

technology in focus

IN BRIEF

New set-top from Kreatel

Motorola-owned set-top box manufacturer Kreatel launched its 1100 series IP set-top box at the IPTV World Forum on March 6-8. This is the most recent in a series of products that differentiate segments of the IPTV market. On the back of the 1900 series (which supports video formats MPEG-4 AVC, Windows Media 9 and MPEG-2, as well as a hybrid version able to receive IPTV with digital cable, satellite or terrestrial transmissions) this new series is an entry-level product that complements the company's high-end and media-centre models. Able to stream MPEG-1 and 2, it offers interactive VOD and near-VOD and is compliant with leading video server suppliers. The product is designed to be easy to use – it boots from flash memory and operators can update the boot image from a remote connection. The box was designed either as a low entry-level box, or to be used with a second or third TV that would be connected to a box with more features.

Serbia deal for NDS

NDS has been chosen to supply conditional access services for Serbian cable operator Serbia Broadband's new DTH service. The operator is the first customer for NDS's Videoguard Express solution, launched last year to target smaller operators. NDS is also supplying its Mediahighway middleware to Serbia Broadband.

Verimatrix wins Telecom Italia France

IPTV security specialist Verimatrix has won a contract to supply content security for Telecom Italia France's forthcoming IPTV service, AliceBox.

AliceBox will offer 100 broadcast channels over its DSL network (formerly Tiscali), along with 6Mbps broadband and unlimited voice calls to France and Italy.

Verimatrix is working closely with Telecom Italia France's set-top partner Sagem. The Verimatrix VCAS software will be used to protect premium content from TPS and Canal Plus Group.

The deal, which did not involve Verimatrix's integration partner, Siemens, highlights the security company's growing presence in the IPTV market Europe, where it already supplies security for Belgacom TV. Forthcoming launches include Dutch telco KPN and T-Com in Croatia. "We now have over 40 telcos worldwide," said

Oetegenn: studios will mandate digital watermarking for HD content.



Steve Oetegenn, marketing director, Verimatrix.

In addition to its VCAS conditional access solution, Verimatrix introduced a new digital watermarking product at IBC in Amsterdam last September. "Security is an ongoing process," said Oetegenn. "We want people to release content for VOD earlier than PPV for cable and satellite, but that means an increased requirement for security. And if you look at HD, studios will make it available for IPTV but will mandate digital watermarking."

For HD content, Verimatrix is providing the ability to add digital watermarking at the set-top.

Oetegenn said he did not rule out an entry into the Microsoft market, despite Microsoft's use of its own DRM as part of its overall IPTV offer. "I see an opportunity for encryption and add-on features like clone detection. You can deploy clone detection without the DRM part. And then there is strong interest in set-top-based watermarking. Microsoft doesn't have that available," he said.

Verimatrix recently struck a deal with US IP set-top provider Wegener to incorporate its watermarking technology, VideoMark, in Wegener's HD set-tops.

Oetegenn said Verimatrix also saw the cable and satellite markets as an opportunity for growth. "Cable is moving more towards bidirectional networks. For satellite, we think the market is ready for a change in that spec as well. We have some things under development," he said.

Amino introduces Firefox browser

IPTV set-top box supplier Amino has said it will integrate the Firefox browser into its range of IPTV set-top boxes. Firefox, with a 13% share of the internet browser market, will be ported onto Amino's software stack and adapted to give users a television interface unlike the original PC browser experience.

The browser, an open-source product and therefore a free technology, was developed by the

Mozilla Foundation and will offer Amino's customers a way of navigating their IPTV at no extra cost. The Mozilla product has been used by other well-known set-top box providers such as Kreatel, and the service it offers does not differ from browsers created by the likes of ANT and Espial, according to Amino. The company has modified this software for its set-top boxes in response to a request from one of its bigger clients.

Karthik Ranjan, vice-president of product marketing, said: "The benefit of this product is that it's free. A paid for browser will cost between US\$3 and US\$5 and if you consider an operator deploying 100,000 of these it could mean savings of US\$500,000." Although Amino had to reintroduce the product to the open source community, the cost of modifying the software is marginal compared with the savings.