

Enigma in Arabic – How does it work?

Paying a visit to Yahya in Saudi Arabia

When you switch on a receiver for the very first time you are usually asked which language you prefer. English, German or French are obvious choices, but what about Russian or... Arabic? From a technical point of view translating one language into another is no big deal. But while most languages are written from left to right, some – such as Arabic – start on the right and go left, and that's where the problems begin. We set off to meet Yahya and to learn how these problems can be solved. He lives somewhere in Saudi Arabia and would rather not have his last name published because what he does is considered a grey zone by some, even though it's not against the law.



■ Yahya presenting his three receivers.

■ **Yahya** on the roof of his house somewhere in Saudi Arabia. His 1.8 m dish is equipped with extension rails for reception of three satellites.

The World of Satellite DXers

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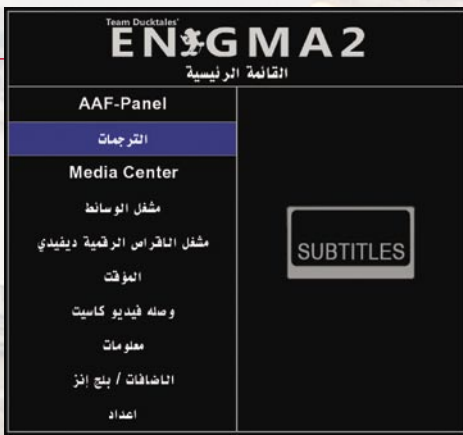
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■ This is the result of Yahya's efforts: Screenshots showing menu items of the Enigma2 receiver software. All Arabic texts have been translated by Yahya.

Yahya is a huge fan of the almost endless possibilities of ABCom receivers and is currently working on translating the Enigma on-screen menu items into Arabic. "It's not as simple as it sounds, because the software has not been developed with Arabic peculiarities in mind," Yahya explains. All texts popping up on

screen are actually stored in a text file which is compiled into the final Enigma version by the responsible software engineer. Everything has to be compatible with each other, and this leaves no room for compromise. "In some cases we have to insert words character by character," Yahya continues, "which for Arabic means writing backward."

Yahya says 'we' for a reason - his friend Al-Alil lends him a hand and together they have set up the so-called 'Arabic Cubebox Team'. Since May 2009 they have even been operating their own website featuring the www.cubebox.org forum, which has turned into a playground for Arabic-speaking ABCom fans. "These receivers enjoy huge popularity in our part of the world," Yahya tells us, "and with our translation work we want to help increase ABCom customer satisfaction even further."

How come somebody like Yahya has decided to translate OSD menus in the first place? He tells us that "this is actually not my first translation project. Before that, I had already translated the 'PC Editor' channel editing software."

It all started as early as 1996, which was when Yahya got hands on his first satellite receiver. In 2002 he began to look at receiver software in-depth, mainly because of the very restrictive situation in Saudi Arabia.

Yahya explains that "most of Gulf countries do not allow the import of receivers which are equipped with an Ethernet

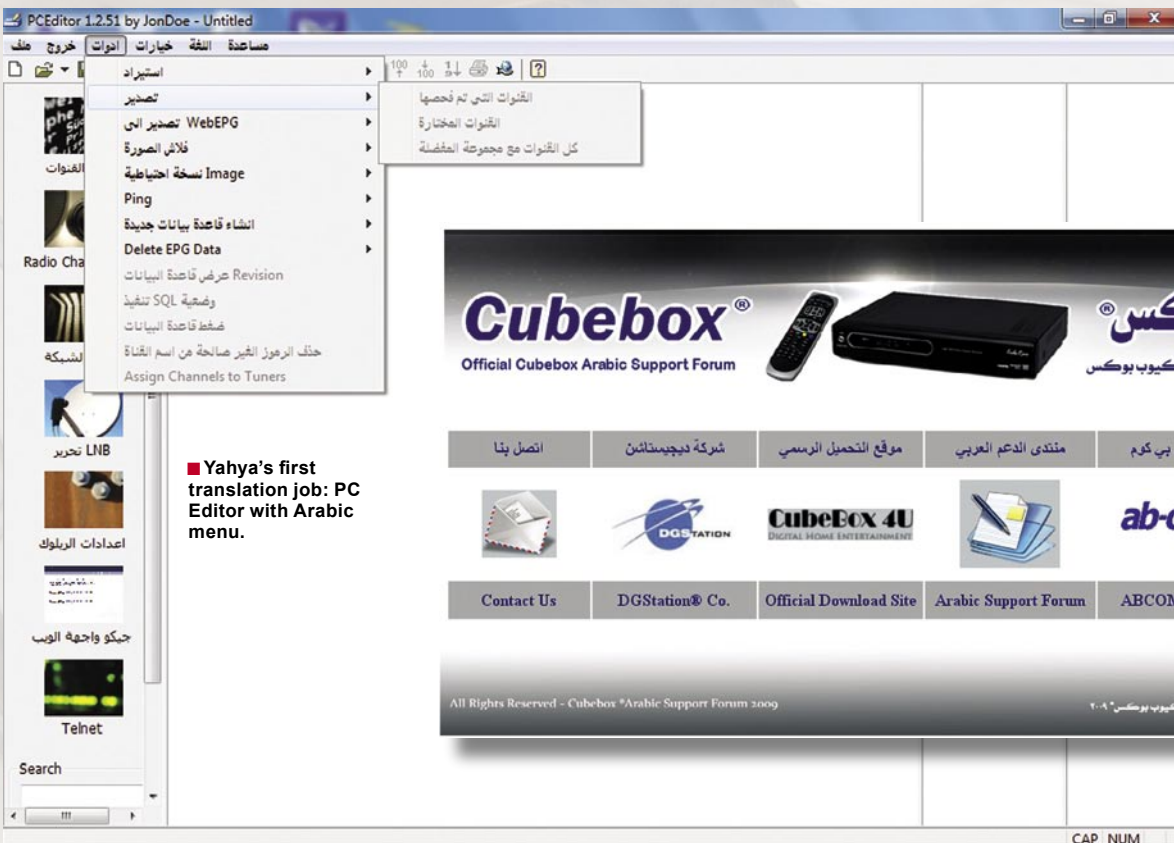
interface due to intellectual property rights. Authorities know the specific brands and makes and simply refuse to let them into the country."

But as always, obstacles exist to be overcome and receivers still enter Saudi Arabia on a small-scale with friends and acquaintances. Even receivers by other brands reach Saudi Arabia. Since 2003 Yahya has also been a loyal reader of the Arabic edition of TELE-satellite.

Not only is Yahya self-educated when it comes to software expertise, he also acquired the English language without any formal education. "I only went to normal school," he says with a remarkably authentic English pronunciation. "My first boss taught me English. He managed a glass factory and was originally from England." Today Yahya is employed by a marketing company and works as Services Administrator.

Which channels does a satellite expert watch when he's off duty? "Al Jazeera, Al Arabic, MBC and Moga are my favourites," Yahya reveals. Al Jazeera is an all-news channel from Qatar, Al Arabia a news channel based in Dubai, and MBC and Moga are a movie and a comedy channel from Egypt.

What are Yahya's plans for the future? "I want to create a forum for all Arabic-language satellite enthusiasts on my website, which I have designed all by myself. Plus I will keep helping with the translation of OSD texts into Arabic, above all for ABCom receivers."



■ Yahya's first translation job: PC Editor with Arabic menu.

Official Cubebox Arabic Support Forum

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■ Yahya's new website at www.cubebox.org