

# EYE OF THE

**Rachael Church** puts her ear to the ground to preview the 2009 IBC Show and asks whether it can expect to be affected by the global economic downturn.

**THE PHRASE 'MUST-ATTEND'** in reference to an industry gathering is often over-stated, although perhaps not in the case of the IBC. And the show dates are significant for one attendee in particular.

Ciaran Quinn, director of strategic business development at Deltatre, takes up the story: "IBC is usually on my wedding anniversary and I end up celebrating it on another day because I'm at IBC. Now I'm not saying that IBC is more important than my wife (it's not!) but to prove it to her, I plan to celebrate our special occasion

on the right day this year and go to IBC from Sunday-Tuesday instead. The show is good for Deltatre - lots of the right people are there... business partners, suppliers and clients."

With IBC attracting over 49,000 visitors - broadcasting, post-production and technology company executives among others - and more than 1,300 exhibitors from in excess of 130 countries last year, which incidentally heralded the best attendance results IBC has ever had, how will the event weather this year against the backdrop of a recession?

The initial signs are not good. In April 2009, IBC stalwart Sony announced it would not be exhibiting at this year's event, preferring instead to concentrate its marketing efforts on a series of localised customer 'engagement' events. The announcement resulted in a veritable flurry of concern both in the trade press and among IBC's followers on Twitter.

Sony, which regularly had one of the largest exhibition spaces during the annual technology-fest, followed Panasonic, a company that announced its own abandonment of IBC's

exhibition-side back in 2006. The costs simply outweighed the benefits, claimed Panasonic - and that was at a time when marketing budgets were much more profligate.

Broadcasting consultant Kay Hutchison from Belle Media says times could be tough: "Sony pulling out certainly isn't a great start for IBC 2009. And it may well set a trend for others pulling out next year as they take stock of their objectives and budgets. The IBC organisers will be well aware that attendee numbers were reportedly down by 40 per cent at [US-based technology show] NAB this year and are bound to be concerned."

Hutchison herself at the time of writing was weighing up the pros and cons of attending the

than e-mails and calls, as does helping them create a plan for the year ahead. That said, these are tough times for everyone and justifying the expense versus return is becoming ever more important. I am sure that it won't just be Sony that has pulled out."

Another IBC regular, Julian Clover, who is editorial director of Broadband TV News and has been going to the event since the mid-1990s, also expects to see less feet through the doors this year. "But that won't necessarily be a bad thing as IBC has tended to be overcrowded in the past," he explains. "It seems likely that numbers will be down more from the production side of the industry than the distribution side however, as the former have been more affected by the

travel and stadia operators and even corporate, educational and health organisations, together with technology vendors, content providers and brand owners to view and discuss the latest developments in this new medium.

Meanwhile, the IBC Big Screen, a state of the art digital cinema, will also make a triumphant return. It is used to full technicolour affect for demonstrations by manufacturers in the digital cinematography and display sectors. Most convivially, attendees can also go there to relax and watch IBC's free screenings and movies at the end of each day. That's of course if they are not too busy engaging in some of the free post-production training that is also on offer to delegates.

# INDUSTRY

event in September. Having been an IBC regular since the 1980s, through her career at Channel 4, Channel 5 and Disney, and more latterly at Red Bee Media, the fact that she is now part of a small consultancy means the costs are much harder to swallow.

"However, if I don't go, I will definitely miss the general networking and seeing all the latest technology in action. Nothing compares with being able to take clients around a whole range of services/competitors under the same roof and to help recommend suppliers to them."

Matt Plested, principal designer, at brand consultancy TheAlloy, explains why IBC is so important to his own company year after year: "Catching up with our clients first hand through face to face meetings can achieve so much more

recession than the latter to date."

Those who can put a good business case forward to their marketing departments for attending IBC 2009 will find that there is plenty to see once they get there. Laid out in zones, IBC's exhibition floorplan accommodates large and small exhibitors grouped together by application areas. For 2009, the Emerging Media Zones will cover IPTV, mobile television and digital signage.

This year marks the successful return of the Digital Signage Zone, following its launch at last year's IBC. Drawing on the news that the digital signage market is set to grow beyond \$2.5bn (£1.47bn) in 2009, the zone will once again gather promotional site owners, such as retailers, leisure and hospitality companies,

Annette Ellingham, business improvement consultant at BT Media and Broadcast (BTM&B), will be looking after the digital broadcast solutions company's exhibition stand at IBC 2009. "Shows [such as IBC] not only provide a great opportunity to meet with new client contacts and suppliers but they also help us understand what's going on in the industry," she says. "With over three years of exhibiting for BT Media and Broadcast, it my challenge to make sure that every exhibition we attend is a success - both in terms of our return on investment, brand awareness and new contacts made."

Ellingham believes that exhibiting at IBC is an ideal way to cast a spotlight into BTM&B's business and "a chance to show people who don't know us (and some that do) what we can do and

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how we have helped others in the industry.”

Once again, IBC has invested heavily in putting together a comprehensive conference programme that runs in tandem with the exhibition and pulling in some big name speakers. For example, to mark Eurosport's 20-year anniversary as a leader and pioneer in sports media entertainment, IBC has invited Arnaud Simon, broadcast director of Eurosport and Eurosport 2, to deliver a speech explaining how his company is using the latest technology and its extensive sports broadcasting experience to deliver entertaining and innovative sports coverage across a range of media platforms.

During ‘The evolution of sports broadcasting - the total audience experience’ on Thursday, 10 September 2009, Simon is expected to examine way social innovations and technology are constantly changing the way fans watch sport and the way the media covers it.

“New technology is exciting because it opens up possibilities,” says Simon. “The experience of watching sport in 3D, for example, is amazing. That’s why I’m looking forward to learning about all the new tools and devices at IBC 2009, to share in the experience of the new technology that will inspire us to shape our future products.”

In addition to 3D, social networking and user-generated content are set to be hot topics at

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IBC 2009, with a conference session devoted to the subject involving input from Gilles Babinet, chairman and co-founder of Eyeka, Martin Rogard, content director at Daily Motion, and France-based social media journalist Gary Smith. Following the session, a panel of students will be invited to take part in the debate.

Regarding conference sessions at IBC, Hutchison from Belle Media only has good things to say about them.

“They always tend to be of high quality and are usually sold out.” On a personal level however, Hutchison would not expect to learn anything new at IBC per se. “Whilst it is always great to see new technology in action and hear about the next big thing, if you are in the know, then you are likely to have seen or heard about such things in advance. Really, you shouldn’t be going to IBC to learn about new things, but instead for networking and keeping a relationship going with your contacts and customers.”

When it comes to making the most out of attending IBC for a ‘first timer’, Hutchison’s main tip is simple: “You need to find a veteran of IBC, literally someone who has been going for years and years and learn from their experiences. It is easy to get lost and to end up in a muddle if you don’t have a clear plan of action.”

Brand consultant Plested agrees: “Often the show takes a while to get going each day. It can be dead in the first hour but buzzing by midday, so my advice is to make an early start if you want to look around while it’s quiet. Never underestimate how much walking you’ll do, so plan a route out in advance to save yourself retracing.”

Finally however, Clover thinks it would be a mistake to be too over-prepared for the event. “Have a good look around when you get there as you may end up missing out on seeing something really important.”

It is dangerous to get too saddled with back-to-back meetings before you have even had a chance to catch your breath.”

*Now in its 42nd year, The IBC will take place at the RAI Centre in Amsterdam, with the conference opening on September 10 and the exhibition running from September 11 to 15.*

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