

BROADCASTPRO

TECHNOLOGY INTELLIGENCE FOR TV, FILM & DIGITAL
MIDDLE EAST

CELEBRATING *Excellence*

Honouring the innovators and changemakers in MENA Media and Entertainment at the 2021 ASBU BroadcastPro Awards





HONOURING THE WINNERS OF 2021

The **ASBU BroadcastPro Awards 2021** edition in Dubai, hosted on November 16, honoured the champions whose passion, ability and tech know-how have taken the industry to an unheralded era of innovation

The 11th edition of the ASBU BroadcastPro Awards in Dubai once again proved a powerful barometer of the trends shaping regional broadcasting and streaming. The 'content is king' mantra has never felt truer than now, when content innovators are playing an increasingly important role in deciding where the smart money should be spent.

With the OTT revolution, new ways of delivering content are introducing a brand new set of dynamics – and on 16 November, the champions of these new working styles were honoured at a gala ceremony at the Westin Mina Seyahi, Dubai.

Earlier in the day, the ASBU BroadcastPro Summit focused on critical areas of content curation and delivery, while the content game-changers who excelled with their pioneering spirit were featured in the night's Awards line-up.

The ASBU BroadcastPro Awards do not aim to just acknowledge the big players whose budgets and global outreach lead the way. They also honour the smaller, outlier businesses whose breakthroughs are

paving the way for a new industry landscape.

The awards are well-known for their regional scope and each year, *BroadcastPro ME* tries to celebrate winners across different regional markets. This year saw some remarkable projects from the UAE, Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and North Africa that mirrored a number of key initiatives in these countries, with companies at the vanguard of industry ambitions and performance.

While two awards were reserved for the satellite segment, 18 awards were given away in the broadcast segment. A big thank you to our judges this year: Afzal Lakdawala, Head of Digital Transformation, ARM Holding; Badih Fattouh, CEO, Creative Venture; Hassan Chahine, founder & CEO, Media Digital Space; Heba Korayem, Content Market Consultant, H.consult; Mustafa Tell, GM of Broadcast Operations, ART, Jordan; Rochdi Noura, Head Engineer, Deputy Director, Technical Department, Tunisian Radio; Sanjay Raina, Media & Entertainment Consultant; and Vijaya Cherian, Editor, *BroadcastPro Middle East*.

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Broadcast Awards

BEST TV PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR

Qayd Majhoul – OSN

Qayd Majhoul, OSN's first Arabic original production, is a psycho-thriller drama series that entertains superbly while also highlighting mental illness – a topic that most producers tend to skirt around for want of knowing how to tackle it appropriately. This production saw renowned Arab celebrities take on intense roles and is testimony to how producers and broadcasters are willing to push the boundaries of storytelling in the MENA region. Besides the innovative storytelling, this one impressed for great direction and high production values. Pictured with the award is Rolla Karam, SVP Content Acquisition – Programming, OSN.



BEST OTT PRODUCTION OF THE YEAR

Nemra Etnein – Shahid

This series is an impressive combination of independent stories that bravely explore modern relationships in the Arab world. It received an almost unanimous vote of confidence from the judges over other competing entries for its compelling and bold storytelling, slick look and overall quality of production. Its take on relationships without making any judgements perhaps added to the appeal. The trailer screened at the awards gala was received with loud applause. Ali Ghamloush (I), Head of Originals – Shahid, received the award from Nitin Michael, co-founder of SynProNize.



Broadcast Awards

BEST CONTENT STRATEGY OF THE YEAR

NINETNINE

Ninetnine, a young content distribution company, has disrupted the way Arab broadcasters monetise their content overseas. Ninetnine took a data-analytics approach and helped create targeted TV bundles for the Arab and North African diaspora in Europe and the Americas, adapting them to different markets. Its content strategy helped reshape Arabic content consumption in Europe. More recently, Ninetnine became the exclusive distributor of MBC channels in Europe, with TV rights to its linear channels. For its game-changing approach to catering to the Arab diaspora while helping regional content owners monetise their assets, Ninetnine took home the award. Ninetnine co-founders Adel Hamla (I) and Samir Zehani with the award.



FILM INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR

Italia Film

This award was created to recognise a company that has helped to bring audiences back to the big screen through its regional initiatives. Italia Film was the first to get a distribution licence in Saudi Arabia when the country lifted its 35-year ban on cinema. It launched the first movie in Saudi theatres with *Black Panther*. It still tops the charts for the highest ever grossing movie in the region with *Aladdin*. Recently, it hit a milestone by being the first distribution company in 2021 to reach more than 2m admissions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after only nine months of film releases. John Chahine (I), GM, UAE & Gulf Lower region, Italia Film received the award from Hasnaa Descuns, co-founder of SynProNize.





Broadcast Awards

**BEST RADIO INITIATIVE
OF THE YEAR**

Ministry of Information Affairs – Radio Project, Kingdom of Bahrain

This project stood out for the \$6.5m makeover that the Kingdom of Bahrain's Ministry of Information Affairs (MIA) undertook in conjunction with systems integrator Glocom for Bahrain Radio during the pandemic, transitioning it from the legacy analogue facility that was built in the '80s to the state-of-the-art digital setup that is now on air. Eng Abdulla Ahmed Albalooshi (l), Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs at the MIA, received the award from Baher Al Zaher, Managing Director for RCS MENA.



**BROADCASTPRO ME INNOVATIVE
PROJECT OF THE YEAR**

Expo 2020 Dubai

Expo 2020 bagged this award for a MAM undertaking that helped facilitate the distribution and access of high-resolution videos, audio and stills on a global scale to all media. The project minimised on-premise deployment by using cloud-based services and leveraged AI technologies to optimise content indexing and cataloguing. The system could cater to 250 users at any given time, allowing them to download high-res content at the same time. Mandy Keegan (l), Vice President, Expo 2020 Dubai, and Pedro Freitas (r), Senior Manager Media Asset Management, Expo 2020, received the award from Razik Zaghloul (c), Regional Director MENA, ATEME.



Broadcast Awards

**BEST 2021 TECH
IMPLEMENTATION IN OTT**

Home Plus Network (H+)

When Hares Consultancy conducted a study into streaming services, it discovered that an OTT app's success depends almost entirely on the ease of content discovery. The research also showed that customers preferred a single provider to make available all the TV services they want to watch on one platform. This led Hares Consultancy to create the region's first OTT aggregation platform – no small feat – where consumers can search and stream content and manage multiple subscriptions. Frederic Petitpont (r), co-founder and CTO of Newsbridge, presented the award to Ammar Hares, CEO and co-founder of Lovetodotmedia and the company behind H+.



**OUTSTANDING SPORTS
INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR**

IP Studios

When IP Studios was entrusted with the opportunity to bring two combat sports to the UAE across multiple platforms, the Abu Dhabi entity went all out. It collaborated with international partners to bring the sport to the region, and built a whole production ecosystem and a calendar of TV events around it. It also built an app to feature live games, VOD content and training programmes for subscribers. Essentially, it helped ignite the dreams of martial arts athletes and unleashed real-life superheroes, offering them a stage to shine. For these initiatives, IP Studios stood head and shoulders above other entries. Mohamad Yehya (l), Founding Director of IP Studios, received the award from Klaus-Joerg Jasper, Senior Sales Director Middle East and CIS, Lawo.





Broadcast Awards

STREAMING SERVICE OF THE YEAR

Shahid

Shahid is a shining example of a product that MBC has nurtured with investment and talent, and the team has delivered a successful streaming service, with high-quality content, a great user interface and a fantastic viewer experience. It produced 25 originals in 2021, versus 12 in 2020. It had 2m subscribers by the end of Ramadan 2021, versus 1.4m subscribers by Ramadan 2020. It is the first Arabic platform to bring pre-theatrical films to a streaming platform. It now has a user interface in Arabic, English and French. For the first time, over 40 new Arabic titles were shown on a single platform during Ramadan. Guy Spivack (r), Regional Commercial Director MENA of Comcast Technology Solutions, presented the award to Natasha Matos-Hemingway, Group Chief Commercial Officer (VOD), MBC Group.



MENA TRENDSETTER OF THE YEAR

Cedars Art Production

For the first time, this award went to a production house and is testimony to the rising significance of Arabic content and formats that are now travelling to international shores. While Turkish drama series are popular in the Arab world, for the first time an Arabic format – *Al Hayba* (a Cedars Art Production series), one of the region's most successful five-season drama series – was sold to a leading production house in Turkey. The production house was also the first to distribute Arabic content on a wide scale internationally. Pictured here with the award is Sadek Sabbah, CEO of Cedars Art Production (Sabbah Brothers).



Broadcast Awards

SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR OF THE YEAR

Wave Media Solutions

We had some heavyweights contending for this category, but Wave Media Solutions was chosen for bringing its systems integration expertise to Iraq. In the last 12 months, this systems integrator has completed six projects in Iraq. It integrated Iraq's largest studio for Al Sharqiya TV in Kurdistan. From studio robotics and full studio automation to advanced VR and AR graphics to large videowalls with advanced videowall graphics, it has been responsible for some robust installations in the country. Zaid Wattar, Managing Director of Wave Media Solutions, is featured here with the award.



OUTSTANDING KIDS' CONTENT INITIATIVE

Spacetoon

Spacetoon has been involved in some remarkable work with kids. It released 30 new titles, 20 TV events and five movies targeting 6-18-year-olds in 2021. A new customised TV block targeting Arab mothers and preschoolers led to 60m views in March 2021 when it was launched. Since January 2021, subscriptions on its YouTube channel have hit 6.6m, a 2.2m increase since December 2020. The launch of *The Moshaya Family Animation* saw a further increase of 100K subscribers on its YouTube channel. All this led to higher acquisition and viewership in 2021. Media & Entertainment consultant Sanjay Raina (l) presented the award to Edy Saaiby, Head Of Sales – Digital & TV at SpaceToon Kids TV.





Broadcast Awards

OUTSTANDING OB PROJECT OF THE YEAR

INC System Integrations DMCC – 4K IP OB van for Sharjah Broadcasting Authority

This award recognised INC for successfully integrating one of the region's first IP UHD ST-2110 OB vans for Sharjah Broadcasting Authority (SBA). Equipped with eight LDX-86 4K native cameras (but wired for 12), this expandable trailer supports the production of content in 4K/UHD HDR format, as well as HD. The vehicle has since been used to cover two live events successfully. INC founder and chairman Mohammed Zaim (l) received the award from Adil Memon, VP – Content and Marketing Head at Zee Entertainment.



ENTERTAINMENT APP OF THE YEAR

Fannbox App

Who wouldn't like a celebrity to sing at their wedding or at their children's party? The Fannbox app from Rotana Audio Visual offers users the ability to book their favourite Arabic singer or celebrity and have them perform virtually in their private events or special occasions such as weddings, engagements, graduation parties, even corporate events, while offering an engaging experience to all attendees. The app caters to the music and entertainment needs of Arab fans all over the world but is targeted primarily at users in the GCC, North Africa and the Levant region. Nesreen Hamdan Hasayen (r), Fannbox Director, received the award from Hasan Sayed Hasan, Managing Director of Master Media.



Broadcast Awards

BROADCAST EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

Manoj A Mathew, Exec. VP & Territory Head (MENAPT), Zee Network

Manoj Mathew has taken Zee to new heights since he took charge of the revenue and the creative side of the company's business in MENA. As passionate about technology as he is about content, he boldly launched new products in the market. He was part of the launch team for Zee's Arabic channels and led the network's foray into original content production and Arabic remakes as well as co-productions of all foreign language content. Manoj (l) received the award from John Illingworth, Sales Director at Bitmovin.



CTO OF THE YEAR

Peter Riz, CTO, OSN

Peter Riz made headlines when he completely reshaped OSN's streaming app, transitioning it in record time from the old app burdened by legacy coding to a brand-new platform that uses new technology to drive agility and ensure adaptability. He helped architect the new app that is designed with machine-learning capabilities to help make sharper predictions and recommendations based on customers' preferences and viewing habits. He also placed emphasis on the app's intuitive user interface being tailored with cutting-edge solutions through a strategic partnership with software partners. Pictured here with the award is Peter Riz.





Broadcast Awards

SPECIAL RECOGNITION – UAE PRODUCTION

Al Sununu, Vioneers Holding

We have seen an exceptional drama series emerge from Vioneers Holding, an Emirati-led production team in the UAE. *Al Sununu* was developed, produced and shot in Dubai from inception to release. The storyline is a reflection of life in Dubai, which brings together people from different cultures; it showcases the beauty of its diversity despite cultural and social differences through a compelling plot. With some big names, a slick production and an outstanding story line, *Al Sununu* won our hearts. Younis Alkanzy (l), Head of Production, Vioneers, received the award from Paul Wallis, Chief of Revenue B2B, The Entertainer.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION – KSA PROJECT

VITEC

When the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia was looking to bring some of its weekly horseracing coverage to an international audience via internet streaming channels, they deployed an encoder from Vitec to achieve this. This solution eliminates the need for a satellite truck, saving considerable cost. The broadcast workflow only uses the public internet and is able to power multiple streams and provide remote monitoring from anywhere in the world. The current setup can provide 4K resolution, should it be desired. Pictured with the award is Aurélie Albert (l), Marketing and Communication Manager, and Nicolas Pons, VP – Business Development, Middle East, VITEC.



Satellite Awards

SATELLITE OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

YAHSAT

Yahsat hit major milestones on multiple fronts this year. In February 2021, it collaborated with a local entity to develop technologies and produce satcom products. In July, it created history by becoming the first UAE-based space entity to go public. Its mobility business secured distribution contracts worth AED 316m this year and reported a net profit of AED 159m for the first nine months of 2021. The top line brought in revenue of AED 1bn, demonstrating a strong performance since Q1 2021. It also serves as an incubator of homegrown engineering talent through its Space Programme. Yahsat CTO Adnan Al Muhairi (l) received the award from Amanda Turnbull.



SATELLITE SOLUTIONS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR

ST Engineering iDirect

ST Engineering iDirect teamed up with Broadpeak, EasyBroadcast and EKT to demonstrate the first end-to-end B2C use case of native IP, showcasing origination, transport, reception and consumption of live OTT video over satellite. Broadpeak's solutions packaged the transcoded streams into OTT formats, ST Engineering iDirect integrated its SCPC or VSAT solution for the modulation and multicast transmission of the content over satellite, EKT's STB partner delivered the content to TV or mobile, and EasyBroadcast showed its 'edge' solution. Heba Korayem (r) of H.Consult presented the award to Tajani Bouqentar, GM MEA, ST Engineering iDirect. PRO

