. For compact or mobile applications, the NET RACER COMPACT standalone chassis holds up to two transmission boards. ERECA develops new field solutions for broadcast camera transmission over optical fibre with the STMA (Strong Racer) series, which offer the signal transmission in a ruggedised box, over hybrid cable or on optical cable, for HD, 3D and slow motion cameras.

FILECATALYST ACCELERATES

FileCatalyst will be showcasing its suite of accelerated and managed file transfer solutions. Founded in the year 2000, the company has more than 1,000 clients with a user base of more than a million, including organisations such as NBC Sports, Travel Channel, Al Jazeera, BBC, ZEE TV, Sony Pictures, and Dreamworks. The FileCatalyst platform provides many advantages to media and broadcasting organisations over traditional file transfer methods, including the fast, reliable, secure and efficient delivery of all large format media files. As file sizes of today’s digital content continue to grow, organisations can reduce the amount of time spent waiting for files to transfer, including file delivery across geographically dispersed locations. Other FileCatalyst features tailored to the media and entertainment industry include the ability to transfer growing files and multi-file transfers.

GAMMA ENGINEERING DEBUTS AT CABSAT

A new exhibit at CABSAT, Gamma Engineering will launch the Russian arm of its operations in the Middle East, at CABSAT will also be a good platform to find a distributor for Koto Bulbs, said a company spokesperson. The product showcase at Gamma Engineering’s 10m long stand will include Movie camera, helicopters and epic drones, among a range of new lenses. There will be a demonstration of the company’s complete solution for filming cars in motion, off-road or on road, high speed action, air suspension, intermodulation, and delivers stunning sound and dynamics with a cable-like purity.

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

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BAVARIAN PAVILION RETURNS TO CABSAT
Bavarian Pavilion will come to CABSAT for the 12th time this year with participation from 10 companies. For the first time, the companies will be exhibiting at two different locations.

- Teracue – a company offering consulting, engineering and training services for professional video, IP video and networking
- AIT – a manufacturer of audio codecs for H.264, JPEG and E (MADI) systems
- BERKB – a maker of power broad range of batteries, chargers, hot swap adaptors – Li-ion and Li-manganese
- Clacson – a satellite reception system for SAT-IF distribution
- KATHRIN-Webke AG – a developer of wide range of products for antenna systems, signal processing, distribution, and measurement
- Rosenberger OSI – a provider of fibre optic system solutions
- MAWRK Communications – a German codec manufacturer
- NE OPTICS – a producer of optics in the area of industry, medicine and cinema
- Band Pro Mesdch GmbH – a full service provider for audio, video and media technology
- WALSER GmbH & Co KG – an international brand product supplier for photography and video accessories for beginners and professionals

CUSTOM CONSOLES IMPROVE ERGONOMICS
Custom Consoles will launch its low-cost flat-pack technical furniture for the first time to the Middle East market at CABSAT. The EditOne desk incorporates three equipment pods with a collective nine units of rack space. These form the base of a monitor shelf with full cable management and optional power distribution. An auxiliary equipment pedestal with an additional nine units of rack space and an integral worktop is also being introduced. Front and rear corners at the desk and auxiliary pedestal are curved, eliminating any possibility of collision with sharp protrusions and contributing to the ultra-modern appearance. The workstation and monitor base also have hard-wearing and operator-friendly curved edges at front, sides and rear. Finish is in oak with contrasting black powder-coated MDF.

All furniture in the EditOne range can be shipped in compact flat-pack form for onsite assembly by customers or systems integrators, saving space, cost and delivery time.

TELESPAZIO COMES TO CABSAT
Telespazio, a satellite communications company, will showcase its solutions at CABSAT. The company manages one of the largest fleets, Italy’s Fucino E5 equipped with over 100 antennas and 83°E to 57°East visibility. Its teleport network extends to Lario and Scanzano in Italy, Romania for Eastern European coverage, Brazil and Argentina. Since 1980, Telespazio has supported the existing TV and radio broadcasting sector, providing tailor-made solutions on all major satellite orbital positions. Telespazio broadcasts TV channels over Europe, the MENA region, North and South America and Asia. It brings content via satellite through a secure international fibre network (with international points of presence all over the world), and playlist systems.

The company provides encoding for MPEG-2 or MPEG-4, provides services at 77° West. Fucino Space Centre.

The ENC-300 encoder series offers real-time HD/SD-HD/HD-SDI encoding for continuous 24/7 operation – due to its rock-solid layout without any moving parts. The units are designed, assembled and supported in Germany*. The ENC-300 encoder model is available with DVI/HDMI or HD-SDI/VGA analogue inputs, and can also support multiple RTSP output streams for delivering live video feeds at the same time to multiple receiving locations.

Telespazio’s main reference customers include: Al Jazeera Satellite Network, RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, Sky Italia, and Mediaset.
EMBRACING TOMORROW’S TECHNOLOGY

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- TV STUDIOS
- EDITING FACILITIES

NUGEN Audio launches Stereopack

NUGEN Audio, a creator of tools for audio professionals, has launched Stereopack, a complete toolkit for stereo image enhancement and manipulation including expansion, positioning, and low-frequency control. Stereopack is designed to offer maximum flexibility in a highly accessible and configurable combination of powerful tools.

With Stereopack, users can naturally widen or reduce the stereo image, focus and define low frequencies, and more specifically capture spectra within the stereo soundfield. Each Stereopack component integrates advanced audio analysis feedback directly onto the user interface, delivering intuitive control of all main parameters with clear and immediate dynamic feedback. All three plug-ins are highly compatible, using unique algorithms that maintain the original character of the source audio without introducing any strange phase, reverb, or delay-related artifacts. Each tool is compatible with 64-bit OSX, AAX (32- and 64-bit), and the latest VST3 standards.

Stereopack is a high-specification stereo image manipulation tool suitable for natural expansion, reduction, and introduction of stereo width at any stage of the audio production process. Another Stereopack tool is the MonoCutter plug-in, which enables users to align and balance low frequencies with minimum effort to create solid, natural-sounding bass. The third tool in the Stereopack bundle is Stereoplacer, an advanced fine-tune parametric balancing control tool that allows users to tune each band to specific frequencies and move the frequency content around in the stereo sound stage.

Wireless HD extension from Gefen

Gefen’s new wireless for HDMI 60 GHz is designed for any in-room transmission of 1080p full HD video up to 33 feet (10m). It delivers, SDTV is plug and play and supports all audio formats including the new lossless high bit rate (HBR) 7.1 channel Dolby TrueHD and DTS HD Master Audio. The ability to pass through uncompressed video, lossless audio and SDTV is ideal for cutting-edge, high-performance commercial or residential installations.

This extender uses the best technology currently available for an impeccable method of wireless extension that takes full advantage of the WirelessHD specification, which is based on the 60 GHz EIRF (extremely high frequency) radio band. This method of extension eliminates the need to run cables, making it a great solution for retail or any environment that wants to streamline cabling.

Due to the in-room transmission and use of the undisturbed 60 GHz frequency band, this extender can perform seamlessly alongside other wireless devices in adjacent rooms with zero interference. It is very easy to install, requiring a connection of the video source to the sender and of the display or projector to the receiver. Content is transported wirelessly at 4Gbps from source to display. This extender also features a small footprint and a compelling MSRP included is a 2-year warranty backed by Gefen’s reputation and well-regarded customer support team.

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Ideal Systems softens

Ideal Systems Group, an Asian broadcast systems integrator, has announced the launch of SoftCast Technologies, the world’s first suite of downloadable solutions for broadcast television operators.

The SoftCast range is a comprehensive suite of software products for operating and managing broadcast television channels.

In an industry first, Ideal Systems is making the new SoftCast range of products available for broadcasters to purchase and download online through its new online store, www.Ideal-Direct.com.

The new SoftCast range of products includes modules for channel-in-a-box, traditional automation, hybrid automation, content ingest, content playout in HD-SDI and IP, CG graphics, media asset management, newswroom computer systems, live feed edit and composition, broadcast schedule planning (traffic); and broadcast ad sales and contract management solutions.

The SoftCast modules can be used as standalone solutions or natively connected to provide a seamless end-to-end broadcast system. SoftCast solutions can be delivered internationally over the internet and are optimised to run on standard Dell computers that can be obtained locally in the user country. The ability to use standard equipment removes any difficult import regulations that many countries impose on broadcast equipment.

“This is the first time this type of product has been sold and delivered on the internet, and it’s very exciting that Ideal Systems is pioneering this new delivery method and customer engagement paradigm,” said Fintan Mc Kiernan, Ideal Systems’ Spokesman for SoftCast.

“This is also the first time that all of Ideal Systems Group offices will be supporting a common product set. At each of our offices, we will provide a high level of support with trained SoftCast engineers and production equipment for demonstrations, trials, and proof-of-concept work,” he added.
VidOvation expands fibre

VidOvation, a technology provider of video and data communication systems to the broadcast television, sports, corporate audio-visual, and government markets, will expand its VidOptic product line of fibre optic transport systems specifically designed for critical applications requiring high-quality video performance and reliability with price-performance leadership.

The new products include:

- USB-DH Computer Graphics Transport - The VidOptic PFC/VPR-2100A-D-0 USB DH is designed for optical KVM extension to transport computer graphics while extending computer control via USB and serial data transport. The system supports high-quality HDV formats from 480p up to and including 1080p with full clarity over one fiber and the transport of non-RGB video formats such as YUV/YCOC1 or YPbPr, RGB-MI, DH-1 and DH-2, through a DVI-D interface. This VidOptic transport is also designed to increase the transmission distance limitations of high resolution RGB, DVI video and computer graphics, and can support audio functionality as well as peripherals such as printers, scanners, and webcams.

- 4 Channel 3G/HDSDI Fibre Optic Transport Card for openGear – VidOptic PFC/VPR-5400-3G is a four channel 3G-HD-SDI fibre optic transport card with AU2 for openGear and is the most cost-effective way to transport HD signals while also providing the convenience of a built-in switcher, remote monitoring, and automatic fail-over protection.

These systems are capable of handling SD rates from 5 M/s/sec to 3 G/s/sec uncompressed with cards that automatically detect the incoming signal, and provide full control over re-clocking and routing. Fiber Optic CATV Cable TV RF Transmitter – VidOptic FCT-1200 utilises a high linearly 133/1333 MHz RF laser, RF power digital automatic process technique, along with RF pre-distortion circuit. The built-in microprocessor monitors the transmitter laser output power and temperature, automatically insuring optimal performance for TV video signal, digital TV signal, telephone voice signal, and data signal long-distance fibre transmission.

SilverBACK Camera-Back Fibre Optic Transceiver – the VidOptic SilverBACK II camera back supports bi-directional signals for DVI, Hitachi, Bellagio, Panasonic, and Sony cameras used in D-965, D-2120, HDV, SDI, and multi-camera production applications.

Facilis Technology launches TerraBlock 6.0

Facilis Technology has announced the availability of TerraBlock 6.0, the latest iteration of its shared storage solution. TerraBlock 6.0 features several improvements designed to augment usability, collaboration and performance – including Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP), Active Directory synchronization, volume size reduction as the fill, a sleek new customizable Graphical User Interface (GUI), support for Apple Aperture for video and more.

TerraBlock 6.0’s multi-platform, high-capacity shared storage solution delivers highly collaborative workflows in post production and content creation environments. The high-performance solution supports 8/16/32p Filer Channels and 1/10Gbps Ethernet through the Facilis Shared File System and is compatible with most of all industry-standard creative applications.

TerraBlock 2.0, a complementary archiving and backup solution to TerraBlock, is slated to be available in the coming months and will feature improved archive management, shared storage automation and support for LDAP.

Sony gets a voice

With compact professional camcorders more widely used for electronic newsgathering and field production applications, Sony’s new UWP-D wireless microphone series deliver the right combination of form and function for pro shooters.

“Production professionals are using handy type and palm-size camcorders more for mobile, ‘run and-gun’ applications, and the wireless microphones need to match and easily mount to the camera,” said Cristi Damian, VP Business Development at Advantech Wireless.

The new series can even fit interchangeable lens cameras to give shooters more options for capturing their content easily and in high quality.

The UWP-D series uses new hybrid digital processing technology to address high quality sound. This technology performs signal processing by digital companding, with transmission handled by conventional analogue FM modulation. This improves transient response performance between the transmitter and receiver, and can clearly reproduce quality sound.

The UWP-D components’ display is twice the size of previous UWP series, with a high brightness that makes information easier to see.

The new series employs wide frequency coverage, with a wide band of up to 72 MHz coverage available. As a result, users can select from a broader range of operating frequencies.

An Automatic Channel Setting mode lets users perform channel scan and channel setting functions easily. The Clear Channel Scan function detects unused channels, and IR Sync enables easy channel setting by sending information from the receiver to the transmitter by infrared communication.

The series’ receiver is equipped with an output level control, as even if camcorder or camera does not have input level control, users can easily adjust to optimise recording levels. The UWP-D transmitters and receivers are compatible with Sony’s HX-A100 series and UWP series.

Advantech Wireless releases new SapphireBlu

Advantech Wireless Inc., a privately-held Canadian corporate and manufacturer of satellite, RF equipment and microwave systems announced the release of the New SapphireBlu Series 6.6kW C-Band Rackmount UltraLinear GaN SSPA/BUC for ultra high power satellite transport uplinks.

The new SapphireBlu series of UltraLinear GaN technology based SSPAs and BUCs from Advantech Wireless are designed for multi-carrier operations. These new systems are designed in a compact indoor modular package with built-in redundancy for maximum link availability.

“Our new high power density, GaN based SSPA concept, offers the maximum power/bandwidth combination. We have already started shipping and completed initial orders,” stated Cristi Damian, VP Business Development at Advantech Wireless.

“We can now saturate all transponders of an entire satellite and obtain maximum bandwidth/power efficiency. Our customers realise great savings in energy cost, satellite bandwidth, CAPER and OPEX.”

The new SapphireBlu series of UltraLinear GaN technology based SSPAs and BUCs from Advantech Wireless, exceed all barriers between Hydrophones, TWPs and SSPAs, backed by over 25 years of outdoor SSPA design and manufacturing, combined with the traditional Advantech Wireless features.
Altona powers up
Altona, an Av distribution solutions provider, will be shipping its new AP-PS-PCC mid-span power supply. Designed to power PoCo-compatible HDBaseT transmitters and/or receivers without requiring the related Altona power source device, the AP-PS-PCC can send power to a compatible transmitter, receiver, or both using the same category cable as the HDBaseT signal.

The AP-PS-PCC is a 24V DC bi-directional power supply ideal for any AV environment in which neither the transmitters nor receivers can receive power from a powered transmitter or switch. The system is also useful in installations that would be unduly cluttered with additional power supply wiring. A switch allows the AP-PS-PCC to provide power between the transmitter and receiver, in either direction or both directions simultaneously, and a single power supply can power multiple AP-PS-PCC devices. The elegant solution can be used to enable and disable PoCo devices for easy power routing, and its captive screw design ensures a secure and reliable connection.

In a typical installation, the AP-PS-PCC could connect Altona’s AT-HDVS-TX-WP transmitters/switchers with RSNET, IR, and PRO3 receivers or HDBaseT displays (such as those from Epson or Panasonic). The power supply also supports RSNET, IR, and PRO3 PoCo receivers with PRO2 switches and RSNET, IR, and PRO3 PoCo receivers from HDBaseT ARs (such as Pioneer).

“With the past, integrators using both PoCo- and non-PoCo-compatible products in an installation would have to run power supplies to and from both the transmitter and receiver,” said Bill Schipper, Altona commercial product manager. “Altona’s AT-PS-PCC mid-span power supply eliminates that need and ensures that PoCo-compatible HDBaseT transmitters and/or receivers are compatible with a variety of devices that don’t provide PoCo power.”

Pro Control’s wireless offering
Pro Control, a division of Remote Technologies Incorporated (RTI), has announced that its new Pro.r remote wireless solution is now shipping. The device makes it simple and cost-effective to extend the ProLink.z processor’s 2.4-GHz ZigBee wireless network to additional areas of a home or commercial facility using existing users with powerful two-way control and feedback — including song metadata, volume levels, current temperature, and more — via the sleek Pro.r Li remote.

“For larger homes, sports bars, nightclubs, and offices, the Pro.r range extender dramatically lowers overall system costs,” said Mike Everett, General Manager at Pro Control.

“By extending the wireless range of the ProLink.z’s internal 2.4-GHz ZigBee antennas, the device allows installers to provide their customers with the convenience of two-way control and feedback over a greater area, without the expense of purchasing additional processors.”

Featuring a durable plastic enclosure, the Pro.r can be located up to 70 feet away from the ProLink.z processor. For increased reliability, multiple modules can be utilized within a single system to create a wireless 2.4-GHz ZigBee RF network, which instantly adapts to changes or problems within the communication path for greater accuracy. For installers, the range extender is easily configured via the Pro Control Studio software and a mini USB cable. Providing a clean and simple installation, the Pro.r features a detachable wall bracket and can be powered from any electrical outlet.
Mobile customers today are influenced by a “connected culture” and have a need to remain connected, informed and entertained continually through the use of digital mobile services.

Traditional mobile value added services (MVAS), which primarily comprised of messaging, ring-back tones, and occasional web sessions, has now passed its product maturity cycle, thus laying the foundation to what we call VAS 2.0 or digital mobile services, covering interactive applications and internet-enabled services.

Mobile customers today are influenced by a “connected culture” and have a need to remain connected, informed and entertained continually through the use of digital mobile services. A number of factors are contributing to the growth and uptake of these services; however, one of the biggest drivers is the changing devices landscape in the region. The Middle East region has been receiving a lot of attention from vendors who are working to “smart” up their entry-level devices and introduce feature-rich smartphones at affordable price points, what we call smart-feature phones. In seeking to maximise the VAS 2.0 opportunity, regional operators are luring smartphone owners to subscribe to various data-access packages. Besides, they are offering smartphones at subsidised rates when customers commit to a certain period. Regional telcos are also actively contributing to the digital content landscape through a number of initiatives such as the launch of operator-owned digital services, which aim to facilitate the consumption of traditional content through digitally-enabled and enhanced services. Furthermore, operators, and device and platform providers in the region are actively encouraging local application development through developer communities. Moreover, initiatives by Arab countries for the development of digital content will boost the adoption of localised Arabic digital content services. For example, in Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah Initiative for Arabic Content has more than 60 projects for developing digital content. Qatar established the Digital Content Incubation Centre to promote entrepreneurship related to the production of Arabic content and a Creative Commons affiliate to encourage and protect digital creativity. Similarly, ‘Badir’, a technology incubator programme launched by King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) in 2007 has been funding and supporting many start-up projects related to mobile apps development. These factors have led to a viable shift from traditional mobile value-added services to data-oriented services. However, there still exists a clear disconnect in the type of content and applications, which consumers use and demand, than what is being developed and supplied by aggregators and operators. As smartphone penetration rises, mobile tariffs rationalise and the availability of localised content increases, consumers will increasingly look for relevant localised content that provides them with a user-friendly and intuitive interface. Therefore, use of data analytics, on both content aggregators’ and operators’ part will play a major role in narrowing the supply and demand gap, enabling absolute visibility of both content consumption and data usage, as well as help differentiate and micro-segment products and services easily, thus addressing some key concerns in the digital content industry.

Going forward, the ability to understand the psychographic, geographic, and the demographics of consumers while also improving quality of service, increase customer satisfaction, and effectively communicating with customers anytime, anywhere will be key element to promoting the adoption of mobile content services over the next couple of years. Hence, operators will need to explore new customer engagement models, develop niche products for different customer segments, and understand how to leverage an ever increasing mass of customer data. They will also have to harness new market drivers such as social networking and mobile advertising, stretch their business models and facilitate the development of a self-sustaining digital content eco-system.
A STABILIZED GIMBAL BORN IN THE SKY REIMAGINED FOR THE GROUND.

Introducing a handheld 3-axis digital stabilized camera gimbal, so advanced, it redefines the possibilities for camera movement. The heart of the gimbal is Freefly’s proprietary high performance IMU and brushless direct drive system. Creating the gimbal from scratch allowed Freefly to precisely execute our vision for the next generation of stabilized camera gimbals. In creating this camera gimbal, FreeFly aims to empower a new era of stabilized cinematography. Freefly MōVI – “The New Moving Picture.”

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