



Al Araby partners with Telestream for HQ relocation



When Al Araby decided to relocate from its London HQ to Qatari home ground, the plan to partner with Telestream on the tech infrastructure was a big part of that decision. Ali Hussein, Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services at Fadaat Media, Al Araby, explains why.



Launched in January 2015 in London, Al Araby is a general public television network broadcasting a variety of programmes and news shows in Arabic, covering society, politics and culture for the MENA region. Owned by Arab media investment company Fadaat Media, it aspires to play a leading role in media production, new media and social media services. Fadaat Media itself is a Qatari company that also owns the pan-Arab daily Al Araby alJadeed (“The New Arab”) and its online editions.

In 2021, the Al Araby shareholders committee, in consultation with its board of directors and executive management, decided to move the broadcaster’s headquarters from London to Lusail City in Qatar, to better serve its Arabic-speaking audience. In January 2022, the broadcaster launched a second channel, Al Araby 2, with the existing Al Araby TV channel becoming Al Araby: News. Now, with more than 400 staff, Al Araby is one of the largest TV networks in the MENA region.



Lusail is a planned city on the coast just north of the capital Doha. Lusail Stadium is the largest arena for the 2022 World Cup, with a capacity of 80,000, and will host ten matches including the final. It is also the site of the F1 racetrack, and the first Doha Grand Prix was held there in 2021.

Pictured: Ali Husseini, Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services at Fadaat Media, Al Araby

The solution

The new broadcast centre in Lusail City is based on an IP infrastructure where possible, predominantly 25Gb with some 40Gb used in high-volume areas. Around 10% of the system still relies on SDI routing. For example, feeds from several of the 35 cities Al Araby: News reports from arrive via satellite – though a planned second phase of the relocation project is set to convert these feeds to IP as well. With this move and migration of capabilities, the Al Araby team knew a hybrid workflow supporting both IP and SDI infrastructure would be required.



When the network started planning the technical design and fit-out, Telestream products became a core part of the discussion, says Ali Husseini, Director of Broadcast Operations & Creative Services at Fadaat Media, Al Araby.

“It was a no-brainer to partner with Telestream. We are building one of the largest-scale IP installations in the Middle East,” he elaborates. “Perhaps in Europe and the United States this type of installation is more commonly implemented, but in the Middle East it is still limited. So, it really gave us confidence to have a partner like Telestream in our infrastructure, and we’ve expanded the use of their solutions to timing, monitoring, video file handling, video archive and content management.”

Al Araby needed highly reliable PTP timing, so it ordered a system consisting of Telestream SPG8000 sync pulse generators and ECO8000 automatic changeover devices to serve as the Grandmaster and follower timing generators in both studio and SDI areas. Telestream sync pulse generators reportedly provide highly accurate, stable and reliable timing in both SDI and IP broadcast facilities. The family of SPG and ECO products offer a sync solution for broadcasting and production environments around the globe.

One of the reasons for choosing Telestream was the confidence Al Araby had that the solutions provider would “take the time to find and develop a solution”, should challenges arise. “We ordered the SPG system early, as it is at the core of the infrastructure,” notes Husseini. “Global supply chain issues caused delays in the supply of these critical system elements, but Telestream helped expedite delivery and keep our project on schedule.”

Telestream PRISM waveform monitors are used in all Al Araby’s technical areas, including the edit suite, Master Control Room (MCR) and transmission area. “IP is still new, and it can be complicated. We needed waveform monitors that support both IP and SDI, and that are flexible enough to be used in different locations. PRISM was 100% compliant with our requirements for operational and technical areas: accuracy, reported data and the flexibility of the profiles.”

Content management is a core aspect of the Al Araby system. The content archive in London, for instance, is scheduled to be migrated to a new on-premise storage system in



Doha. A critical part of this system is the Telestream DIVA, which will enable the migration of the existing content while maintaining continuing operations between the two cities. Operations between the two cities.

“We are already well-established with our own archive and our own DIVAs in London,” says Hussein. “At some point, we will need to migrate our content to the new products. This is something we’re looking forward to working on with Telestream, on how we’re going to migrate this data and how to create automated workflows to extract the right metadata for easier searching.”

In the second phase of the relocation project, Hussein and his team intend to tackle the integration of cloud-based services with their existing workflows. “We will look at DIVA to migrate existing archives to cloud storage: both the new local on-premise archive in Doha, which will be migrated from London to Doha, and then also from Doha as a secondary copy for long-term preservation into the cloud.”

Al Araby has deployed a centralised Telestream Vantage media processing platform – three nodes running on Telestream Lightspeed G8 servers – for all aspects of its file-based media workflows, from content ingest to Avid news systems, encoding of finished content for broadcast, online and OTT delivery, and preparation of archive content.

Vantage services provide media capture, transcoding, media metadata processing, media analysis and content assembly, with Vantage connectors enabling seamless, API-level integration with third-party systems. Lightspeed Live Capture allows users to check captured assets (even if they’re still capturing) directly into Avid or Adobe-based NLE systems. Whether editors are using Interplay, Media Composer or Adobe CS, they can grab growing files captured by Lightspeed Live Capture and begin editing right away.

“I’ve been using Vantage since 2010. At that time, this layer of workflow orchestration, transcoding and end-to-end media handling was something we could only dream about,” says Hussein. “For anyone who wants to build a robust workflow for video handling and transcoding, especially in multiple formats, Vantage works. It adds value to fast-paced environments like news and sports, allowing us to produce multiple formats quickly and



easily. And when we need to make changes, we just draw a new workflow on the Vantage workflow designer,” he adds.

Results

“On a personal level, I have been a heavy user of Telestream for the last 15 years, and in my opinion, if you want to build a sustainable, rock-solid news channel, you have to consider a wide array of Telestream products as an essential part of your infrastructure – especially since the acquisition of DIVA and Tek Video into the company. We have confidence that a big part of our infrastructure will be dealt with professionally and with excellent support, as Telestream understands exactly the type of demanding workflows that are involved in a news environment. Telestream were not just equipment suppliers, but true partners on this project,” he concludes.