IBC 2016 – Follow Up Report

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In this report I will summarise my visit to the IBC – Exhibition and Conference 2016 in Amsterdam.

I was presented with the opportunity to be sponsored by the IABM to attend the IBC which takes place yearly. It was this year that I was in the right semester and mindset to take the challenge of preparing a presentation to win the IABM Engineering Student Awards. We were only three students to participate of which two were chosen. This made the competition aspect to win rather small. It is unfortunate that only so less students agreed to participate because only a small number of students know about the IBC and the possibilities that can grow from it.

Beforehand I planned to spend a whole week in Amsterdam to have some spare time to experience the city. I arrived one day prior to the opening day of the IBC. My AirBnB stay was easy to find and I can only recommend that to everybody attending the IBC in the future, as it is cheaper than a hotel and much more personal. My host family provided some very valuable information about Amsterdam, especially good places to go for food and nice spots to visit. I made the valuable decision to pick up a 2 two-day tram- and bus pass at the airport as we did not receive our IBC-bus passes until the two days after the exhibition started. Due to the ticket I was able to get around town quickly.

The opening day came and after a quick and easy registration I received the Silver Badge pass that would allow me to participate in nearly everything that the IBC offered. A very useful bag with some brochures was handed to me. These brochures gave a first overview about the main topics covered by the conferences. I haven't been to the RAI-fair in Amsterdam before so the size and the amount of halls were just overwhelming. Though, it was easy to find the IABM stall, where we would meet Dr. Martin Salter and Andy Jones, both from IABM. On the first exhibition day we had an introductory to IABM staff and the other participating students from Russia, France and Italy.

I had prepared a list of companies prior to my visit that would fit my interests and also go along with my presentation about HFR-shooting and image stabilization in the cinema production. It took me all the time and days available to visit all company stalls that I intended to visit originally. To start with I walked around all fair-halls to get a good overview how the companies are sorted. The first impression I got was that the majority of companies are trying to provide an overall solution for a potential customer, may it be IP-technologies, system integration/architecture or everything that comes with the VR-technolgy. It was a good 50% of companies based in the software- and IP-field. I left these companies aside at first because that's not the working direction I'm planning to head for. I visited Arri, a German manufacturer for cinematography cameras. There was a huge amount of cameras to be touched and tested by the visitors. I found the new Arri Alexa 65 very impressive in terms of the dynamic range of up to 14 f-stops. Also the new Arri Trinity, a five axis hybrid stabilizer was very impressive. It is a very versatile stabilisation mechanism because it combines electronic image stabilization with classical mechanical stabilization.

It can be mounted to a shoulder camera mount, which gives the operator a good and easy way of shooting images. My next visit brought me to QVestMedia, a German company based in

Cologne that provides support to big TV-studios in form of system integration. That specific field was completely new to me and I could not imagine before what exactly a system architect does. So I had an informative chat to one of the officials of that company, which opened my mind to a whole new field of work. System integrators merge old and new TV-studio setups together or build a new system from scratch. I collected some business cards to grow my network. To cover the image stabilization field that I intended to get an insight to, I visited the stall of Shotover. This company builds mounts and housing for any bigger cine-style camera. The mounts are all gymbal stabilized and can be attached to a helicopter or industrial – sized drones to shoot aerial footage. I knew about this system prior to the IBC based on a movie called "The Art of flight" by Travis Rice. In this movie the Shotover F1 – system was extensively used on helicopters, providing a stunning and well stabilized aerial image.

Spontaneously I walked up to a lot of other companies which suited my interests that came across my paths through the RAI. Whenever there was time in between I attended several presentations of the IBC conference. There was a lot of interesting talks and discussion rounds mainly about the future of the TV-industry as well as HDR-technology. One presentation really caught my ears and eyes: "High Dynamic Range and Wide Colour Gamut: the Art and Science". This presentation was held in the Big Screen theatre. This theatre room was set up with a 4K HDR projector and Dolby Atmos technology. The presenters explained the technology and the differences to LDR (Low Dynamic Range) footage, added by examples of HDR and LDR footage from "Batman, The Dark Knight Rises". The main question was, how effective and visually viewable an HDR TV screen would compare to a standard TV screen in a standard living room surrounding. Of course in a cinema environment the differences are easier to see, because the whole room is meticulously dimmed out and the overall luminosity on screen of 48 cd/m² is enough to provide a bright enough viewing experience. However in home surroundings, where TV-programmes and movies are usually consumed, a TV-system will need a much higher luminosity to generate the same effect. To sum it up, the differences between LDR and HDR in that named movie were definitely visible but all over much smaller than expected. The main visible difference lays in the dark image areas where the HDR image opens up a new world of detail.

In addition to all these impressions I gathered in the exhibition, the so called "Rising Star Programme" was a great addition with its combination of tailored conference sessions and masterclasses, especially for young students, who will possibly be working in the broadcasting field. The programme took place on Saturday and Sunday. Besides the complimentary breakfast for us the presentations were very informative. In "The Battle for Eyeballs: Winning viewers in the connected world" there was an interesting discussion about the future of the standard TV format competing with "next-generation" TV competitors like Youtube and Netflix.

The key question is how to win viewers for the particular formats. The answer is not as easy as it seems to be. A key aspect to consider is, that new "TV formats" allow the user to decide by himself what he wants to watch at any time. This personalisation allows a much higher satisfaction of the user.

The days went by rather fast, with lots and lots of impressions and images in my head to be processed. To be honest I did never expect that there are so many companies in the broadcast field that I never even heard of. This aspect doesn't make it easier for me to decide into which direction I will be heading after my study. Though it was a worthy trip and made my knowledge about broadcast technology a little bigger. I used the remaining time to do some sightseeing in Amsterdam.

Last but not least I want to thank the IABM Educational Foundation genuinely to open up this opportunity for me. I felt very honoured to receive the IABM Student Awards.