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A Gutsy take on the Moomins

Former FremantleMedia Finland and Friday TV chief Marika Makaroff has landed rights to Scandinavian kids property the Moomins through new prodco, Gutsy Animation. She tells Jesse Whittock about rebooting Tove Jansson's characters for a family audience

While there's been no shortage of brand refreshes and character updates in kids and family entertainment in recent years, none is undergoing as radical a change as the Moomins.

First committed to print by reclusive Finnish children's author Tove Jansson in Sweden in 1945, its hippopotamus-like characters have since been the basis of numerous European children's cartoons, with their values of family and adventure at the core.

The newest, and perhaps most international version of the property yet, *Moominvalley*, takes those tenets and moves them on to primetime schedules for the first time.

Former FremantleMedia Finland and Endemol Shine Nordics-owned Friday TV chief Marika Makaroff, best known as a drama and formats developer and producer, is the driving force behind the project. She tells TBI she has secured a 20-year licence to produce *Moomins* programming until 2036 through her new Finnish prodco, Gutsy Animations.

"This came about as I was living in Sweden and working for Endemol Shine," she says. "After that ended, I wanted to do something on my own that I could choose, and I have this mentality of focusing on and creating meaningful projects."

Launching Gutsy just over 18 months ago, Makaroff has worked quickly to put together what is potentially one of the biggest family series currently in development.

After licensing the rights from Moomin Characters, which creator Jansson founded with her brother Lars to protect the brand, and an Indiegogo crowdfunding process raised more than US\$250,000, Finnish pubcaster YLE's drama division joined the project at development stage.

Makaroff had already established a Bristol-based animation production arm, Gutsy UK, and she then drafted in former Aardman Animation pair Steve Box and John Woolley as director and producer respectively, and Mark Huckerby and Nick Ostler to write.

"This is really Marika's baby," says Woolley, who worked at pioneering stop-motion studio Aardman for 16 years on shows such as *Shaun the Sheep* and *Wallace & Gromit's World of Invention*.



The resulting 13x22mins series (two seasons of which have been ordered) is using a new hybrid animation technique that renders characters in 3D environments with some illustrated or painted elements. “We are doing something different in that we’re taking it into a new medium, but we’re also actively returning to stories from the original source material,” says Woolley.

The big reveal came in September, when Gutsy revealed a glut of A-list acting talent had signed on to voice the series.

Rosamund Pike (*Gone Girl*) will play caring matriarch Moominmamma, Matt Berry (*Toast of London*) is her adventurous husband Moominpappa, Taron Egerton (*Kingsman*) voices the central character Moomintroll, Kate Winslet (*Titanic*) is Mrs Fillyjonk, Warwick

David (*Life’s Too Short*) is Moomintroll’s adopted brother Sniff, Akiya Henry is the flirtatious Snorkmaiden, Will Self is the philosopher The Muskrat and Richard Ayoade (*The IT Crowd*) will play The Ghost.

“The amazing thing was most of these guys were almost waiting by the phone for the call,” says Makaroff.

However, even with the talent attached, reworking a classic children’s property into a primetime family series is a tough ask.

“There has only ever been one truly global primetime animation, *The Simpsons*, and we are now trying to bring something different to that global audience,” says Makaroff. “We really have to keep our minds on the high production values and Tove’s world.”

Makaroff began her career as a radio and television journalist in Finland before moving into TV production, initially on youth and unscripted programming. She later became

CEO of FremantleMedia Finland, working on local versions of shows such as *The Apprentice*, *Dragons Den*, *Idols* and *The X Factor*, and then joined *Minute to Win It* and *Clash of the Choirs* prodco Friday TV just before parent Shine Group merged with Endemol. She then joined *The Bridge* creator Filmlance International as chief executive shortly before going it alone.

Gutsy has financial backing from private investors in Finland and further afield, Makaroff says, which has helped with the large budget needed to attempt to tackle the task of *Moominvalley* as a first project.

“Gutsy has the rights to produce for the *Moomins* for the next 20 years,” she says when questioned on expectations. “You do feel the weight of the responsibility – the last series was produced over 25 years ago.”

That series, *Moomin*, was an Asian-European preschool series that played on TV Tokyo in Japan and CBBC in the UK.

The project has even taught Makaroff some new productions skills. “Primarily, I’ve been an entertainment and serious drama, but it has been a really good mix throughout my career,” she says. “With *Moominvalley*, we have added some of our own touches to the scripts, but I’ve also been really happy to learn some new tricks at my age,” she quips.

Makaroff and Woolley are headed to MIPCOM to debut the programme at an event on the Croisette on Tuesday night. With the *Moomins* second as a Finnish cultural export only to mobile-app-turned-TV-series *Angry Birds*, expectation is indeed high. “This is an expensive animation, but we believe we have found the right concept for it,” says Makaroff. **TBI**

On the move

TBI takes a look at the latest comings and goings in the international television business and reports on who's moving where

UK-based kids TV distributor Cake upped **BIANCA RODRIGUEZ** to sales chief and hired former NBCUniversal exec Julien Farcat and BBC Worldwide's Francesca de Nicolo to support her in an expanded distribution team



Netflix hired DreamWorks Animation's **Melissa Cobb** to lead its kids and family content team. She will oversee the creation and acquisition of series and films for kids and families

France-based content distributor Federation Kids & Family hired **ALEXANDRE HENIN** in a dual role as head of acquisitions and creative producer for sister prodco Cottonwood Media, which David Michel leads



Comcast's NBCUniversal International appointed **Duccio Donati** to take on the newly created role of executive vice president for lifestyle and kids. Donati now also has responsibility for the DreamWorks Channel



DHX Media appointed Nelvana Enterprises' **JERRY DIAZ** as vice president of distribution. His appointment follows the integration of DHX Media's studios and sales management teams in February

Kay Benbow will leave the children's division of UK pubcaster the BBC as part of a major shake-up that makes Cheryl Taylor its content chief. Taylor will oversee all commissioning for BBC Children's, looking after content for under-16's



French production firm Surperprod hired former Télé Images and Cyber Group Studios sales exec **CAROLINE BRIN**. She takes the newly created role of chief digital officer

Scotland-based indie Maramedia brought in the BBC's former head of children's production in Scotland, Simon Parsons. The former executive producer of magazine show *Live and Kicking* will run new unit Marakids



Belfast-based animation company Sixteen South is launching a distribution division, with Foxtel exec **GILLIAN CALVERT-RIDGE** returning to the UK from Australia to become its head of distribution



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Dennis tries on an international outfit

Dennis & Gnasher Unleashed is the most recent Dennis the Menace CGI-animated series, coming from the newly formed Beano Studios, which aims to take its cheeky characters to a global crowd

Beano Studios was launched in September 2016 with the intention of taking the Beano universe, and its well-known characters, to international audiences across platforms.

Allison Watkins, executive of global consumer products and TV distribution at Beano, tells TBI that the studio had allowed Beano to create and manage content for a range of formats as the company attempts to reflect the way viewers currently consume content.

Its first project, *Dennis & Gnasher: Unleashed*, has been produced with a global outlook from the get-go, according to Watkins.

“Our exec producer, Michael Elson, comes from a feature film background, and we very much wanted to bring that sense of scale and quality to the product through the set and character design, and importantly the role of the camera and lensing in our shot design,” she says. “The use of depth of field and directional lighting brings such a rich warmth and depth to our world. The reaction from all of the partners we have shared it with globally has certainly assured us that it has worked.”

Dennis is best known from his appearances in DC Thomson comics initially created in 1951 in Dundee, Scotland. Since then, the naughty schoolboy has had many iterations, including a range of TV-based cartoons that run to this day, but it has always found territories such as the US “tough to crack”, according to producers.

Elson, who led the vision for the new show and has worked on major productions such as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *X-Men: The Last Stand*, aimed to turn Beanoland into a place that feels both specific and yet potentially anywhere in the world. He says he aimed for “somewhere that feels familiar, but not parochial”.

Briefed to refresh the Beano universe, London-based Jellyfish Studios has initially focused on *Dennis and Gnasher*, which it has been working on since February 2016.

The first step for the studio involved creating a new look for Dennis, his friends and Beanoland in general. While certain visual elements remain sacrosanct for the Menace, including the red and black stripes, spikey hair and trusted shaggy dog Gnasher, Dennis now looks further than ever from the comic book original.

The new Dennis features “separated eyes and eyebrows for

the first time”, animated expressions and a more life-like appearance.

Denis Jose Francois, head of 3D animation at Jellyfish, says: “There are some technical reasons for that and there are some aesthetic reasons for that as well. Dennis has historically always moved with the times anyway. In the 90s he might have had a tracksuit and trainers at one point, so that process has evolved generally over time.”

As well as a new look, and part of reaching wider audiences, additional characters have been added in the form of Ruby and JJ. These strong female leads take position beside Dennis’ faithful friends Gnasher and Pieface.

“While this is obviously the same character from the comic, we’re not as informed by the comic as you might imagine,” says Francois.

“Beano Studios has a very clear intent that this is a revitalisation of the character and we’re going into several new directions with it, and we’re not bound by what’s in the comic.”

Despite the conscious upholding of a British feel in the animation, certain safeguards are placed throughout Beantown to ensure global relatability. These lie in small details and idiosyncrasies, according to Francois, who says that the studio avoids presentations of British post boxes, telephone boxes and other signifiers.

“We try to avoid them,” he adds. “Not saying they’re not there definitively, but they’re not the centrepiece of the story and you try to generally neutralise these aspects as much as you can while retaining a British feel.”

Beano brought on the UK’s Jetpack Distribution to represent the show internationally, this August. Watkins tells TBI that given the themes of the show, it can play equally well in all markets.

“Understanding the Beano spirit – laughter, imagination and rebelliousness – translates internationally,” adds Watkins. “We know this already from the overwhelming positivity we have received from US audiences to the new *Dennis* series.”

Along with Jetpack’s Dominic Gardiner, Watkins will be sharing the show with new and existing broadcast partners at MIPCOM and its younger-skewing sister, MIPJunior.

“The fun and adventures of a ten-year-old boy, his friends and dog, are themes that resonate with kids and audiences across the world,” concludes Watkins. **TBI**





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Vive la difference

Core values or analytics: what really matters when creating a new kids TV title? Producers, distributors and broadcasters tell Gary Smith about the ingredients to produce a perfect property



about whether to choose animated or live action, hitting the demographic sweet spot and creating likeable characters’?

How important is it to work with a core vision that drives every successful drama and entertainment franchise for adults? Does kids TV demand the same basic age-adjusted approach as the grown-up version or are content specificity and constantly shifting demographics the real creative drivers?

According to BBC Worldwide’s director of children’s, Henrietta Hurford-Jones, one area that distinguishes the business of producing new kids shows is the nature of the creative.

“You have to have some sort of take-out for kids, whereas for adults it’s much more about being blatantly experiential,” she says. “CBeebies controller Kay Benbow deserves a lot of credit for introducing live-action drama series for

covering geography in a fun and engaging way and that’s where the show came from,” says Hurford-Jones.

“Looking for gaps in the market is an important part of producing for kids, much more so than in the world of grown-up entertainment. From my own point of view, when I’m thinking about programming CBeebies’ international channel, spotting needs that are not being addressed is an important part of the job. *Bluey*, the animated preschool show we coproduced with the ABC in Australia, focuses on the relationship between the father figure and his kids, and part of the reason we wanted to be involved was that we felt that the ‘affectionate dad’ angle was under represented.”

Halle Stanford, executive VP of children’s entertainment at the Jim Henson Company, also points to gap-spotting as being important.

“You have to have some sort of take out for kids, whereas for adults its much more about being blatantly experiential”
Henrietta Hurford-Jones,
BBC Worldwide



preschoolers, which might sound odd, but when you see shows like *Apple Tree House* and *Topsy & Tim*, they make total sense.

“The diversity of characters and backgrounds in *Apple Tree House* reflects life in our inner cities and prepares young kids for the sort environment they’re going to be growing up in. The main take-out there is learning about diversity and tolerance.”

Producing narrative driven shows for a preschool audience was “a brave thing to do”, Hurford-Jones adds, noting Benbow’s idea to marry “a rich, universally appealing narrative with live action, as opposed to animation, was inspired”. It will be interesting to see if the push keeps pace when Benbow exits as part of a restructure and BBC Children’s consolidates under CBBC chief Cheryl Taylor.

With *Go Jetters*, an in-house animation series for CBeebies, the take-out is geography and unique experiences of other cultures, but it’s the genesis of the show that reveals another fundamental difference between kids’ and adult TV. “We realised that there weren’t any shows

“It’s partly about knowing what a broadcaster might be looking for, in which case projects can be largely driven or inspired by a channel commissioner, but we are always looking for gaps in the market,” she says. “Ultimately though, what we do at Henson is make the shows we want to see because that is the only way to stand out.

“We’re all parents here, but we’re also kids at heart, which is why a lot of our shows are aimed at the family audience, and let’s be honest, that’s the hardest possible audience to target.”

Jim Henson is currently working on *Dark Crystal*, a Netflix prequel series to the early 1980s feature film. Stanford says it is meaningful and relevant to kids from around the age of nine, but sophisticated enough for parents too. “We refer to it as the *Star Wars* audience,” she adds. “To appeal to the 7-70 demographic you have to have engaging characters and big themes.”

Part of the skill of producing genuinely pan-demographic shows lies in how you deal with the dark, decidedly un-fluffy stuff. “What you’ll never see in a Jim Henson production is sex and

On one level the differences between producing shows for kids and grown-ups are obvious, but as audience analysis methods improve and the TV industry becomes ever more research-driven, how much do kids producers obsess

violence, and that's because we seek to provide a trusted safe space, but we do not veer away from the dark stuff, as it provides a narrative balance, especially in fantasy and sci-fi," says Stanford.

"*Harry Potter* is a brilliant example of exactly how to deal with the difficult moments in that, at root, it's about prejudice. That's what gives it its edge and turns it from a kids fantasy series into something that resonates much more broadly."

It's also at this point – where the difference between an also-ran and a global hit is the issue – that the role of channel execs comes into play. "There are truly great execs who can spot and then support a great idea across every aspect of the TV industry," says Stanford. "These are people who know what they want, and they are true champions."

"Really, there's nothing more pointless than saying, 'produce me a hit'. It's a question of working together and really knowing each other."

According to Nina Hahn, senior VP of production and development Nickelodeon at Nickelodeon International, understanding the end-user is hugely important.

"A lot of preparation happens before the script is written, covering what demographic you're targeting, and making sure that the brand is well defined, because to be where kids are, you have to know what they want," she says.

"Our viewers expect something very specific when they choose to watch Nickelodeon, and what that boils down to is a mixture of emotion and humour based around a simple, but always grounded and authentic, core concept."

The key is identifying the child's real-life world and then to hyper-realise it, she adds: "That's your entry-level requirement and we haven't done our job properly if any of our shows are failing to connect with our audience. That said, you never know how kids will react to new ideas, which is why we do a lot of research and testing."

Hahn uses the example of a gameshow based around siblings that Nick had in development. "The big red light that we got was that children



who didn't have either a brother or a sister could not relate to the idea at all," she says.

Every once in a while, a show will come along that defies all expectations, and *SpongeBob Squarepants* is a shining example. "We honestly were not thinking that *SpongeBob* would appeal to adults," says Hahn.

"When it started broadcasting it was intended as a show for 7-12 year-olds, but pretty early on we saw that it was drawing in adults as well. That's because Bob is emotional and normal, but he's surrounded by crazy people, so you have grass roots appeal driven by consistent creativity."

"Also, the audience knows exactly what it is dealing with thanks to the amazing reliability of Stephen Hillenburg's voice and vision. That's why, 17 years later, it's as popular as ever."

Xilam Animation CEO Marc du Pontavice began his career producing international drama

series, notably *Highlander*, alongside several successful movies, including *Gainsbourg*, and *A Heroic Life*. In September, his TV and movie prodco One World Films announced the development of a new series about French resistance icon Joan of Arc with Federation Entertainment. Drawing on his considerable experience of producing hits for both kids and adults, where does he see the real differences?

"On the plus side, young viewers have universal taste, with no prejudices or cultural barriers up until roughly the age of ten," he says. "On the negative side, they are very compulsive and intensely curious, which means that no matter how good your show is, they can forget you in an instant and move on to the next thing."

"Working in animation demands a huge amount of creativity and a long production process, usually around three years. You are constantly under considerable creative pressure and you can never relax because you are only as good as your last job."

One upside of the tortuous production time is that the cycles of exploitation are long. "Xilam is basically a creative eco-system that allows us to spend long periods finding the best way to produce a show," says du Pontavice.

"The series *Paprika* was in development for over three years and in that time we changed the team several times until we found the right



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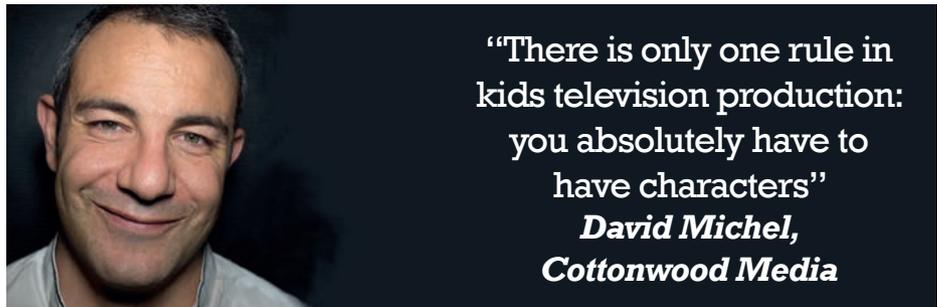
Eventually, it was *Paprika* showrunner Jean Cayrol who found that right look and feel says du Pontavice. “It’s a tough and stressful process, but a show like *Oggy & the Cockroaches* is still broadcasting in 150 countries and is going strong 20 years after being launched, so the rewards for doing a good job are undeniably there,” he adds.

There is also, says du Pontavice, a particularly brutal kind of segmentation in animation. “We would never produce in the same way for 6-9 year-olds as we would for 10-13 year-olds, so you have to really know what you want to create, otherwise you get lost in the infinite possibilities,” he says.

“From the purely creative standpoint, you really do need a core vision, but then my job is to accompany that vision and re-model it for the market. Ultimately, every show that makes it on to the screen has been adapted to some degree.”

An indication of how brutal the kids market can be comes with *Badanamu Cadets*, a show that in its first incarnation was more popular than *Peppa Pig* on VOD services, with three billion views docked up.

“We were aware that we really needed to take the show to a public broadcaster in order to grow the franchise, but then we found that the formula that had worked previously was skewing the show too young,” says David Roberts, CEO of producer Calm Island. “It needed to be much more dynamic and most of all that it was too



sanitised and it needed emotional contrasts.”

The key, Roberts believes, is all about empathy. “When you create characters that kids can empathise with, you’re good for 500 replays and they’ll never get bored, but the production balance is very different to that of grown-ups because kids are more visually-based, so high-end animation is another crucial part of our re-invention of the show,” he says.

It’s clear that flexibility is an asset in this fraught, fickle and crowded world, but according to Corinne Kouper, head of development at France-based animator TeamTO, it’s much worse than that – it’s total anarchy.

“If there were such a thing as rules, it would be easy,” she says. “At TeamTO we do not have preconceived rules. Rather, we operate on the basis of instinct when choosing our projects, on the relationship with the rights owner, the originality of the idea, and the talent of the director. We hope that by trusting our gut feeling and never relying on the same formula, we will

end up making great projects.

TeamTO picks creatives that desire to make shows for adult and young adult audiences. “Unfortunately, the fact is that the demand is not there in Europe, but we get pitched projects for an older audience, and we hope to bring one to market in the near future,” says Kouper.

At that point, Kouper may decide she needs the services of a showrunner. Currently, these are rare in kids TV, but examples such as Jean Cayrol on *Paprika*, are increasing in volume.

“There is an increasing tendency to use showrunners to supervise all creative aspects of production,” says Kouper. “This will soon become the norm, as it is with live action – especially if we start to integrate long-term narrative arcs in our kids series, something that until recently was inconceivable.”

TeamTO launched its latest series, *School of Magic* (pictured), a 52x11mins show that spun out of Studiocanal’s feature film *The House of Magic*, at Cartoon Forum last month.

Cottonwood Media’s David Michel partly agrees with Kouper about showrunners, but disagrees about an absence of rules. “There is a rule, one only though,” he says. “It’s that you absolutely have to have characters. They are the most important things in kids’ entertainment.

“As for showrunners, they are becoming more common, but more in live-action than in animation, and that’s down to cost. Having a creator in a showrunner role, which means being involved full time for the duration of production adds a significant cost to the total budget.” This explains why most showrunner-driven shows are made by US studios and not by indies, adds Michel, whose firm is currently in the process of selling ZDF live-action series *Find Me in Paris*.

“On top of that, most kids’ shows are coproductions with different tasks being handled in different countries, and the length of production of an animated show is typically 18-24 months for a 26x26mins series. Again, very good reasons to do without a show runner.” **TBI**



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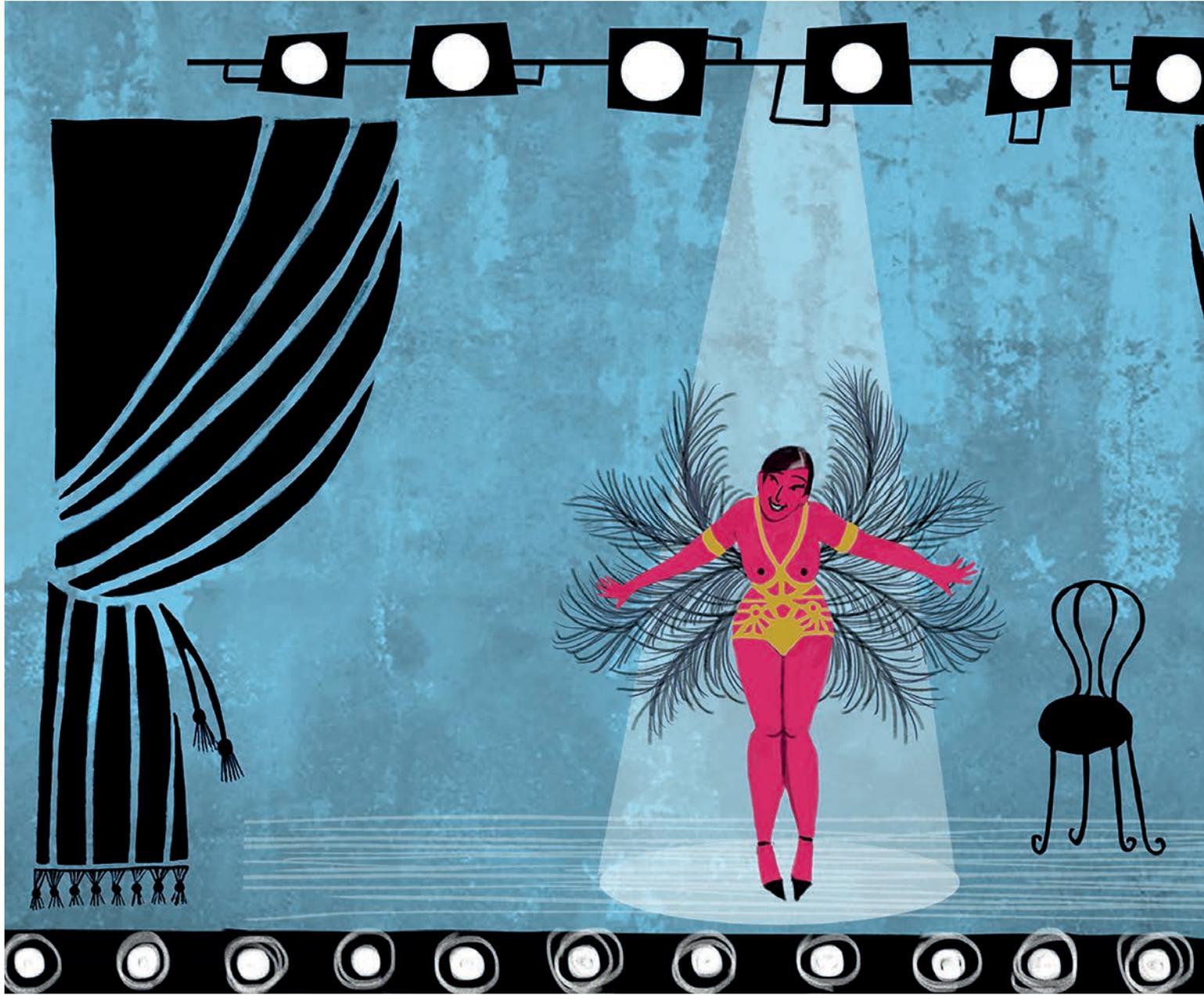
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Cartoon forum: on a diversity drive

Diversity defined this year's Cartoon Forum, from the varied talent pitching at the Toulouse event to the content that largely promoted the acceptance of outsiders

Agat Films & Cie's *Brazen*



In 2017, Cartoon Forum hosted 23 countries featuring their projects during the annual pitching event – the highest range of countries in its history. It saw the Toulouse-based event host countries such as Japan, South Korea and Poland, as well as regular European entrants from Finland, Belgium and home territory France.

In addition, the show hosted content aimed at a range of age groups that often blurred the lines of age brackets entirely. The event featured 33 animated shows for the 6-12 bracket, 30 for preschool children, and a range for intermediate ages from 4-8, to family-based, young-adult and teen toons. However, these age distinctions didn't satisfy some producers and creators.

Liz Keynes, executive producer of one project, *Tulipop*, says that while preschool shows have traditionally been favoured at the Forum, this year saw a lot more shows “working around the borderline”.

Iceland's *Tulipop* is a clear example of a project that does this. Officially it aims to reach

children between 7-12, but it is surprising that its cutesy characters are aimed at an older-skewing age bracket.

Signy Kolbeinsdottir, creative director of the animation, says: “From the beginning this is what they were. So they are, and always were, flawed with a dark sense of humour and we didn't want to change that just to fit some category. We wanted them to be what they are.”

Keynes adds: “The age bracket has really been annoying in a sense, because each broadcaster has a nuance to how their age bracketing goes and we think *Tulipop* can play quite broadly, so although there's a core heartland age group it should be spreading up and down.”

Tulipop characters Bubble, Gloomy and Fred all have darker quirks to their personalities, which Kolbeinsdottir says is true to real life and something that both children and adults alike appreciate.

Gloomy is a ‘mushroom girl’ that's adventurous and brave – but she has faults. She is untidy, doesn't care about appearances



Tulipop's Gloomy and Bubble

and never finishes what she starts. Her brother, Bubble, is the more shy, anxious and homely, but he has a bad temper. Despite these attributes, all of the characters in *Tulipop*'s magical land work together with their flaws in tow.

Adult voices have also been used for the first short-episodes set to appear on YouTube on October 5, which Kolbeinsdottir says again contrasts the cute appearance of its characters.

Tulipop's team of Keynes, Kolbeinsdottir and CEO Helga Arnadottir have global aspirations for the show offset by the cult following of *Tulipop*'s merchandising which includes lamps, stationary and school kits. They tell TBI that they've already had discussions with a range of broadcasters and distributors keen to bring the title to an international audience.

Genevieve Dexter, founder and CEO at distributor Serious Lunch, has witnessed a change. She says: "It is very interesting to see some projects really defying traditional age targets and taking a more digital approach, and this is particularly true in the case of two of the Finnish properties, *Tulipop* and *Best & Bester*.

"I hope that kids viewing habits encourage that blurring of distinction and genre, just as the new SVOD platforms have encouraged greater creative freedom. I hear the BBC reiterating this view and perhaps this is the beginning of the demise of thematic kids channels."

Marc Vanderweyer, Cartoon Forum's general director, adds that animations in Europe generally presume children as intelligent and capable, and so often present intelligent content to their audiences no matter the age group.

"There are many projects talking about respecting differences," he says. "It's really important. The content Europeans are presenting is sometimes more intelligent than other entertainment, and it's a good thing."

Vanderweyer comments on the political slant to the projects in general this year. He says gender equality has been a big part of the Forum for 2017, as well as the concepts of acceptance and empathy.

Stinky Dog, created by French prodcos Dandeloo and Folivari and Belgium's Panique!, was the most widely attended project pitched

to 325 delegates, 106 of which were potential investors. It was also picked up by France Télévisions post-pitch.

The premise of the project, which is targeted at children 6-11, is to make a smelly dog the hero of a show. It aims to develop empathy and the notion of solidarity to kids, according to the show's creators.

The dog lives with a flattened cat and a group of diverse animals in Paris as they get into a range of adventures, promoting difference and acceptance.

The Royale Sisters and *Brazen* are aimed at an older skewing audience from 7-12 year olds and young adults. Each toon tackles themes of accepting outsiders as well as differences within themselves.

Pikkukala Productions' *Royale Sisters* is a Finnish project that features a royal family that has to move into an ordinary home. Princess Stella and her sister Molly go through the trials and tribulations of trying to show that they can live a common life.

"Stella is a 13-year-old, and an emphatic, funny, strong, social princess," says Pikkukala



Dandeloo, Folivari & Panique!'s *Stinky Dog*

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Paper Owl Films' *Happy the Hoglet*

creative director Veronica Lassenius. “She can’t help bursting into song randomly even though she really wants to ditch the whole princess cliché. She just can’t help herself, and she wants to blend in and be a normal girl most of all.”

The show features a hybrid style, combining 2D animated characters with real-life footage in the background from cities such as Barcelona, Helsinki, France and Ireland. Creators Lassenius and Pablo Jordi have tried to reflect the common reality of families moving from city to city in a globalised world. The series was one of the top attended projects by investors, drawing in 60 execs.

Agat Films & Cie’s *Brazen* portrays bold and rebellious women around the world including Nellie Bly, Mae Jemison, Josephine Baker and Naziq al-Abid. Based on Penelope Bagieu’s feminist graphic novel and directed by Iranian filmmaker Sarah Saidan, the toon features a distinctive voice that puts a spotlight on often overlooked and diverse characters.

The toon was the third most attended at Cartoon Forum, drawing in 249 attendees, of which 68 were investors.

This theme also extends to preschool children. Paper Owl Films’ *Happy the Hoglet* is an Irish project that focuses on Happy, a grumpy hedgehog that finds it hard to live up to his name.

The character is prickly, smelly and has fleas and only through accidentally finding unusual friends via a random act of kindness does he find fun and happiness.

Serious Lunch’s Dexter also noticed *Avni, Unidentified Friendly Oddity from Milan, Zibilla* and *The Slimefoots* grappling with the same themes. She adds: “It’s tricky to treat these subjects without the social acceptance element being too ‘on the nose’.

“Everyone is interested in the subject, but everyone is wary of it too. Different channels have very varied editorial policies in how front-and-centre the theme can be presented. If it is presented through animals or fantasy based characters it is a lot more acceptable than showing human diversity because that means different things in every country.”

The Forum still presented some limitations when it comes to diversity, however. French producers were involved in 15 of the top 82 projects viewed at the event. Furthermore,

France has a total of 28 projects of the 82.

For its yearly Cartoon Tributes for broadcasters, distributors and producers, French entities were chosen for all, bar one. Broadcaster of the year went to France Télévisions, producer of the year went to Dandeloo and the Cartoon Tribute of Honour went to Patrick Eveno, general director of Citia and of The Annecy International Animation Film Festival. The exemption to the rule was the award for distributor of the year. This was handed to Germany’s Beta Film, which recently moved into kids TV.

The general feeling among overseas producers was that there was a lot of point in anticipating an award if you were not from a French company. One producer, who prefers to remain unnamed, tells TBI that “while a nomination is nice it is unlikely that you will win an award if you are from a company outside the host nation”.

France has a disproportionately higher rate of animation studios, however, so this may be part of the reason as to why the event is overwhelmed by quality French productions. None the less, many attendees remarked on the predictability of the event. **TBI**

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On trend: the biggest kids shows in Europe

Eurodata TV Worldwide data reveals the top performing shows in France, Spain and the UK



DreamWorks Dragons: Race to the Edge

FRANCE

Twenty-sixteen's biggest kids TV successes remained powerful at the beginning of 2017 in France: *Noddy Toyland Detective* and *Pirata et Capitano* on France 5 and *Yo-Kai Watch* on Gulli led the way. Among the most convincing launches of the season was *DreamWorks Dragons: Race to the Edge*, which made an excellent linear debut during an evening slot in February digital terrestrial Gulli, after an exclusive broadcast on SVOD service Netflix that began in 2015.

In line with its good performance in Spain last semester, *The Powerpuff Girls* began airing on French free-to-air TV in March and immediately became of the top 20 show in children aged 4-14, pulling in boys as well as girls.

UNITED KINGDOM

Once again, CBeebies dominated the top 20 rankings in key target demos. Its only challenger

was the terrestrial Channel 5 and its Milkshake! brand, which scored three programmes in the general children's top 20 rankings, and two in the preschool arena.

CBeebies' biggest successes were already established programmes such as the CGI-animated series *Peter Rabbit* and the educational



Apple Tree House

show *Andy's Prehistoric Adventures*.

Only two of the channel's new shows featured in the rankings. The best performing one, *Apple Tree House*, is a live-action series about community life in a mixed neighbourhood. It attests to the increasing popularity of live-action shows among young children, following the success of series like *Topsy and Tim* and *Teacup Travels*. CBeebies' second new show to feature in both rankings was *Where in the World?*, an educational format in which children get to discover how daily life looks like in distant countries like Jordan, Vietnam and India.

SPAIN

Turner International's Boing kept on gathering audiences around its entertainment shows. After last year's successful game show *Hora de Aventuras: Misión ¡Zuzumba!*, another programme from the Spanish studio Lucky Road Productions also achieved high ratings. In *Wooala!*, children observe two magicians, Borja and Mariano, who execute hidden camera pranks, and perform and explain magic tricks to the audience.

The comedy programme was Boing's best performing series in both all-children and preschool targets, ahead of the channel's flagships *Regular Show* and *The Amazing World of Gumball*.

Live-action series have also been popular in Spain. Among the top shows was Clan's new launch, the Nickelodeon original *100 Things to Do Before High School*. The series was the best performing programme from this genre in the all-children demo.

It follows twelve-year-old best friends CJ, Fenwick and Christian, as they create a list of exciting achievements before they set off to high school, in which they will be separated. *100 Things* gathered more than 100,000 children aged 4-12 on average, mostly boys. **TBI**

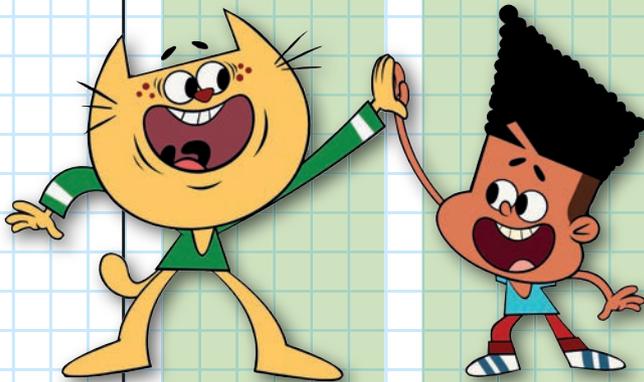
NUMBER OF NEWLY LAUNCHED PROGRAMMES PER TERRITORY

SPAIN



6

- 100 Things To Do Before High School (Clan),
- Marcus Level (Clan),
- Masha and the Bear (Clan),
- Noddy Toyland Detective (Clan),
- Tutu (Clan),
- Winston Steinburger & Sir Dudley Ding Dong (Clan)



Winston Steinburger & Sir Dudley Ding Dong



Let's Go Pocoyo

ITALY



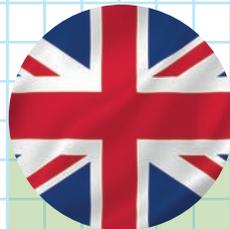
5

- Art Attack (Rai Yoyo),
- Let's Go Pocoyo (Rai Yoyo),
- Minnie's Bow Toons (Rai Yoyo),
- The Powerpuff Girls (Boing),
- Yo Yo (Rai Yoyo)



This exclusive chart provides a snapshot into the top performing newly launched kids shows in Spain, Italy, the UK, France and Germany

UK

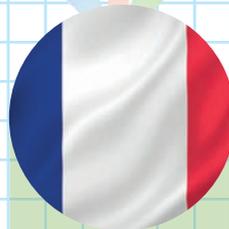


3

- Apple Tree House (CBeebies),
- Digby Dragon (Channel 5),
- Where in the World? (CBeebies)



FRANCE



3

- DreamWorks Dragons: Race to the Edge (Gulli),
- Ernest et Célestine, la Collection (France 5),
- The Powerpuff Girls (Gulli)



The Powerpuff Girls

Ella the Elephant



GERMANY



2

- Ella the Elephant (KiKA),
- Insectibles (KiKA)

Digby Dragon

Source: Eurodata TV Worldwide

LAST WORD

PHIL BIRCHENALL



Why are we ignoring Gen Z?

FunToys Collector has been one of the biggest YouTube channels by far in recent years, yet the channel's sole output comprises a grown adult playing with kids' toys. Yet with nearly 9.5m subscribers, an association with Disney-owned Maker Studios, plus an reported US\$4.9 million per annum yield, it's clearly doing something right for its audience. Just don't expect CBeebies to pick it up any time soon.

FunToys Collector crystallises the challenge faced by the 'traditional' media in engaging Generation Z – those born anytime between 1996 and now. It's not that they watch any less video – in fact the data clearly demonstrates otherwise – it's that less of it conforms to our traditional understanding of what 'video entertainment' actually is.

We often worry about how to engage millennials, but there's a whole generation coming through where the battle for eyeballs has, arguably, already been lost. We agonise about the swathes of cord-cutters and what that means for the US\$100 per month cable

revenues of old, but we have our head firmly in the sand when it comes to the generation of 'cord-nevers' that have quietly become mass consumers of video.

According to research published by Google and Ipsos earlier this year, today's teens receive their first smartphone at the age of twelve; whereas the millennials that preceded Gen Z hit that same milestone at the average age of 20.

Makers of kids content have already become strategic about how they use the myriad of video platforms to form a cohesive 'whole' around releases.

The Beano comic launched its content studio a year ago, leveraging its IP to launch new shows based upon characters such as Dennis the Menace and Minnie the Minx (see page 8).

As those titles launch on linear, they'll be supported by short-form content optimised for whichever social, and typically mobile-first, platform they're distributed on. At the centre of it all is Beano's online hub: neatly pitched as a BuzzFeed for the younger crowd, pulling in content not only from its own vast archive, but from other relevant platforms, too.

We often worry about how to engage millennials, but there's a whole generation coming through where the battle for eyeballs has, arguably, already been lost. We agonise about the cord-cutters and what that means for the US\$100 per month cable revenues, but we have our heads firmly in the sand when it comes to the generation of 'cord-nevers' that have quietly become mass consumers

Social media brands have seized an opportunity to woo marketers away from the comfortable world of traditional TV advertising, promising the highly-prized youth audience delivered through engaging mobile-friendly content.

Snapchat's content strategy stepped up a gear at the time of Snap Inc's flotation in March, since when there's been a glut of commissions and partnerships announced – many from traditional media brands keen to stay relevant. Shows such as the revived *MTV Cribs* bring tried and tested formats to a new audience whilst NBC News' *Stay Tuned* rethinks news reporting for a vertical future.

Is Gen Z really watching these shows? It will be interesting to see how willing Snapchat is to continue funding original content in the long-term. As we've seen with Netflix and Amazon, often the only true measure of success is recommissions and ongoing investment.

Facebook noisily launched its video destination, Watch, with a similarly high-profile slew of new titles and familiar brands lining up to be part of the fun.

Meanwhile, new players are emerging, with the likes of Blackpills and Studio+ creating premium scripted content for this mobile-first audience. DreamWorks' co-founder Jeffrey Katzenberg is currently developing plans for New TV, a – you guessed it – mobile-first content play, which notably already has support from Disney and CBS.

As we've seen with FunToys Collector, we've moved into an era where 'success' can bubble up from the most unlikely of ideas; for every social or traditional media brand attempting to attract Gen Z, there's a newcomer vying for that same attention.

Unlike ever before, cracking this illusive audience will be challenging... but it might just be child's play, too. **TBI**

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