

MEDIA BEYOND TITLE-A SHOWREEL

A Thesis
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Media Studies – Electronic Media

by
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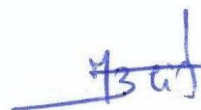
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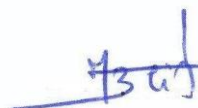
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Abstract

This presentation showcases the journey that I embarked into within the media world. It is based on creating an overview of TV distribution history and analyzing changes in distribution to identify patterns throughout the years. This work was done by studying major formats in TV production as well as local and international production, TV shows, home-viewing and audience, and digital distribution.

Every method of distribution and production affected shifts in audience expectations and changes in content, and every production was executed differently in each country. Based on academic literature and personal achievements, this study investigates the media industry in the Arab world and how it shapes the national identities, the effect of COVID 19 on media, and how media use changed and shifted to platforms.

This shape-based study shows that our personalities and realities are created through our communicative interactions with others despite personal and daily challenges. It is a lifetime “practice” and story sharing about goals and hopes for the future, alongside with the factors that helped to realize the first steps toward the career I achieved. It is an approach viewed from the most basic steps and elements in life – facts that shaped a career in TV and media fulfilling, thus, my life.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to producers who placed their trust in me during the early stages of my career. I am also thankful to my thesis' supervisors who guided me patiently throughout my journey. I also extend my gratitude to all the people I have met along the way and who had a profound impact on my career in the media field. I am indebted to all the hosts and anchors I have worked with, who entrusted me to handle their shows with professionalism and devotion. I would like to mention in no specific order: Neshan Derharoutounian, Mona Abou Hamzeh, Jessica Azar, Nadia Bsar, Anabella Hilal, Tony Baroud, Aline Azour El Murr, Maya Diab, Nabila Awad, Wissam Breidi, Charbel Raji, Mohamad Kais, and Albert Thoumy. I would also like to mention all the directors I have worked with, who showcased my work in the most professional way: Bassem Christo, Charbel Youssef, Kamil Tanios, Paul Van and many others from Lebanon, France and the UAE.

I cannot but also thank all the clients who trusted me to produce their events, awards ceremonies, corporate events and telethons, and who helped me to move forward; namely: May Chidiac, Michel Moawad, Michel Pharaon, Tania Kassis, Maroun & Violette Balaa, Regina Fenianos, Ray Abed, the Presidential Palace team for granting me the honor of producing their Christmas concerts and events.

A special thanks goes to MTV Chairman Michel EL Murr, Dubai Media Inc. Chairman and CEO Mr. Rached Mohd Amiri, Christian Gemayel MTV Head of Channel, Ean Torley Head of LIVE at Expo 2020 and several others for the many opportunities I was given.

Finally, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to my parents who have been endlessly supportive from the very beginning , this also goes wholeheartedly to my wonderful husband and kids for their continuous patience and tolerance especially during the tough long absences they endured when I was away from home.

Introduction

I was born in a middle-class family of two sisters and a brother. We were raised to strive to be the best we could despite all the challenges and to overcome any obstacle.

Since childhood, I have had a profound interest in the media industry. And when I graduated from school, I knew exactly what career to pursue. I wanted to grow my understanding and get ahead in the media industry, so I majored in Journalism at the Lebanese University.

How it all started...

It all started when I had to choose a university that was the most affordable to match my situation. Back then, I picked the Lebanese University since it best suited my financial situation at that time. Knowing that my chances of being accepted at the Lebanese university were slim, I had also applied to the Radio and Television major at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and simultaneously registered in the Business Management program at Saint Joseph University (USJ) in Lebanon.

The Faculty of Information and Documentation at the Lebanese University is a prestigious school and is well known for its tough selection criteria. Despite this, I went ahead and did the entrance exam. I was skeptical about being accepted. But luckily, I passed the entrance exam and guaranteed a spot at my university of choice. My educational experience at the Lebanese University helped me to excel and gave me the opportunity to learn from top-notch professors and renowned professionals in the field. It shaped me to become the media person I am today.

The Launch of my Career

During my university years, I got my fresh start in the media field as a TV anchor and host at Dubai TV. I could describe my days back then as long juggling between Work and university. This experience was foundational for building my character and gave me the opportunity to earn some pocket money needed at the time.

One would think that being a TV anchor and host is every girl's dream. The perception of this among many is that it is all glitz and glam with the opportunity to socialize and to become a TV icon. You are always looking good with hair and makeup on a daily

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standby basis. This was my life for more than a year but I realized that this was not me, nor was it my aim.

I then moved to New TV where I had presented more than 30 episodes of a social and touristic show covering all Lebanese regions and conducted more than 100 interviews. This was in 2000 and it led the management of New TV to ask me to join their team as one of their TV hosts. This lasted for a year, but my dream was larger than this - my dream was to be an Executive Producer with a well-established background. The real place for me was to be behind the scenes as backstage moments fascinated me.

Then one miraculous day, the real opportunity I had been preparing myself for, occurred.

In 2001, I joined one of the leading TV stations in Lebanon, MTV. I had a little help getting in, through my father who introduced me to one of his friends at MTV management.

I learned fast that in this industry, to get in, you needed a network and connections, but to stay there is another story. It was imperative to work hard to earn your place. I kept my eyes and ears open to learn everything about producing a TV show, all the while making sure to maintain a professional demeanor. I recognized quickly that there is no 'right' way to relate to each individual and that social relatability is crucial in this industry. This was paramount to be given the opportunity to prove my talent and showcase my work. I gradually enlarged my circle and my network through hard work and wise discernment.

In the media field, especially in the Arab world, the focus is not only on the production in its technical aspect but the content is also crucial

The Media Industry in the Arab World

Talking about the media industry in the Arab World, we can all agree that it shapes the national identity. According to Lapierre, Fleming-Milici et al. (2017) entertainment content viewed on television is an important note of persuasion and has an important impact on the audience, especially children. That is what we really noticed after the launching of Heik Mengahni, the entertainment show on the Lebanese channel MTV. Maya Diab, the Lebanese host, became a trendsetter. Moreover, duet and music fusion from the show were played in Lebanese nightclubs. According to this, entertainment influences attitude and beliefs as well.

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According to Liu and Shrum (2009), although interactivity is often considered to have a positive influence on persuasion, research on interactivity effects is actually very mixed. Under certain circumstances, interactivity may either enhance or inhibit persuasion.

In an increasingly wired Arab world, mass media consumers do not live by news and politics alone, but rather use different entertainment resources that occupy and enrich their time, depending on each one's perspective (Stillman 2014). Cross-national studies of Arab media use, particularly since the Arab uprisings of 2010 and beyond, have examined mass media as tools of social change, privileging news and political conflict. This picture of mass media impact is crucial but incomplete. Local studies have shown that entertainment media use eclipses news and information seeking in mass media (Ayyad 2011). Saudi Arabia, for example, consumes more YouTube content than any other country in the world (Al-Saggaf and Simmons 2015) and surveys focusing exclusively on legacy news use, to the exclusion of entertainment, can miss important ideas pertaining to media influence. For these reasons, Northwestern University in Qatar, in partnership with Doha Film Institute conducted a comprehensive survey on entertainment as a main media function.

Talking about entertainment and based on my experience in the media field, entertainment may also influence values and beliefs, which leads to many questions related to the Arab popular culture.

In their book "Stories from Experts about the impact of Digital Life" Anderson and Rainie (2018), The entertainment shows and especially now with social media, are affecting the interpersonal relationships, not only in the Arab world but worldwide. As per Irving (2018) co-founder of The Mobile Alliance for Global Good, there is almost no area in which digital technology has not impacted life. The media and entertainment in the Middle East was valued at USD 30,349.4 million in 2020, of course, this number will raise, and the estimation is to reach USD 47,029.82 million by 2026. With the rising spread of COVID-19 in the world, the businesses suffered significantly. Initiatives were elaborated to overcome the situation, which positively affected the media and entertainment market.

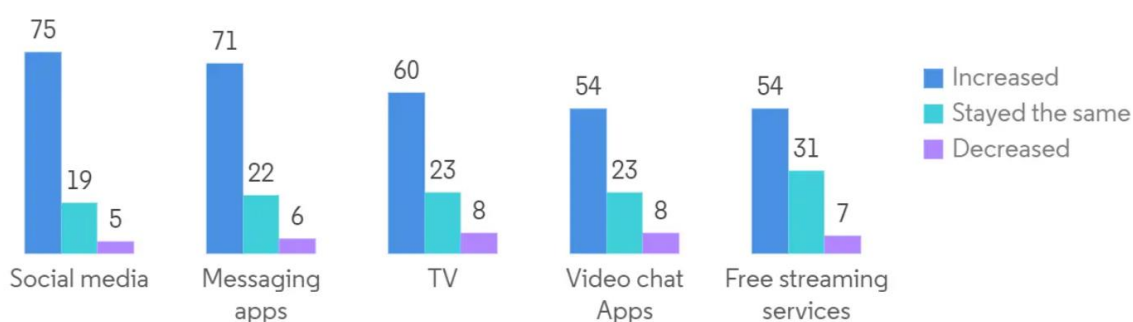
For instance, in April 2020, in order to support the Qatar government in raising awareness among the public to limit the spread of the COVID-19, ELAN Group

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launched a CSR awareness campaign to promote the idea that staying at home and keeping a safe distance from each other are some of the most important things people can do in the fight against the pandemic. The campaign takes place on many ELAN Media's Seniors and MUPIs and in all of Doha and Greater Doha Municipalities.

Figure 1: Media usage change in MENA 2020

Share of media usage change post the COVID-19 social distancing measures in the Middle East and North Africa region in 2020, by platform Share of respondents



Source: Arab News GroupM PwC Sensor Tower Facebook Twitter Snap Inc



The Creativity

During my whole career, I tried and still to break down what was called “This is what the audience wants to see”. This helped a lot in empowering my creative thinking in producing and shaping the shows. According to Janet Balis, (2013), as per EY Americas Customer and Growth Market Leader and Marketing Practice Leader, “In this industry, creativity is prized above all else. And, the art of the craft must be honored”. However, with the digital world now, things have changed considerably when it comes to creativity; In fact, digital media is a new world that led to a new reality in TV production. A dynamic and fast pace was established imposing a certain balance between content and creativity since the latter is a must in the production of any entertainment show.

Previously what was important consisted of having a clear value proposition for a media or entertainment show and to produce a light content. However, the bar is higher now since audience reality challenges the notion of “Destination production.”

That is why, I have always considered appealing content as a priority. Putting all this in mind, I progressively climbed the ladder one-step at a time. I started with editing

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some promo spots, working night shifts, editing small reports for the daily youth show on MTV all the while making sure to learn something new every day until I mastered my job.

I started building my network of famous hosts and presenters who I looked up to. A few months later, I moved to the production department where I held the position of Production Coordinator. I handled many interesting tasks, such as:

- Supervising the whole crew and managing the equipment
- Providing logistics and catering for the guests (even providing water, coffee and cleaning services)
- Setting up the stage
- Writing production reports.

At the same time, I worked overtime to watch the production of the show in real time. I intently examined and observed all the details from afar without being involved. This was a building block for my future.

I turned all my challenges into learnings to move forward.

To me, although connections were important, what really drove me was the desire to make an impact in the media industry. With time, producers started knowing me more and trusted my professional attitude, so I started receiving requests to join their projects. I was entrusted with all the pre-production preparations, being on set or editing the shows myself.

I had amicable relationships with all producers, managing to keep a low profile while conducting my work in the best way possible.

In 2005, I was assigned my first big entertainment show on Rotana TV. During that time, I was expecting my first child. Still, I did not let that deter me from embracing this opportunity

There is no second chance to make a first impression (Schlüter, Waldkirch et al. 2021) I could either succeed or wait for another chance. Except that another chance might not be given, so I decided to succeed.

This is when I found myself managing a full crew, booking accommodations, handling set-up designs and doing everything from scratch; I was creating my own show for the first time and it felt exhilarating.

I knew by then that my strength resides in my patience, enthusiasm, structured approach and hard work. I was aware that my weakness was that at times I could be controlling

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and take on too much at once. I noticed that I also have a tendency to expect too much from others due to the nature of my character that continuously strives for perfection. I have volunteered on several production projects just to grasp the secrets of Television. This has been instrumental in helping me to deal with my team, setting priorities and moving ahead with all the basic requirements. This time I was the boss and I was ready! With this experience, I was able to gain the trust and confidence of the management and my team. I was always able to send positive vibes in a stressful environment.

The show was a success despite complications due to internal conflicts among some of the crew members. This proved that the mission was more difficult than expected.

On set, I was handling all tasks without delegating since I wanted to learn more. Alternatively, at the office, I was managing all the pre-production necessities; I was the Financial Analyst, the PR officer, and the marketing strategic planner. I had the ability to transform negative environment into a healthy and thriving one. Because of all this, I was able to be productive with long-lasting and excellent production results for high-level clients as well as big entertainment shows and events.

I catered to major companies, non-profit organizations, beauty pageants, as well as A-class hosts and clients. Having worked well with senior directors, I was also effective at persuading and influencing high-profile personalities when it came to production ideas, events, budgets and sponsors, especially while working for Rotana TV. I reached a point where my opinion was highly valued; people trusted and respected me as I gained credibility.

While working on the shows, MTV management sent me an offer to be in the production office handling all the bookings and scheduling. I was not too keen on this since it would not add value having already been on the field, but I did not say no. I thought that this would help me have an edge as a producer whenever I have a project; after all, I am in the production office, which is the production factory of every show. Through this period, I developed a passionate interest in being organized. I knew the importance of having everything archived, documented and recorded. There, I managed complicated decisions while handling the production analysis needs of the office. I also contributed to the development of policies and sample format productions for all the reports in the department to make the work more organized.

I had successfully nourished my passion through my three years as a production officer. I did this by directly examining the production process through different resources.

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I did not feel engaged since I was doing a lot more than my peers. I wanted my efforts to be acknowledged. This was back in 2008 when I was expecting my second child. Having not received any credit for my efforts, I resigned from the production department and decided to focus more on producing shows. I was open to challenges, conversations, and an exchange of ideas from top managers. I started working towards my long-term goal to become the number one producer in the company. Throughout this whole experience, I was able to create several tools to help the company evaluate its operational production requirements more accurately. It was time to prove myself again... And to lead.

My self-trust grew particularly when my work started being noticed by the CEO and his team. More so, the feedback I received from all the clients I worked with was so positive. In fact, I had the skill set required to work individually, but that was not an option anymore with 3 prime time shows running simultaneously.

Rotana TV was launched and I produced my first LIVE show, – **“Rotana Café”** launched on October 2003. It was another edition of young talents discussing many topics in a friendly and cozy environment. Further assignments were designated to me, such as daily celebrity news and gossip shows. I was both the producer and the director, which was a challenging and enjoyable mission. The show was the discovery of many talents like Nicolas Moawad, currently a famous Lebanese actor working in the United States and Egypt. He started his career as a host in Rotana café (2003-2009). His debut-acting role was in Marwan Najjar’s television drama “Helm Athar” in 2006. Rotana Café also revealed Rita Hayek (Lebanese actress), Pierre Rabbat (TV Host), Albert Thoumy (TV Host), Sabine Sassine (TV Host)

One year later, I received the opportunity to produce **“Heik Menghani”**, a show with Maya Diab. This shifted my career to a completely new level. I learned how to work under stressful conditions, and handle celebrities; it was one of the most complicated technical production shows ever. Nevertheless, it was a hit, not only in Lebanon, but also in the Middle East.

I could not forget all the late nights, shooting the show with all the challenges that come with it, the overnight overwhelming editing sessions, my long absences from home, leaving my 2 girls behind with the helper, and with my husband when he is not at work. I also learned that planning and keeping records of all communications and necessary documents, such as emails, Memorandums of Understanding and contracts helped me in planning kept me safe from misunderstandings or wrong information. I also learned

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that in this position, it was time to switch strategies from being low profile into a higher profile in order to show that I was doing a great job.

“**Heik Menghanni**” was an amazing experience that helped me develop the skills I need to be the producer of any big show. I encountered plenty of setbacks with people in my team. Not accomplishing their job as they should was critical because after all I would be the one held responsible, and for that reason, I felt obliged to do the job by myself working really hard in this production, pushing myself to the limit, as it was my chance to shine.

When I was assigned by MTV two other prime time shows simultaneously, one of them being the number one entertainment show in Lebanon, I admit, I was afraid of what the consequences would be, not having the dream team to back me up. This left me feeling skeptical about this turning out to be a success. However “**S2alo Marti**” a game show hosted by Mohamad Kais marked another hit in my career. I believe that taking on these opportunities and not saying NO was a great tool in upgrading my career and myself. It is true that prioritizing my career made the life of my family harder .They had to endure my long absences, but that was the only way I could succeed, as my career was a priority.

I created my own signature, from shows like the above, to events, awards ceremonies and beauty pageants. I allowed myself to grow more and expand my connections. My company and its clients and connections trusted me; at some point, I felt I was in a dream with deep pride.

My work always mattered to me and I knew that I had the potential to change, to create and to develop ideas and shows. I had the expertise, credibility and tolerance to make great things and to produce very important shows.

My robust experience in a variety of production programs enabled me to gain valuable skills that have prepared me to be an effective Executive Producer and that was when I felt confident to ask my title to be changed from Executive Producer to Senior Executive Producer; my request was instantly approved. However, I was challenging myself constantly looking for ways to improve my production skills and find innovative and challenging projects to continually grow in the field and in MTV. I began searching for ways to communicate directly with clients and negotiate all aspects with them from A to Z and I succeeded.

During this period, I have learned the virtue of being flexible. Flexibility is key to developing a solid structure for any job and in dealing with any client.

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In 2009, I decided to pursue an Advanced Degree in the Media field, in spite of all the experience I had developed professionally and academically, I chose the Master's degree in Electronic Media to enhance my skills on the job. Notre Dame University was the academic institution I applied to.

I thoroughly enjoyed the diverse types of courses offered through this degree. When I first enrolled, I was concerned that some of the courses might be repetitive or maybe not of added value for me especially with all the experience I had gathered. Thankfully, my concerns quickly dissipated.

After completing all the courses, I was confident that I had made the right decision in enrolling in this Master's degree.

This period was hectic, endless stress, squeezed schedules, overnight shooting and studies all at once. Some of my classmates were in the media field, Neshan having been one of them. He was constantly in contact collaborating with me. I would have never expected all of this, three years of studies with a restless work schedule and a family to take care of; the results of this on all levels exceeded my expectations.

The courses I had enrolled in have taught me valuable new insights that I used in my job. This degree enriched my experience as a Senior Executive Producer.

I acquired more confidence. This shaped and helped me evolve on many different levels.

Before I began my graduate studies, I had problems with public speaking. I used to work in silence and behind the scenes, everything was done through emails and small meetings; staying behind the scenes made me feel safe. The academic path helped me to get myself out of my comfort zone and to become more confident about myself. I invested this in expanding my leadership capacities.

I was no longer in the shadows. What I have learned gave me an edge to compete with others with more experience.

The following journey was with format execution.

TV FORMATS

Based on my experience with formats, it is very important to highlight the value of international formats compared to local homegrown shows especially in the Middle East. This section will examine how formats can reshape industrial-cultural conventions for local productions. This was ideally, the case in most of the TV Format

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shows that I produced, it reshaped the interest of the audience in entertainment shows like Heik Menghani, people were scheduling their weekends and outings according to the show, same as for Min Byarref, the show format of “the Brainiest”, this game show was adapted in French as “Le Grand Concours des Animateurs”

Cultural values, assumptions, and norms are affected by modern TV formats (Miller 2007). Medical reality programs, such as TLC’s Trauma: Life in the E.R. and Maternity Ward, are good examples of reality programming. Throughout television history, medical dramas have attempted to address social issues and present the inner workings of the hospital in an honest manner

Moreover, Pop Idol—the Famous Music format, gives a good example on how Idol’s appeared in the Indian television market (as Indian Idol) and later in many other countries and how it affected the cultural expectations for music-based entertainment shows in India. The Idol franchise has been adapted in fifty-five different cultural versions, making it one of the iconic global brands since it first appeared in the United Kingdom in 2001 (Baltruschat, 2009).

Pop Idol was the moment for the Indian television industry. The re-formatting of formats is actually done through how producers deliberate and rewrite their productions to challenge and overcome format copying. Format Execution needs tactical, creative, and cultural responses to the power of global media and not creative lethargy or mere copycatting. Most of the time, the production made in the Middle East was much better than the original format, and this was always challenging.

Most of the entertainment shows I produced were based on international formats, and shows were played in different countries. The main concern and challenge was to customize these formats to fit with the values of the Middle Eastern audience.

Heik Menghani was an innovation in the media field not only as a TV production but also in the music industry. Despite being recorded Multi Track, it was the first TV show to have a Music Producer, Hady Charara, who re-produced all the songs (around 35 in each episode) so all the performances were played as if they were recorded in the studio. Also, the band had this nice look, a fusion between the oriental and occidental. Lebmetal.com, the website specialized in the music industry, issued an article titled “Legal or Fail? Rock culture in the Lebanese mainstream media”(2020), Patricia Saad the author, said “Rock subculture influences and music have been slowly but surely making an appearance in Lebanese mainstream media. Rock musicians and

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even Rock music are now a normal part of popular prime-time TV shows and music videos. Several prime-time shows on Lebanese TV feature multiple celebrities (actors, artists, models, etc.) in an atmosphere focused on singing and dancing. These shows have been bringing their house band to the limelight, where it is now common to see guitar players and other musicians rocking out to the songs, regardless of whether they are Rock songs or not. For example, Micheal “Labex” Labaki is often seen rocking out on stage to “Arabic Pop” songs on MTV Lebanon’s Heik Menghanni show”, Saad concluded.

Another hit in the TV Production, “The brainiest”, the international Format in its Lebanese version. Min Bya3ref: A Lebanese TV show that is making me watch TV Again, an article on Blog Baladi a Lebanese online news blog (2016), by Jimmy Ghazal Communications Expert, Media Trainer, Academic Advisor and Entrepreneur. Ghazal mentioned, “Min Bya3ref is a show that stands out from the crowd. For the past few weeks, I found myself enjoying every single episode and actually participating remotely in the show. I realized that many people feel the same, even my 6-year-old tries to participate by guessing the answers and feeling extremely proud when he gets it right (even though he understands nothing). In fact, the question sets include everything from general knowledge to social media and viral stories from Lebanon and the Arab World so everyone can take part in that show”. Ghazal added, “To me, these are all signs proving that the format is successful, entertaining and engaging. It has brought me back from being a passive TV viewer to a more engaged one. The show has a good production value, the set is simple and well designed, the content is very well prepared, and custom tailored for the audience. More importantly, the presenter Nadia Bsar fits perfectly in the show, she is charismatic, respectful and bring out the very best out of her guests (which is something we really miss on TV and enjoy seeing). My only complaint is that some guests tend to take their participation lightly and end up acting silly during the show. It is nice to have fun participants but they need to remember that this is a serious show and not a comedy”.

Heik Menghani

Original Format: The Lyrics Board

Country: Ireland

Live it Love it Productions

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Hosted by Maya Diab on MTV Lebanon, the show was launched in Ireland in 1993 – Created by Andy Ruan and Philip Kompf.

I got the chance to meet Andy Ruane since, as format buyer, we need to have a consultancy before proceeding with the actual production. The consultant should be present during the first episode shooting.

According to Ruane in an interview with TVFORMATS.WS on October 15, 2018, what differentiates *The Lyrics Board* from other prime-time shows is the game itself. “*We have a truly original game,*” he said. “*No game, no show. Talent, quiz and elimination shows tend to run out of steam quicker than game. An original game will play forever.*”

A testament to this: NRK in Norway has had 26 seasons running in prime time and SVT in Sweden is on season 24. Both are still going strong.

“*Any format that can go for 25 seasons is format royalty,*” says Ruane. “*You can count those examples on one hand.*”

In Lebanon, the show ran for 8 seasons in a row. In 2011, it was selected as “the most popular TV Show in the Arab world” as per a survey conducted by Zahrat el Khaleej (the first women's lifestyle magazine of the United Arab Emirates).

According to Mr. Christian Gemayel (Head of MTV channel), “*the show was the first of its kind in the Media industry, when it comes to the level of production; it was an innovation from different aspects*”.

The host: Maya Diab was a discovery. Diab stated in many interviews that Heik Mengahni was a “Turning point in her career” affirming that “*The show made me more mature and more self-confident*”.

The Set: Designed by Olivier Illouz, a 360 degrees LED studio, with a movable circular platform and 2 golden pianos. Illouz designed the set of the most important shows like NJR music Awards, Fete de la Musique, Dancing with Stars, Famille en Or among others.

What interests Olivier Illouz goes well beyond the creation of a set and deep into the development of a core concept. He likes overturning conventions with clearly distinct designs. His designs make the most of new technologies by playing with video screens and lighting effects, yet remaining lucid and simple.

The Music: For the first time in the TV shows history in Lebanon, all the music and songs performed in the show are produced and edited via protocols by the music producer Hadi Sharara.

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As per Sharara, “the show was challenging from all aspects, especially when dealing with artists competing with each other”. He added, “The music production was as difficult as the production itself, hours of music edit and sometimes recording again some instruments to have the desired output, more than 30 songs performed in each episode and a deadline of 48 hours to submit the final product”.

This was a challenge by itself.

“*The Lyrics Board* is the most successful and longest-running music game show in the world,” stated Ruane (2018) founder of Like It Love It Productions.

The director of the show, Kamil Tanios, said: “Heik Menghani was a turning point not only for me as a director but for the channel and for all the crew and for the TV Industry as well”. He added “Everyone in Lebanon and the Middle East knows what is Heik Menghani, who were the guests, and what was Maya’s look in each episode. She was by then a trendsetter.

“The production of the show was very complicated especially in the music and edit. When the show was scheduled, it was supposed to be a small show as per the original format. MTV and the whole team developed the production and it was one of the best shows on MTV, MBC (media conglomerate owned by the Saudi government based in the Middle East and North Africa region) and Al Hayat (London-based, pan-Arab newspaper owned by Saudi Prince Khalid bin Sultan).

For years, Heik Menghani was the only music show in town. Many channels tried to copy it and have some games integrated in their shows. It was as well the most rated TV show in MTV-Lebanon channel’s history, Annahar TV in Egypt, MBC, and many others.

The episodes were recorded on DVDs and songs on CDS sold everywhere ...it was a masterpiece. In the 8th Season, many channels tried to copy the show by integrating similar games, the rating of the show declined, however, it remained the number one entertaining show in Lebanon,

Min Byaaref

Original format: The brainiest

Country: France

“Min Byaaref” is the show format of “the Brainiest”, this game show was adapted in French as “Le Grand Concours des Animateurs” formerly presented by Carole Rousseau from 2003 to 2018 on RF then by Laurence Boccolini in 2018.

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In Lebanon, Nadia Bsar on MTV Lebanon hosted the show for 3 consecutive seasons. It brought together important radio, television, drama, and politics Lebanese figures. The main target of the show was to test their general knowledge in a light atmosphere. Nadia Bsar (2016) said in an interview on Radio Lebanon *“the feedback on the show was great because the audience interacted, and the questions were accessible to everyone, the target was to reach an educated audience. She added, “the shooting was stressful since it is a live to tape event and the questions should be asked in a very fast way, it is not easy at all!”*

Each episode brings together 20 personalities in the French version, adapted to 10 in the Lebanese version, who compete in a general knowledge quiz. Several rounds allow deciding between the candidates tested on themes as diverse as history, music, sport, art and current affairs. In each round, several of them are eliminated. During the very last round, the last three candidates in the running are questioned on topics related to their profession or their passions.

In a relaxed atmosphere, Min Byaaref allows viewers to discover their favorite personalities from another angle. Humor, general culture and entertainment come together in Le Grand Concours.

Adapted from the British Celador “Brainiest” format dedicated to children.

The show expanded the format from kids to celebrities.

It was produced in more than 23 countries including Russia, Portugal, Singapore, New Zealand, Japan, Italy, Greece, Finland, etc.

The director Charbel Youssef considered that this show was a “comeback for the intellectual TV show genre based on general knowledge”. He added, “The fact of having celebrities competing in general knowledge was a challenge by itself, especially in the Middle East. Youssef added “from a directing side, the camera plot of the show was a bit complicated since most of the cameras especially the one behind the host should be hidden same as those behind the guests”.

Audience Le Grand Concours des Animateurs

According to “le Parisien” (2021) the French daily newspaper, TF1 took the lead in audiences on Friday evenings with its "Grand competition for animators" hosted by Alessandra Sublet. The evening brought together 3.9 million viewers, or 20.7% of the public watching TV.

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The rating in Lebanon was not bad, comparing to other shows, according to ARAB SAT and IPSOS SAT (2014) it reached 8% that was very good for its genre, and the show went for 3 seasons. It stopped due to the high format fees to be paid for each episode.

Figure 2: Chiffre Audiences Télévision Prime Time samedi 15 janvier 2022 | Source: toutlatele.com

Soirée TV du samedi 15 janvier 2022			
Chaine	Programme	TVspectateurs	PDA 4+
	Le grand concours	2 990 000	17.7%
	Spectaculaire	1 492 000	8.1%
	Meurtres au Mont Saint-Michel	5 050 000	25.3%
	Echappées belles	1 238 000	6.1%
	9-1-1 : Lone Star	1 174 000	5.7%
	Enfants du Soleil	487 000	3.1%
	Le jour du kiwi	535 000	2.7%
	La petite histoire de France	361 000	2%
	Columbo	764 000	3.8%
	Chroniques criminelles	274 000	1.4%
	Modern Family	129 000	0.6%
	Ghost Adventures	170 000	0.8%
	La grande vidéo party	179 000	0.9%
	Joséphine, ange gardien	334 000	1.7%

Original Format: Forty

Country: Turkey

Lucid Dream Entertainment

Hosted by Jessica Azar on MTV Lebanon, it is a celebrity talk show with a gameshow twist; as serious as “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, as fun as a celebrity magazine show.

The studio is an arena, a 360-degrees self-reflecting mirror that provides the celebrity guest, a real chance to explain, to come clean, to be understood. The guests already know the answers; there is no trophy to be won and they will not be dancing, singing or battling it out against their competitor.

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In 40, the editors with journalist backgrounds conduct detailed research about the guests from birth. They read press, news, gossips, and social media and accumulate all the data they find, then they dig deeper to find missing links and notice inconsistencies.

“40” with its unique structure is a proven formula for every channel’s Prime Time needs. In Lebanon, the expectations were not very high in the beginning. The show seemed to be a simple one on one show. However, the results were great to an extent where the format owner asked for our consultancy to upgrade their initial production.

Murex D’Or’s Award ceremony, the first award ceremony in Lebanon, took me to the next level: The show was the dream of every producer.

In 2012, I received a call for a meeting with MTV’s CEO who informed me that his channel was to produce the **Murex D’Or** for the first time after LBC. Albeit all the criticism and comments about this event, it is after all the Lebanese award ceremony that recognizes artistic achievements in Lebanon and the Arab region. We were 3 producers assigned to the event; 2 weeks later I was alone! It was too stressful, preparations were hectic and it was not easy to handle, such a big responsibility, but the challenge was accepted.

Six hours of live shows, more than 15 performances, 40 awardees in the presence of Arab and international singers, the event was covered by many international Media stations, and had a profound impact.

Those experiences I have had made me the person I am today, I will never forget the stress, the tears, the fatigue, the moments of weakness, it was hard, but I made it.

This accomplishment elevated me to higher rankings in event production.

I was very lucky to be in MTV, my happy place, where I had access to the whole world to explore my passion.

I have spent the last fifteen years learning everything about the media industry from management to execution. I am currently applying all this knowledge in my role as a Senior Executive Producer.

For most people, hard work and accomplishment do not sound very interesting. To me, my work is a passion that I have been chasing for many years and landed me a Senior Executive Position.

As Oprah Winfrey once said, “It doesn't matter who you are, or where you come from. The ability to triumph begins with you. Always”

In 2015, my baby boy was born, this didn’t stop me to continue my on-going projects.

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With all these changes in my life, the new opportunities and all challenges, I had the ability to develop more my career path.

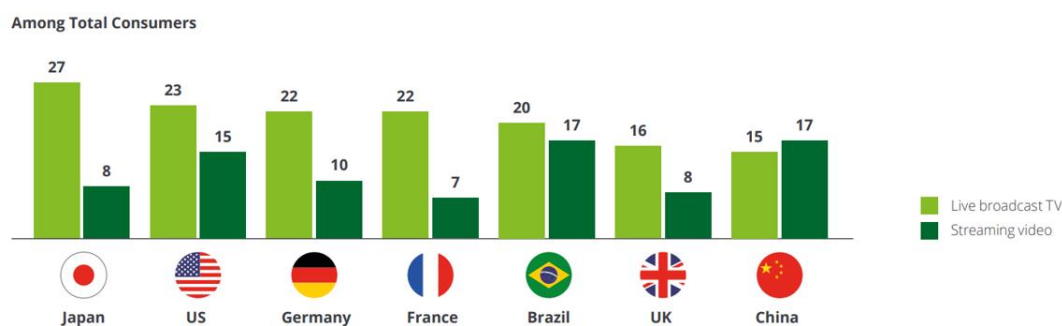
Throughout the additional working years, I realized that new technology was starting to integrate into all areas and this was compulsory to operate with the new system defined as the “digital world”.

The global television industry is in the midst of a digital revolution. Online Platforms like Shahed, Netflix, Awan, morotove.tv, and many others has been spreading worldwide, also, all TV stations have now their own Media Streaming combining their production and allowing viewers and users to watch what they want when they want it. Networks Cable and satellite companies are fighting to stay relevant. Content producers are scrambling to develop hit shows. As per the world Economic forum, “The digitalization of the media industry has been driven by changing consumer behavior and expectations, especially among younger generations who demand instant access to content, anytime, anywhere”.

The ability to manage this new business model was my next challenge as I shifted to some social media shows, interviews, game shows, all on social media platforms.

According to Deloitte, “On-demand-services will disrupt the TV and video industry”, “New market players such as Netflix or Amazon will soon replace traditional broadcasters”, “Consumers’ demand for TV and video consumption is fundamentally changing”: established players are being increasingly confronted with horror news about their own positioning within the future TV and video landscape.

Figure 3: Average weekly video content consumption (in hours)



¹ Digital Media Trends Survey 2018 (United States); ² Deloitte's Digital Democracy Survey 2018 (global); ³ Deloitte Media Consumer Survey 2018 (Germany)

While I was sure that digital platform companies are being the major disruptors for TV and video market, and that broadcasters and content creators and producers like me are facing the greatest pressure for change and while I was focusing on the digital

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production through small interactive shows, 2019 presented a new challenge. It was the production of Miss Lebanon for the first time on MTV after being produced for more than 15 years on the LBC Channel. This Production made me Alive again, and showed me that digital production will never replace what we call a good production. This was a hectic production on all levels. The main concern of the company and for myself was to stand out on all levels.

The mission was not easy, as usual, from the pre-production preparations, to the crew selection, the budgeting, and then the main concern, the casting.

Aiming to be unique made me more serious in the preparations; things should be different. I had 30 candidates instead of the usual 15. Several international artists, 2 different venues and the most important factor, the election was done in a theatrical set-up with 4 super stars: Ragheb Alama, Maya Diab, Massari and French Montana, and for the first time Miss Universe Demi-Leigh Nel- Peters was among the jury members. The event was successful; the election night was trending all over the world and in Lebanon for more than 3 days.

Trends for you

- 1 #MissLebanon2018
31.4K Tweets
 IBRAHIM, Dominic Abu Hanna دومينيك ابو حنا, and 2 more are Tweeting about this
- 2 #مايا_رعيدي
1,248 Tweets
 Fatima Daoud-فاطمة داوود is Tweeting about this
- 3 #ملكة_جمال_لبنان

Figure 4: Elections night trends on Twitter. Source: Twitter (Sep. 2019)

Unfortunately, 2019 was the end for all the big productions in Lebanon. It is true that I produced many shows and events after that, but it was different, something was missing, maybe the glamour, the positivity, the creativity, it was just not the same.

Media in Lebanon

According to Lebanon - Media Landscape Author(s): Lorenzo Trombetta (2018)

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“Despite its inevitable entanglement in regional turmoil, Lebanon is viewed as the most stable and safe country in the Middle East”.

We all know that well-educated population in Lebanon has led to one of the most diverse and sophisticated press and media landscapes in the Arab Levant. Beirut had always a vibrant media community with relatively high professional standards despite the limitations of some sectarian system that dominates the country.

Trometta also said: “The Lebanese media sector is facing a profound crisis and there are many journalists and media staff, working in the local and pan-Arab media outlets based in Beirut, who have not been given their salaries for a long time or who have lost their jobs”, In fact, Safir, An-Nahar, Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera have reduced the number of their staff members.

Beirut was the region’s media hub and sadly, in 2019 everything froze.

In February 2019, I resigned from MTV, after 22 years of being a devoted employee, I decided to leave; my only reason for this being that I was “not given a satisfactory or/and challenging production opportunity to add to my career path.” It was not worth leaving my family behind considering such unpredictable times. COVID for me as for many others was a lesson.

I had free time between February and September 2019 until I was asked to produce the New Year’s Eve show on MTV as a freelancer.

In light of this experience, I believed once again that the production industry and the media field in Lebanon were no longer the same. With plenty of budget cuts and people not being in the mood, the plummeting financial situation imposed production decisions to be addressed more delicately taking into consideration the production level that we still had to deliver to the audience. I had to customize the production and the content in order to respect the Lebanese economic challenges that the audience was facing.

Inasmuch, the Television industry's language and how it evolved, especially when it came to self-reflexivity, had a hard task to portray the real picture of what was happening since people’s political stances were different. As media professionals we were always scrutinized, and now even more for whether we were portraying the truth or taking a political angle .There was no more clarity with everything going on globally and locally considering that Lebanon was fading.

TV for me was no longer a passion since it became a “Passe Temps” with nothing exciting to offer, just a way to pass the time. I wanted to focus on motherhood, instead.

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Despite my decision to rest, I kept challenging myself , “**Forty**” the format previously mentioned proved once again that we should challenge ourselves before competing with others . the Show simplicity was also intricate with large attention to detail.

Forty’s first season was a success – the ratings exceeded our expectations making our first season a “hit”. The show is set to launch a second season; **it is now released with a special edition for the UAE**. Despite all the success that I had achieved in this production, I still felt dissatisfied, as I was not producing “THE” stellar production I wanted. I did not face the daily challenges I was so fond of , like discovering new talents to generating new innovative ideas. Each production had its own unique challenges, which I felt were missing during these past few months in Lebanon. I find myself once again longing for a new path; this in itself was a challenge, which was ignited in my heart again. I needed interesting projects to continue progressing in my career.

It was essential for me to stay ahead of my game and juggle many projects at once. I enjoyed working under pressure and fell in love with every project.

The Last Project: EXPO 2020

On September 3rd , 2021, I received a phone call informing me that I have been selected as the Supervising Producer for the production of EXPO 2020 in Dubai.

Expo 2020 Dubai is the Universal Exhibition held in the United Arab Emirates from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 - the first of its kind to be held in an Arab country. When I received the call, I genuinely thought it was a prank or a joke, as I would have never thought that I would be chosen for this opportunity, and I did not even apply to this job.

This happened on a Friday morning and they wanted me to fly in for an interview on Monday. I told them it was impossible to do so, and they rescheduled my flight to Wednesday September 8, 2021.

When I landed in Dubai, I knew this was a new challenge, a new promise for a new beginning, a chance to prove myself not to others, but once again to myself. After the interview, I was asked to start immediately as they needed me on the job urgently.

It was planned as an interview, and here I was from day one, on the ground trying to introduce myself to everyone, to test the ground, to navigate my way to start. All my files and the research I had prepared were ready; I was ready to hit the ground running.

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“The secret to becoming a successful Producer lies in one always remaining ‘a possibility thinker’ and embracing the philosophy that "in life, anything is possible." Indeed anything is possible, and in EXPO 2020, the impossible is possible... For me Dubai is now the land of opportunity. I have the chance to prove myself in a country where I am a total stranger. This international project involved many nationalities and companies from all around the world; it is an opportunity for me to succeed in the first Universal Exhibition to be held in the ME.NA.SA (Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia) region.

Definitely EXPO 2020 is accompanied by the media in DUBAI with a 24 hours coverage on expo TV of LIVE coverage including intellectual forums, concerts and national days celebrations

In 2021, according to COMMITBIZ, a management consultancy company, the media industry in Dubai is already spread over a wide spectrum across the country, covering and reporting several major issues. Now, Dubai Expo 2020 is contributing more in the evolution of the Media in UAE, after several months, Expo is still in the headlines for many media industries. Since the city was given the right to host the mega event, many news agencies have been alert to provide each details to promote expo, and to take advantages from the covering of the Unique and most important events in 2021. The word “Expo 2020” has been the major keyword for every media search for now and for upcoming years.

Any edition of the expo usually welcomes a large number of celebrities attending and promoting the event. The involvement of celebrities with their families attracts a lot of attention from tourists as well as media houses. The media firms tend to provide every detail of the concerned celebrity to the general public.

As a Supervising and Live Host Broadcast Producer at Expo 2020, I am currently responsible for the smooth integration and collaboration of the Host Broadcaster during the planning and delivery of the overall live event.

In addition, I am responsible for the supervision of all requests coming into the TV Crew and the assets to be delivered prior to the time of the event.

My main task is to report directly to the Head of live, while managing the communication and logistics from internal and external departments. I managed, during a short period, to meet face to face with various internal/external stakeholders at the expo in order to receive their instructions and to be able to deliver feedback whilst managing the delivery of the requested content.

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My communication skills helped a lot in liaising closely with the production crew to ensure seamless preparation and supervision of video production logistics. I also liaise closely with the Media Asset Management team to ensure that all produced content is updated on the Media Asset Management system and to ensure that the status of each request is communicated regularly.

It is also very important to provide continuous feedback into the pre-production process for projects to ensure the scale and deliverables are aligned with the requirements.

“Aside from the 3,000 strong audience inside Al Wasl Plaza, millions across the globe tuned in_ to virtually view the eagerly awaited event. With the golden ring of connectivity – the inspiration for the Expo 2020 Dubai logo – raised to the trellis of the magnificent Al Wasl Plaza, the beating heart of the Expo site and the spectacular setting for the captivating ceremony, the most inclusive World Expo ever was officially underway”.

The opening was in itself an exciting experience to welcome 200 participating countries and millions of guests from all around the world. It is an out of-this-world experience for all people within and outside the UAE. It was also thrilling for me to supervise the whole series of productions scheduled for these different countries and produce the big events at the EXPO from the Al Wasl plaza.

I have had the honor of dealing with international companies and clients, as well as technical crew from multiple nationalities, exposed to different locations and managed logistical complications while dealing with many regulations and policies inside the Expo space. To this effect, I came across many advantages, like being exposed to multiple areas of the business, providing more job opportunities and I saw this as a real time internal and external continuing education for myself in the form of an on-the-job training.

The Expo 2020 brought a lot of opportunities for the Media industry in Dubai with big concerts, dance competitions, and performances going to be the center of attraction in the mega event. As a producer, I got a lot of stuff to cover throughout the event and after the event.

What followed the inauguration ceremony was another challenging event, “**Live Cross**” with NASA, and after that, the ball got rolling with productions of exciting events.

The events of Expo 2020 that I have worked on so far:

- Preopening ceremony Expo 2020 (*as mentioned above*)

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- Live Cross France with Thomas Pesquet in presence of: Jean-Yves Le Drian (French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs) *and* Franck Riester (French Minister Delegate in charge of Foreign Trade and Attractiveness).

Astronaut and French pavilion Ambassador Thomas Pesquet said on this occasion: Expo 2020 Dubai offers countries a chance to collaborate on projects.

This event was a 15 minutes LIVE call with the astronaut on the international space station. This long distance call was part of the celebrations for the special expo national day of France.

- L’Oréal Event

As per Nicole Hieronimus, CEO of L’Oreal “The event’s theme of ‘Connecting Minds, Creating the Future’ is entirely consistent with our own sense of purpose to ‘create the beauty that moves the world’, an inclusive and responsible beauty that has a positive impact on people and the planet. Since 1928, nations and companies have gathered to explore how to solve the problems of tomorrow. This year more than ever after months of isolation, we celebrate coming together again for the World Expo in Dubai, to work together for a better future.”

- Exposé:

Exposé was a high-energy exploration of sizzling song and dazzling dance. This electric and eclectic show is a delicious mix of amazing performances by an international team of song and dance masters.

- Urban & Rural Business Development Forum:

This forum was organized to highlight and showcase business opportunities, cutting-edge technologies, progress achieved by the UAE to date, international participants and Expo partners relevant to the urban and rural development sector

- Kadim el Sahir:

Kadim Al Sahir, one of the most successful Arab artists in history, kickstarts Expo 2020 Dubai’s spectacular Infinite Nights series on 15 October 2021, with a concert of his biggest classical and top hits.

Back in front of an audience after a two-year break, the ‘Caesar of Arabic Song’ honored the rich legacy of Arabic music under Expo 2020’s opportunity subtheme.

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- The Cartier Event:

Expo 2020 Dubai and Cartier came together to celebrate the official inauguration of the Women's Pavilion in a spectacular celebration at Al Wasl Plaza. The event was inaugurated by Reem Bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Minister of State for International Cooperation and Director General, Expo 2020 Dubai and many other UAE prominent figures along with Cyrille Vigneron, president and CEO of Cartier International. The event featured four artists commissioned to curate and design the Pavilion: Laura Gonzalez, El Seed, Nadine Labaki and Mélanie Laurent along with 'Friends of the Maison' Monica Belluci, Vanessa Kirby, Ramla Ali, and Amira Casar, Yasmine Sabry, Fatima Albanawi, Dhafer L'Abidine, Fouz Al Fahad, Farida Khelfa and Elisa Sednaoui were also among the guests in attendance. It was a huge event transmitted worldwide as a live feed on many platforms.

- Nancy Ajram and Ragheb Alama:

Ragheb Alama and Nancy Ajram were set to unite the world through the power of music at Expo 2020. The second concert in Expo's Infinite Night series where the two Arab megastars performed at Al Wasl Plaza.

I was assigned on the show where we connected fans across the world to celebrate a night of breath-taking entertainment that turned into a real success.

- Sami Yussef:

The British spiritual singer and composer delivered the new production, "**Beyond the Stars**", as an eclectic work exemplifying the spirit of both the UAE and the Expo.

- The Riverdance:

Riverdance is a theatrical show consisting mainly of traditional Irish music and dance. With a score composed by Bill Whelan, it originated as an interval performance act during the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest, featuring Irish dancing champions Jean Butler, Michael Flatley and the vocal ensemble Anúna.

- The Arab Journalism Award Ceremony:

The Arab Journalism Awards, launched in 1999, is the region's most prestigious award recognizing journalistic excellence. The Award's main goal is to reward talent, inspire, and stimulate creativity. It is also aimed at enhancing the

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constructive role of the press in serving the community. Since its launch under the directives of his Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. Since the launch of the Award, DPC collaborated with the Federation of Arab Journalists (Al Itihad el Aam Lil Shafiyin el Arab) along with prominent Arab media personalities, to ensure the integrity of the Award and its comprehensiveness to include all Arabs.

It has been a wild ride so far. Although it is still too premature to judge what is going to happen with a few months left to go, I cannot but acknowledge how blessed and lucky I am to be a part of this, it came just in time to pull my spirits up, once again the impossible is possible and "**Impossible is an opinion, not a fact.**"

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