

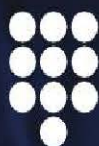
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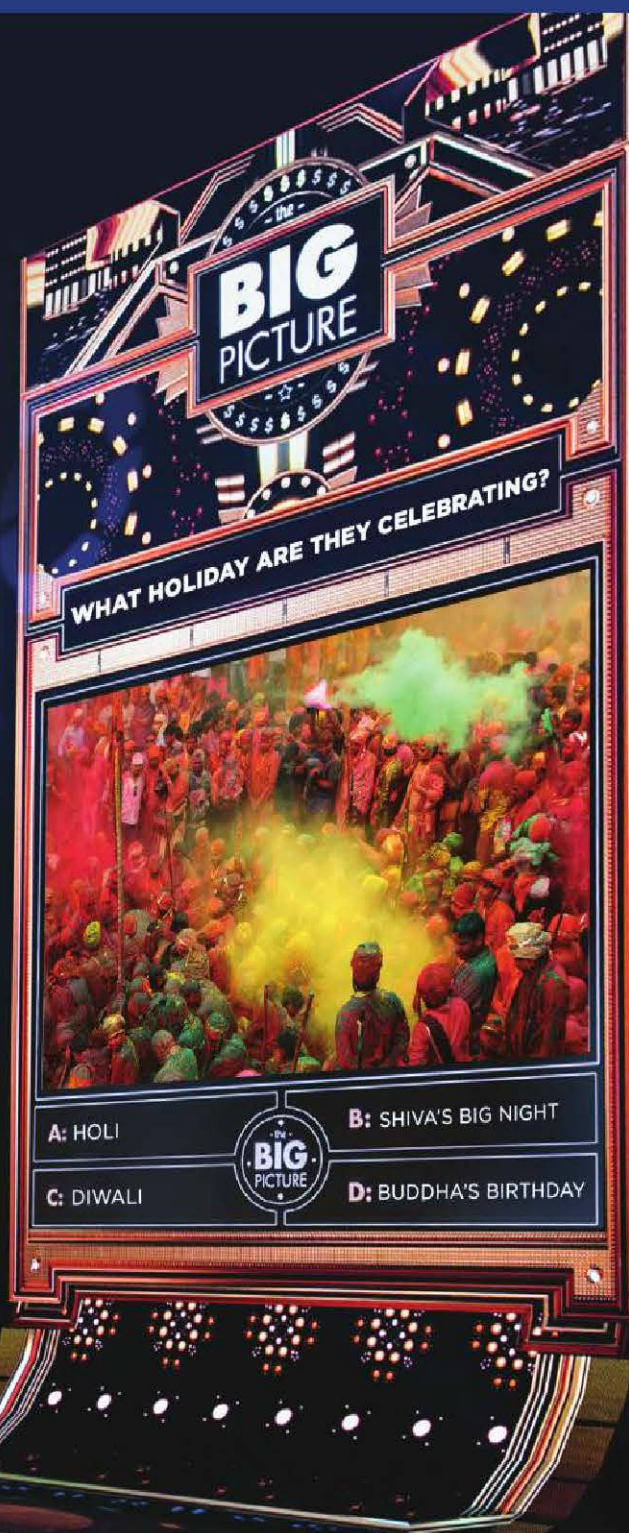
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The merger of Endemol, Shine and Core has created a production and distribution giant with particular strength in the formats market. TBI outlines who's who and what's what at the new firm

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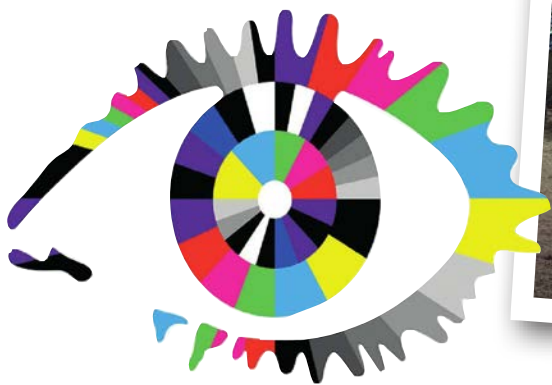
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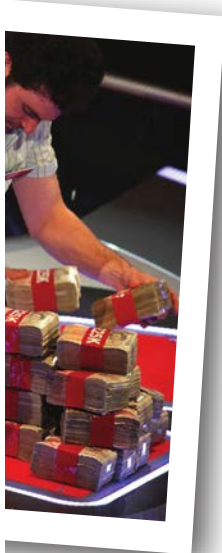
ENDEMOL SHINE INTERNATIONAL

Endemol Worldwide Distribution CEO Cathy Payne runs the combined sales unit. Shine International's chief executive, Nadine Nohr, has left as a result.

Matt Creasey will lead distribution in the Americas, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, while London-based Mark Lawrence will lead European efforts. Shine International senior VP for the Americas Ted Bookstaver's role is unclear.

James Braham has been named senior sales director, UK and Ireland, with Gisela Asimus-Minnberg thought to be leaving. Meanwhile, Lisette Schlipp is senior sales director, Germany, major central and eastern Europe. This throws Shine EMEA sales director Dorit Schilling's future into doubt. In France, where Endemol and Shine remain independently operated, Shine's Priscilla Siney and EWD's Solange Ribeiro-Murphy remain as senior sales directors.

Kirsten Cargill and Lisa Higginson keep their posts in Australia and New Zealand, while a sales director will be appointed in Asia, who will report to senior sales director Rashmi Bajpai. ESI is also searching for a head of acquisitions after Shine International's Georgia Brown left to join FremantleMedia's international drama division



Title: *Wipeout*
Genre: Physical
Game show
Launch date:
 2008, ABC, US
Previously sold
 by: Endemol
Deals (by
number): 27

Who goes where?

Bringing together two of the biggest production groups in the world was always going to require some serious reorganisation. TBI breaks down the key appointments and departures resulting from the merger in each operational territory and business

ENDEMOL SHINE GROUP



After 21st Century Fox and Apollo Global Management had created the JV and former Sky content chief **Sophie Turner Laing** (left) was named CEO, former Endemol president Tim Hincks was handed the same post at Endemol Shine Group.

Shine founder Elisabeth Murdoch and CEO Alex Mahon both exited, while Core Media president Marc Graboff also left following the deal's announcement (he has since joined Discovery Studios).

Shine Group chairman for northern Europe Gary Carter and high-ranking Endemol exec **Martha Brass** (right) were named co-international CEOs, but last month Carter decided he was unhappy with the job and chose to leave. A replacement is being sought, with Carter exiting in coming months.



Endemol's CFO, Edwin van Es, will take up the same role within the new group, with Shine finance director Tom Fussell stepping down. Boudewijn Beusman becomes group commercial officer having been chief legal and business affairs officer at Endemol

EUROPE

UK: Former Endemol UK COO **Richard Johnston** (right) has been named CEO of Endemol Shine UK, with Endemol UK CEO Lucas Church becoming chairman and a member of ESG's worldwide group commercial board. Shine's COO, Tim Robinson, is leaving his post. Dragonfly co-managing director Lucinda Hicks becomes COO of ESUK



NORDICS: Gary Carter was to take on Endemol Shine Nordics with local bosses reporting to him, but his exit changes this dynamic. Despite that development, Endemol Nordics CEO Michael Porseryd, Endemol Denmark managing director Rikke Missen and Endemol Norway MD Eric Linschooten had already been announced as leaving in the restructure



GERMANY: Endemol Germany managing director **Marcus Wolter** (left) leads the combined Endemol and Shine businesses, which become Endemol Shine Germany. Shine Germany's deputy CEO Holger Rettler becomes director of Show, a new label, but Axel Kuehn, Shine Germany's chief executive, exits

FRANCE: Endemol's and Shine's operations remain separate and will be run by Nicolas Coppermann and Thierry Lachkar respectively

IBERIA: Endemol Spain managing director boss Pilar Blasco becomes managing director of Endemol Shine Iberia, with her number two, Javier Garcia, becoming CFO and COO. Endemol Spain president Jordi Bosch becomes chairman. Macarena Rey will continue as CEO of Shine Iberia, which now sits within the group

CEE/MENA: Marina Williams remains as local CEO, responsible for Russia, Poland, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa

NORTH AMERICA

Endemol's **Cris Abrego** and Charlie Corwin have been named co-CEOs of Endemol Shine North America, with Rich Ross leaving Shine America (and later joining Discovery Channel as president). Endemol North America's Ben Samek and Paul Jennings become COO and CFO, respectively.



Philippe Maigret is leaving Endemol Studios, which merges with Shine's operations and morphs into Endemol Shine Studios under Shine America's executive VP, scripted programming Carolyn G. Bernstein and Endemol Studios' executive VP, creative affairs, Jeremy Gold.

Shine America's Eden Gaha has become president of unscripted television, Endemol Shine USA, reporting to Abrego and Corwin, with Rob Smith promoted to executive VP and head of unscripted television.

Shine 360° and Shine America digital president Vivi Zigler has been named president, digital, brand and audience development at ESNA. Will Keenan remains as president of Endemol Beyond USA, with former Participant exec Adrian Sexton drafted in as chief operating officer

AUSTRALASIA

Viacom's William Tan has been hired to run new unit Endemol Shine China, with CEO of Endemol's wider Asian operations, Arjen van Mierlo, leaving the company. His number two, Fotini Paraskakis, will continue to oversee operations in Asia as MD.

There has been no formal announcement of the team in Australia and New Zealand, though Shine Australia executive director **Rory Callaghan** (right) has already left to lead Banijay Group-owned Screentime as CEO.



The Fennessy brothers are currently in charge at Shine Australia and Janeen Faithfull is chief exec of Endemol Australia

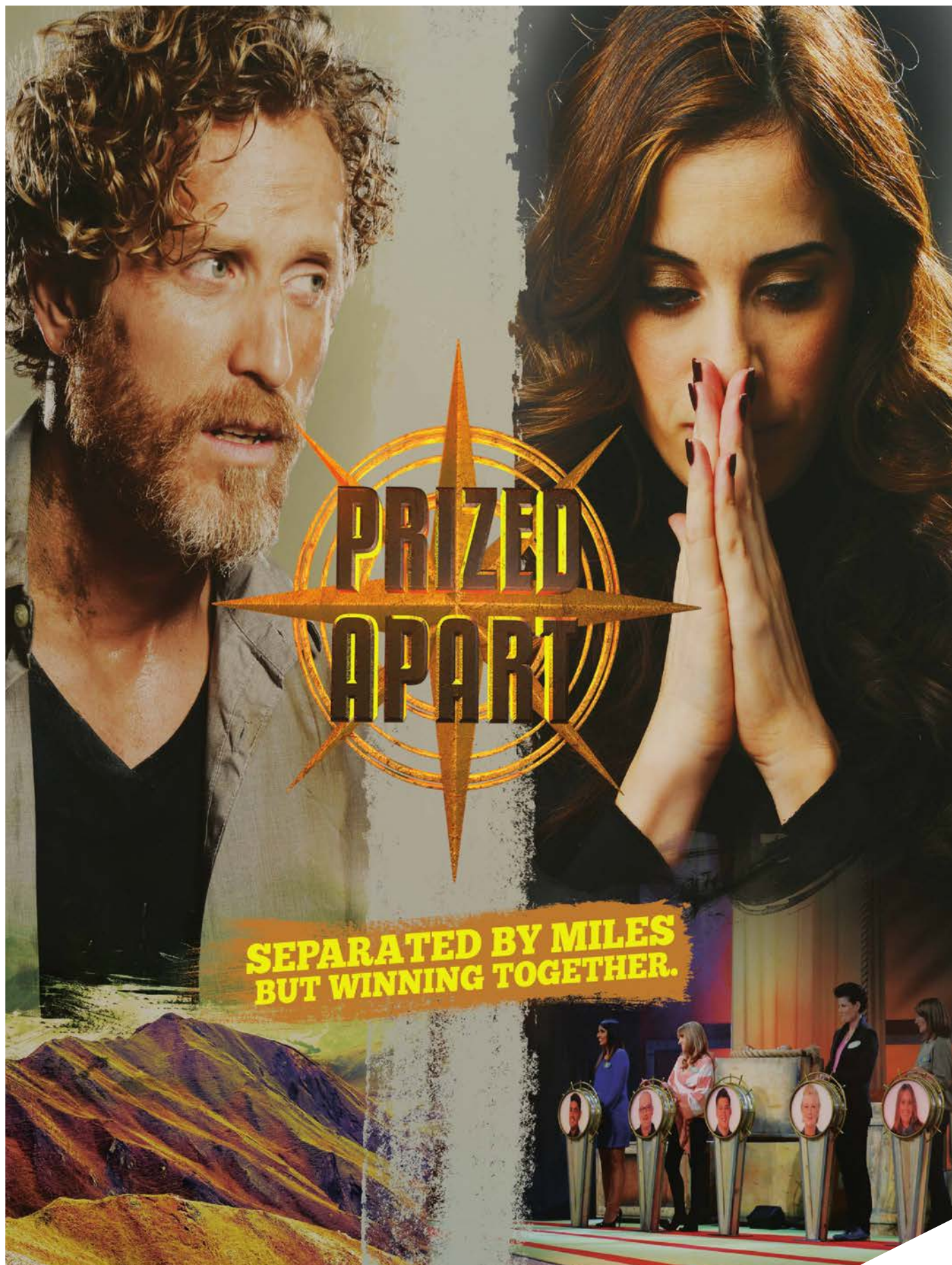
CREATIVE NETWORKS

Shine Network's managing director, Lisa Perrin, will lead Endemol Shine Creative Networks, which combines Perrin's old company and Endemol's creative development unit. Endemol's international operations MD, **Iris Boelhouwer** (right) leaves as a result. Format sales and acquisitions are being split out, with Endemol's Ana Langenberg taking on the unit as global head of format distribution



CORE MEDIA

Graboff's exit was followed by the announcement of ex-Weinstein Company exec Peter Hurwitz joining as president of the company, which owns *American Idol*, *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Man Vs Food*, the latter through ownership of producer Sharp Entertainment **TBI**



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VIEWPOINT

CAROLINE BEATON



Why niche is the new normal

In an increasingly fragmented TV landscape, should broadcasters and producers focus more on niche formats than on trying to recreate the entertainment and reality juggernauts of the noughties

We're told we are living through a 'golden age' of television, with intensifying competition for increasingly fickle eyeballs inspiring new levels of creativity, particularly for scripted content. However, for anyone specialising in non-scripted content, it feels like the glow has long since faded.

The first decade of the 21st century was an extraordinary period of innovation and re-invention in non-scripted television, particularly entertainment and reality formats. Quiz shows, talent shows, dating shows and reality shows dominated global air-time, with audiences showing a seemingly insatiable appetite for big reveal moments, celebrities stripped bare, the talented and, indeed, the talentless. From the turn of the millennium shows like *Pop Idol*, *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, *The X Factor*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Got Talent* dominated the weekly ratings.

In 2015, however, a general decline in ratings for unscripted entertainment formats suggests the shows that audiences around the world have held so dear for so long may be finally running out of steam.

The X Factor was axed by Fox in the US after three seasons, with its audience falling as low as 4.5 million compared with an average of more than 12 million in 2011. In the UK, *The X Factor* has also hit a ratings low with just over nine million viewers tuning in for the final, little more than half the 17 million who tuned in for the climax in 2010 when the show was at its most popular. *American Idol* is heading in the same direction with ratings for its thirteenth season down 23% on the previous year.

Recent attempts to replenish the schedules

with new entertainment and reality hits that strike the same chord don't appear to be working. In the UK, BBC 1's *Tumble* averaged an audience of three million in early Saturday peak, a fraction of the 10 million who tuned into *Strictly* in a similar time slot in 2014 (although even that was one million below its performance in 2013). ITV's *Splash* also took a ratings nose-dive and was axed after two seasons. In the US, ABC's *Rising Star* – tipped to be a “revolution in TV programming” with its real-time voting mechanism – failed to shine, launching with just five million viewers; it was eclipsed by NBC rival *America's Got Talent*. And Fox's *Utopia* – costing a reported US\$50 million – failed to meet expectations and was cancelled after just 12 episodes.

Of course, primetime reality and entertainment producers aren't the only TV professionals feeling the pinch when it comes to ratings. The whole industry is being forced to come to terms with the gradual shift from live, linear viewing to time-shifted, non-linear viewing. VIMN's latest major research study, TV RE[DEFINED], which explored the viewing habits of more than 10,500 viewers aged 6-34 across 14 countries, reveals how in mature TV markets, such as the US and countries across northern Europe, audiences now expect to be able to watch what they want to watch precisely when they want to watch it and increasingly where they want to watch it, given the penetration of smartphones and tablets.

The rise of video-on-demand platforms, with their emphasis on potentially limitless individual choice, is likely impacting shows designed to bring the whole family together more than shows targeting specific demographics. The current abundance of high-quality dramas – *Awkward*, *Broadchurch*, *Game of Thrones*, *House of Cards*, *Scandal* – seem better suited to this world of

binge viewing and box sets than entertainment and reality juggernauts that are designed for viewing live.

In this fragmenting TV landscape, is uncovering the next *Got Talent* a realistic ambition? Of course, there are still shows successfully managing to deliver cross-demographic appeal – from *Celebrity Big Brother* to *Bake Off*, *The Voice* to *The Jump* – but the format industry must evolve its thinking and spend less time trying to replicate whatever it was that gave the *X Factor* the X factor. As greater choice inevitably makes audiences more niche, entertainment and reality formats must surely become more niche too.

The silver lining to the cloud obscuring the golden age of reality and entertainment television, is that this evolution is already underway. Digital technologies have lowered distribution costs and massively increased the number of linear TV channels serving highly targeted audiences. In order to differentiate themselves in the face of intensifying competition, these channels are increasing investment in origination and are on the look-out for proven, but affordable international hits that can be replicated locally. These buyers are looking for fresh ideas to help them stand out with their target demographic, not globally recognisable brands with a record of localisation in 20-plus countries.

There is no evidence that overall demand for non-scripted general entertainment has lessened; rather that demand for all types of television is becoming more segmented. As the audience's exercise ever more control over their choice of content, creators should stop worrying about uncovering 'the next big thing', and instead look to create 'big things' for niche audiences. **TBI**

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When *Extreme Makeover* and *The Moment of Truth* creator Howard Schultz died unexpectedly last December, he left behind a US indie that had several series in production and a deep development slate. Company co-owner Jeff Spangler tells TBI about how Schulz's legacy remains in place at Lighthearted as it moves into a new phase

Keeping Lighthearted switched on

Howard Schulz was a TV giant, having created some of the biggest entertainment shows on the small screen, notably *Extreme Makeover*. Late last year he made Rob LaPlante and Jeff Spangler co-owners of his LA-based indie producer, Lighthearted Entertainment. Spangler, who cut his teeth on *Extreme Makeover*, says that Schultz's absence is still, and always will be, felt after his unexpected death on December 30 of last year, but that he left behind the building blocks to keep Lighthearted on track.

"He opened my eyes to how to develop and create formats that would in his words, 'light up the world'; ideas that could be boiled down to something simple and uniquely human," Spangler says.

The move to widen the ownership structure also meant that before his tragic death, the company was already moving in new directions and synonymous with more than just Schultz.

"Howard saw what Rob and I were doing, looking at different models and getting into cable, where the margins might be smaller, but if you have enough volume makes sense," says the indie boss.

The cable nets are also more likely to let producers keep secondary rights, opening up the international market. Lighthearted has worked with different distributors, for example Banijay International shops *Spinsanity*, its giant slot-machine quiz show that was developed with Japan's NTV. However, most of its content now goes through the distribution arm of Ben Silverman's Electus, which sells *The Moment of Truth*, *Lonestar Legend*, *Next* and newer Lighthearted fare including VH1 series *Dating Naked*.

"With Electus we have a distributor we trust, knows what we want and will hustle for us," Spangler says.

Electus International boss John Pollak says: "With Howard's creative genius and ability to deliver on his vision, he changed the international television business with such shows as *Extreme Makeover* and *The Moment of Truth*." He adds: "In his constant desire to teach and influence, Rob and Jeff have now taken on the torch and are continuing Howard's legacy with innovative shows like *Dating Naked* and *Are You the One?*."

Internally there have been changes post-Schultz, with Annie Meek upped to VP, production; Michael Newstat to VP, post-production; and Megan McGrath and Patty Suh both elevated to development directors. Amid the change, the prodco will continue to mine the areas it has always specialised in, entertainment formats; it is not about to move into scripted, or heavily into the big-character-ob-doc space.

"In the heyday of *Duck Dynasty*, when everyone else was zigging and making more of these shows, we zagged. We said 'we don't know how deep that well is'," Spangler says. "The bar has kept getting higher with these docs and eventually we saw that channels will go back to formats, which can last a long time and will sell internationally.

"We can do and have done docs, we did *Bye Felicia* for VH1, but at the same time it becomes harder for networks to find producers that can come up with unique ideas when there are lots of producers doing these. So *Are*



"In the heyday of *Duck Dynasty*, we zagged when everyone else was zigging and making those shows"
Jeff Spangler

You the One? is a simple idea and *Dating Naked* is super simple, but they can continue and [unlike ob-docs] are not dependent on talent to keep delivering."

Lighthearted's latest offering is *Twinning*, which uses 'twintuition' as its jumping-off point, putting identical twins through various challenges to see how connected they really are.

"There are more twins in the world now than ever and most people know, or are related to some," Spangler says. "There's a curiosity because here are two humans genetically the same but two individuals, so we developed it with that in mind, against the dynamics of a house-based reality show."

The Lighthearted boss talks about "full-contact" development, which means that everyone in the office, from intern to CEO, has a voice and can give feedback. The result, he says, is shows that are simple and work.

He concludes that Schultz cutting him and LaPlante in on the business was typical of the producer. "Over the past year we were working together he passed the business over," he says. "In an age when people want as much real estate as they can get, he didn't have to do that, but that inclusive culture permeated through everything he did. The last year was all about setting the company up for the future."

In an era in which US prodcos are getting bought by super production and distribution groups for big bucks, could that future involve becoming part of a larger group? "Howard set us on a trajectory to expand and we want our shows everywhere, so the more coverage we can get can only help us," Spangler says. "We are absolutely open to partnerships." **TBI**

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Quiz + game = broad entertainment



How can producers and distributors widen the appeal of Q+A-based quiz shows?

By introducing physical elements that make them more inclusive

By blending them with game elements that make them more family-friendly



By introducing fact-ent style format points

“**B**uyers have been looking for more than straightforward Q+A for some time; they want more escapist shows with more fun built in,” says one distribution boss, underlining the challenge of selling question and answer-based shows.

Although Q+A lends itself very well to younger-skewing digital applications, buyers are wary quizzes skew old. One answer is to broaden the basic proposition and bring in elements from other categories of programming.

“There is definitely a demand for some kind of physical piece,” says one acquisitions exec. “Some quiz shows have gone too far and got too big, which has made them difficult to reinvent or scale down. There is definitely a sweet middle spot.”

In the ‘too large’ category, Studio Lambert’s *Million Second Quiz*, failed to ignite ratings for NBC in the US, or set the international world alight last year.

Another big-ticket US quiz show is in the offing in the form of *500 Questions*. As TBI goes to press the Mark Burnett and Mike Darnell project for ABC is still under wraps, but will be, TBI understands, a multi-night gameshow in which super-smart contestants attempt to answer 500 super-tough general knowledge questions. The main rule is never get three wrong in a row or you are eliminated.

Quizzes with tough questions do have a place: Parasol Media and RDF Television’s fiendishly tough lateral-thinking quiz *Only Connect* for BBC Two in the UK or Talpa Media’s celebrity quiz *What Do I Know?*, in which viewers can play along via second screens, being two good recent examples.

However, adding elements beyond the core Q+A broadens the appeal of a format, making them less about exclusive knowledge.

The quiz genre is in ripe for reinvention, says Kate Phillips, who joined BBC Worldwide in January as creative director of formats. Speaking during Formats Day at BBC Worldwide’s Showcase event, she said one way of doing this is to look at “quizzes with fact-ent gameplay”.

The UK is the largest format exporter in the world, but local British tastes do not always chime with those further afield. UK viewers devour daytime quiz shows, often stripped, and they deliver a solid, predictable and reliable audience for broadcasters. However, wholesale



importers of UK shows such as the Scandis are not big buyers of quiz. Latin America is also tough in this respect, UK-based distributors say.

“There is a market in the UK that is not reflective of the market internationally; the audience at 4pm in the UK wants something different to the audience at 7pm in France,” says Sky Vision’s director of factual and entertainment, Barnaby Shingleton. “That means it can be hard for a UK quiz to break through from daytime and shoulder-peak into

later slots [internationally] where people are often looking for something lighter and more entertaining.”

Sky Vision’s *1000 Heartbeats* gets around the problem by adding in a genre-broadening physicality. Contestants attempt to move up a money ladder by successfully answering questions, but with heart rates being measured and tension inducing music playing, they must not exceed the titular number of heartbeats.

“It has a visceral physical element and that



1000 Heartbeats

produces a visceral response,” Shingleton says. “Adding that physicality lifts it above simple Q+A and makes it a more complete entertainment experience.”

Other market-watchers say that the high-tension dynamic that defined the last generation of hit quiz shows such as *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and *The Weakest Link* is no longer a top priority, with many new quiz and game shows focused on fun. Formats like *Wild Things*, which has launched on Sky1 in the UK, illustrates several of the quiz/game show trends, with both Q+A and physical game elements and a firm emphasis on fun.

The IWC/Mad Monk & GroupM-produced, Zodiak Rights-distributed competition show has groups of two, one effectively blind in a furry animal costume without eye holes, taking on physical challenges and answering questions in a wacky woodland setting.

Without the humour angle, but also combining quiz with physicality, is *One in a 1000*. It sees the 1,000 contestants whittled down by half over each of ten rounds. It attempts to level the playing field among the multi-age participants, as they compete for a cash prize, by mixing physical challenges with Q+A and mental agility. While negotiating a huge assault course for example, contestants can avail themselves of short cuts by correctly answering general knowledge questions.

The show is notable for being one of the first formats created by BBC Worldwide and has been developed for a third-party international broadcaster, ZDF, which ended a run for

another big event show, *Wetten Dass?*, last year.

All3Media’s Tower Productions co-created the format and ZDF will run it in April or May as a three-hour event special. BBC Worldwide is distributing and was introducing it to buyers at the Showcase Formats Day.

“It’s not a typical quiz, or a typical physical gameshow, and we have developed a big catalogue of multi-discipline events to be used in the show,” said Tower Productions’ head of show, Markus Templin. “We’re looking for people with multiple skills and abilities.”

Sony Pictures Television brought an Israeli-originated format from United Studios, *Raid the Cage*, to market back in 2012. Along with *The Brain*, it pre-empted the physical-plus-Q+A trend and was picked up in ten territories.

Endemol Germany-originated *The Brain* launched in 2013, and sees people try to perform amazing mental and physical challenges. It sold well in Spain and Lat Am.

SPT, meanwhile, is now bringing another quiz-gameshow hybrid to market in the shape of *Prized Apart*. From Sony-backed Electric Ray, it is a Saturday night primetime show for BBC One.

Couples – either married, siblings or friends – are separated, with one flying to a far-off land to take part in grueling physical challenges. They return home at the end of the week, and the stay-at-home partners then face head-to-head question rounds to keep their other half in the game and get them back on the plane.

“It’s a hybrid adventure reality quiz show, and is something that has never been done

before,” says Jane Dockery, senior VP of formats and international distribution at SPT. “There are a lot of adventure-themed shows out there and this plays into that trend, but brings in a broader family audience.”

Israel being the creative hub it is, it is not surprising it has developed a physical/quiz show. *Boom* was created by Ido Rosenblum, the host of the local version of *Cash Cab*. Initially designed as an outdoor gameshow, it was refined by Rosenblum and Merav Schiffman and Ran Telem from free-TV Israeli broadcaster Keshet.

Q+A is mixed with a physical element that sees the contestant have to select the wires to snip on a ‘primed’ bomb, which explodes if they get their selection wrong.

The premise translates to dramatic viewing Rosenblum says. “Drama has become huge and we wanted to try and capture some of that, to bring the essence of the big screen to the small screen.

“It takes the standard [quiz and gameshow] genres to the next level – it’s more than getting four right answers and getting some prize money. *Boom* is like the pinnacle of an action movie.”

SPT, meanwhile, is hoping for enough international interest in *Prized Apart* to set up a central base from which different versions can be made. “We’re talking about a production hub if it takes off,” Dockery says. “If we get a second season ordered quickly [in the UK], we could be in production in the autumn and film different versions back-to-back.”

Sony also sells the king of the straight Q+A formats, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* While buyers are now asking for hybrid elements in new formats, the likes of *Millionaire* and, more recently, ITV Studios-distributed *The Chase* remain in demand. “It is great to see a process of creative renewal, but there is still a big appetite for *Millionaire* and the right type of Q+A,” Dockery says. “Every broadcaster needs one of these shows in their schedule.”

As channels look to meld the quiz show with interactivity, *Prized Apart* and *One in a 1000* prepare for launch, *Boom* rolls out, *1000 Heartbeats* continues and *Wild Things* creates a buzz, it seems Q+A-plus-game is in fashion.

At MIPTV and beyond, we will see whether international sales mount up for the abovementioned and others in the new sub-genre, and whether physical quiz shows can put more quiz into primetime. **TBI**

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Creativity crisis?

What crisis?



Those trying to launch innovative new entertainment programmes are weathering a perfect storm: scripted TV is taking up more time in schedules, established formats are not going away, and big new launches have failed to live up to expectations. But that doesn't mean there aren't a wave of innovative, creative formats bubbling up, TBI finds

It is a tough time to launch a new entertainment format. There are fewer slots for new shows, with existing international formats mostly refusing to budge – *X Factor* in the US and *Splash* in the UK among the notable exceptions – and TV drama is enjoying its most creative period ever and being commissioned in greater volume.

International hits also have a habit of coming back even if they have gone away, with the likes

of *The Weakest Link* and *Survivor* returning in France, *Big Brother* in Norway and *Family Feud* in multiple territories.

With scripted in rude health, the entertainment formats side of the TV business looks to be in an uncomfortable place. In-house research from one of the largest international distributors, seen by TBI, shows that 65 new formats were sold to more than one territory in 2014 (while 559 went to one country), a year-on-

year decrease, and notably down on the number from a few years back.

The failure of Talpa's *Utopia* to ignite ratings on Fox in the US, and high-concept *Million Second Quiz* to do the same for NBC, shook confidence in risky new ideas. Meanwhile, the last format to set Cannes alight was *Rising Star*, which was the talk of the market at MIPCOM in 2013. The Israeli format sold well. Seven versions launched last year, and more than 25 deals have



I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse

been done in total by Keshet International, but it did not go on to be the global mega-format it seemed destined to become.

Israel, however, has joined the elite group of format-creating countries and it would be a brave exec who bets against the next big international hit coming out of the country. The likes of Armoza Formats, Dori Media and Keshet International are all pushing the envelope with innovative new concepts.



SAT.1's remake of Bake Off

Capturing the social media picture-taking zeitgeist, Dori has *The Selfie Challenge*. Created by Studio Glam, the reality gameshow has two groups of friends, in different locations, compete over five rounds and attempt to mimic increasingly challenging selfies. Studio Glam is also responsible for another high-concept format, *The Extra Mile*, in which couples who have been through an acrimonious divorce jointly take on physical and mental challenges to win a prize for their kids. Endemol Shine has optioned it in several territories after its transmission on Channel 10 in Israel.

Armoza is hoping giant matryoska dolls will prove the next big thing with its new show, *Babushka* (see Hot Picks), in which contestants choose different dolls to open to win cash prizes. Taking the baton from *Deal or No Deal*, the emphasis is on luck rather than skill. French broadcaster TF1, Armoza and Ryan Seacrest joined forces for the show.

Also in the question-less (or luck-skewed) realm is *Seven Envelopes*, from UK indie Riverdog, in which seven contestants are each given an envelope – which contains anything from 1p to £20,000 (US\$30,000) – and are offered the chance to trade it in for amazing experiences or open it in the hope of a big cash prize. A broadcast pilot has been greenlit by UKTV channel Watch.

The French-Israeli connection is also evident with another Armoza-distributed high-concept

format, *Tied to Mom*, which has been optioned by Paris-based Elephant TV. Developed by Artza Productions and TV Format Fund, the social experiment format sees a mother and grown-up child attached to one another by a rope, or 'pseudo umbilical chord' for three days.

Enquiring when the next international hit format is coming is, some execs argue, to ask the wrong question. In a fragmented media landscape, the real emphasis should be on creating targeted shows that hit specific categories of viewer, says Caroline Beaton, senior VP, international programme sales at Viacom International Media Networks. "Of course, there are still shows successfully managing to deliver cross-demographic appeal – from *Celebrity Big Brother* to *Bake Off*, *The Voice* to *The Jump* – but the format industry must evolve its thinking and spend less time trying to replicate whatever it was that gave the *X-Factor* the X factor," she says. "As greater choice inevitably makes audiences more niche, entertainment and reality formats must surely become more niche too."

VIMN's latest offering is *Lip Sync Battle*, which is a show based on a segment in Jimmy Fallon's US talkshow and the first offering from his Eight Million Plus Productions. For Viacom's Spike channel in the US (and in the UK), it pits celebrities against each other as they lip sync to a song of their choice, with the audience deciding the winner.

Amid criticism that a lot of new formats are derivative, BBC Worldwide creative director of formats, Kate Phillips, says “every format has been done before. It is about giving things a fresh spin. Even *Gogglebox*, which is fresh and does stand out, is *The Royal Family* in factual form.”

All3Media International-distributed *Gogglebox* has certainly proved an innovative, breakout hit. In the Studio Lambert-produced show, viewers watch a cast of real people at home watching that week's TV. It was the most-travelled format of 2014, registering 13 local format deals through the year, and there are now 25 now in total.

Innovating within existing sub-genres is more commonplace than creating whole new categories as *Gogglebox* arguably did.

The Dictator, for example, develops the social experiment trend that can be traced back to *Big Brother*. In the show, eight contestants are stripped of their belongings and rights and locked in a Soviet-style compound where they live in harsh conditions. There is a cash prize, but the participants are not told how they can win it. All they know is an all-powerful dictator governs their new environment.

It was created by UR/ART89 for Swedish pubcaster SVT, which put it out on SVT2 last autumn. It is being distributed by Nordic World, which recently shopped it to NRK in Norway and SBS in Belgium.

In the relationship/dating space, *Married at First Sight*, in which pre-matched couples wed

upon their first meeting, is doing well in the US. Several format deals have been inked, and UK and other versions in the works.

Another new offering in the genre, is *Extreme Love*, from Israel's Studio Glam. It sees a group of men living in a simple outside compound where their progress against the elements is monitored by a ‘maiden’ housed in a luxury villa. Each week, she selects two to accompany her on a date.

For a time, ‘naked’ was in vogue in the dating category, with Eyeworks-created format *Adam Looking for Eve*, which launched on RTL4 in Holland, and VH1 US show *Dating Naked* the standout examples. The latter's producer, Lighthearted Entertainment [see page 10], is now prepping a digital spin-off, which breaks new ground, boss Jeff Spangler tells TBI. “We've expanded our team in digital and are producing shortform in-house, for YouTube and other platforms,” he says. *Dating Naked* plays on the fact marijuana has been legalised in some states and sees what happens when people go on their first date stoned.”

US indie Relativity makes *Catfish: The TV Show*. The high-concept relationship format has run to four seasons on MTV. It has Nev Schulman and Max Joseph, the producers of the *Catfish* movie, counsel people involved in online relationships.

Relativity has also just adapted edgy UK relationship format *Sex Box*, in which couples have sex and then discuss issues relating to their sex life, for WeTV in the US. CEO Tom Forman says the issue with super-creative new formats is that they are struggling to find a home. “The problem is not that they are not being created, it is that they are not selling,” he says. “Buyers are more risk averse. It's not that people are not having big ideas, but it is increasingly hard with declining budgets and increased audience [fragmentation] to take these big swings and do something you haven't done before. *Catfish* split the difference between a traditional studio show and a docu-series. It has the authenticity viewers are craving.”

The UK extended its lead as the biggest creator and supplier of international formats in 2014, while the Netherlands overtook the US in terms of number of international formats sold. Talpa Media, now owned by UK broadcaster ITV, is partly responsible for that. It brought a new twist to the talent show world with *The Voice* with its unique swivelling chair concept. The show launched in 2010 when *Idols* and other singing shows were in their pomp, when

FLYING IN THE FACE OF FORMATS

Release the Hounds producer Gogglebox's new show is unarguably bringing something new to the screen. Drawing inspiration from Barak Obama's famous fly swatting in a CNBC interview, it elevates the activity to a competitive sport, albeit with tongue placed firmly in cheek. *Man vs. Fly* sees contestants enter a white cube and face off against the titular insect, attempting to swat it against the clock. A sports-style commentary team talks viewers through the action.

“We thought this is maybe the oldest participation sport in the world, and we treat it as a sport; there are 9,999 ways to engage in battle with the fly,” says Gogglebox managing director Matt Steiner. “It's universal, everyone gets it, and it is very loud.”

Gogglebox made twelve shortform episodes for UK newspaper The Sun. US cable net GSN has now picked up 50 instalments, and Gogglebox is developing a full half-hour version of the show for the Sony Pictures Television and DirecTV-owned channel.

SPT backs Gogglebox and is selling the format and finished show. Steiner says that in a world of derivative formats, shows like *Man vs Fly* and *Release the Hounds* grab attention. “There is a certain blandness in some areas of entertainment, but that can be a good thing because really different and original ideas can really stand out.”



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many in the industry thought the market could not sustain another show in the same category. "People said there was no room for *The Voice*, but we opened people's eyes to that show and now we feel we have something else special with *The Puppet Show*," says Talpa Global managing director Maarten Meijs. Like *The Voice*, Talpa's new format launched first in the Netherlands, this time on SBS6, and Meijs is confident the puppet performance talent show can go big, like its earlier counterpart. "During the process of creating it, everyone looked at us like, 'really, is this a joke?' when we told them about the concept," Meijs says. In fact, it launched very strongly and Talpa is now shopping it internationally.

Other new and innovative shows come with built-in challenges because of their high-concept set-ups. Dutch format *The Bully Project* is tough to produce as it is filmed inside schools and shows children being bullied, before seeking to resolve the issues at hand. Fledgling distributor Lineup Industries has, however, optioned it in numerous territories, with UK and Australian versions among those in the offing.

Validating the notion that in tough economic times people gravitate towards more positive life affirming formats (and vice versa), one area that continues to grow is arts and crafts. BBC Worldwide is leading the charge with *Bake Off* and *Sewing Bee*. "There is an 'endeavour' trend in fact-ent; people are taking up new skills and are now interested in their 'life resume', and not just their career resume," says Tracy Forsyth, director of factual entertainment at BBC Worldwide.

There are now 16 format deals in place for *Bake Off* (including one, in Thailand, for the

Junior Bake off spin-off), with a deal with Israeli broadcaster Keshet just inked. The next format in the genre is *The Big Painting Challenge*, in which ten amateur painters compete against each other. "It makes art accessible and inspiring, not highbrow," says Sue Kendrick, acting head of format sales at BBC Worldwide.

One challenge for formats players is that, amid this strong period of TV drama, there is simply less room in primetime for entertainment formats.

"There has been an evolution in the market towards scripted and big, juggernaut formats," says Tyler Massey, the former Eyeworks sales exec and founder of Mass Media International. "Rather than take a risk people will go after a *MasterChef* or *The Voice*. We're not in the creative doldrums, but we are in a risk-aversion cycle."

Massey set up MMI last year with a mission to bring formats from outside of the traditional format creation hotspots to market.

South Korea has a burgeoning reputation for entertainment formats with CJ E&M leading the charge. The upcoming NBC remake of its celebrity travel format *Grandpas Over Flowers* could make the territory the 'new Israel' of the formats world. "It could be a paradigm shift if it is big on NBC, and could spark a feeding frenzy for formats from Korea and other smaller markets," says Massey. "There are a lot of smaller international markets that have realised they can create formats." He also identifies Thailand as another Asian market to watch in terms of format origination, and China, as it moves from a format importer to exporter.

The roster of format-creating countries is clearly getting longer. Icelandic show *Treasured*

Tunes launches at MIPTV. The Sagafilm show uses viewer voting and interaction to find the nation's favourite song, as classic ditties are reinterpreted by modern artists. Banijay starts the international push at MIPTV.

Harry Gamsu, Red Arrow's vice president, format acquisitions and sales, says innovative new formats are starting to break through again. "We're seeing the more creative, softly-formatted, high-concept shows like [Warner Bros International Television Production.-distributed] *First Dates* and *Gogglebox* do better.

Red Arrow's new format offerings include *Real Men* (see Hot Picks) and *The Big Surprise*. The latter has just been recommissioned by German free-TV broadcaster ProSieben and will "put pranking back in primetime", Gamsu says. The series sees one person pranked with nightmare scenarios, before they then receive a final positive, life-changing surprise.

The trend for more lightly formatted shows extends to the popular survival genre with the likes of *The Island* and *10,000 BC* in the UK differing from earlier offerings such as *Survivor*, which was more rigidly structured.

Within survival, horror is also working. *Release the Hounds*, in which contestants negotiate a spooky house before being chased by a pack of dogs, is on ITV2 in the UK and has just been recommissioned. It demonstrates the benefit of a noisy, attention-grabbing premise, with distributor Sony Pictures Television securing several international deals. Similarly noisy and horrific is Tiger Aspect's *I Survived a Zombie Apocalypse* for BBC Three in the UK.

Slow TV also continues to grow. Hailing from NRK, it is a deliberately meditative take on entertainment, with the Norwegian pubcaster's upcoming slow TV offerings include a live broadcast following climbers ascending the Troll Wall mountain face.

DRG sells NRK's slow fare and has just landed a US deal, with cable net Travel Channel planning a slow special.

In the UK, BBC Four is embarking on a dedicated slow season. "It is a different way of watching TV," says Ole Hedemann, chief creative officer at NRK. "People might not sit through it all, but get up and walk about during the show."

"High-concept shows do represent a risk, but *Dancing with the Stars* – ballroom dancing in primetime – and *Big Brother* were big risks when they began," says one international producer. Here's to the next wave of innovative formats, and a new golden age of entertainment. **TBI**



Gogglebox South Korea on KBS



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THE SHOW: *The Puppet Show*

THE PRODUCER: Talpa

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Talpa Global

THE BROADCASTER: SBS6

THE CONCEPT: Primetime family talent show, with puppets instead of human acts

The Puppet Show was, Talpa Global boss Maarten Meijs says, a “butterfly project”, by which he means the team had butterflies in their stomachs ahead of broadcast. These likely disappeared when the overnights landed. The opening episode on Talpa-backed SBS6 delivering over one million viewers in an 8.30pm-10pm part of the grid that averages 450,000 to 500,000. It commanded a 13.6% share in the 24-to-54 demo.

Meijs says: “During the creative process a lot of people said ‘is this a joke?’ and a lot of international partners wanted to know how it would work. We wanted a show for the whole family that could also take people by surprise and within the talent genre, this is unique.

“It has a lot of viewer touchpoints; the show is on TV, there is an online platform where people can learn some of the skills and how to create puppets, and Miss Izzy will soon appear in a retail promotion.”

Miss Izzy is the puppet member of the three-member judging panel. As a diva, flown in from New York, she has a key role in the show. As well as making decisions on the acts, she also conducts backstage interviews and talks directly to the other puppets.

The Puppet Show shares some DNA with Talpa’s other talent hit, *The Voice*, according to Meijs: “It is visually appealing and becomes an event, which is something *The Voice* has. You can also watch with the whole family and it is

a positive show, and it takes you by surprise because the acts are all so different.”

On SBS6 there were five 90-minute selection episodes building to the final.

All eps are pre-recorded. The puppeteers, who are of all ages, are judged on their puppet-making skill as well as their act, which could be singing, dancing, lip-syncing, comedy or ventriloquism. Two stars from the three judges then sees the act through to the next round.

Talpa will use the Dutch version of *The Puppet Show* (*Popster*), as a showcase for future international versions, in the same way it did with *The Voice*, which started out on RTL4. The international sales effort gets away in earnest at MIPTV, where it is Talpa Global’s big launch.



THE SHOW: *The Most Beautiful Woman*
THE PRODUCER: UFA Show & Factual
THE DISTRIBUTOR: FremantleMedia International
THE CHANNEL: RTL1 (Germany)
THE CONCEPT: National competition in which women compete in challenges that highlight their inner beauty and improve self esteem

THE SHOW: *Hall of Fame*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Hat Trick International
THE PRODUCERS: Kalooki Pictures, Hat Trick Productions
THE BROADCASTER: BBC One (UK)
THE CONCEPT: Variety format in which stars perform acts immortalised by their heroes

Veteran British host and entertainer Sir Bruce Forsyth fronted *Hall of Fame – Bruce's Hall of Fame in the UK* – on BBC One where it went out as a holiday season special over Christmas. Hat Trick International is now launching the format internationally.

It has stars performing the acts of the heroes who inspired their careers. The celebrity explains their fascination with their act they will mimic before performing live. In the UK special, which was filmed at the iconic London Palladium, the likes of Jamie Cullum and Ben Miller paid homage to stars including singer Tony Bennett and comedian Norman Wisdom.

Pitched as family entertainment, HTI sales chief Sarah Tong says even if younger viewers don't recognise the star being emulated, they will likely know the celebrity giving the actual performance. "They may not know who Dean Martin is, but they will know the new stars and will learn about who inspired them," she says.

The UK show was produced by Kalooki Pictures and Hat Trick. Given the clearance issues with the music rights, the international sales effort will focus on format sales.

"Broadcasters are always looking for the next big thing and this is a big Saturday night entertainment show," says Tong. "There are so many celebrity shows out there, but it is interesting to look at celebs in different ways, see who inspired them and see a different side to them."

According to FremantleMedia's global formats chief Rob Clark, *The Most Beautiful Woman* is almost an anti-beauty pageant. Instead of judging women on their physical appearance, the format aims to reveal inner beauty through a series of challenges. "It's about women themselves being empowered," he says.

The format is in part based on a Dove commercial in which a forensic sketch artist asked women of all ages to describe themselves, before then asking strangers the women had just met to describe them.

The results showed women saw themselves as less beautiful than others – indeed, the show points to research that suggests just 4% of women consider themselves beautiful.

In Germany, 20 women aged between 21 and 65 took part, with the host performing the role of the stranger, briefing the artist for a sketch of each contestants. The women then took part in tests that brought out their

confidence and self-esteem. The final saw four women go to a public vote.

RTL1 positioned it against midweek football and was the number two show of the day among 14-49s, and was top in its timeslot among 14-49s and 14-29s. "Most broadcasters – even the broadest broadcasters – have slots that are for females," says Clark.

Besides falling into the popular trend for feel-good format television, Clark also describes the programme as "good arts reality" with strong potential to translate in numerous territories.

"Looking for the most beautiful women in the world is not a niche play," he says. "It's very broad, but it is not about traditional beauty and not like Miss Universe. It's about beauty that comes from a life story."

Clark also notes the sponsorship and advertising potential, saying: "What brand does not want to be associated with empowerment?"





THE SHOW: *Babushka*

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Armoza Formats

THE PRODUCERS: Armoza Formats, Ryan Seacrest Productions, TF1

THE CONCEPT: Gameshow format in which contestants attempt to win cash prizes hidden in giant matryoshka dolls

Babushka is a three-way gameshow format hailing from French broadcaster TF1 and Israeli and US prodcos Armoza Formats and Ryan Seacrest Productions.

TF1 came up with the idea of a gameshow using Russian, or matryoshka, dolls. Armoza, which has worked with TF1 on several shows, then worked up the concept before bringing in RSP as the US partner.

"Then we made an English-language pilot, which was filmed in Israel," says Armoza founder Avi Armoza. "We did 90% of the full set and tested the mechanics of opening the Babushkas."

The gameplay sees contestants open eight dolls. Some contain cash prizes of up to

US\$100,000 and others will cause the player to lose their winnings. Whatever happens, they open eight dolls. "Even if they lose on one turn they keep playing and can go on to accumulate prize money," Armoza says. "It's an emotional rollercoaster."

Pitched as a one-hour show, two contestants can play per episode. Armoza says that the company has learned from previous formats that when new contestants come into a game audiences can use the opportunity to leave, and that limiting the number of players to two mitigates that potential problem.

"The combination of such an engaging and emotional game show and the fresh take of bringing contestants along for the whole ride

struck us from the first moment and led us to choose it as the first format we have taken on as an international partnership," says Eugene Young, president, Ryan Seacrest Productions.

In a similar vein to formats such as *Deal or No Deal*, luck plays a huge part in deciding who walks away with a prize, although there is a basic true/false question to answer on each turn in *Babushka*. "There is a simple general knowledge and strategy element with a money tree, but the key element is luck," says Armoza. "We felt the element of actually opening the dolls really appeals to a family audience."

Armoza is selling the format outside of France and the US and will launch it internationally at MIPTV.



THE SHOW: *Anno*
THE PRODUCERS: Strix Norway, NRK
THE DISTRIBUTOR: DRG
THE CHANNEL: NRK1
THE CONCEPT: Contestants are whisked away into the past, where they compete to adapt to their new life

NRK's development team described *Anno* as a "major new programme initiative for the whole family" before it hit screens in Norway on January 1 of this year. The ratings it has achieved certainly suggest multiple layers of viewing – 899,000 (a 49.2% total viewing share) on debut, with a season high of 959,000 (58.6%) and an average episode audience of 790,000 (47%).

"We're studying the ratings with fascination – they were so good," says Noel Hedges,

executive VP of content and acquisitions at distributor DRG. "It definitely drew in older and younger viewers while pressing the obvious buttons."

The reality competition format sees contestants living in a town in which life from hundreds of years before is recreated. In Norway this was the 1764 Bergen.

Participants were a variety of ages, and competed across tasks such as fencing, cooking, craftwork and building.

The historically accurate tasks helped NRK satisfy its public service remit, and ended in weekly eliminations voted for by peers.

Ultimately a winner was selected by professional Norwegian guilds, making them a 'citizen' of their new city.

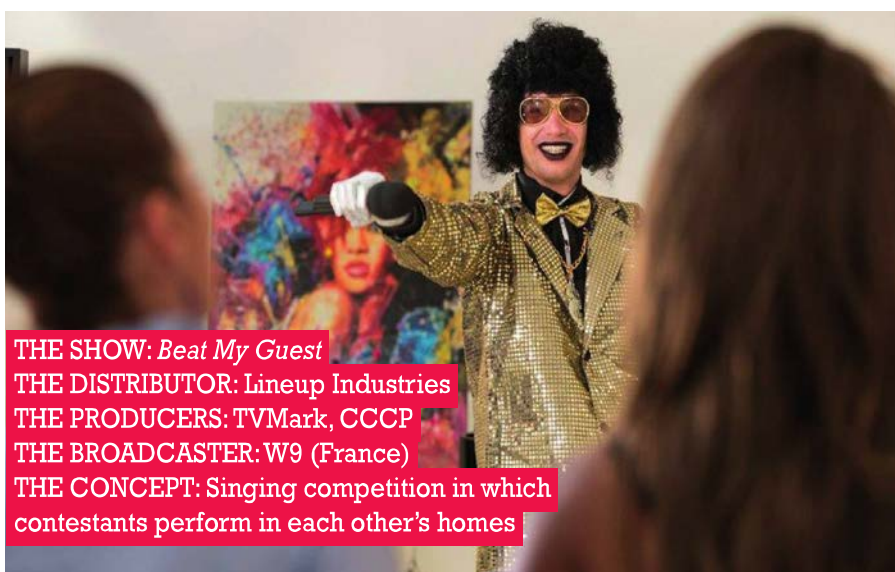
"We're used to competition reality being about conflict and combat, which is important to create drama, but the principle element is putting people in a past time and them challenging themselves with the skills and lifestyle of an era gone by," says Hedges.

DRG – a sister company of producer Strix Norway via parent company Nice Entertainment Group – will be at MIPTV targeting channels of all types, with Hedges noting phone voting could be introduced for commercial channels.

Buyers may be concerned by similarities to Talpa Media's social experiment format *Utopia*, in which people try to create a new society over the course of a year.

While ratings of that were strong in Holland on SBS, it flopped on Fox in the US and is struggling in Germany.

Hedges says such comparisons are wide of the mark. "This isn't a social experiment; it's a competition reality series first and foremost, and it's much more scalable when it comes to budgets. *Utopia* is a big commitment that needs to run for a year, but this doesn't."



THE SHOW: *Beat My Guest*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Lineup Industries
THE PRODUCERS: TVMark, CCCP
THE BROADCASTER: W9 (France)
THE CONCEPT: Singing competition in which contestants perform in each other's homes

Beat My Guest takes some of the ingredients of a show such as *Come Dine With Me* and folds in the perennially popular singing talent competition. The format has been ordered by M6's French DTT channel W9, with Reservoir

Productions making the local version.

The show was created by Dutch prodcos CCCP and TVMark, the indie run by *Intellygents* co-creator Mark van Berkel.

"It's a Dutch format that has started in France,"

says Lineup co-founder Ed Louwerse. "It's an access primetime show with the contestants going into each other's homes, where a small stage is set up. It has a clear structure, with each of them singing and voting on each other's performances. It's a feel-good format."

A voiceover helps ensure the fun, light tone. Each day the five contestants must sing a song from a selection in the same genre. They vote for a daily winner and at the end of the week an overall champion.

In France W9 will run a two-week, ten-episode version of *Beat My Guest*, which Lineup will be pitching to buyers as part of its MIPTV slate.

In many respects, the series is the antithesis of the massive TV talent competitions. "This is the opposite of the huge studio singing competitions," according to Louwerse. "It is much closer to the people; it is not a glossy shiny-floor show. It is a show that could be done in various regions."

Red Arrow International is bringing *Real Men* to Cannes. The show has proved a hit on DR1 in Denmark where it averaged over one million viewers, 80-85% above its slot average. It is in the same "real reality" camp as another Red Arrow format, *Married at First Sight*, says Harry Gamsu, the company's vice president, format acquisitions and sales. "Its doing for weight loss what *Married at First Sight* did for marriage," he says.

The series hails from Danish production collective Fjernsynsforeningen. The show casts five out of shape guys, who train together before competing in a triathlon. As the group bonds and the camaraderie builds, the five are put through their paces by a personal trainer and face a physical challenge at the end of each episode.

The participants on the show are weighed and measured, but in many ways, the show is the antithesis of a weight-loss competition format like *The Biggest Loser*.

The participants do not directly compete against each other, but are tested weekly as a group. For example, after an episode in which they have been training on bikes they are entered into a bike race – against a group of (super-fit) pensioner cyclists.



THE SHOW: *Real Men*

THE PRODUCER: Fjernsynsforeningen

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Red Arrow International

THE BROADCASTER: DR1 (Denmark)

THE CONCEPT: Five ordinary out of shape guys are put through their paces to get fit, lose the fat and compete in physical challenges

"Each of the [weekly] challenges has a little twist," Gamsu says. "The guys are out of shape but still competitive, and what you get are these everyday heroes."

The Danish participants became stars at home and there was huge social media interest in them and talk show appearances.

The DR1 show was made in association with a men's health association and,

particularly for pubcasters, promoting positive men's health issues is an angle that could be pushed.

Equally, a commercial channel could have an all-out entertainment version of *Real Men* and cast it accordingly.

Heading into MIP, Gamsu says there is a demand among buyers for lightly formatted, authentic shows like this.



THE SHOW: *Cash Mob*

THE PRODUCERS: Dockside Productions, Corus Entertainment

THE DISTRIBUTOR: All3Media International

THE BROADCASTER: CMT (Canada)

THE CONCEPT: A tongue-in-cheek game show that surprises its contestants as they work

Cash Mob's unique selling points are exactly the opposite of what most game shows try to achieve. "It's not about big money, there's isn't much tension, and instead of people being primed and prepared to be on TV, they're just completely surprised," says distributor All3Media

International's senior VP, format production Nick Smith. "The whole thing is meant to be ironic."

The format sees a host ambush contestants at their workplace after getting permission from the boss, who has nominated three of their staff to play. The contestants then square off to win 'tens

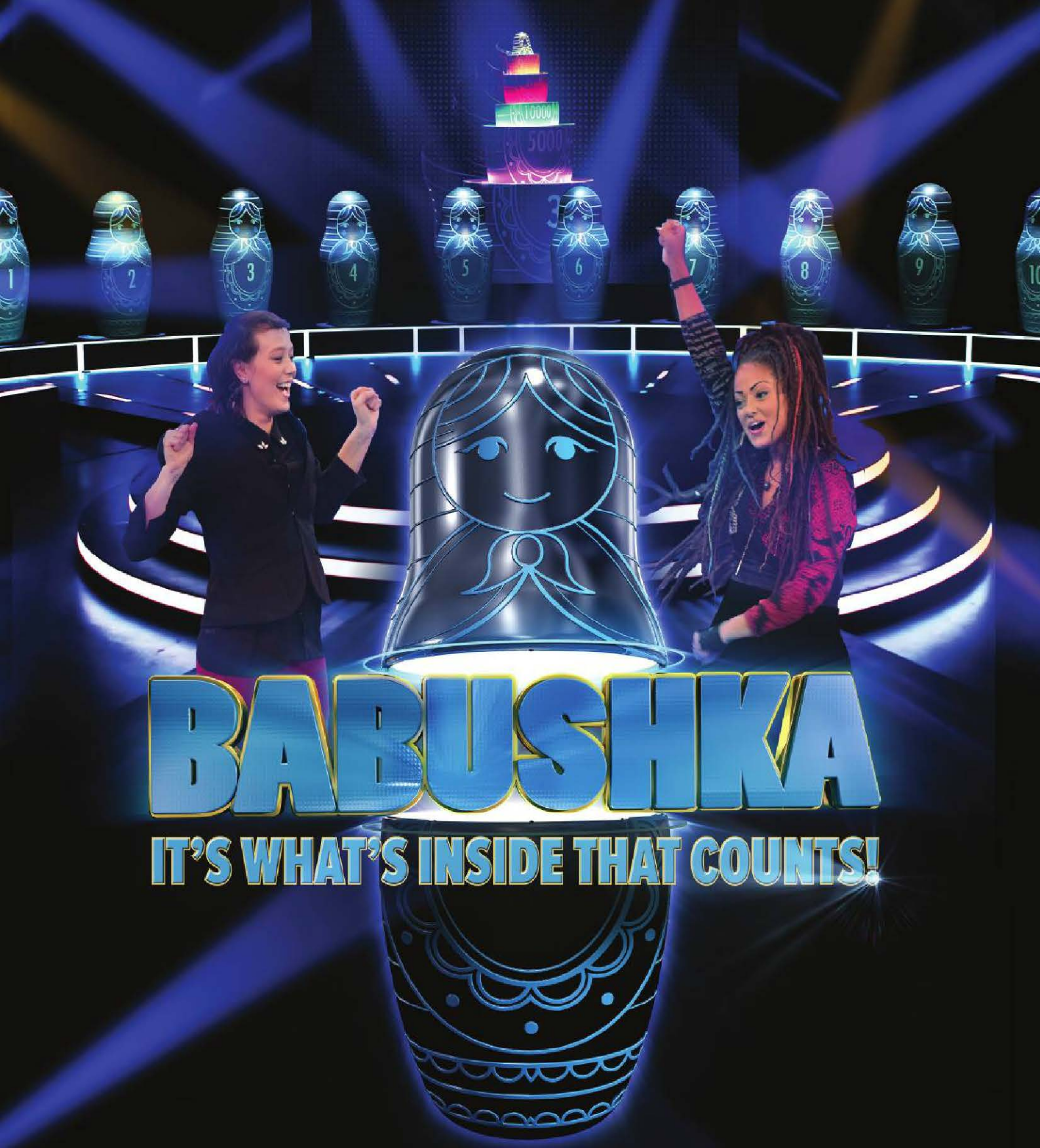
of dollars, strange consolation prizes and endless bragging rights'.

"It's not high tech and that's the idea; it's very tongue in cheek and very, very funny," says Smith, who predicts it will appeal to buyers of different profiles thanks to its versatility. Corus Entertainment has played it on a number of channels in a number of slots.

Smith found the Canadian format through Corus, which launched the show on specialty channel CMT. This marks the first time All3 has acquired a format from the Toronto-based media group, which operates a number of local channels, including HBO, OWN and Cartoon Network.

All3 has found huge success with formats in a similar space such as *Cash Cab* and *Cash at Your Door*. The former is a vitally-important cash generator for the Discovery Communications- and Liberty Global-owned company.

"So many people are focusing on the next big primetime smash that smaller shows can be forgotten, but they can make huge financial differences to both distributors and channels because they can play in various slots," says Smith. "It's not often you come across shows like it." **TBI**



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LAST WORD

TOM FORMAN



Why you need me if you want to crack the US market

The meeting always goes the same way. On one side, you've got me and my development exec. On the other, a smart producer from Spain. Or Israel. Or Timbuktu. We're knee-to-knee in the Majestic lobby. Or camped at a table at the Carlton. If it's after lunch, we've ordered wine. If it's earlier, we're pretending we're okay with Evian. The laptop is open, the pitch deck in hand, and we're about to have the same conversation we always have. And I mean always.

Producer: Take a look at this sizzle reel for my new show. It aired in my home territory to great numbers. I think it's a sure thing in the USA!

Me: You know, that is a pretty good idea. We'd need to tweak it slightly for American audiences, but you've got something special and we'd be thrilled to partner with you and bring it to the US. Our buyers will really get excited.

Producer: Yep, they were excited.

Me: I'm sorry. They "were" excited?

Producer: Well, a few months back I flew to Los Angeles and New York. I pitched the show to a few networks myself. They were interested in the room, but the conversation stalled.

Me: What nets did you pitch?

Producer: Just a few. CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox. CW, USA, TNT, and WGN. My US agent had me swing by TLC, Discovery, Lifetime, A&E, History, MTV, VH1, Logo, WeTV, AMC, Bravo, E!, Oxygen, Reelz, Pivot, Tru, Showtime and OWN. And, oh, I had lunch with the Golf Channel. They passed because the show isn't about golf.

Me: First, respectfully, everyone passed. If they didn't call you that very week to buy it, it's a pass. That's how they do it in America. Second, which

one of us should pay for this wine? I'm thinking you.

Producer: We should partner up on this project and take it back out. It didn't sell the first time, but I'm thinking the right production partner could make the difference.

Me: Hey, I'm pretty good. But I'm not that good. Nobody is. You went out solo into the dog-eat-dog American market and didn't sell. Maybe because you were pitching the wrong people, or didn't precisely tweak the format for US buyers and viewers. Plus, those buyers likely got spooked that you don't have boots-on-ground creative and production infrastructure in the US. That can make the process unwieldy and expensive.

Doesn't really matter why they passed, because rebooting a failed pitch process is typically impossible. You get one shot with buyers in the USA. Next time, let's have this meeting before you pitch, not after. It could have ended differently. And, oh, sorry for crushing your dreams. I'll buy the wine.

I certainly don't blame the producers. With well over a hundred channels commissioning original content, American network execs are actively courting international content creators. US nets offer comparatively enormous budgets. Plus, nothing supercharges international format sales like a hit in the United States. Who wouldn't jump on a plane and pitch?

But it rarely ends well. The most competitive, most lucrative territory in the world represents an almost insurmountable challenge to even the most determined international indie producer.

US buyers require sellers to understand both their uniquely American audience and the constantly changing competitive landscape in the States. They expect an understanding of the ways even a strong existing format must be modified for the USA. They need producers to navigate their frustrating financial models. They demand top-notch execution, and they're

rightfully wary of the complicated process of marrying an international creator with a domestic production services provider. That's a lot to ask of someone who doesn't live and work and create in the United States.

Those of us who've grown up making TV in the USA have spent our careers getting to know our viewers, our networks, and their often bizarrely American tastes. We know what they'll love, what they'll buy, and just as importantly, what they'll find weirdly offensive or confusing or... European. We have a deep understanding of what's working at this moment. We have personal relationships, network precedent, and the production infrastructure that can ensure smooth sailing.

Basically, we've got the stuff that makes it easy for a buyer to say yes. So when you bring your big idea to the States, you want one of us in the room with you. Or maybe even in the room *instead* of you. And you want it the first time the idea goes to market, because there won't be a second.

One quick case study: this year at Relativity Television, we had the pleasure of working with UK producers ClearStory to adapt their format *Sex Box* for the US market. Over a series of Skypes and conference calls and productive brainstorming sessions, we jointly "Americanised" the show. We pitched the project, engineered a four-network bidding war, and ultimately produced the series for WeTV in the US.

That's how you do it. And it's just one recent example. We're currently working with an intentionally small number of talented, independent, wildly creative producers from around the world to modify their formats for sale in the United States. Sometimes we're making minor tonal changes. Sometimes we're doing a wholesale rethinking of everything from show structure to air pattern.

Instead of pitching US buyers directly or planting your project with an international distributor who doesn't entirely understand my territory or my networks, email me. We can meet, and I'll buy the wine. **TBI**



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