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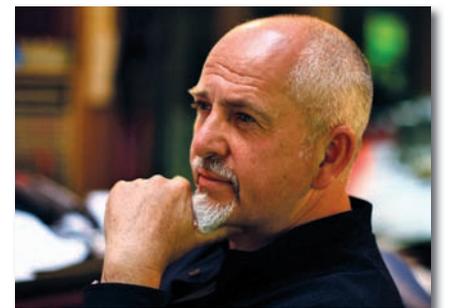
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The Convergence of AV and IT

AV and ICT systems live side-by-side in the Mississauga Council Chambers.

by Christian Bechard

The past decade has seen a continued convergence of audio-visual with information and communications technologies, first in fixed installations and now increasingly in mobile and touring systems.

In less than 10 years, the novelty of designing hybrid analog and digital systems has given way to the mundane reality of integrating complete IT-based solutions. Five years ago, for example, the accepted design for a major new building at a Canadian university included video-over-CAT5 cable, alongside what were then state-of-the-art analog systems. However, now that the building is nearing completion, those systems are completely digital, with an 8 MB video bandwidth. The AV control processors look like purpose-specific computers, and the control system itself resembles an IT network.

The greatest advantages of a network are the increased connectivity and capacity. It is very easy to route hundreds of inputs to hundreds of outputs without concern for traditional limitations such as impedance and termination, and over very long distances — up to 68 miles in the case of single-mode fibre optic cable. One fibre optic cable can carry a great deal of audio, video and other data that in the past would have required the installation of an enormous — and very expensive — amount of copper. An added advantage of fibre is that ground loops are all but a distant memory.

These increases in flexibility and signal quality have been accompanied by a dramatic decrease in the cost of installation, while system operation has been simplified through ordinary IT practices, such as the use of macros, through which complex routines can be executed via single key-

strokes. In addition, the operational status of most equipment on a network can now be monitored remotely in real time, leading to savings in down time and maintenance costs.

While the technologies have been integrating well, the same isn't always true for the professionals responsible for them. It's helpful for AV and Broadcast designers and technicians to understand the IT point of view, learn what their needs are, and how to communicate with them.

IT professionals tend to feel ownership over their network. IT departments are usually in charge of all technology, and they are ultimately responsible if anything goes wrong. It is in their interest to know every element and ensure it all works together. AV/Broadcast is only one part of a larger whole. If you can communicate the how and why of your systems, they'll be able to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Security is a big concern. Questions they may ask include: Does this need a firewall? Does it require outside access? A virtual network? Issues specific to a given organization may arise depending on the sensitivity of other information on the network. For example, we recently designed systems for a municipal arts, theatre, and library complex. The IT network for this building is shared with the municipality, which raised security concerns because AV equipment is on the same network as records of residents' tax bills. Ideally, there wouldn't be anything else on a network purpose-designed for AV, but this is often seen as impractical, or considered an unnecessary duplication of equipment and expense.

The IT department may be unfamiliar with AV requirements, particularly in the realm of bandwidth (the fundamental requirement that

there be enough space in a network path for all of your packets to get through unimpeded). Requirements can vary widely. For example, a low bandwidth (450Kbps) 20-minute videoconference call would require 54 megabytes of data, or 162Mb/hour; the same call at high bandwidth (3Mbps) would require 3.6 Gigabytes of data or 10.8Gb/hour.

Another thing that IT needs to understand is that ideally, an AV network should not exhibit any latency, particularly in monitoring live situations. It is very distracting — imagine a speaker addressing a large room, his image projected on screens overhead. If there is latency in the system, the sound of his voice will not match the

movement of his lips. It is like watching an old, out of sync movie.

To increase communication and understanding, AV and Broadcast professionals should educate themselves in the area of IT, perhaps even to the point of upgrading their credentials in the field. At the very least, they should learn about Ethernet and IP addresses, and how to configure IP settings on their own computers. They should understand the difference between a hub and a router, the cable length limitations for wired Ethernet, and the surprisingly restrictive rules for hooking up cascading hubs — perhaps even learn how to fix RJ-45 connectors. (Put a little RJ-45 cable crimper in your toolkit. Get the ratcheting kind and learn how to use it — a good one costs only about \$100. And while you're at it, buy a computer cable tester.)

As a worthwhile career investment, buy and read one or more of the many good introductory books on the subject of AV networks; for example, *Video Systems in an IT Environment*, 2nd edition; *Audio Over IP*; and *Mobile Broadcasting With WiMAX*, all available from Focal Press (<http://www.focalpress.com>).

When all is said and done, it's much more enjoyable going to work when you can share the concerns of your fellow workers in ancillary fields, and can communicate your own interests in language they understand. **B**



Contributor Christian Bechard draws on over 30 years' experience in the AV and entertainment industries.

Christian Bechard, CTS-D, is a partner of Novita Techno Ltd. in Toronto, and designs AV systems and infrastructure for diverse facilities, such as universities, corporate offices, and performing arts centres.

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Toronto's Spatial View are partners on a 3D concert film that can be watched on glasses-free mobile media devices.

New Blood Adds to 3D Content Offerings

Photo credit York Tillyer

Among the hurdles faces by the 3D industry, a shortage of content that truly shows off the creative capacity for audience engagement. Sci-Fi and kid's animation can work well; some documentarians are producing great 3D content, and particularly live music performances are a terrific multi-dimensional calling card.

So Spatial View, the Toronto-based 3D

content distributor and auto-stereoscopic display developer, is presenting and distributing Peter Gabriel's *New Blood Live in London In 3Dimensions* concert, in partnership with Eagle Rock Entertainment, the independent music program production company.

The concert can be watched in 3D, without glasses, using one of Spatial View's plastic



Photo credit York Tillyer

Musician Peter Gabriel becomes stereographer Gabriel, as seen in outtakes from his new 3D concert film, *New Blood Live in London*.

overlay screens on a compatible mobile device. The 3DeeSlide accessory is not surprisingly now available as a limited edition *New Blood Live in London* branded version.

The multi-media concert was staged at London's Hammersmith Apollo last March, as Rock and Roll Hall of Fame artist Peter Gabriel performed a collection of orchestral reinterpretations of his songs, accompanied by a 46-piece orchestra, conducted by Ben Foster.

The concert shoot involved a huge crew armed with 3D cameras and related equipment, assembled and directed by Eagle Rock production company EMP.

Producer Joss Crowley described some of the creative and technical challenges encountered on the shoot in correspondence with *Broadcaster Magazine*:

"The technology is still relatively new and complex. It requires a lot of testing and prep

time. The room for error is much smaller than in 2D production. If the left eye isn't aligned perfectly with the right eye or there is a different in exposure levels you can end up with unusable footage," he outlined. "Somewhere between the director, the producer, and the DoP, has arisen a new role: the stereographer! They play a crucial role in achieving good 3D stereo imaging and they advise on areas such as cameras, lenses, lighting, camera and stage positions."

Physically, the 3D rigs are quite large, and Crowley noted the "extra challenge to get the seat kills in place" (while persuading the promoter to part with lots of tickets so that we could fit the rigs in along with cranes, dollies and tracks).

"We had nine 3D camera rigs, some that shot on both nights of the gig. We had two dollies on track in the pit, a steadycam on stage, a huge crane at the back of the stalls, some locked off long lens rigs, and three minicam rigs in amongst

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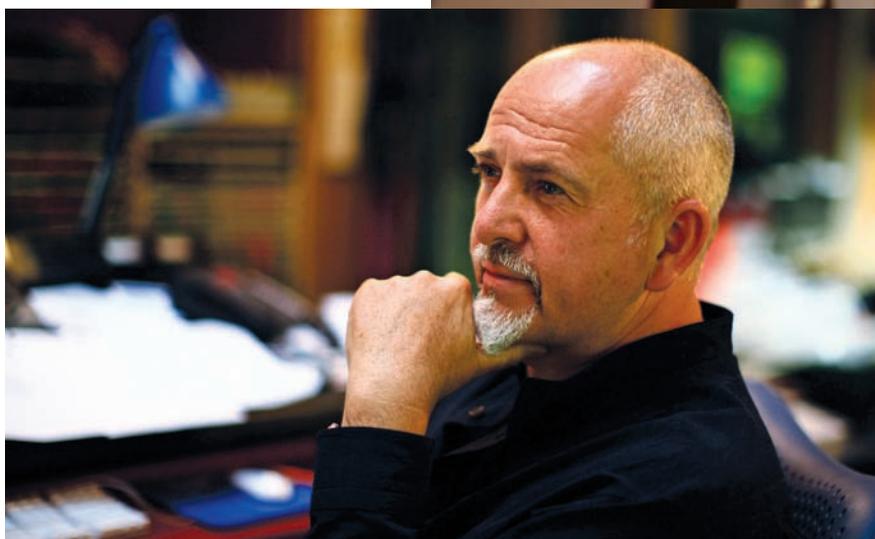
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“ One of the main barriers to 3D going mainstream is the lack of compelling 3D content. . . ”

the orchestra and one on Peter himself on a body rig (but it was only worn during sound check).”

As well, he said, the lighting needed to capture good 3D stereo imagery meant the crew had to significantly increase overall light levels.

“All the more so with a 48 piece orchestra. This reality is never well received with the show lighting director! I remember discussions about the lighting going on right up to show time between the film’s DoP and the show LD.”

Crowley also explained that the 3D and the 2D edits were run independently at two different post facilities in London, as they needed – and now have - a completely different feel and pace.

As many 3D producers know, a 3D edit works well with more gradual tracking shots with longer holds on shots; the 2D edit moves with a slightly faster feel, with some different angles and camera positions.

Crowley said Final Cut Pro was used for the 3D offline edit and MISTIKA for the grade and online work.

The effort has paid off, according to the star of the show.

“It was a buzz seeing the way Spatial View turned something as small as the iPhone into a magical box: a bona-fide 3D device. Capturing our *New Blood Live* show in not one, not two, but three dimensions was no easy job,” Peter Gabriel said in a statement. “I’m very pleased the way Eagle Rock and all the creative team

managed to record the essence of the concert, a concert experience that can now be shared by many more people through Spatial View’s cool technology.”

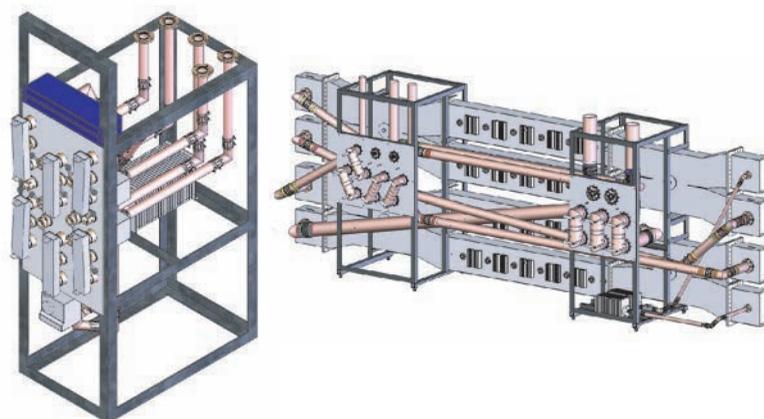
“One of the main barriers to 3D going mainstream is the lack of compelling 3D content,” Al Lopez, the COO at Spatial View added.

His company is obviously aiming to change that. Spatial View not only promotes and distributes the new Gabriel title as part of its online store offerings; it also is deeply involved in the technical workflow that makes such content compatible with the delivery platform it developed, as well as various mobile media devices.

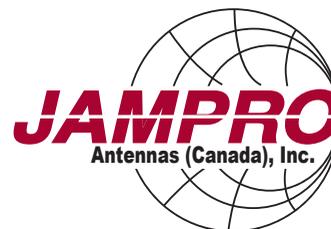
As Lopez explained to Broadcaster, “The content is displayed using standard MP4 H.264 format for video and JPS format for images. The content is adapted to make sure that content shot for the large screen displays properly on small screens. This content adaptation is done at Spatial View. The content is encrypted using a proprietary DRM system. On playback, the content is decrypted, decoded and interlaced for the proprietary lenticular lens on the fly by the app.”

The *New Blood Live in London* concert film is a downloadable file for the iPhone 4/4S, available from Spatial View’s 3DeeCentral site. *New Blood Live in London* concert film and tracks will also be released for 3D-enabled Android devices and Internet-connected 3D TVs this month. **B**

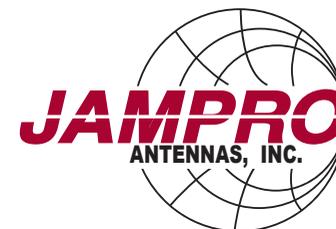
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New App Brand Tells Which Way Wind is Blowing – Towards Mobile

Only seventy per cent? Not a bad audience penetration rate, all things considered.

A recent Environment Canada survey says 70 per cent of Canadians are likely to check a weather forecast on a daily basis.

That's a low number to some, who felt the survey debunked that age-old myth that all Canadians are weather obsessed.

The telephone survey of 2,333 Canadians was carried out earlier this year by Ekos Research; researchers said that "Canadians offer highly favourable views of Canada's weather information outlets, with nearly nine in ten stating they are satisfied with their main source of weather information."

The study suggests a growing number of Canadians are getting weather information off the Internet, yet mainstream media outlets and weather specific services still top the list.

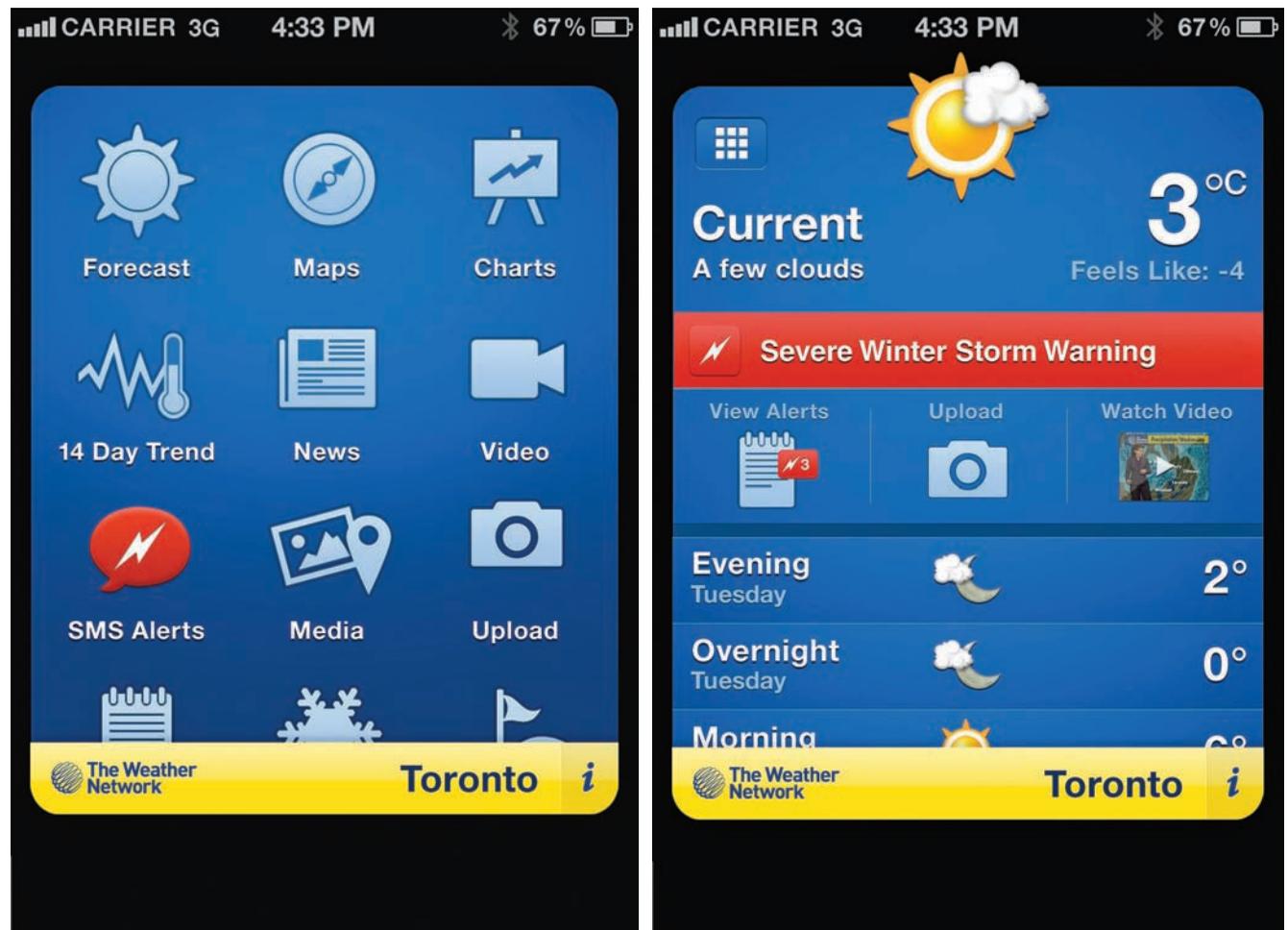
For the forecasters and media producers at the Pelmorex-owned specialty services The Weather Network and MétéoMédia, any predictions about Canadians and the weather may seem like old news.

(In fact, another survey from Ipsos Reid says that weather apps are the most popular Canadian download. Again, not surprising to the digital media team at TWN; tens of millions of such downloads have been tallied since the first release, and some three million monthly uniques are tallied on the smartphone platform.)

The weather apps are available across multiple platforms, including PCs, tablets and smartphones like those from Apple, BlackBerry and Android.

Now, the original app for iPhone has a new face, and a new name.

Since it launched in 2008, The Weather Network's WeatherEye for iPhone has received



The new mobile apps from The Weather Network add extra interactivity and user generated media upload capabilities.

more than three million downloads, steadily maintaining a 4.5 star rating.

But, as Gina Ashar, Director of Mobile Applications, told *Broadcaster Magazine*, development and innovation on the platform has continued (building on a lot of valuable user feedback) so that her team has now launched an

Ashar and her team noted the new device's great video capabilities, and so they've built-in several new multi-media features into the app . . .

iOS 5 compatible version for the newest iPhone.

It's now called The Weather Network App, and Ashar described how it delivers a more interactive experience, with functionalities uniquely designed to support new capabilities of the iPhone 4, including retina display and multitasking capabilities.

Ashar and her team noted the new device's great video capabilities, and so they've built-in several new multi-media features into the app, including more video embedded in daily forecasts, top weather news stories and active weather, as well as the ability for user to upload photos and video in real-time.

There's even a new user help video, embedded into the app.

Interactivity and geo-location features are also expanded in the new app; users can compare city

forecasts, plan trips and track weather developments over 12 selected cities.

The new "Follow Me" feature also taps into GPS co-ordinates and capabilities, and it automatically updates weather-related information such as severe weather, air quality, pollen, flu and UV to match users' current location.

The GPS local search feature can be used to locate forecasts for schools, airports or provincial parks, all of which can be saved for future reference.

Each device targeted by an app like those from The Weather Network must be planned and developed for different capabilities, such as screen size or embedded processing.

So the development team must focus on providing the weather data in the best 'wrapper' for each device, Ashar explained.

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Gina Ashar brings a broadcast background as a production coordinator in live TV to the role of Director, Mobile Applications at The Weather Network.

While the application is activity oriented, developers can't use up too much on-screen real estate.

Working in a 'paper-and-pencil' mode, the development team (usually, a lead designed and two developers), draws out various mock-ups, with input from other development team members as well as other company stakeholders, including audience relations, marketing and PR.

Brain-storming sessions around the mock-ups are conducted, with a view to what worked well in the past and what new ideas are coming forward from formal and informal audience focus group sessions.

"We've had a couple of years to collect input and feedback from users," Ashar notes. "We think we've responded to the ideas and input we've received, as well as our own research and analysis. There's added content

in terms of weather data and video clips, and new functions built around increased location and geo-awareness."

"The look and feel has changed somewhat, and the app's core ability to collect weather information, and display it in a way that keeps the end user in mind, has been improved. The content is right in the app now, and integrated more carefully into the overall user experience." **B**

Interactive TV App Joins Mobile, PC Family



The new iTV weather application, built on the Microsoft Mediaroom platform, is now available on Bell Vibe TV.

New interactive television applications let consumers customize and interact with weather-related information on TV.

In addition to the line-up of mobile and desktop apps, The Weather Network and MétéoMédia have launched an iTV weather app, available on Bell's Fibe TV service.

The weather app allows customers to access on-demand weather information and enhanced content using the TV remote control.

The digital Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) service on Fibe is built on the underlying Microsoft Mediaroom multimedia software platform.

Information from local cities or towns, or up to nine other locations can be saved in the iTV system to reference school, cottage or travel related weather information.

"Our easy-to-use iTV app makes it even more convenient for consumers to get timely weather information," Maureen Rogers, Sr. VP Television, Pelmorex Media Inc., described. "As a company that's known for innovation, we're excited to be the first licensed broadcaster to launch on this platform."

Once loaded on a set-top box, the app delivers up to date and automatic weather condition information, based on location. Short-term forecasts, including temperature, POP, "feels like" and wind direction, along with longer term forecasts, including minimum and maximum temperatures, are also available.

"We are excited to give viewers the opportunity to personalize their weather experience by adding favourite cities and accessing on-demand weather information with a touch of

their remote," said Naomi Lipowski, Director iTV, Pelmorex Media Inc. "It's another example of how The Weather Network and MétéoMédia keep pace with consumer technology to help people plan their day."

Bell Fibe TV is available in selected areas of Toronto and Montréal.

The Weather Network and MétéoMédia's expert weather reporting is broadcast on television, Web, desktop and mobile applications.

The Weather Network and MétéoMédia, both divisions of Pelmorex Media Inc., utilize in-house technology called the Pelmorex Forecast Engine (PFE) that supports meteorological forecasts to be issued down to a 10-square-kilometre grid across the country, described as one of the most accurate, local forecasting systems in the world.

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Peace Point Mobile Applications a Recipe for Success

Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity. -Voltaire

Well, funding is pretty pleasurable and necessary, too. Particularly when it is granted in support of new content creation for TV and emerging digital platforms, as is the mandate of the not-for-profit Canada Media Fund.

It provides some \$350 million each year in crucial funding to support innovative new media projects, including the latest TV series and complimentary mobile application from Peace Point Entertainment Group.

Peace Point has cooked up the Olson Recipe Maker, a new mobile application from celebrity chefs Anna and Michael Olson.

Olson's Recipe Maker is not just a cookbook, but a highly innovative data-driven application,

which generates recipes based on ingredients a user has at hand. As well, custom recipes can be saved in a personal database.

The app is also an engaging instructional tool, with a built-in series of exclusive 'how to' video segments from the Olsons.

Working closely with the Olsons, the new Recipe Maker app was created and produced by Eric Leo Blais, Peace Point's VP of Digital Media. BCK Group designed the interface and built the application.

Blais noted that financing for the project was provided through the CMF's Experimental Stream, with additional sponsorship from appliance and accessory maker KitchenAid.

"Without them, this whole exercise would not have happened," Blais noted in an interview with *Broadcaster Magazine*. "The Canada

"We can see the move from analog to digital and its impact in music, and that's going to happen in TV, too . . ."

Media Fund financed almost 75 per cent of this app.

We showed them mock-ups and betas, and kept them involved through the process. They were fantastic to work with, and we are very grateful that they trusted us with this idea."

As there were no additional licensing fees or transmedia funds tied to the project, Blais says simply it could not have happened without the Media Fund's support.

Blais has been with Peace Point for some five years now, coming from a background that

includes communications consulting and web production, and spear-heading its many new digital initiatives. "People are giving a lot of weight to digital, but really it is still an industry in transition. We can see the move from analog to digital and its impact in music, and that's going to happen in TV, too," Blais asserts.

But if you look at the history of TV, well, it took decades for solid business models to take hold across a large enough market.

"Digital people are expecting an industry transition in the blink of an eye," Blais acknowledges.

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Anna Olson's pizza dough is ready for its close-up as exclusive video segments are created for the new Olson Recipe Maker mobile app.

“But that’s not necessarily going to be the case.”

The natives are restless, however, and Blais points to his own in-house creative and production team as important providers and consumers

in the process. “A good majority of our team are in their 20s; they consume TV through their laptop or Internet-connected game console. That’s where it is headed....”

Blais’ team not only develops new program and application ideas, they execute production elements including the writing, audio and video production.

For the new Olson app, Blais describes the first challenge as bringing a way to share and interact with a wealth of information and reference material, including more than 60 minutes of exclusive video content.

“That itself is worth the price of admission,” Blais says of the high impact video clips created solely for the new app.

The video production took place at Cirillo’s Culinary Academy in Toronto, with the same production crew that has shot video for the Olson’s before - so the established relationships and sponsor trust levels were maintained throughout.

Cirillo’s is known as a KitchenAid facility, so several product placement opportunities arose for partners and sponsors, providing for them a valuable presence in the overall production.

Blais said the shoot took four full days, with a full production crew, and called it the equivalent to TV series shoot. These segments were a production on their own, but it sure pays off – the video looks stunning on an iPad, it really is beautiful,” Blais enthuses.

The mobile application itself was initially released for the Apple iOS platform, but Blais adds that apps for Android and other devices will be introduced. Each application takes roughly three weeks to a month to complete, and each device necessitates a different interface to capitalize on its unique features. Video segments must be re-encoded, as well, to be delivered to the various platforms.

The application has no geographic restrictions, so it will allow the Olsons and Peace Point to extend their brand internationally.

The application invites food fans and Olson bloggers to continue to interact with the show using social media tools like Facebook posts and Twitter conversations.

Known for Food Network Canada shows *Sugar* and *Fresh with Anna Olson* (also produced by Peace Point Entertainment) Anna and her husband Michael, well known chef and culinary instructor at the Niagara College, are known as one of Canada’s most celebrated food teams.

They’ve been together for nearly 15 years, and have penned several cookbooks and original recipe collections.

Fresh with Anna Olson airs in more than 50 countries worldwide. **B**



A selection of custom video segments is included with the new cooking app that builds on a database of related information and reference material.



Production crew members ready the kitchen set at Cirillo’s before taping exclusive video segments for a new mobile application from Peace Point Entertainment.

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Canadian Dreams at American Film Market

By Myles Shane



Show business kids from around the world ride a wave breaking just west of Hollywood, as they mix, mingle and make deals at the American Film Market.

As usual, the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel was filled with filmmakers hoping their independent-no-budget-without-any-big-name-actor films would be acquired for six figures. It's a sure fire hit, they pitched every buyer in sight.

And, according to AFM's numbers, some of those independent filmmakers actually had their Hollywood dreams come true.

In 2011, there were eight per cent more companies buying films than in 2010 (up to 718 from 664). There were seven per cent more buying Executives that showed up (1,523 vs. 1,417 a year ago) and overall attendance climbing about four per cent, from 7,695 to 7,988.

Canadian distributors were swamped at the American Film Market, with Montreal indie VVS

Films particularly busy, acquiring a trio of U.S. genre titles.

VVS Films did a pre-buy for Mark Steven Johnson's *Killing Season*, which stars Robert De Niro and John Travolta, from Nu Image/Millennium, and also acquired the Nicolas Cage-starrer *The Frozen Ground* from Voltage for a December 2012 theatrical release.

VVS Films acquired the *Vehicle 19* thriller by South African director Mukunda Michael Dewil in a deal handled by UTA Independent Film Group; more Canadian updates are below.

"We are thrilled with the strong growth in buyers — it's our most important metric — and selling out the new AFM Conference Series in its first year underscores the AFM's relevance to the production community," said AFM Managing

Director Jonathan Wolf, who also serves as executive vice president of the Independent Film & Television Alliance.

Countries with more individuals from buying companies at the market this year included China (+61%, 37 vs. 23), Germany (+38%, 109 vs. 79), the United Kingdom (+16%, 73 vs. 63), South Korea (+15%, 116 vs. 101) and Japan (+11%, 128 vs. 115). Among regions, the Middle East rose 35%, to 42 from 31, while Asia grew 17%, from 407 to 348.

Among individual countries, China posted the most growth for buying companies (+50%, 21 vs. 14), followed by Germany (+39%, 46 vs. 33) and France (+18%, 40 vs. 34). The U.S. was up 8% to 137 from 127 the previous year.

Exhibiting companies saw an increase of 4% (356 vs. 343) with no major shifts among countries.

At this year's AFM 415 films were screened. There were 69 world Premieres, 310 market premieres, 28 3D film screenings, 35 countries presented films and there were more than 700 total screenings.

The new five-day AFM Conference Series showcased sessions on financing, production, marketing, distribution and pitching attracted sold-out audiences of 600-700.

Furthermore, the first ever Industry

Conversations Series — intimate, interactive and informative discussions with visionaries, trendsetters and experts of the film industry — highlighted many accomplished well known speakers, including Director/Writer Rob Reiner; Producer Lauren Shuler Donner; Kevin Pollak; Selma Blair; Emmy-winning "Amazing Race" Co-Creator and Executive Producer Bertram van Munster; and Rodrigo Guerrero Rojas, the renowned Colombian producer of "Maria Full of Grace."

Other Canadian deals include: Phase 4 Films purchased all North American rights to Derick Martini's *Hick*, which stars Chloe Grace Moretz (*Kick-Ass*), Blake Lively (*The Town*), Juliette Lewis and Alec Baldwin.

Phase 4 plans a spring 2012 release for the *Hick Picture Productions* movie. Entertainment One International sold Quebec director Ken Scott's *Starbuck* into Japan, Israel and Australia.

Klockworks/Comstock acquired the *Starbuck* rights for Japan, while *Hopscotch*, a division of the Canadian producer, picked the Quebec film up for the Australian market.

Next year, the American Film Market takes place from: October 31 - November 7 in Santa Monica. **B**

Myles Shane is an independent filmmaker, and a co-founder at Toronto-based Hiltz Squared Media.

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