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Television Business International

Issue #5 October 2016

The magazine celebrating television's golden era of scripted programming

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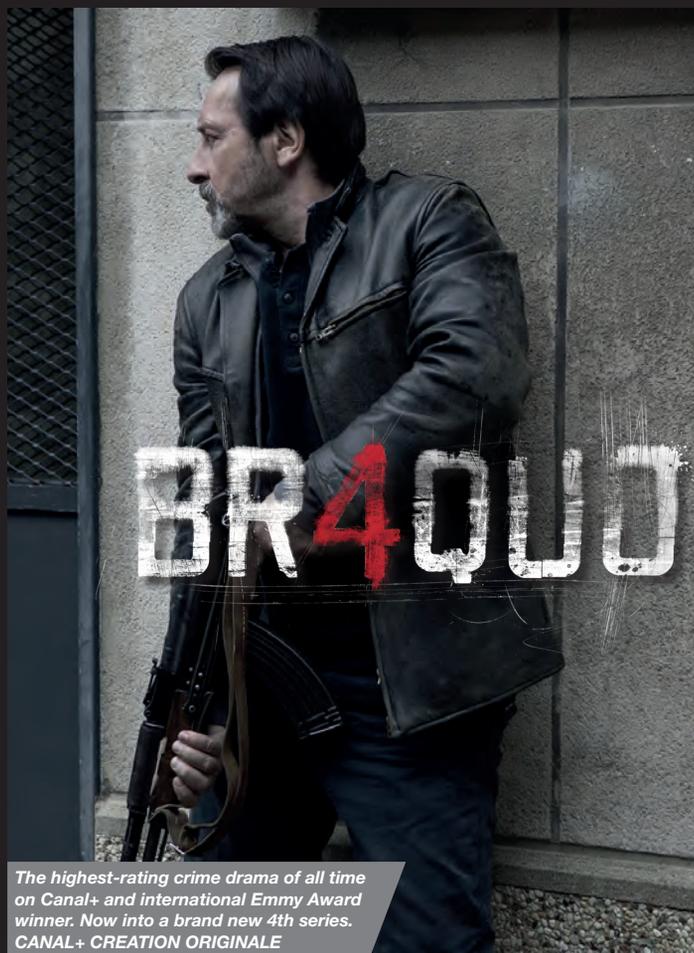


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## Editor's Note



There's a lot of debate about where the international television drama market is headed. Is there too much? Where are the procedurals? How can we keep up with so much telly, and how on earth is it all going to make money?

The point that overrides all those conversations is that TV drama, in October 2016 as I write this note, evidentially remains a pretty outstanding medium, doesn't it?

HBO's *The Night Of*, a remake of BBC drama *Criminal Justice* and starring the always-fantastic John Turturro, has been warmly received by press and public alike, while the reviews coming in for *Westworld*, which debuts here in the UK on the night we go to press, suggest the sci-fi/Western mash-up will be nothing short of scintillating (despite all its problems during production).

This month, the viewing public also gets an answer to the *Walking Dead* cliffhanger that's been the subject of literally hundreds of online articles (see our exclusive interview with cast and producers on page 26), while at MIPCOM, the industry will get a first look at the latest big-ticket dramas such as World War II piece *The Halcyon*, featured in-depth on page 20, and AMC's *The Son* (Pierce Brosnan's return to the small screen, reviewed on page 10).

That's enough evidence for most people, but those who remain unconvinced should turn their attention to our awards ceremony on the eve of the market at the Carlton Hotel in Cannes, France.

The Content Innovation Awards, in just its second year, is becoming a major event celebrating the best of the best in the TV tech and content worlds. The nominations for the Best Series Launch include *Outcast*, *Versailles*, *The A Word* and *11/22/63*, while the Breakout International Drama category pits Netflix's *Narcos* against BBC One drama *Poldark* and Sky-Canal+ copro *The Last Panthers*. It's an A-grade selection.

The winners might have been announced by the time you read this, and congratulations to the victors in advance, but ultimately the CIAs prove we have a drama sector that remains in extremely rude health. The day that stops being the case is when we should consider whether everything's heading for a disastrous financial collapse, but that day is not today.

Jesse Whittock

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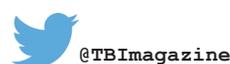
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# Award Winner: *The Night Manger*

The arms and espionage drama scooped two Emmys and won the Grand Prize at the Seoul International Drama Awards. The team behind the John Le Carré adaptation talk to Stewart Clarke

When TBI asked about *The Night Manger's* prospects ahead of the Emmys, executive producer Stephen Garrett professed to being “very British”, and not holding out too much hope. Correctly, as it turned out, he identified *The People v. O.J. Simpson* as a very strong rival – “a huge show that resonated with everyone”, he said of the FX show. The American series went on to win the outstanding limited series accolade, while *Game of Thrones* scooped another bagful of gongs.

As the co-founder of *Spooks* prodco Kudos, Garrett is no stranger to the awards circuit. “It’s like being a child,” he says. “It’s thrilling and tense, but you have to slightly numb yourself, because getting a nomination and not winning can be really depressing. You have to just be pleased you are nominated because on the whole it is the best stories that get nominations. But who actually wins can be a bit of a lottery.”

In the event, *The Night Manger* did bag a double Emmy haul. The six-part drama, about an ex-army officer turned hotel manager who gets sucked into a world of espionage and arms dealing, also went on to win the Grand Prize at the Seoul International Drama Awards.

*The Night Manger* had 12 EMMY nominations in total, winning two: Victor Reyes scooped the best miniseries score in the craft Emmys, and Susanne Bier took the best directing for a miniseries accolade. Bier is no stranger to winning gongs, having scooped an

Oscar for Danish movie *In a Better World*. *The Night Manger* was her first TV work, and ahead of launch earlier this year she told TBI what she wanted to bring to the project. “I wanted people to be seduced by [villain] Richard Roper in the same way that [protagonist] Jonathan is seduced by him,” she said. “The main difference with this and a feature was it was six hours, not two, but I shot it in the same way as a film, not as individual episodes.”

The BBC and AMC drama was also a first project for Garrett’s new company, Character Seven, and the first TV work for The Ink Factory, the prodco run by Le Carré’s sons, Stephen and Simon Cornwell.

“It was a challenge because this was an adaptation of something from a prominent, living author who was the father of the two people who are your producing partners,” Garrett says. “As a producer you have to be faithful to the spirit of the book, but it would have fallen apart if we were too faithful, as what worked on the page was not what would work as a piece of TV.”

The producers changed the setting, sex of one of the main characters, and the ending, with writing on the denouement continuing right up to the culmination of filming.

*The Night Manger* was a remarkably successful TV debut for the Ink Factory, with the company having previously focused on features (it now has one unified TV and film development department).



“It was our first tentative step into TV and longer-form narrative,” Stephen Cornwell says. “When we started thinking about it, limited or miniseries were toxic. That has changed in last couple of years, and *The Night Manger* opened our eyes to the potential of TV.”

The series averaged 6.3 million viewers in a Sunday night slot on BBC One in the UK, but fared less well in its Tuesday night slot on AMC in the US. The opener garnered less than a million viewers in the States, somewhat mitigated by a decent +3 performance, factoring in catch-up and timeshifted viewing.

The series was widely compared to the *James Bond* films. While being mentioned in the same breath as one the most popular movie



photos: Des Willie. © 2015 The Night Manger Limited. All Rights Reserved

### The Spy Who Came in From the Cold

Next up for *The Night Manger* producer Stephen Garrett and Ink Factory is a TV adaptation of one of John Le Carré's best-known books, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. They have teamed with the TV arm of Paramount, which is also the studio behind the 1965 Richard Burton movie adaptation. Paramount Worldwide Television Licensing & Distribution, which is better known for selling features, will handle international sales.

"We have thought about it since the inception of The Ink Factory," says co-CEO Stephen Cornwell. "In terms of Le Carré's work, and interest in the Cold War, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* is the gold standard. There is a sense of relevance and prescience in the way that the divisions of the Cold War are returning. It has taken a few years to unpick the rights, but has been on the horizon for a while."

The 1963 book is better known than *The Night Manger*, which was published 30 years later. Cornwell says: "One interesting challenge on our minds is that the book is so iconic – it shifted and invented much of the language of the spy novel, and created the realistic spy story – so how do you reinvent something that has been that much imitated?"

For Le Carré, the adaptation has greater meaning. "He's very excited," Cornwell says. "It's poignant because, as he nears end of career, this was his first global book."

franchises of all time is hardly a cross to bear, it's not wholly accurate, according to Stephen Cornwell. "Tom Hiddleston's Pine is a man at a point of intersection, who becomes drawn into a secretive world," he says. "It has some of the scope and lavishness of Bond, but a more emotional and human entrypoint. It has some of the same tropes: there's a villain [played by Hugh Laurie] who is frightening but inhabits a world you want to hang out in. Roper is very engaging, and I think that part is very akin to Bond stories."

Laurie's casting as the wealthy arms dealer Roper came after the *House* star had tried to option *The Night Manger* rights in 1993. He was outbid by Paramount, which set up a

film adaptation with Robert Towne (*Mission: Impossible*) and Sidney Pollack (*Out of Africa*). As with a subsequent version planned by Brad Pitt's Plan B, it didn't come to fruition, in all likelihood because the novel needed more than a two-hour movie, which it was afforded on television.

The chances of more of the show? Slim, but not impossible. "There are lots of avenues you could go down," says Simon Cornwell. "Obviously the show has been very successful, and it would be weird if we didn't have those conversations. There's a lot of interest, but also a lot of Le Carré books not adapted yet." **S**



In the spotlight:

# Frank Spotnitz

Beginning his writing career on *The X-Files*, Frank Spotnitz has gone on to become one of the world's most prolific small-screen scribes. His Amazon alternative-history drama *The Man in the High Castle* this year received four Emmy nominations, while his latest series, *Ransom*, is based on the experiences of French crisis negotiator Laurent Combalbert and is an international coproduction for CBS, Global and TF1. He is also introducing *Medici: Masters of Florence*, a new series for Italy's Rai that stars Dustin Hoffman

### **The drama programmes that most influenced my career**

It's a massively difficult question because I watched so much television as a kid, so it would have to be something from when I was very young, as that's when I was most impressionable. I go back a lot to my imagination from my childhood. I would have to say *The Twilight Zone*, closely followed by *Star Trek: The Original Series*. They transported me to other worlds, and were about something that made me think. I still look to them for inspiration. As I've been doing this a long time now, I think about what it is that makes me do what I do – and I realise those shows were deeply engaging but left you with something to think about.

### **The executive who has influenced me the most**

There's no question – that's Chris Carter from *The X Files*. It was my first job in television having come out of my second film school, and he was such a brilliant, determined and competitive writer and producer who never gave up and insisted everyone around him did their best. I couldn't have had a better teacher or mentor than Chris.

### **Where I find most inspiration and how I research my shows**

I love so many types of stories, and it's one of the great pleasures of where I am in my career that I have freedom to do all of these different genres. For most of my career I was very happily typecast in a certain kind of storytelling because of *The X Files*, but now I'm free to do science fiction, supernatural stories, historical dramas, murder mysteries and thrillers and even a comedy drama. It's wonderful to let my mind wander to all of these different places.

In the case of *Ransom*, the show was based on an amazing, real French hostage negotiator called Laurent Combalbert, who I met several times. The hero character is based on him, and I got to see how his mind works and the principles he employs to resolve conflicts. That was hugely inspiring and invaluable in developing the series.

*Medici* was completely the opposite – it was the first time I'd done full-on historical drama. This was about a family from 15th century Italy. We know a lot about them, but there's a lot more we don't, and so you have pieces of the historical record. To create a drama you have to fill in the blanks, and connect the dots, and I really liked that. Bizarrely, it was very similar to the genre storytelling of *The X Files* – you only have to have the theme and the reason behind it. *Medici* is ultimately about people who are trying to do good in the world but realise that to do good, sometimes you have to do bad.

### **The best advice I've ever received about writing and producing**

It's going to sound awfully mundane, but Chris Carter said to me that 90% of writing is keeping your butt in a chair and making yourself do the work. You have to make yourself solve the problem. Unfortunately these days you can keep your butt on the chair, but be browsing the internet instead of word processing!

### **My favourite drama of the current 'golden era' of drama**

There's no question – for me it's *Breaking Bad*. It's not just because Vince Gilligan is a friend and a great artist, but I think it changed television. There have been many other shows during this period – *The Wire*, *The Sopranos*, *Mad Men* and on and on – but the whole



*The X Files*

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*Ransom*



*Medici: Masters of Florence*

idea of *Breaking Bad* was to chart the change of a character: the pitch was to go from Mr. Chips to Scarface. That was really a radical idea, and I don't think Vince even appreciated how radical it was. It changed the form.

Now there are many, many similar series, and no-one had done it before. Both for its originality and excellence in execution in every way, I have to say *Breaking Bad*.

### **How international programming has changed the market**

It really is the best time in television, and even more so it's the best time in European television. I think we're just at the beginning of seismic shifts in European television and new opportunities for European talent. It's connected to the explosion of US television: until about six years ago, when I moved to the UK, America sold television around the world, but wouldn't buy it from anywhere else – in the rare exceptions we would buy a great British show and put it on PBS's *Masterpiece*, public television. Other than that we really didn't, but because of the explosion in distribution platforms in the US we now have this unending appetite for content.

Not all of these platforms can afford drama that costs US\$3 million or US\$4 million an hour, so they've turned to Europe. As a result, there's a great demand for European shows, and people in the US are desperately trying to figure out shows involving European talent. That's led to more opportunity than ever and the possibility for European writers, producers and actors to make TV dramas on the same scale as American drama.

That's going to affect the industry in all kinds of profound ways, and you're just beginning to see those changes in the way TV is distributed and consumed. It's happening a little slower in Europe than in the US, but it's a very exciting time. The industry is going to expand into a bigger market, and there's a need for more talented people to get into it.

### **The one piece of IP I would love to work with**

I have to say almost the entire oeuvre of Graham Greene. He's one of my very favourite writers, but it is very hard to adapt his books. The ones I'd most love to film, like *Heart of the Matter*, would be very challenging to film. Those are just beautiful, profound stories that would be a thrill to work with. **S**

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# Brosnan's back

**The man known as James Bond and Thomas Crown returns to television in a multi-generational character study set in the early days of Texas**

Pierce Brosnan's return to television comes in the shape of AMC period piece *The Son*, which is the cable network's attempt to tell the story of the birth of the US state of Texas.

The former *James Bond* plays Eli, the patriarch of the McCullough family, who was born on the day Texas was declared an independent republic in 1836 and thus gained the nickname "The First Son of Texas".

"This is a multi-generational family story about the birth of Texas," says Jenna Santoianni, executive VP of television series at producer and distributor Sonar Entertainment. "It's about love and family, and how this can be taken away from you, and it's about how empires are built and fall."

Eli's story is one of tragedy, success and family, and is based on a Pulitzer-nominated book by Philipp Meyer, who adapted the book with Lee Shipman and Brian McGreevey with the financial backing of Sonar, which packaged the series and sold it to AMC.

Eli looks back at his life through his brutal worldview, which is informed by his childhood, during which he was kidnapped and raised by the ruthless Comanche Native Americans after his white family were slaughtered. After rejoining the white world, McCullough uses force to take over oil field and cattle ranches, and builds an empire. However, the means used to create his lot lock the McCullough family into an ending cycle of violence and conflict.

The book, which was published three years ago and runs longer than the series, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2014. It has been described as 'masterly' and 'remarkable', with 'an eerie, heart-stopping finish', and has been compared with Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*.

"The television story is Pierce looking at three generations of his family and his legacy," says Santoianni. "How does a man raised in an incredibly strange place become who he is today?"

Henry Garrett, Zahn McClarnon, Paola Nunez and Sydney Lucas co-star, but the draw is Brosnan in his first TV series starring role since NBC adventure drama *Remington Steele*, which ran between 1982 and 1987. He replaced Sam O'Neill, who left for personal reasons.

"Piers Brosnan is a great number one on the call sheet," says Santoianni. "We were incredibly fortunate to get him to step in." **S**

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# Paper trail

Can a multilayered drama billed as Croatia's answer to *The Wire* live up to the hype?

Parallels between HBO's masterpiece *The Wire* and Croatian drama *The Paper* were first made in the local press, with local film critic Jurica Pavicic noting that every episode opens with a line that a character will later utter – a direct homage to David Simon's series.

They don't stop there, though. Besides being set primarily in a newsroom (*Wire* fans will remember the Baltimore Sun scenes of season five), the series lays out the discord between the characters, their lives and aspirations, and the political and social structures that keep them from growing and progressing.

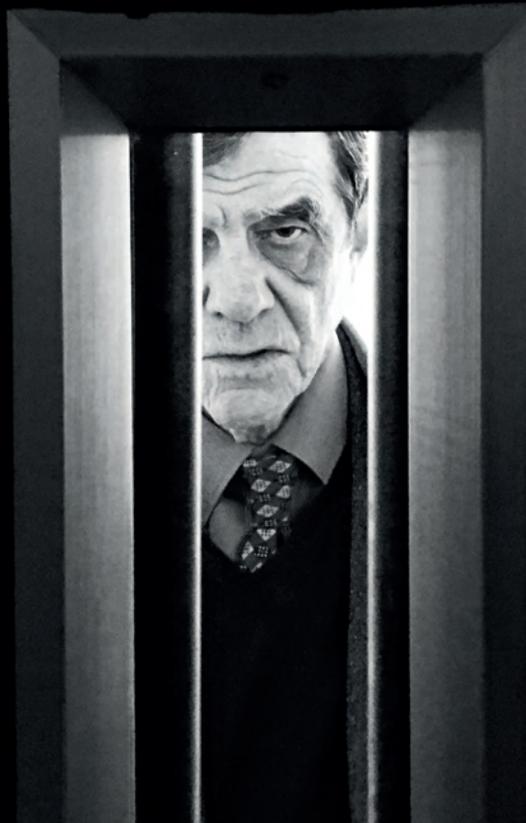
*The Paper* is set in a busy news organisation of the same name that has been acquired by an influential and politically conservative building contractor from a powerful family, who wishes for a domestic scandal to be kept out of the headlines and for the left-wing title to endorse a right-wing political candidate.

Some staff members fight for their editorial integrity, while others have their own corrupt connections and internal demons that conflict and compromise them.

"Journalists are usually presented either as saints or hate figures, but this news room is stuck between money and big politics," says Nebojsa Taraba, partner and content producer at the twelve-part series' production company, Drugi Plan. "The characters are at the boil and are lost in the politics. They don't know what to do – they're stuck with expectations of the public, the profession and their families. Can they react, or is the battle already lost?"

Just as *The Wire* is considered a radical piece of filmmaking, *The Paper* has caused uproar in Croatia, where it is scheduled to play on a public television network, HRT1, which is not used to such openly provocative programming. Both the government and HRT management have changed since the series was commissioned in January, meaning a local debut date has not emerged.

Taraba, who created the 12x50mins show with writer Ivica Diki and Miodrag Sila, says the situation locally means it is all the important the series performs internationally. Keshet International has the global distribution rights. **S**





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# National Treasure

The titular national treasure in the new UK drama four-parter is Paul Finchley, one half of a much-loved comedy double act who is accused of a rape in a case dating back to the 1970s.

The series apes real-life events in the UK, where Operation Yewtree and subsequent investigations into allegations of historical sex abuse by celebrities and well-known public figures have dominated headlines.

*National Treasure* is, however, complete fiction. “We didn’t intend to make something that was a thinly veiled version of a real person and events, or one of the huge trials that have taken place,” says George Ormond, series executive producer at The Forge, which made the show. “The series is very current, but is not in any way a factual drama. It has a fictional constellation of characters and that allowed us to really explore what we wanted to explore.”

The Forge is the UK prodco established by Company Pictures cofounder George Faber in 2014, with backing from All3Media, whose sales arm, All3Media International, is handling distribution and launching the show at MIPCOM.

Faber came up with the original outline of the idea for the show, which behind with the story of the fictional Finchley after he gets a knock on the door from the police, is accused of an historical sex crime, and is put trial.

After development, *The Last Panthers* scribe Jack Thorne came on board, with a clear vision for the series, says Ormond. “What excited him was exploring questions of doubt – how families cope if someone close is accused of a terrible crime – and the world of celebrity and its distorting lens.”

When the show was commissioned, Thorne said: “What I’ve always loved about Channel 4 is that it’s a place to discuss big ideas. *National Treasure* is a piece about doubt, about the smell of abuse, about how we as a society live in Yewtree times.”

Piers Wenger, now at the BBC, ordered the show in his former role as Channel 4 head of drama. Commissioning the series, he said *National Treasure* would be “a powerful drama that goes beyond recent headlines, exploring the human and emotional impact when a whole life is called into question”.

Finchley is played by Robbie Coltrane (*Cracker*), his wife Marie by Julie Walters (*Indian Summers*). The star’s daughter, Dee, is played by Andrea Riseborough, and *National Treasure* reunited the actor with

director Marc Munden, after the pair worked together on gritty period drama *The Devil’s Whore*.

Ormond says that while the characters are made up, the producers endeavoured to get the procedural details right to heighten the realism. “The characters and story are entirely fictional, but we looked at the realities of the process, how the police operate, and why these cases are so difficult to investigate and try,” he says.

The four-part, highly serialised format would lend itself to being stripped, but commissioning broadcaster Channel 4 in the UK decided to play it in weekly instalments.

Playing out chronologically, Thorne’s story sees a particular focus on the three main characters through each of the first three instalments, with Finchley examined in episode one, Marie in two, and Dee in three. The guilt or otherwise of the star is revealed, but not until the fourth episode, which is given over to the trial.

The story is on the one hand very UK-centric, but it also has elements that will give it an appeal further afield, the producers say. “There are lots of ways in which it is very British,” Ormond says. “It is responding to something that has happened here, but unfortunately that’s not something unique to Britain.

“The currency of the story is the abuse of power. The best stories are rooted in something very specific that also have a universal quality – this is about what would you do if someone close to you was accused of something like this, and how well can you ever really know the people you are close to. The audience is put in the place of Finchley’s daughter and wife.” **S**

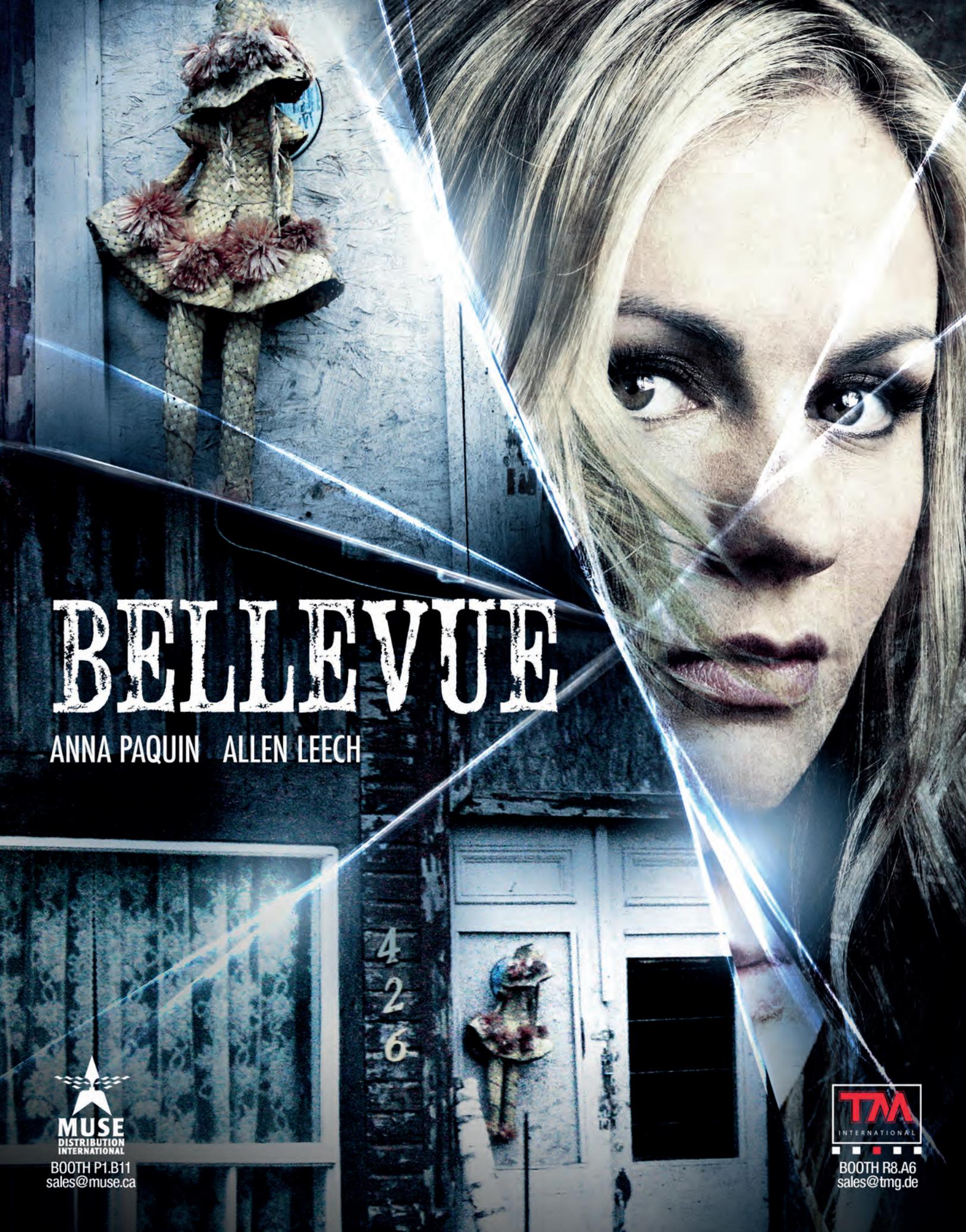
## In focus

**The producer:** The Forge

**The distributor:** All3Media International

**The broadcaster:** Channel 4 (UK)

**The concept:** Four-parter following events after a well-known celebrity is accused of a sex crime dating back decades, and the effect on him and his family



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# Six shooter

History is going back to the recent past with a Navy SEALs-inspired drama

History is leaving the distant past behind with its latest drama, which is part of the US cable network's plan to diversify its subject matter and continue investing in original high-end drama, a strategy that so far has brought more hits than misses through the likes of *Vikings* and *The Bible*.

*Six* will be part-action flick, part-character study of a group of elite US Navy SEALs, SEAL Team Six, according to Bob DeBitetto, president of brand strategy and business development at History parent A+E Networks and boss of its production wing, A+E Studios.

"This has a unique style that's interested in the action through the eyes of the SEAL Six team," he says. "You won't get overuse of shaky cams, as they have a stealthy calm about the way they approach those missions."

The series comes from screenwriter William Broyles Jr., who worked on the screenplay for war epic *Saving Private Ryan* and on Kathryn Bigelow's *Jarhead*, and has military experience, and his son, David Broyles. The Weinstein Company is coproducing with A+E Studios after successfully pitching the series, and retired Navy SEAL Mitchell Hall is technical advisor.

"An inspiration was [Clint Eastwood's 2014 war drama] *American Sniper*, and the realistic exploration of how it was for these people to go into incredibly dangerous places with their jobs and then go home to their families and live normal lives," says DeBitetto.

Inspired by real missions, the series is a highly serialised effort, with each planned season (several have been mapped out) focusing on a different theatre of war.

Season one begins with a flashback to a disastrous mission against the Taliban that has serious implications for the modern-day team, where the SEALs are set to battle the Nigerian terrorist organisation Boko Haram.

DeBitetto says the series is not simply set up as a good-versus-evil play. "It's not interested in a two-dimensional, black-and-white cardboard-cut-out approach," he says. "It's quite complex: our heroes are not always so heroic. The show is led by actual circumstances, some of which lead to heroism. But what I love about what the creative team has done is that it has created a certain dispassion that goes deep into the psyches of the soldiers." **S**



## In focus

**Format:** 8x60mins

**Stars:** Walter Goggins, Barry Sloane, Kyle Schmid, Juan Pablo Raba, Goggins and Sloane will be in Cannes at MIPCOM

**Distribution:** A+E Networks International



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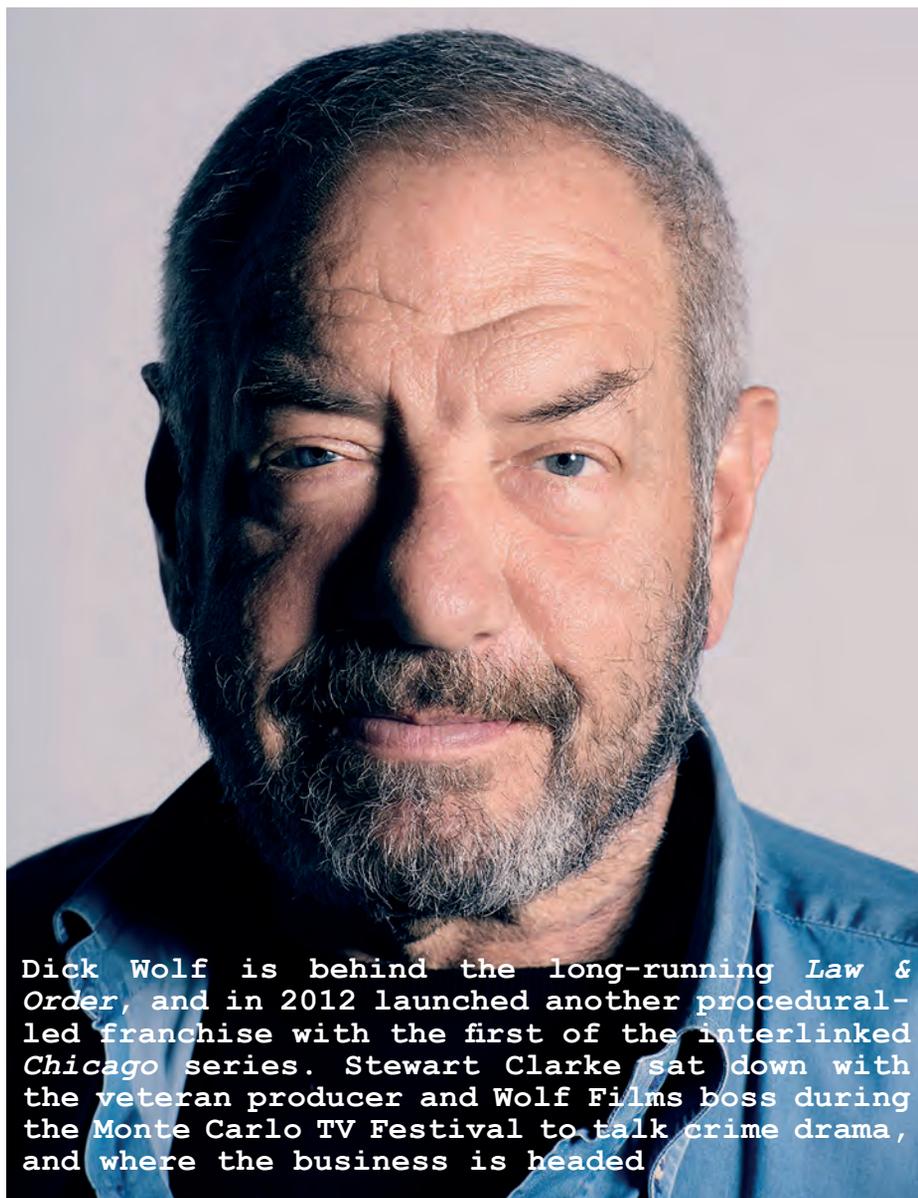


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# The Procedural King



Dick Wolf is behind the long-running *Law & Order*, and in 2012 launched another procedural-led franchise with the first of the interlinked *Chicago* series. Stewart Clarke sat down with the veteran producer and Wolf Films boss during the Monte Carlo TV Festival to talk crime drama, and where the business is headed

With *Chicago Justice* set for a midseason launch on NBC, you will have continued to add to the procedurals based in the city, alongside *Chicago Med*, *Chicago P.D.* and *Chicago Fire*. How tough is it to get four interlinked shows on air?

DW: It's hard to get multiple shows on the same network, and I have been extraordinarily lucky. NBC is used to me after 32 years, but for

somebody to come along and try to convince [CBS boss] Les [Moonves], for example, that he should give up two hours of the schedule? It's not impossible, but it's unlikely.

When [Moonves] does have multiple shows, like *NCIS* and *NCIS: LA*, there's not real integration. Maybe [*NCIS* star] Mark Harmon turns up for a scene, but the real joy of my integration is it mimics the reality of the way these services operate in Chicago.

The exteriors of the new show are a block-and-a-half from the fire house we use the

exterior of, so they are within visual distance of each other, and where the paramedics take people is *Chicago Med*. It's the same universe, so you need shows in the same place and multiple shows to reflect that.

Even *NCIS* is not geared to this kind of seamless character integration, but the research says this is one of the audience's favourite parts of the shows.

**You are famous for your dramas, but you also make unscripted shows. What is going on with that side of the business? Is there a connection between the two?**

I have got a bunch of unscripted stuff on. *Cold Justice* might be moving to Oxygen after three years on TNT, and having got 23 indictments and 15 people back in prison. It's quite extraordinary that it worked very well. A&E's *Nightwatch* has been in New Orleans and is now coming to Chicago.

They are all in the same wheelhouse; it is an interesting way of doing reality shows that are cousins of the scripted shows.

**How similar or different are the processes of getting scripted and unscripted on air?**

The thing that is surprising is that unscripted moves much more slowly than scripted. For example, it took many months to make a Netflix deal, the equivalent of two development cycles for a scripted show. It's endlessly fascinating and I'm glad I get a chance to do it, but it is nothing like network [drama] shows in terms of if they hit, and what the profitability is. You can take all the unscripted shows, and even if you had a huge success, it would be equivalent to a very minor scripted show economically. The economics are very different.

**Netflix has rewritten a lot of the rules when it comes to TV drama. What impact has it had on the business?**

Nobody knows how many people are

watching any given Netflix show, but they are making money. So when Ted Sarandos comes out and says they are going to spend US\$5 billion on programming it's like 'What!' It's a huge amount. Netflix is a game-changer.

This is something I have said for the last couple of years – the business has changed more in the past six years than in the previous 60, and more in the last year than the previous six. It's a constantly evolving universe, with no rules.

**What challenges does that present?**

The bottom line will be how you make money on this stuff and monetise the back end, because nobody knows what anything is going to be worth going forward. The traditional syndicated market is essentially over in terms of paying US\$2 million an hour for something like *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.

That deal was done when the only other place you could see it than NBC was USA Network. Nobody remembers that *SVU* was a landmark deal because it was the first time there had been repurposing nine days after it ran on NBC, which hadn't been done before.

[NBCU boss] Bob Greenblatt and I were talking about this. In three years I don't think there will be an Upfront in May, or any telling people when shows are going to be on. There will be an icon on the screen saying 'NBC', and it will be a question of 'what do you want to watch?'

**You are known for procedurals, and internationally the genre is in demand. What is your take on serialised versus procedural?**

It all depends on the show. *Fire* is in fact a blue-collar soap – it is highly serialised – and the stories go over an entire season sometimes. *P.D.* is a much more traditional cop show; there's some arcing and serialisation of character and personal lives. Then you have *Med*, which does not have much going on outside the hospital. There's enough going on that you're not going home with the characters. It's a medical show; we're not reinventing the wheel.

**How have you seen the TV drama business evolve?**

There's going to be a huge business shakeout. There was something like 450 scripted shows on American TV last year, and that can't be sustained, because they're all made at a deficit.

Take *Fargo*, which is a very good show. It gets one million viewers a week. What is the value of that when it goes off that network, the secondary value? How much will people pay for it? How much would Netflix pay?

**Does that mean you agree with FX chief John Landgraf that there's too much scripted TV?**

I've known John for 25 years, and what he said was true: I called him [the morning Landgraf revealed his research on the proliferation of scripted series] and said, 'thank you'.

There's a huge bubble – all of these smaller cable channels that are making original programming are out of their minds from a business standpoint.

Everybody is making dramas and I don't even know why, because most of these channels do not have the promotional basis to launch these shows.

It's almost the dirty little secret that the

reason it's so great to brand things is you don't have to rewrite it. If the first one works it's: 'Oh, ok, its *Chicago*, I get it'.

Educating the audience about new shows is getting harder and harder and harder. I remember in the old days when if you didn't have a 30-share you were cancelled, but promotionally when you have a 30-share of the audience now, you can offer them a new show, and maybe get them to watch that too.

**There was a lot of speculation earlier this year that with your NBC deal up, you might both part ways. You then renewed your agreement through to 2020. Was it a close-run thing?**

Leaving was never really an option. You say it's an option because you try to maintain some negotiating neutrality, but the only reason I wouldn't have come back is if they had said we have no interest in continuing this.

I'm lucky that they still want these shows, and they are working. I have had the same office and same phone number for 32 years – that's probably a record! **S**



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**Act 1** “If you were to survive the tough years of the Second World War, music, fun and sex would have been part of it,” says Left Bank Pictures CEO Andy Harries of MIPCOM-bound period drama *The Halcyon*.

Beginning in 1940, a year into the battle for the future of Europe and at the onset of Germany’s airborne assaults on the UK, the series will tell the story of guests and staff at a fictional five-star central London hotel, capturing the impact of conflict on families, politics, relationships and work. Much of the story will be related through the eyes of an American journalist, making the series more palatable for US audiences.

This bustling melting pot of different classes and dynamics provides the backdrop to the show, with the deliberately jaunty music of the era contrasting with the unrelenting threat of air raids, destruction and fear of death.

“In the 1940s during the war, hotels were safe havens,” says producer Chris Croucher. “Hundreds of people moved into hotels – the rich aristocrats had lost all their servants, who’d gone to fight in the war, but still wanted the same standard of living, and then there were rich European aristocrats who’d fled the Nazis. That created a hotbed of international characters.”

The concept for *The Halcyon* emerged from Left Bank development meetings around four years ago, with Harries keen to create a series that explored the early period of Winston Churchill’s time as a wartime prime minister, which also included the iconic music of the time.

Left Bank, best known for series such as BBC cop drama *Wallander* and Netflix period piece *The Crown*, had initially been in discussions with UK paycaster Sky about a commission, though Harries recalls that British drama producers were acutely aware that *Downton Abbey* was drawing to its conclusion (it was ultimately cancelled after seven seasons last year), meaning terrestrial ITV would soon be in the market for something new. “It was clear ITV would be looking around and would be talking to producers,” he says.

The network came onboard with an eight-part commission, providing around a third of the total budget. The order was one of the last drama chief Steve November made before he exited, as new ITV controller Kevin Lygo put in place his own senior management team.

Announcing the series in December 2015, November said: “A hotel is the perfect place to show ambition in telling the story of World War II. It was an extraordinary time in our country’s history, and London was a transforming city. *The Halcyon* takes us right to the heart of this as the hotel is busy, energetic and vibrant, which reflects how people carried on with their lives with defiance in the air.”

Left Bank was able to take the series into production without a coproducer because of its parent, Sony



Pictures Television, which invested in the project and took international distribution in return, and the British high-end-drama tax-breaks system.

“You have to make big bets to make a show like this,” says Harries. “It has to be a drama for the international market, and production values are very important. The great advantage we have is Sony is a really good distributor, which knows the value of shows.”

Charlotte Jones (*Without You*) was drafted in to create the world and its characters, with Jack Lothian, who worked with Left Bank on Sky 1’s *Strike Back*, refining the scripts as lead series writer.

Casting saw Steven Mackintosh (*Luther*) and Olivia Williams (*Anna Karenina*) landing the starring roles. Kara Tointon, the actress and Pygmalion/My Fair Lady theatre star, landed a key role as the hotel’s resident singer, while Matt Ryan (*Constantine*) plays the US hack watching events unfold as an outsider.

# The Halcyon



All in all, there is a main ensemble cast of 22, with the overall number rising to 66. Significantly, half the crew, including Croucher, worked on ITV's *Downton Abbey*, which has now drawn to a close.

**Act 2** *The Halcyon* opens during a party to celebrate its 50th anniversary, with Tointon, clothed in a classic 1940s dress, belting out a fast-paced number to the musical backdrop of a house band, while a choreographed dance group performs in front of them. The raucous scene – “the idea that any day you could be blown up creates frenetic energy and wild abandonment,” says Croucher – will also close the season.

Jazz singer Jamie Cullum has recorded two songs for the series, while R'n'B star Beverley Knight performs. Harries notes that secondary revenue should be derived from a forthcoming music album of original songs.

Croucher and his team have built a huge hotel set that allows for sweeping crane shots in the central atrium, and more intimate moments in guest rooms, switchboards, kitchens and manager's offices elsewhere. The interior is modelled on Blythe House in west London, with the Land Registry in Lincolns Inn Field stunting as the exterior.

“We wanted everything to work with a long-term plan,” says Croucher. “[Period drama] *Home Fires* has finished, though ITV still has *The Durrells*, but hopefully this can become one of its returning dramas.”

The plan is for each season to represent one year of the war, logically leading to a natural six-season narrative arc that ends on VE (Victory in Europe) Day on May 7, 1945, when the Allies accepted Germany's formal and unconditional surrender.

Left Bank and ITV have been careful to remain as faithful as possible to real events of the war, with Croucher using his experience working on *Downton Abbey* as a



reason why. “What’s interesting about the Second World War is that a lot of people really know the history, and if *Downton* taught me anything it’s that people will let you know [if you’re wrong]. You have to make the story work, but you try your best to be accurate. One episode happens on September 7, 1940, which is the first day of the Blitz. It actually happened in daylight, which not a lot of people know.”

In terms of budget, Croucher says Left Bank pushed the envelope as far as possible on a British drama budget that is “comparable to *Downton*”. “We’ve got bombs and planes, but through the microcosm of the hotel,” he explains. “When we started the show it was all set in a hotel, but we realised early on we had to expand the world: you can’t do a show about the war and not see the war, can you?”

Therefore, there will be representations of London’s working-class East End of the forties and RAF Spitfire bases. “As the series goes, fingers crossed, we can expand, but with the hotel as the central heartbeat,” says Croucher.

**Act 3** The first guests checking out *The Halcyon* will be those invited to a premiere screening and Q&A at the Palais des Festivals on Sunday, October 16, at 6.30pm local time, on the eve of MIPCOM.

Market delegates will witness a screening and a panel discussion with producers. “We’re doing the big unveiling on Sunday night,” says Sony Pictures Television’s president

of international distribution, Keith Le Goy. “It’s what we did four years ago for *House of Cards*. It’s a show that’s starting to attract a massive amount of interest, we’re expecting a tremendous response to the screening.”

SPT is indeed investing a lot in *The Halcyon*, as part of the US studio’s strategy to back its own creative talent, celebrate their work and distribute their programming to major players around the world. “We say internally that we’re going to party like it’s 1939,” says Le Goy.

With the obvious attractions for a US partner, and the period setting that American audiences have taken to since *Downton*, there has been much speculation that a deal with PBS is on the cards.

TBI understands, however, that the US pubcaster is just one of a number of interested parties, and that the likes of Netflix, which is already working with Left Bank on the upcoming royal drama *The Queen*, are considering a wider, global play, while Starz has been pitched the series.

SPT, for its part, is playing its cards close to its chest. “The distribution strategy is very simple: selling it to the right partners and for good value,” says Le Goy. “We view the show as one that will perform incredibly well here in the US.

“We have had interest from the obvious networks, and we will certainly be maintaining dialogue with them, but also with other interested parties.”

In the UK, *The Halcyon* opens its doors to the viewing public next year. SPT will suggest that interested parties book early to avoid disappointment. **S**

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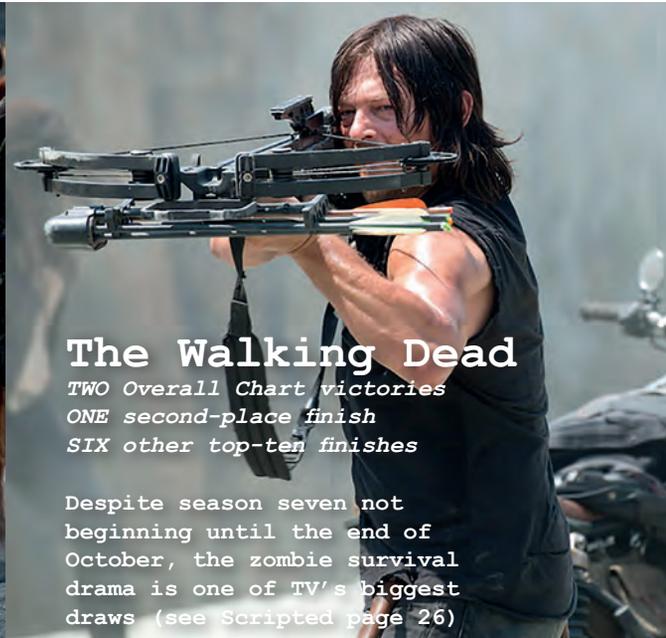
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## Game of Thrones

*NINE Overall Chart victories*  
*TWO second-place finishes*  
*ONE third-placed finish*

The fantasy drama became the biggest winner of Emmys in history this year, and was also the top performing show by demand expressions



## The Walking Dead

*TWO Overall Chart victories*  
*ONE second-place finish*  
*SIX other top-ten finishes*

Despite season seven not beginning until the end of October, the zombie survival drama is one of TV's biggest draws (see Scripted page 26)

# Charting the rise of drama



## Orange is the New Black

*FOUR Digital Chart victories*  
*FIVE top ten Overall Chart finishes*



## House of Cards

*FOUR Digital Chart victories*  
*EIGHT other top ten Digital Chart finishes*



## Stranger Things

ONE Overall Chart victory

TWO Digital Chart victories

Taking the crown for most-surprising hit of the year, the nostalgic Netflix sci-fi series is currently up there as the most popular show in the US

Earlier this year, TBI began publishing charts that rank TV programmes by their in-demand status, tracking how many times they had been searched for, mentioned on social media, accessed through peer-to-peer sites or included in various other digital touch points.

The data, supplied by the hotshot tech firm Parrot Analytics, throws up few surprises. *Game of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead* began the year as the television's biggest draws, but have since been joined by watercooler hit of the summer, *Stranger Things*. Netflix's investment in original programmes has also seen *House of Cards*, *Orange is the New Black*, *Narcos* and *Marvel's Daredevil* all top of various charts. We've now crunched the numbers on the best-performing shows, and here are the results.



## Marvel's Daredevil

ONE Digital Chart victory

TEN other Digital Chart top ten finishes



## Narcos

ONE Digital Chart victory

ELEVEN other top ten Digital Chart finishes



# Dead ahead

Executive producer Gale Anne Hurd and actor Michael Cudlitz, aka Abraham Ford, tell TBI Scripted how record-breaking zombie drama *The Walking Dead* remains on track as it hurtles towards its seventh season

For Gale Anne Hurd, the success of *The Walking Dead* owes as much to its international following as its record-breaking basic cable ratings on US network AMC.

“Fox International Channels [now subsumed within Fox Networks Group] was involved since the inception,” says the veteran executive producer, who produced big-ticket movies *The Terminator*, *Aliens* and *The Abyss* in the 1980s.

“Those executives bet on the first six episodes, they didn’t wait, and wanted it to go within a week of America. That was game-changing, and let’s not forget how important that was in making the show as successful as it is.”

*The Walking Dead* has reset what television executives understand as success in the US, with episode one of its fifth season in October 2014 scoring 17.3 million – the highest number ever for a non-sports cablecast. Ratings dipped for season six, though they still left every other show trailing far in their wake, with Live+3 and catch-up numbers still making for eye-watering reading (around 20 million for the premiere episode).

Hurd defends the season six performance, saying: “If you look at delayed viewing, the ratings are so close to live. People have a lot more choices and are more comfortable waiting [to watch a programme],

be it a couple of hours or a couple of days.”

Michael Cudlitz, who – spoiler alert – plays the Abraham Ford character (pictured) who could be involved in the resolution of a brutal season six finale cliff-hanger that has divided viewers, attributes the ratings to the fans’ investment in both the show and the comics from which they are derived.

“The fans are incredible – they are so positive and onboard,” he says. “My biggest fear about the show before I started was when I realised there’s this huge fan base that could hate me. I’m one of the iconic comic book characters, and at some point you are confronted with that.”

Interestingly, the *Walking Dead* that preceded both Hurd and Cudlitz – a version that Frank Darabont originally devised before his acrimonious and increasingly litigious split with the production team and network in season two – could have been a very different show.

The story goes that NBC had been interested, but couldn’t understand why a series with two police officer leads (Andrew Lincoln’s heroic Rick Grimes and Jon Bernthal’s maverick Shane Walsh) couldn’t pair up to solve a ‘zombie case of the week’. “Even better, I’m told,” says Hurd, “they wanted to know, ‘does it have to have zombies in it at all?’”

Had that series gone ahead, you wonder if the ratings would have been as dead as the zombies lurking the shadows of each episode. **S**

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# Writer's Room:

Nikolaus Kraemer assesses if Germany is ready to become a leading drama light

Germany is, behind the US, the second-strongest TV market in the world in terms of turnover. Therefore, one would expect TV fiction to be one of the thriving pillars of the television sector there, benefiting from the serious financial backing that the market can offer. The reality is that more and more established fiction time slots are getting cut at the big networks, while there is a trend for growth on the smaller networks, and pay TV and SVOD platforms.

So, while the US celebrates the ongoing 'golden age of television', with more than 400-plus series on air, Germany is still rather shy in terms of beefing up its drama output, especially content targeted at the international market. Only every now and then does a critically acclaimed German drama series gain international recognition, and even more outstandingly render a sale into the tough US market such as the one UFA's *Deutschland 83* managed.

The French, Italian and, of course, UK television markets have so far seemed to be more daring in terms of pushing the creative envelope than Germany. Local original series as well as international coproductions including Roberto Saviano's *Gomorrah*, Stefano Accorsi's *1992* and Paolo Sorrentino's *The Young Pope* were all initiated by Sky Italia and the wider Sky family of pay platforms, establishing Italian series as international must-see TV events.

Next door, in France, productions like *Les Revenants*, *Engrenages*, *Baron Noir* and *Versailles*, all on Canal+, as well as Netflix's first French original series, *Marseille*, have put French series on the international map.

Then there is the UK, with its long established standing as one of the most creative content providers worldwide. Recent TV hits such as *Broadchurch*, *Sherlock*, *The Fall* and *Peaky Blinders* are just a few of its top-rated shows that travel well around the world.

Why has there been no major shift in Germany yet in terms of the internationalisation of TV drama? Besides Rola Bauer's *Tandem* [now part of StudioCanal], which has produced many successful international series out of its Munich base in recent years, German TV fare has sold best when delivered as event movies or miniseries.

Nico Hofmann's teamWorx (now UFA Fiction) has delivered these in assembly-line fashion throughout the years with major hits such as *Ku'damm 56*, *The Airlift* and *Dresden*, but it was the aforementioned *Deutschland 83*, the eight-part Stasi spy series, that became the game changer in 2015. UFA successfully collaborated and coproduced with SundanceTV, which aired the critically-acclaimed German-language shot series in the US with English subtitles. Is this the starting shot the German TV industry has been waiting for all along?

Analysing the German market today it is evident that the smaller TV networks, pay TV and SVOD platforms such as RTL2, VOX, TNT Germany, 13th Street, Maxdome and even ZDFNeo – as well as Netflix, Amazon and Sky Germany – are beefing up their drama output, with an amazing array of storytelling opportunities that didn't



exist before.

Be it RTL 2's four-hour crime-drama series *Neanderthals* (which I created, wrote and coproduced); VOX's *Club der Roten Bänder*, the Germany version of the Catalan format *Polseres Vermelles*; TNT Germany's *Vier Blocks*, about an Arab clan running parts of the Berlin underworld; or Maxdome's *Jerks*, with Christian Ulmen, a famous German comedian.

Adding to this growing niche segment are the SVOD giants Netflix and Amazon Germany, which are both currently producing their first German drama series, *Dark* and *You Are Wanted*, respectively. Then there is, of course, another awakening giant – Sky Germany. It has just partnered with German players ARD, Degeto and Beta Film for their first in-house series, *Babylon Berlin*, with showrunner Tom Tykwer attached, and an astonishing budget of €40 million (US\$45 million) for two eight-episode seasons. Next on Sky's list is a sequel to Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot*.

All of which raises the question: where is German TV heading?

The hopes are that as the above-mentioned niche players push more into long-running drama series targeted at the local and the international market, greater resources will pour into this growth segment.

Germany, with its long tradition in filmmaking starting with the formation of Studio Babelsberg in 1912 and UFA in 1917, has a lot to offer, not only financially, but also creatively.

Being a US-German citizen and a creator, writer and producer living in Los Angeles, I'm optimistic that Germany eventually will learn to be the initiator of cutting-edge local and international content that travels. I'm hoping the activity at the smaller and niche players is a sign that, finally, that is happening. **S**

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