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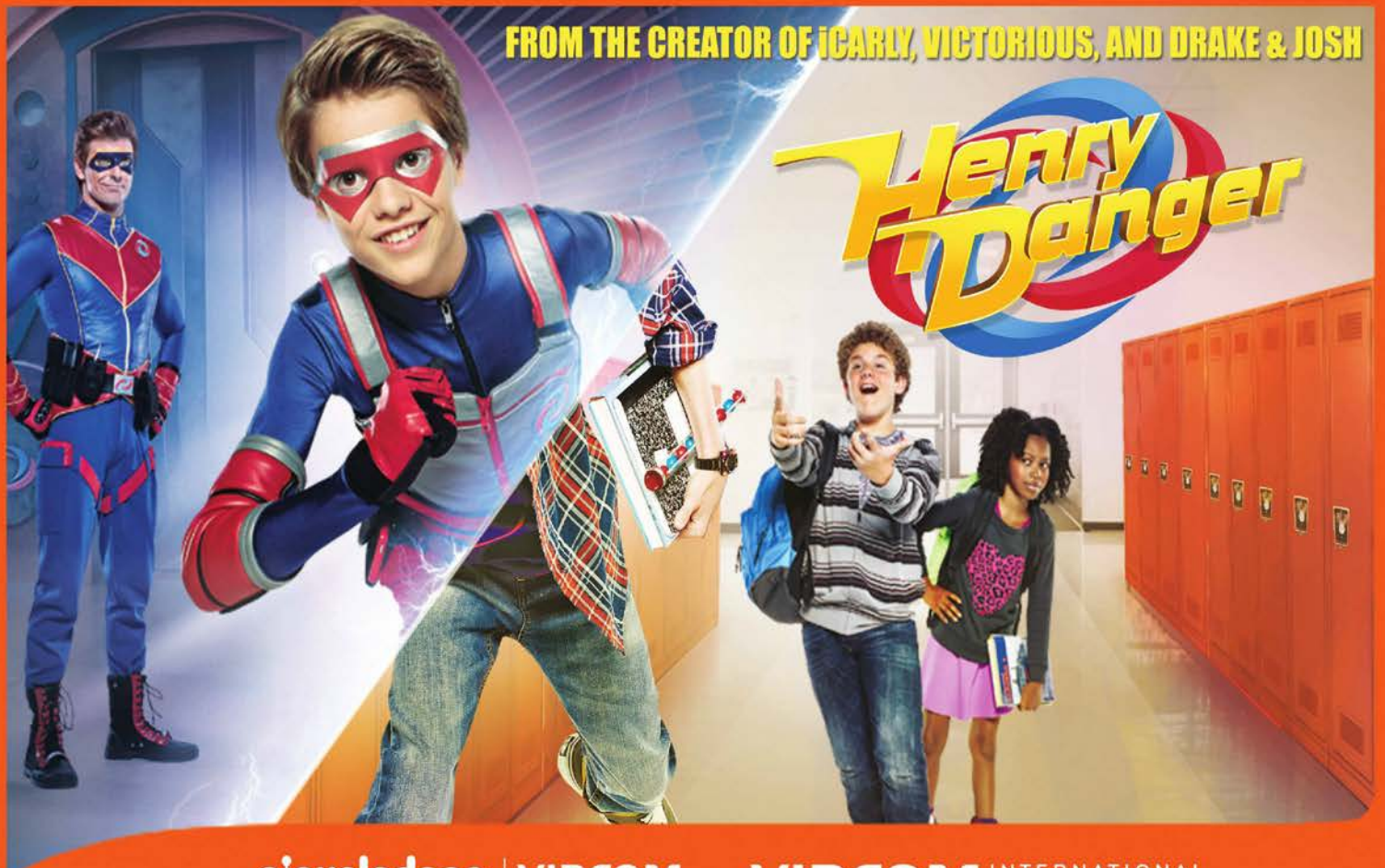
**№1 US PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM
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*Source: Nielsen, 8/21/13-5/6/14, Live +SD, Preschool Block Avg. based on MF 8:30-2p



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SEASON 2

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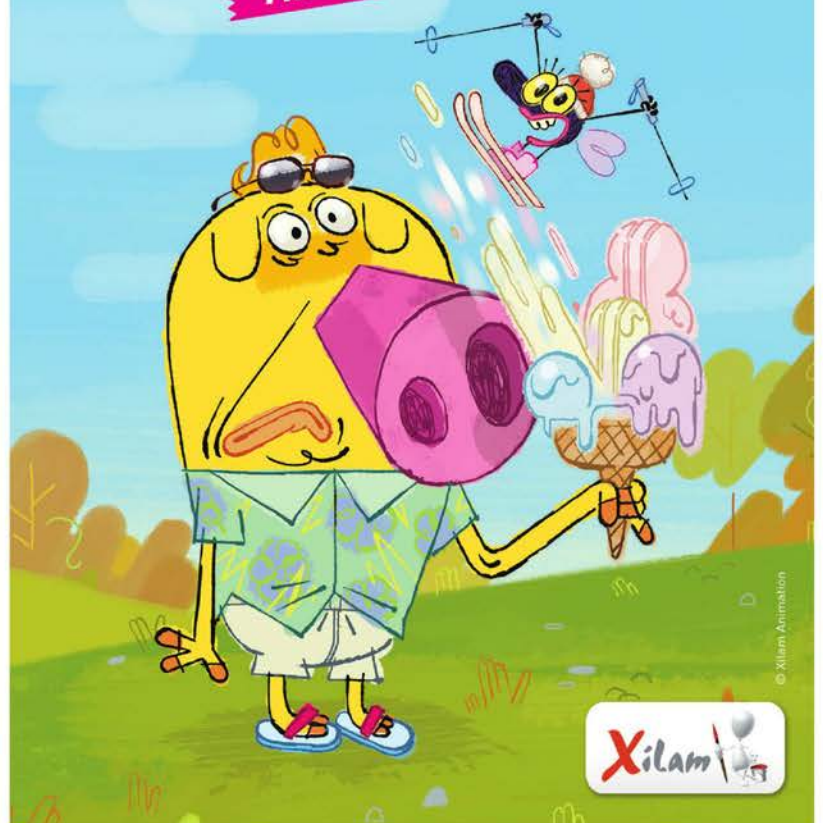
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VIEWPOINT


 DAVID MICHEL

Content extremes and the new radical indies

It is now quite clear that our industry is witness to major changes, which are affecting scripted coproductions in both drama and children's programming. On the production side, a new tide of concentration of the key media players is sweeping Europe and Asia where massive media groups are about to be formed, Endemol-Shine-Core being the most recent example.

Meanwhile, on the US broadcast side, another tide sees the now ubiquitous non-linear competitors and specialty cable channels, from AMC to Disney, intensifying competition, especially in the premium content segment. The now obvious product of this increased competition is 'extreme niche branding': each platform or channel is branding itself in a way that is more and more specific (*The Knick*, as a branding tool to redefine Cinemax's drama offering is a good recent example). This movement, which started primarily as a US phenomenon, is now rapidly spreading around the world.

In the 'old world' model of content, international programming was divided neatly into two categories:

1) Fully-funded original US productions in which one player (the network/studio) was funding and giving creative notes on scripted shows. This gave birth to the US showrunner, an individual entrusted by one single client to imprint a unique voice on a programme. From *Doc McStuffins* to *Game of Thrones*, this model has enabled bold new talent to emerge and has encouraged new ways to tell stories. This now-classic US system has been embraced by the likes of Netflix and Amazon to come up with groundbreaking content; thus reinforcing the trend for über platform-branding.

2) The international coproduction model patching financing from various networks and

countries and hence combining creative notes from very different perspectives. This model allowed for the rise of many mid-sized international media groups outside the United States. While we all know of the ugly side of this system (the disastrous Euro-pudding), many successful examples can be found both in drama such as *The Border*, and kids TV, from *Rabid Invasion* to *Totally Spies*. The key to this model's success relies on the ability of the producer, not the showrunner, to establish a clear creative direction for a series by smartly aggregating the sometimes-contradictory notes coming from the series' financiers.

Our belief is that this distinction cannot and will not sustain.

On the creative side, audiences are now used to high-end, studio-budget type series because of the upsurge of the competition to create premium content, which was intensified by Netflix.

On the branding side, the rise of the premium series is also a reflection of linear and non-linear platforms looking for content, which can uniquely build their brand. In a matter of months *Orange is the New Black* and *House of Cards* created a very distinctive brand image for Netflix, in the same way the first generation of HBO shows did. In the kids business, series such as *Adventure Time* provide the same brand defining content for Cartoon Network.

Besides quality, this new breed of premium shows have in common a clear a mission to support the niche branding of the one platform they're airing on. This is clearly becoming a world of one show equals one broadcaster equals one brand image; going against the old model of producing a series for a variety of partners, sharing notes and co-financing. This is already a fact of life in the US and will soon be a reality in Europe.

The content market is like many others

becoming polarised between high-end and low-cost, with little room left between local content and premium US or international series produced to fit a specific client's branding.

This means that the scripted bread and butter of most media groups, coproduced content that is "brand-compatible" with a multitude of broadcasters in order to feed international sales, will become increasingly hard to put together. In a nutshell, this new age of "content extremes" (premium international and low-cost local), will mostly be fulfilled by two groups of producers working at either extreme: US studios and/or networks and a limited number of 'mega-international' groups such as eOne or Endemol-Shine and radical indies.

The latter is a new generation of well-funded, agile content companies, able to work with high-end talent without being tied by the mid-sized independent media group model with its in-house distribution and high structural costs and make creator-driven series hard to foster.

The kids business – it being ahead of the global trends by a few years – is already showing us this change in action. Companies such as Little Airplane (*Wonderpets*) or Frederator Studios on the animation side are both global, radical indies providing creative-driven content in an über-branded world.

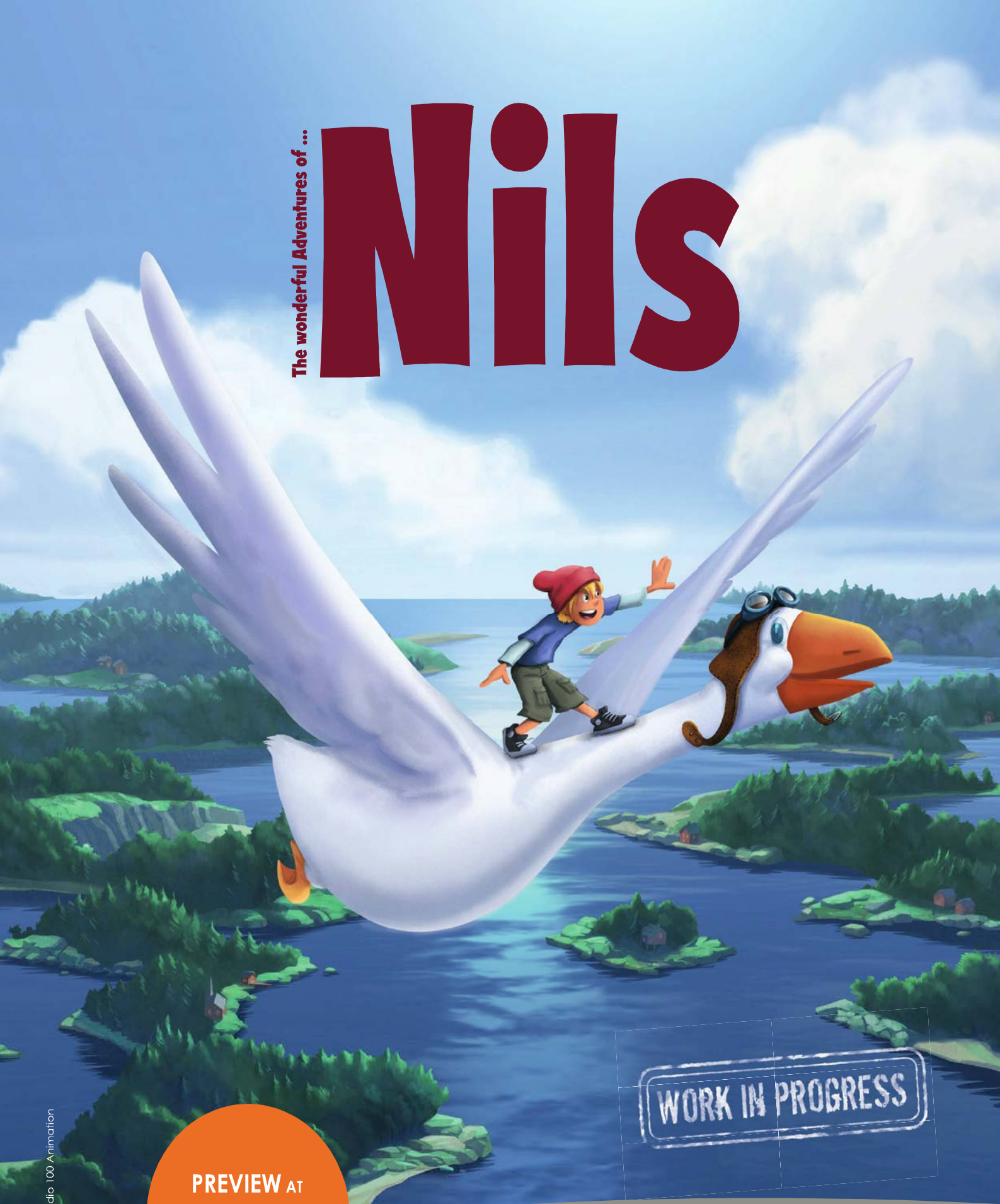
Successful radical companies have three abilities in common: to work with premium talent, to sell to the US market, and to put together bespoke financial models for each show. Achieving all three is a difficult act to perform within a medium-sized group with its demands for built-in distribution.

There are many reasons to be excited by this new world of content extremes, especially on a creative level. As an industry, this means deep and sometimes difficult times for those who will keep playing by the old rules... and the surge of a new breed of global, radical indies.

TBI

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PREVIEW AT
MIPCOM 2014
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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

Cosgrove Hall Fitzpatrick Entertainment, the business formed by the founders of UK toon studio Cosgrove Hall, has hired JENNY JOHNSTONE as its commercial director. She joins from Licensing Management International



Dublin's JAM Media has named Millimages' group commercial director John Reynolds the animation studio's first chief commercial officer. He will oversee all aspects of commercial activities, including financing its current slate of programming

German regional pubcaster WDR has poached ProSiebenSat. 1's Stefanie Fischer as part of a push into international coproductions. She will oversee international sales and broadcast distribution of WDR's children's brands and seek to exploit rights across platforms



Canadian broadcaster Corus Entertainment has promoted Athena Georgaklis to director of content at kids channel Teletoon following the exit of Alan Gregg earlier this year. Gregg left to launch an Irish office for Mercury Filmworks

Viacom International Media Networks has hired former Turner Broadcasting System Africa and Middle East boss ALAN MUSA as vice president and commercial director of Nickelodeon and Comedy Central in the UK. Musa was more recently president of short-form movie firm Shorts International



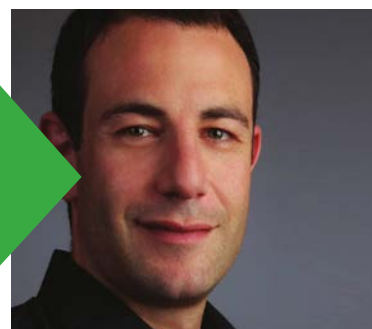
FremantleMedia Kids & Family Entertainment has named Hit Entertainment's Henry Or head of a new Asian office. He will be VP, Asia, and be joined by another Hit exec, Tracy Griffiths, who becomes VP of licensing and consumer products, EMEA and Australia

Former HIT Entertainment boss JEFFREY DUNN has been named president and CEO of Sesame Workshop. He succeeds Mel Ming, who announced that he was retiring earlier this year. Dunn exited HIT after toyco Mattel acquired the UK-based producer-distributor in 2012 for £426 million (US\$696 million)



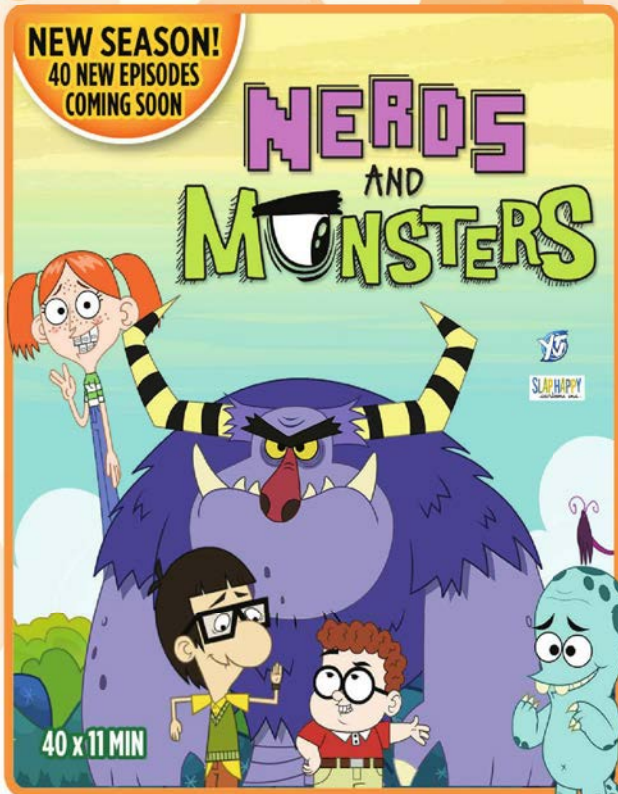
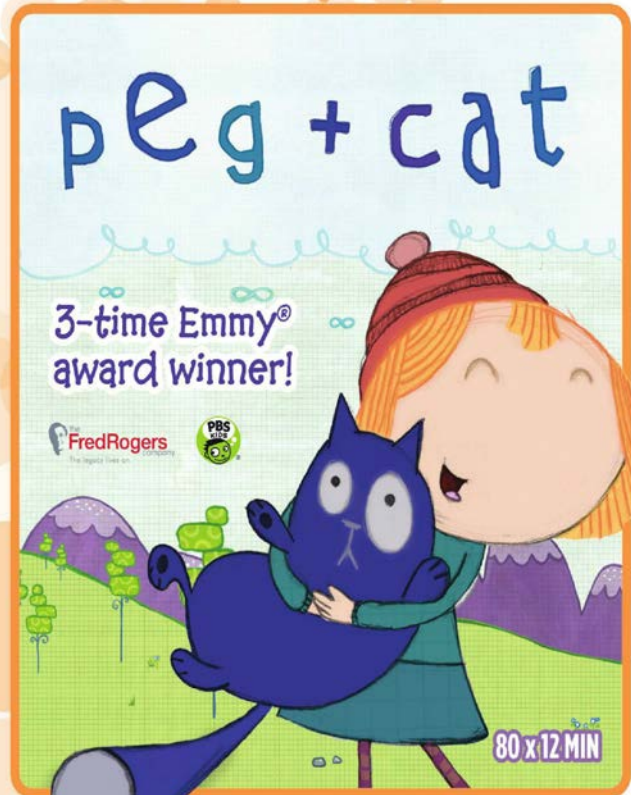
Natalie Dumoulin has been appointed to the new position of VP, creative affairs at Canadian producer 9 Story Entertainment. She most recently served as creative producer at another Canadian company, Shaftesbury Film

Ex-Marathon Media general manager DAVID MICHEL has launched his own prodco, Cottonwood Media. He left Zodiak Kids-owned Marathon earlier this year, and is positioning Cottonwood as an "agile" production and investment vehicle



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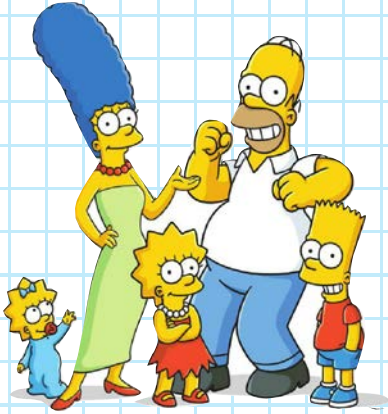


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The Kids Matrix

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THE SIMPSONS launches in China after SVOD platform Sohu takes local rights



PGS Entertainment's **ALVINNN!!!** and the Chipmunks and FTV's Peanuts are the most-screened shows at French Screenings (Le Rendez Vous)

Free-to-air kids channel Disney Germany orders local version of *100 Days of Being Nice*, the Gong format that sees a host attempt to reintroduce politeness through a series of events

Viacom has launched kids Nick Jr and Nicktoons in Africa for the first time, on MultiChoice's DStv platform

\$ Low



Al Jazeera stocks up with large package of programmes from Zodiak including **REKKIT RABBIT** for its Arabic kids channels Jeem and preschool service Baraem TV



Numerous international broadcasters acquire Method Animation and DQ Entertainment's animated Robin Hood series *Robin Hood: Mischief in Sherwood*

Netflix orders several kids series, including one based on the Popples brand

Jetpack Distribution launches as a joint venture between France's Samka Productions, Nerd Corps Entertainment and Gardiner Entertainment

The organisers of the annual Children's Media Conference launching new London event, the The CMC Rights Exchange

Peo

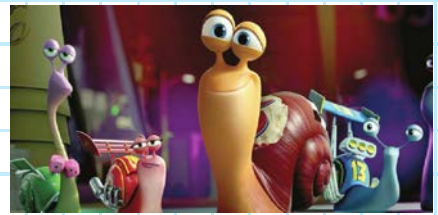
TBI's at-a-glance guide to the biggest deals in international childrens television

Content



Amazon Prime Instant Video launches new wave of original kids pilots shows include *The Stinky & Dirty Show*, *Buddy: Tech Detective* and *Niko and the Sword of Light*, and live-actioners *Table 58* and *Just Add Magic*.

New **THUNDERBIRDS** launches at MIPJunior with gala screening



Discussions start – and break down – over a possible sale of the **DREAMWORKS** studio

Scandinavian on-demand service Viaplay bags Nickelodeon kids shows, including *Dora the Explorer* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*

\$ High

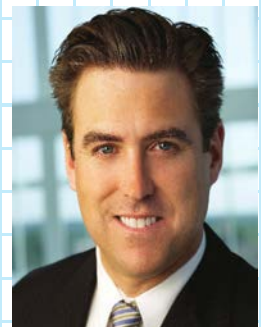
Japanese conglomerate SoftBank approaches DreamWorks Animation, the company Jeffrey Katzenberg heads up over a US\$3.4 billion takeover, but talks stall



NIGEL PICKARD joins Dial Square 86, David Frank's new company, to oversee investment in kids and family content



Cottonwood Media, the indie set up by former Marathon Media boss **DAVID MICHEL**, has bagged its first shows, preschool series *Ollie & Moon* and *Squish* for 6-to-11s



US kids net The Hub rebranded as Discovery Family Channel, with **TOM COSGROVE** taking over as his 3net channel is wound down

People



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Peppa's success leaves eOne sitting pretty in pink

New preschool hits are thin on the ground: *Peppa Pig* is still the last show to break through internationally. As the show hits ten, TBI speaks with Olivier Dumont about the billion-dollar pig



Peppa Pig started out on Channel 5 and Nickelodeon UK in May 2004 and has launched in 180 territories and in 40 languages in the subsequent decade. The challenge for Olivier Dumont upon joining eOne in 2010 was not selling its key show to channels, but to maximise its off-screen potential.

"Four years ago we had sold everything on TV, but it was a UK licensing property, and it hadn't been successful anywhere else," says the eOne Family managing director. "I focused all of my attention on making it a success internationally and, market by market, making sure it gets the same support."

The preschool show now ranks as the top licensing and merchandising property in Australia, Italy and Spain, and is growing in Latin America and the US. Dumont says it is generating revenues above the US\$650 million annual retail figure that is referenced.

"Globally it is north of US\$650 million now, it will reach a billion soon given the growth," he says. The numbers in key categories illustrate the L&M story: 10 million books, nine million DVDs, 15 million toys and 1.5 million apps have been sold worldwide.

The show was created by UK indie Astley Baker Davies, which still produces it, while eOne holds the international rights and made it the lynchpin of its kids TV sales business. "We have coloured the map pink," Dumont says. (There are a handful of exceptions globally such as in Japan, where it has been on Cartoon Network, but never terrestrial TV.)

Peppa's tenth birthday is being marked with a three-parter, the first time Peppa has appeared in the fifteen-minute format. Astley Baker Davies was initially intent on making an extended double episode (ten minutes) before deciding it worked better as a triple. The prodco has built in two natural breaks in the story so that broadcasters can also run, or re-run, the content in the regular five-minute format.

The extended *Peppa* is a good marketing platform for channel partners, Dumont says. "Broadcasters want to be able to say are premiering new episodes, and it helps with on and off-air communications."

But why has *Peppa* become a global hit? Dumont notes that the show goes wider than the core 2-5s, and that 6-7s will tune in because the show is funny, and that humour is a secret of *Peppa's* success. "Very few preschool shows are funny," he says. "It could be funny just for kids, but *Peppa* is funny for the entire family. Parents enjoy it, unlike a lot of preschool, which can be torture for adults."

Another key question for the people selling the show is how much *Peppa* do you need? Preschoolers will sit through repeats and the demo is constantly being refreshed, so why keep making more episodes? So far, there are 209x5mins. The majors will generally go to 52 or more half-hours of a series. On that basis, *Peppa* has a way to go.

The anniversary special, entitled *Golden Boots* and following Peppa's quest to find the titular footwear and take part in a puddle-jumping competition, will bow on Channel 5 and Nick UK – now sister channels in the Viacom stable – in November. Dumont says that he is hopeful there will be other specials in the future. "Hopefully it will spark more long-form story ideas for *Peppa*," he says.

Astley Baker Davies is largely left to its own devices with *Peppa*, given it has a proven track record, but eOne will suggest themes to include that could be the cornerstones of licensing campaigns.

Given the largest part of eOne's business is features, is there a possibility of a *Peppa* movie? "We've discussed a feature and are always talking about it," Dumont says. "Astley Baker Davies only has so much time [each four-and-a-half minute episode takes two weeks to animate], but we have planted the seed. It's in the queue." **TBI**

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Cyber plays the *Long, Long* game

Founder of Cyber Group Studios Pierre Sissman tells TBI that the firm is expanding its development and production capabilities, and why World War II animation *The Long, Long Holiday* will bring families together

Pierre Sissman has spent the better part of a decade getting his Cyber Group Studios to the point where it is ready for wider expansion. Having launched the firm in 2005, the former Disney France president initially focused on preschool through series such as *Ozie Boo!* and *Tales of Tatonka*.

Now the firm is at the stage where new avenues of business have opened up, with enough capital behind it to finance a larger development slate, new production tools and bigger distribution operations.

“When we created the company we decided to focus on one segment of the market and to do it right,” Sissman says. “That’s what happened. Our biggest evolution in the past three or four years is we have expanded our main focus from only preschool to a slate of kids series. We are coming very aggressively to the wider market.”

At MIPCOM, it will be premiering new episodes of the much-travelled Disney Channels Worldwide series *Zou* and *Mia*, which it coproduces for Tiji, Radio Canada and Middle Eastern-Asian broadcaster Spacetoon.

“We invested a lot in those two shows, creating new software with new lighting and rendering tools to create even better images on the screen,” says Sissman. “*Zou* and *Mia* are achieving images at a level we’ve never seen before [in a TV production].”

The company’s development slate has increased massively since gaining US\$5 million in VC funding in 2012. “The funding gave us the security to develop our production tools and our development slate in a way that we were unable to before,” says Sissman.

Resulting shows from this push include MIPCOM debutantes *Mini Ninjas*, which is a 2D/3D coproduction with TFI Productions, and *Zorro: The Chronicles*, a series for 6-10s based on the classic Latin bandit stories, for France Télévisions and Italian pubcaster Rai. Sissman describes the latter series as Cyber Group’s biggest to date.



Other new Cyber Group shows include TFI’s *Mirette Investigates*, which debuted to the international market at Cartoon Forum last year and follows a globe-trotting detective girl and her cat; and *Pirates Next Door*, which is for France Télévisions and based on a book by Jonny Duddle, who’s best known as the illustrator of the Harry Potter novels.

Cyber Group has now working on other projects with Duddle and publisher Templar. Sissman reveals his company is working up TV adaptations of the British illustrator’s *The King of Space*, a kids title about the six-year-old heir to a galactic empire, and *Gigantosaurus*, a boy-that-cried-wolf story that substitutes dinosaurs for humans.

From an overall standpoint, Sissman says: “We have a huge development slate – we spend between €400,000 and €500,000 [US\$515,000 and US\$644,000] on development each year. We have up to 10 projects in development, and all have a reason to be there. We’re going to make some very big announcements at MIPCOM that are going to surprise some people.”

Making large bets on development, production and distribution takes financing, and earlier this year Cyber Group secured a multi-year deal with French banks Natixis

and Coficiné that will allow it to make even bigger moves.

That cash is being used to make a push into third-party rights, though Cyber Group has been selling other firms content as far back as 2009, when it picked up Australia/Canadian/UK/US cartoon *Animalia*.

Also new for MIPCOM are KidsPlanetoon series *Balloopo*, and Les Armateurs’ *The Long, Long Holiday* (pictured), the latter of which Sissman is particularly proud to represent due to its historical content.

The 10x26mins/5x50mins France Télévisions and Canal+ series was produced in time for the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It follows the life of a brother and sister who go to live with their grandparents in the relative safety of the Normandy coast at the beginning of the devastating conflict.

“What makes the hardship of the business worth it is moments like this, when you are proud to be representing something,” says Sissman. “We’ve got to do business and have to make a living, but behind that is the passion to do things that are significant. This is beyond just producing or selling; families are going to watch *Long, Long Holiday* – grandparents, parents and children.” **TBI**

From Soho Square to the Croisette

The latest London post-production firm moving into original content counts a former child TV star alongside an ex-member of The Hollies as its founders. TBI speaks with the team at Soho Square Productions about their plans

The history of the production business is dotted with post-production companies that have tried – and failed – to make original content. However, the owners of Soho Square Studios say their effort in the will prove altogether more successful for various reasons.

“The point of difference is clear – we are not managers or business people from a post-production studio, but creators that run a post-production studio that was originally started to take load of our creative work,” says Alan Coates, who runs the London-based Soho Square with wife Kim Goody.

Their new venture, Soho Square Productions, is the result of the pair’s desire to continue their careers in creation. Coates, a multi-instrumentalist, is a former member of pioneering British rock group The Hollies, while Goody is a former child TV star on shows such as *Play Away* and *Number 73*, a comedy writer and a singer/songwriter. Together Coates and Goody have written music for BBC Radio 5 Live, puppet show *The Magic House* and the 1984 revival of *Rainbow*.

“We really do have such a different story to tell than other post houses trying their arm,” says Goody. “We’re not doing what they’re doing because we’ve absolutely come at it from production – our facilities housed production.”

Those creative efforts did, for the large part, however, become the possession of the networks, radio stations and other media companies they worked with. Now, following both internal and angel investment, they plan to develop and own the property they create.

“It’s a big step forward for Soho Square Studios, but it in a way it seems inevitable that we would make the leap into production as everything was coming to the place where we needed to lead ideas and own some IP,” says Goody.

Their first effort is a 52x11mins CG-animated preschool series for kids aged 4-7



that Soho Square Productions has developed with *Bob the Builder* and *Raa Raa the Noisy Lion* creator Keith Chapman. While keeping details of the project quiet before MIPCOM, Goody says the show aims to “make preschoolers and their parents giggle. Its real ethos is to make children really happy – we’re not throwing out deep thoughts, but joyous moments of humour.”

The firm also has ambitions to create children’s live-action programming – Goody says there is “appetite for the genre” and that there are ideas “simmering in the pot” – and also more adult-themed dramas and documentaries.

“New genres are not too far down the line,” says Coates. “We are working on a documentary. I can say we’ve been working with a very passionate group of people for nine months on a very serious subject.”

Despite the limited success of post-production companies with dreams of small screen IP success (see Prime Focus’s non-

existent push into content a few years back, for example), these firms offer TV companies the benefit of a studio that can develop, produce and edit programming internally, alleviating the need to dilute rights via further coproduction partners or broadcast pre-buyers. “We’ve got a lot of the nuts and bolts,” says Goody.

At this stage, Soho Square Productions is “enjoying flying independently,” she adds. Therefore, coproduction is not part of the business plan for now.

The firm has drafted in former Chapman Entertainment and Sixteen South development chief Emily Whinnet as director of programmes, and she is overseeing a slate of new ideas, though the preschool toon is the focus at the firm’s debut Cannes.

“What we want people to understand is that this has our full-weight behind it,” says Goody. “I don’t want anyone to see us as a diluted route to do doing copros. This production is our baby.” **TBI**



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Mike Young: making a Splash

Mike Young's Splash Entertainment is making animated films, operating US kids channel Kabillion and running a work-for-hire studio. Having come through a challenging period, he talks to TBI his new business, and a reboot of *SuperTed*

“**F**or half of last year we didn't greenlight anything because of the [much-documented] problems with Moonscoop, [as] it took all of that time to negotiate and get the shows back,” Mike Young says.

The veteran producer is alluding to the bankruptcy of Moonscoop in France, leaving Moonscoop LLC, the US business he was running with Nicolas Atlan, dealing with the fallout. The US producer and distributor was rebranded Splash Entertainment and has a pipeline of programming, a catalogue and its own channel, but making sure that partners knew the story was part of the job in 2013.

Young says the team have “been on a mission” to spend time with all of the major networks around the world. “We had to get the message out,” he says. “Mevelyn [Noriega, VP, sales and administration] has been to all of the Scandi and Asian broadcasters, I will go to the US and British networks, and Nicolas will liaise with Cartoon and Nickelodeon, and go to the French and Italian broadcasters with Mevelyn.”

Splash has three lines of business to talk to partners about on those trips, including its work-for-hire division, which includes *Strawberry Shortcake* and *Lalaloopsy* for American Greetings, Nick and others. It is also producing and selling content, and a sizeable library includes *Sabrina: Secrets of a Teenage Witch*, *Chloe's Closet*, *It's Archie* and *Dive Olly Dive!*.

“Brands such as *Sabrina* and *It's Archie* are iconic: there is a parental and even grandparental value in those properties,”



Young says.

Dive Olly Dive! is proving popular in China. Last year, Splash theatrically released 3D movie *Dive Olly Dive and The Pirate Treasure* featuring the submarine character in China. The film was subsequently acquired by the Discovery Kids (Latin America) and Gulli (France) channels. Splash has since launched a features division, and its first project, *Norm of the North*, will be distributed by Lionsgate in the US.

The next new TV project is *G.U.N.K. Aliens* (pictured), a 26x30mins toon based on the Harper Collins books. It is produced with Foothill Entertainment and will launch internationally at MIPCOM.

Another much-loved show he is connected to is *SuperTed*. Young created the animated teddy superhero show in the 1980s and now has a bible for a contemporary version. He says the new version will have the same spirit as its forbear, although some of the edges might have to be taken off the original, which had gun-toting cowboys, camp skeletons and jokes about one of the fat characters.

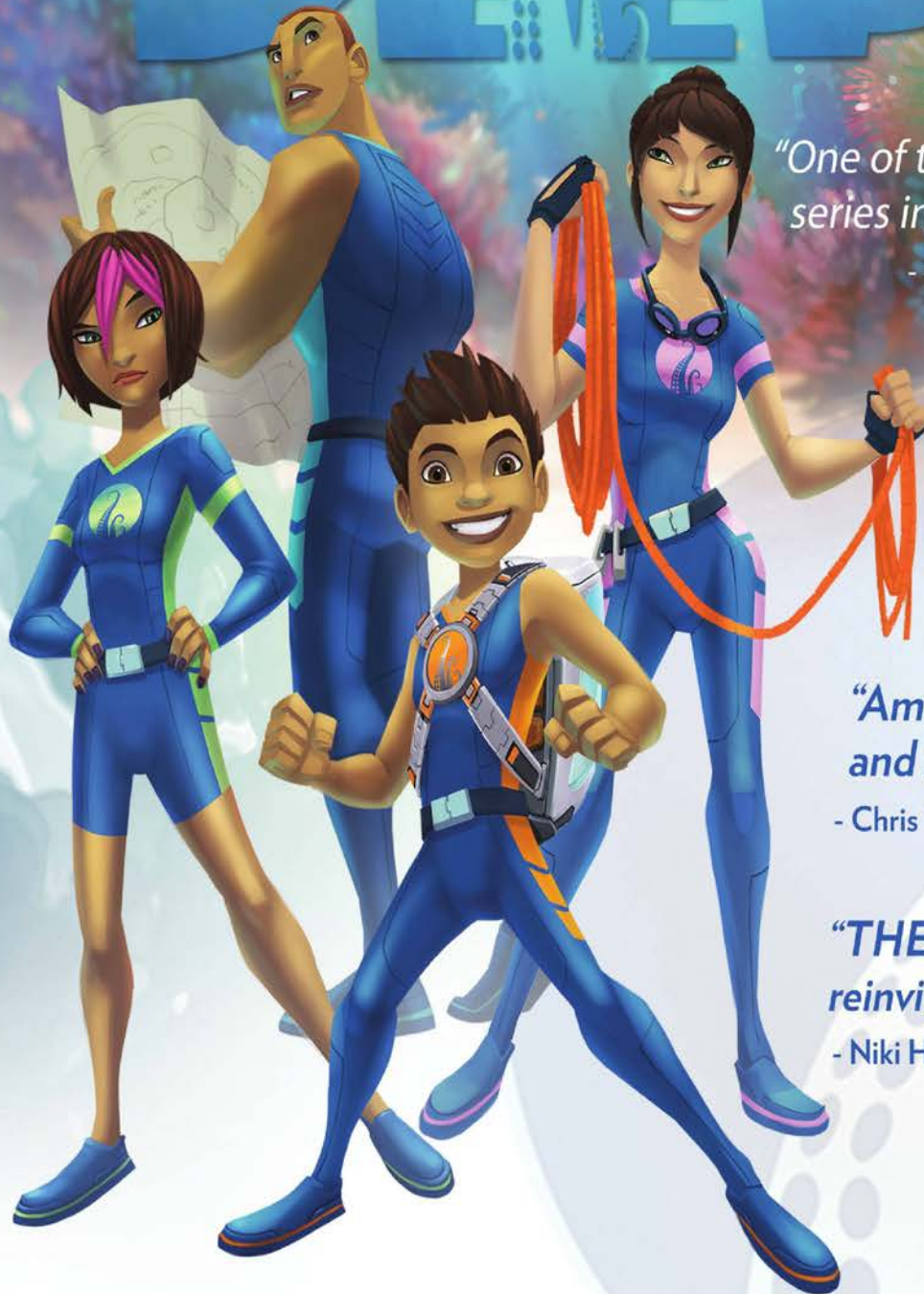
“Political correctness is to the fore now, but it will retain the spirit of the original; I'll be damned if I do it any other way,” Young says. He adds that outside of the traditional buyers, the likes of Netflix and Amazon have opened the door to new opportunities in kids and “have a very different approach”.

Splash also has its own channel, the US Kabillion service, which is in about 50 million homes. “It is more and more recognised now, and after years of sweat and tears, people understand the concept,” Young says. “It generates advertising revenues and sponsorship, and people pay to have content on there and share in revenues.”

It is also a good place to test out new ideas, which is what happened with *The Meeps*. The series, about an animated band, is from pop impresario Simon Fuller. “Simon wanted to see how it worked, it's the best focus group in the world,” Young says. The plan for the channel includes introducing dedicated programming “We will start to do original programming for Kabillion,” he adds. **TBI**

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VIEWPOINT

FRANK FALCONE

Kids lead the mobile content revolution (or why the hare really does beat the tortoise)

It's no news to anyone that mobile viewing habits have severely disrupted the traditional TV business. Rapid cultural globalisation and democratised technological innovations have created a fragmented landscape of distribution channels, leading to a watershed transformation in how producers fund, produce and sell content. In this sea of turmoil and opportunity, the kids entertainment business can be a bellwether for the future of the entire TV industry.

As any parent knows, the younger a child, the less culturally specific their interests, and the greater the opportunity to reach them. Knowing that, what qualities distinguish a successful kids TV producer in this rapidly expanding market? Compelling, heartfelt entertainment that sparks a child's imagination will always be central to any success, but producers also need to focus on three key factors: quality, agility and speed.

The new junior binge viewers are patterning their viewing habits on their parents, with kids SVOD services encouraging the same "deep-dive" consumption habits. This new highly selective and user-driven viewing pattern challenges the traditional methods of content delivery. As a kid, I had to wait seven days to watch *Bugs Bunny* at 5pm on Saturday with the faint hope that I just might see [classic 1957 episode] 'What's Opera Doc'. I knew the good stuff was being kept from me, to prolong its value and keep me watching through the bad

stuff. To a modern child that's pure senseless cruelty.

In the history of TV, we've never provided children with the option of bingeing and self-regulating on a full buffet of choices. Personal entertainment technology is creating a generation of kids in total command of what they want to watch, and with it all at their fingertips, they simply will not tolerate middling choices. Shows have to be loved not liked. Producers need to hone their characters to near perfection, tell intelligent, entertaining and compelling original stories, and introduce concepts that rise above the standard fare – or become obsolete.

The burn rate on a new series is probably many times what it was just a decade ago so broadcasters and content commissioners must take larger risks and commission unique content faster than ever before.

The era of programmer-designed, repeat scheduling is drawing to a close. Not to say that kids won't repeat-view content – they will more than ever – but they will choose what they wish to repeat-view. Kids demands are very simple, "entertain me: faster, better and whenever I want!" To satisfy such a voracious appetite, producers need to light a fire under their traditional methods of development, financing and production.

The classic American studio model had centralised creative decision-making under

one roof (in LA), and then provided a prescriptive recipe for production, leaving little room for creative interpretation. The animation became a manufactured commodity, produced in a cost-effective international zone.

The timelines required for this 'pre-loaded' creative model are excessive by today's standards and unsustainable. Creative problem solving occurs throughout the process, not just at the beginning. The by-product of this process is a disconnect between the creative storytellers and those who execute that vision, and ultimately, a slower process. Modern animation studios have to take the intent of the story to heart and support it through every stage of production, right through to delivery, and be able to respond and adapt in real time.

Canadian-based shows have found extraordinary success in defining this new globally collaborative, high-quality, rapid response model. With a diverse multicultural population, a sympathetic eye to the world at large and front row seat to the latest US television and film offerings, Canadian producers and creative teams are ideally positioned to understand the global kids market. Combine decades of high-quality production under their belts, an emerging confidence among new creators and newly pioneered methods of production that allow for agility and speed, and you have a perfect storm for kids television success. Canada is tremendously supportive partner to work with and has been creating some of the best and most successful kids programming in the world. We punch high above our weight class.

And because I'm Australian born, I refuse to apologise for touting our success. **TBI**

The new junior binge viewers are patterning their viewing habits on their parents, with kids SVOD services encouraging the same "deep-dive" consumption habits... and they simply will not tolerate middling content choices

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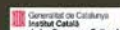
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Cartoon Forum grows up

Animated preschool programming has been swamping the kids TV market for years now, but the 25th edition of European coproduction event suggests demand for teen and young adult shows is growing, writes Jesse Whittock.

For producers, distributors and broadcasters in the children's TV game, reaching the teenage/young adult market has always been among the biggest challenges. This year's Cartoon Forum suggests efforts are being made to tackle the problem.

As always, the three-day event, which falls weeks before MIPCOM, was heavily weighted towards preschool and 6-8-targeted shows, with the likes of Sixteen South's *Claude*, Indie Production's *Pablo* and Studio Film Bilder/SWR's *Patchwork Pals* among the shows attracting the buyer interest.

This being the event's 25th anniversary, it

seems apt that older demographics were also well served at event in Toulouse late last month. Twenty-four of the 84 projects pitched were defined as serving either children 9-to-11, families or teenagers and young adults. Of this 24, a third were for 'young adults/adults' or 'teenagers'.

It could simply be because there are more pitches this year – 89 were lined up at one point been lined up – or perhaps it is because demand is greater with more buyers in the market. "Could it be that the SVOD services are looking for these shows," mused one seasoned kids TV buyer asked at the event

.Amazon Studios was present for the first time, though Netflix ultimately did not attend after an Air France strike put pay to travel arrangements.

The evidence makes a solid case for teen and young adult shows. *Scribe* (pictured above), an Irish series from Wiggleywoo pitched on day one of the event, was an immediate stand-out, according to several attendees. The 6x26mins comedy follows a pair of best friends, one of whom has muscular dystrophy and the other is his 'scribe' – effectively his disabled friend's hands and feet. They attend a dysfunctional adult education sound engineering class that

includes a pair of junkies and a kind-hearted female teacher with a hint of a moustache.

Pitched as a “comedy with a warm-hearted central relationship between the lead characters”, it contains drug-abuse references, cultural misunderstandings and other adult themes. Wiggleywoo itself acknowledged the change in tone, with the producer noting wryly: “And last year we pitched preschool.”

Rotoscoped teen drama *Gaia*, meanwhile, also met with a warm response from buyers, as did the wacky *Pigeons and Dragons*. *Gaia* follows a teenage girl whose act of compassion one night hands Earth a chance of a reprieve from a powerful, morality-driven alien race that decides if other planets are deserving of a continued existence.

Hailing from Italy’s Tilapia and Rai Fiction, the series was considered to have a strong central female character. One onlooker described the lead character as “Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games* meets Hermione from *Harry Potter* meets a Frida Kahlo who wants to be Mother Theresa”.

Even the older-skewing kids series displayed more adult sensibilities. *I, Elvis Riboldi* (pictured above), which was among the best received pitches overall, is targeted at 9-11s, but won over investors with its mix of slapstick, fast-paced animation and pop culture references.

The 52x11mins show, which has budget of



€5 million (US\$6.3 million) and will soon have around 50% of finance in place, follows the live-wire loose-cannon Elvis, who is constantly blamed for things he does not do. It comes from Spain’s Edebe Audiovisual Licensing, Insomne Studio, Wuji House, Alla Kinda, and Zodiak Kids-owned Tele Images Productions from France, which has signed up as a coproducer.

Surprisingly, Zodiak Kids does not yet have distribution rights locked in, though senior VP, global sales and coproductions Karen Vermuelen was gushing in her praise, saying: “It’s a wonderful project.” TBI understands at least two other distributors are keen on the property, but that Zodiak Kids is confident of locking in a deal having tracked it for some time.

Planets... is a 2D 52x11mins series for 6-8s about a group of oddball planets created during the Big Bang at the beginning of time. Episodes will show how they deal with the inevitable problems of being so completely ridiculous.

How did you develop the concept?

The concept was developed via a new pitching initiative at Blue-Zoo. As well as developing three shorts a year in-house, we are also taking pitches from members of our staff who have ideas. The best of those ideas we then nurture into fully fledged concepts. *Planets...* is the first of these. It came from three employees who collectively call themselves Mish Mash. The concept is loosely based around strange planets, with

very peculiar needs, who in reality are just huge expressive faces that the animators wanted to imbibe with as much ‘funny’ as possible.

Which broadcaster sponsored the project?

Accidentally, both Nick UK and Turner.

What makes the project unique?

It is an unexpectedly character-focused comedy, which really makes it stand out from the crowd. It’s a unique world, inhabited by laugh-out-load characters, rammed full of catchphrases and filled with energetic cartooning fun. Who wouldn’t want to meet Cactus Planet and witness the unfortunate results of him falling in love with Nervous Bubble Planet? Another thing I



would add is we are developing a new technique with which to produce the show. It is a type of flash/CG hybrid animation interface, which should produce some interesting visual results.

Are you looking for coproduction partners?

All options are open at the moment.

Q & A: Oli Hyatt, founder, Blue-Zoo Animation, *Planets: The Greatest Show in the Universe*



Disney's Orion Ross seemed equally keen, saying only when asked for comment from the floor that "It's great to see someone [like lead character Elvis] who is so anarchic and chaotic. We will need to have this conversation in private."

Expect the series to appeal to older viewers that enjoy shows such as *Adventure Time* and *The Amazing World of Gumball*.

That same style was also in evidence during Blue-Zoo Animation's *Planets: The Greatest Show on Earth*, which had been greatly hyped before the Forum. Coming from Mish Mash, a

trio of producers working within Oli Hyatt's Blue-Zoo, the series is a madcap concept in which a pair of young planets cause havoc around the universe.

Hyatt said he expected the 5-8 comedy, which seemed to skew both older and younger at times, could be a "different experience for each broadcaster that buys it" and that Blue-Zoo would "work with them to that end".

Then there was the positive reaction to Thuristar's *Roger Flambé (Animated) Actor*, a Belgian-produced 9-11-targeted series that in some senses a follow up to 2012 Cartoon

Forum hit *My Knight And Me*. The 39x7mins show has a budget of €3 million, with its producers keen to keep production in Belgium's Flanders region.

It follows a deluded cartoon actor that moves to an animated Hollywood-style town in search of fame and fortune, only to find his talent lacking and opportunities limited.

"We immediately fell in love with Roger," said Telidja Klai from Belgian public children's channel Ketnet, which is backing the project. The PSB also supported the pitch that immediately preceded *Roger* (pictured page 28) in the Pink Room, teenage-skewed sex education series *Sex, Say What?* from Beast Animation.

"Pubcasters play an important role in sex education," said Klai. "We think this has very big potential." She pointed to the fact the World Health Organisation and Sensoa, a Flemish sexual health specialist, are involved as signs the series had taken the right approach to informing teenagers about sex, sexuality and growing up safely.

A surprising mini-hit was *Binbag*, a gothic-style multiplatform project from the UK's Plentitude Productions that follows a group of people brought together after an unexplained event destroys the Earth and transfers them to a realm where everything is trash.

Though there was confusion over the plot, a number of buyers were impressed by the tone, music and look of the show. One British

Dudels is a 52x11mins comedy-adventure cross-media toon aimed at 6-8s in which three 'doodles' from a scrapbook come to life and encounter drawn monsters, sums, musical notes, as-yet-uninvented machines, postcards, coffee stains and chewing gum.

How did you develop the concept?

Rudi Mertens, the creator of *Dudels*, presented me the concept and it was love at first sight. The Dudel characters made me laugh from the moment I saw them. Together we molded the concept to what it is right now.

Which broadcaster sponsored the project?

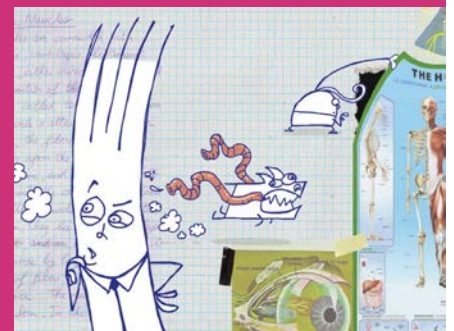
Ketnet, the Flemish public broadcaster.

What makes the project unique?

Dudels is a universal, cross-cultural concept. After all, children all across the globe draw doodles in their books at school. It is also a series which will stir children's creativity: they can draw, cut, paste and make collages themselves.

What else?

The stories are not only funny and exciting, they also touch upon particular subject matter. They will also touch young children's emotions, and that is something we rarely see in animation series nowadays. In this series this is possible because twelve year-old Sara, who draws the doodles in her drawing scrapbook, comments on her environment



through those sketches and pasted photos and pictures. That is what makes this series so powerful: the stories touch upon issues that matter to young children.

Are you looking for coproduction partners?

Yes.

Q & A: Jimmy Simons, creative producer (animation), Eyeworks Belgium *Dudels*

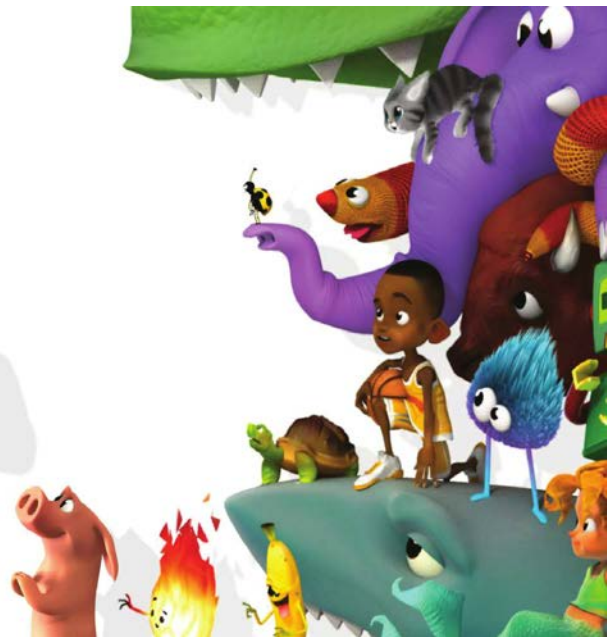
commissioner looking for teen content for a designated slot told TBI: “There’s something about it that might really work for our audience.”

Family series *The Tiniest Man in the World*, the first pitch of the Forum in the big Blue Room, was also warmly received, and the most-attended pitch. (Perhaps it should come as no surprise its producer, Les Films de l’Arlequin, was named as Producer of the Year at the Cartoon Tributes on the second day of the event, see box.)

Tiniest Man (pictured, page 26) apes classic British comedy *Mr Bean* in that it follows a hapless, mute character as he struggles with everyday life. In this case, the character is a tiny stopmotion man who finds his size means he cannot hold down a job or even safely use a urinal. The series has a budget of €370,000 for 52 one-minute episodes or €690,000 for 104.

Event organiser CARTOON noted *Tiniest Man* was one of 20 ‘hybrid’ animation/live-action projects. Others included *Fleak* from Finland, *Mick the Kobold Chef* from Germany, *Little Roy* from Ireland and France’s *All For Nuts*. Other cross-media projects highlighted included *Gaia* and *Squids*.

Les Films de l’Arlequin will be expecting big things from *Tiniest Man*. It was the most popular pitch over the three days with 309



delegates out of a total 870 in attendance. The list of most-viewed projects reflected the French setting of the event, with *Dandeloo’s Houdini* second with 278. *Autour de Minuit’s Jean-Michel: Super Caribou* attracted 251 delegates, *Folivari/Mélusine Productions/Studio 352’s Ernest and Celestine* had 249, *Milan Presse’s One Day One Fact* and *Ellipsanime’s Squids* both had 228. *Les Armateurs/Folimage’s Cheeky Anna* was seen

by 213 delegates and *Vivement Lundi!/Nasady Film’s Operation Christmas 208*.

Roger Flaumbe was the most-attended non-French project with 236 delegates. Dutch-German-Belgian coproduction *Fox and Hare* welcomed had 192 and *Mick the Kobold Chef* took 176. *Sex Say What?* and UK prodco *Sixteen South’s Claude* had 174 each, suggesting the European buyers at Cartoon are still open ideas outside France. **TBI**



Fleak is a 25x5mins live-action/animation hybrid series for preschoolers about a small bug that tries to familiarise itself with our world and children. The character, *Fleak*, is prone to bouts of anger but is able to navigate problems and experience the joys of discovery.

How did you develop the concept?

The *Fleak* character was born out of an imaginative solution to waking up the

creator’s three-year-old child, Aapo. The character soon became a regular tool for those handling difficult situations, for example by quickly converting a child’s emotional state to a different one. *Fleak* has the potential of bringing joy to a much larger audience.

Which broadcaster was sponsoring the project at Cartoon Forum?

Fleak is in a very early development phase. At the moment we haven’t locked in any broadcasters. We have negotiated with the genre production arm of Finland’s national broadcasting company YLE. It was interested about the themes *Fleak* presents, and also intrigued by the technical side, mixing live action and animation is a challenging and yet fruitful way to tell *Fleak*’s story.

What makes the project unique?

The concept is about a small bug from another dimension who has a desire to learn about the life of children. The creator and director Antti Haikala describes it as “not overly cute”, as he “never felt comfortable blabbering to small children as they were some different species”. He describes it as “something playful, a bit anarchic, but still rooted in our common experiences of being children and parents”. Technically, *Fleak*’s production is also very unique. The animation is made mainly with Anima’s own high-tech innovation called the ‘Glove animation technique’, which is a mixture of puppet animation and 3D animation.

Are you looking for coproduction partners?

We’ll definitely keep our eyes and ears open.

Q & A: Robert Niva, junior producer, Anima Vitae, *Fleak*

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Q & A: Tom Niedzwiedz, producer, Badi Badi, *The Flying Bear and the Gang*

The Flying Bear and the Gang is a 13x10mins 3D coproduced action-adventure series in which a magical bear and his helpers, a brother-sister duo, battle with their nemesis, a 1980s video game character called Cyber, who wants to create a digital army of monsters that would take hold of children's imaginations.

How did you develop the concept?

During a conversation with my eight year-old daughter about Czech legends on a journey to Prague, she asked why such story legends were often so complicated to understand. Couldn't they be just a little simpler and funnier? I realised that they could, so I created a story that was full of

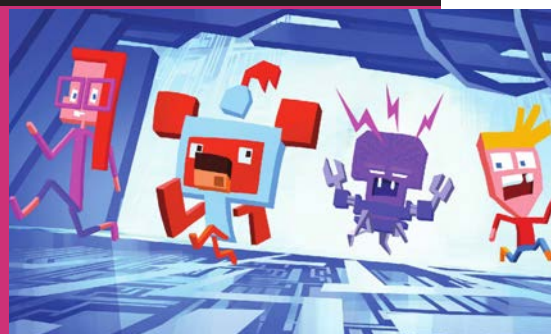
action and adventures about our little story tellers – the bear and the two kids – who are trying to save forgotten legendary figures from being digitised by the Cyber.

What company was sponsoring the project at Cartoon Forum?

At the Cartoon Forum, the project was sponsored by PISF (Polish Film Institute).

What makes the project unique?

Mainly the idea. We travel with the Flying Bear and his gang through Europe, where we find many forgotten stories, and largely unknown stories, which are a backdrop for the action. Kids will meet a giant snail called Lu Carcolh in France; the Kraken in



Norway; the Sirens in Italy, Sweden and Poland; and the White Lady in Germany.

Are you looking for coproduction partners?

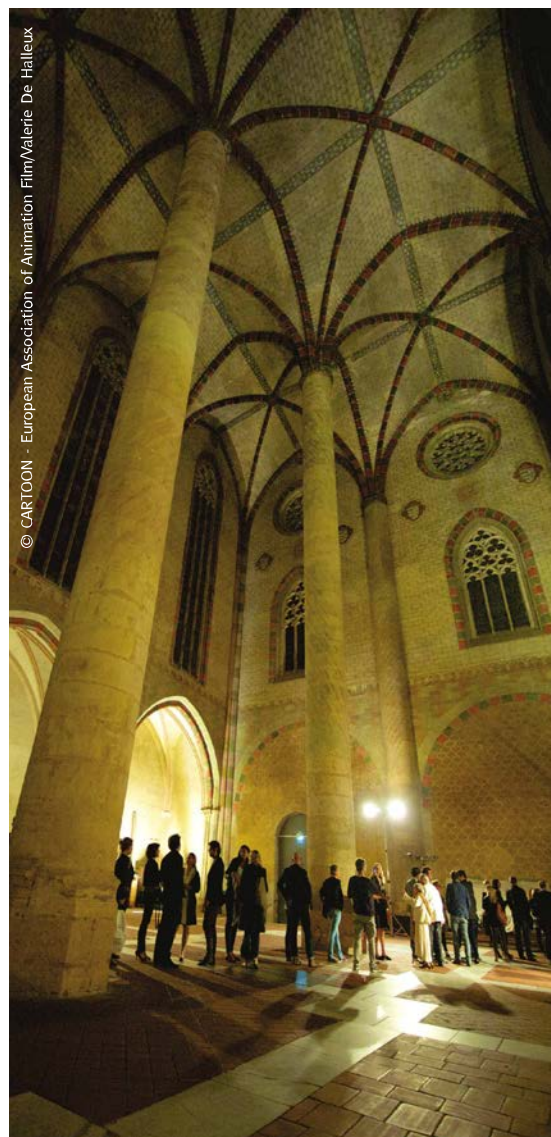
Yep. We're finishing our previous animated series, *Agi Bagi*, which is for the 2-4 demo, and during this time we've decided that it's necessary to have a production partner.



CARTOON FORUM: THE ALTAR OF ANIMATION

The 2014 event saw...

- More teen and young adult series than in recent years
- A focus on "hybrid" formats such as live action/animation
- A strong showing from Belgium, which is fast becoming a leading mainland Europe production hub
- The premiere of crossover show *The Jungle Bunch Meets The Owl & Co*
- Canal+, Mediatoon Distribution and Les Films de l'Arlequin win Cartoon Tribute awards
- 870 attendees despite an Air France strike meaning a few, including Netflix, missed out
- The debut of Malta as a participating country





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What's trending in kids TV?

Johanna Karsenty, Eurodata TV Worldwide's director of research looks at the data covering the most-watched kids TV shows throughout Europe in the first half of 2014 and what it tells us about how the children's programming business is evolving

The first half of 2014 brought some important changes to the main European kids' TV markets, with the arrival of new challengers. At the same time, children are finding their favorite content on a greater variety of screens. Over the first half of 2014 children in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK spent on average two hours and six minutes watching the television every day, a drop of nine minutes a day compared with the first semester of 2013. The significance of the decline should not, however, be over-emphasised. Five years ago, over the first semester of 2009, daily viewing times for children

stood at 2 hours 9 minutes a day, only three minutes a day more viewing than January to June 2014. Equally, despite the increasing importance of other screens, the vast majority of children's TV content viewing still happens via the traditional set.

CHANGE IN KEY MARKETS

The past semester changed the shape of the children's TV markets, in two countries in particular: France and Germany.

In France, Lagardère acquired the remaining share of children's channel Gulli from France Télévisions. The latter is

consequently forming a new identity for its France 4 offering and rebadging it as a children's channel.

Across the border in Germany, Disney Channel is now available on the country's digital free-to-air terrestrial platform.

Super RTL whose grids were previously partly composed of Disney programming when the pair ran the service as a joint venture, has concluded an output deal with DreamWorks for exclusive animation content to fill some of the shortfall, giving it cartoon series including *DreamWorks Dragons* and *Turbo Fast*, which debuted on Netflix. That's more competition than ever.

ANIMATION ON TOP

Securing strong cartoon content is key in the European markets, where animation is by far the strongest genre in kids TV. Over the semester January to June 2014, animation accounted for 70% of the top 20 children's shows throughout France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK combined.

The preponderance to watch cartoons can be seen even more clearly among preschool children, where 83% of the top shows are animated offerings.

KIDS TV VIEWING BY SERIES

Throughout these markets, there is still a strong presence of US productions within the animated genre.

For example, over the first semester of 2014, the property *Scooby-Doo!* found success in France where the series *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated* gathered on average a 19.2% market share among 4-to-14 year olds while the same series in the UK racked up an average of almost 113,000 viewers aged 4-to-15. In Spain, *What's New, Scooby-Doo?* was in fifth place in the list of top programmes for 4-to-12 year olds.

The presence of US series is particularly widespread in Spain and Italy among the roster of children's favourites, with American series in top-ranking lists, including *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *The Simpsons* and *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*.

However, in Italian market, children love oriental animation just as much that hailing from the US, with Japanese series regularly featuring as top-ranking shows in the country.

For example, two series from the TOEI franchise *Dragon Ball* appeared in Italy's top 20 in shows for 4-to-14 year-olds last semester: *Dragon Ball GT* took the top spot and *Dragon Ball: Z* also featured.

Another popular Japanese series to feature in Italy is *Doraemon*. French children, too, are partial to these manga-style cartoons, with *Inazuma Eleven GO* drawing in a 16.1% market share on average among 4-to-14 year-olds.

Meanwhile, in France, the UK and Germany, local content is well-represented in the top rankings. Despite the some of the same US and Japanese influences in these

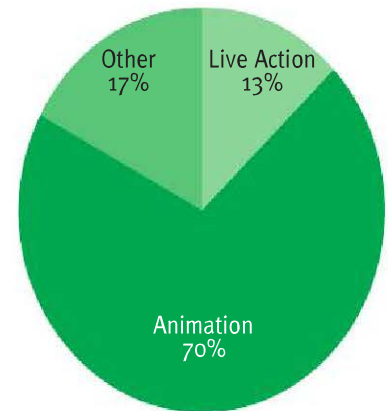


Dragon Ballz is big in Italy



Marcus Level highlights the success of local shows

PROGRAMME BREAKDOWN BY GENRE



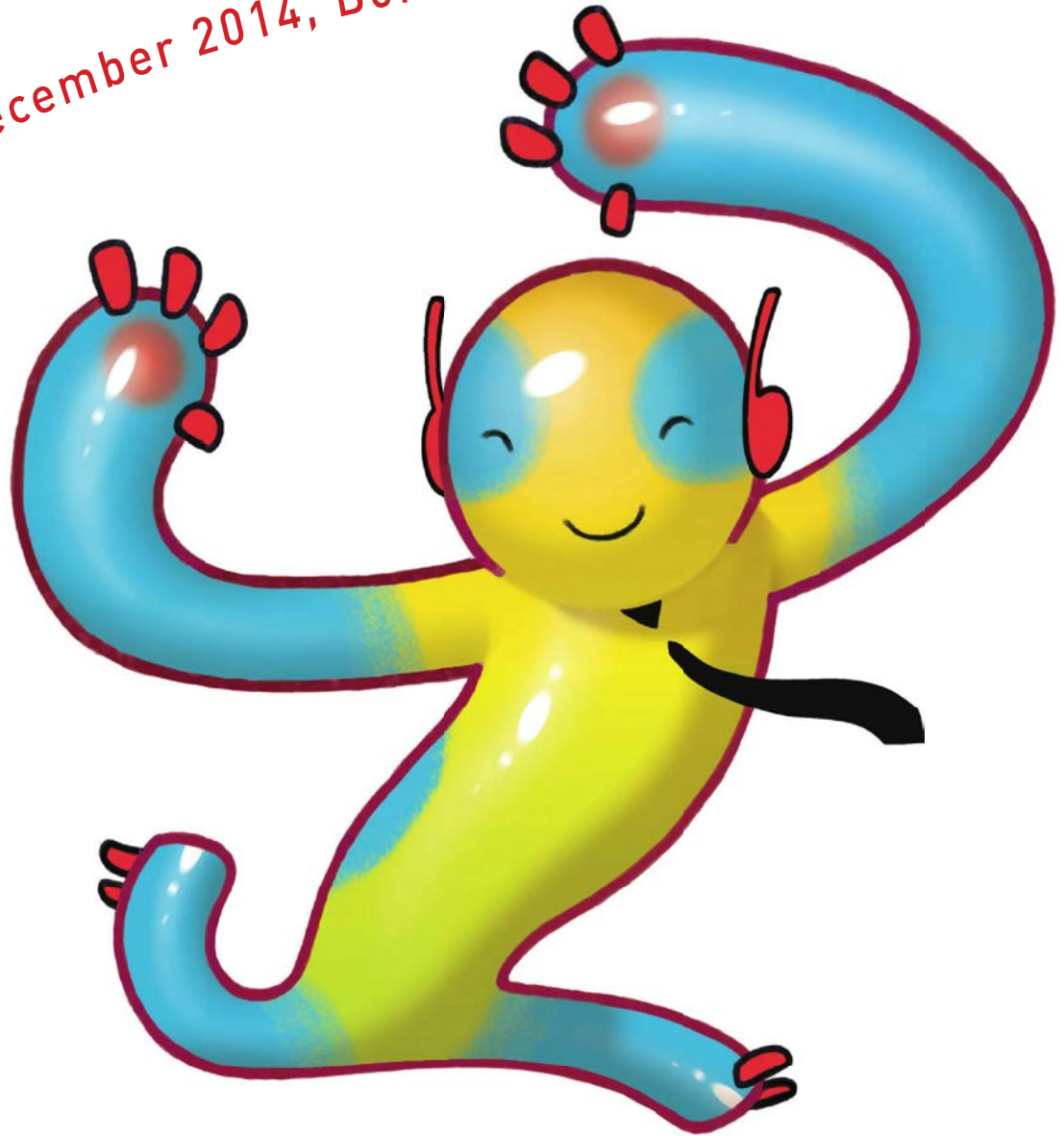
Percentage of the genre of programmes based on the Top 20 in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK on the Total Children target for the period January-June 2014



Source

Cartoon Business

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LAST WORD



PHILIPPE SOUTTER

In kids TV, a great concept simply isn't enough

Everyone in the television industry will agree to two things when it comes to kids TV: it's tough to get funded for a US\$10 million kids TV show, and it's even tougher to make it successful.

What makes it even tougher to persist and subsist in kids TV is that, like the music industry, this is a 'hits' market. You don't make any money with 'average': the winner takes all! But it might cost you US\$1,000 to record a hit song, whereas when it comes to producing a kids show, you'd have to add four large zeros next to that studio bill.

With 95% of kids shows not going into season two, it's easy to understand that either you barely break even and nobody wants to make more episodes or, worse, all your investors have lost money and nobody (well, at least the money guys) ever want to hear about it again.

Having worked with the best producers in the world for a decade now, I still can't define what the magic formula is for a great TV show. However, I have identified several key points that I think are crucial for success.

As in most endeavours, success is a

combination of hard work, dedication and passion, but what makes it slightly different when it comes to making a TV show is that you need more than a great concept – you need great everything.

A show that doesn't go into production is missing something essential. So essential, in fact, that overlooking it might mean your show never had a chance in the first place. So, first off, you need to do your homework. There are hundreds of show pitches a year, and hundreds more that sit on broadcasters' shelves because they haven't performed well. What they want is something different: how do you bring that into the mix? If you want to do a superhero series, what makes your superhero more interesting and exciting than any in the Marvel franchise? If you create a great comedy series, how is it better or different than *Sponge Bob*? If you can't think of how your show will stand out from what everybody else has already done, it's not going to work.

To tackle this challenge of creating the next totally unique series, you'll need a great editorial team. With a movie script, you can come with a big name attached, but since

Brad Pitt is unlikely to voice your main character, you'll need to show that your team has the track record, expertise and knowledge to make your series concept exceptionally cool.

Think in practical terms. If you want to do a preschool show, do you have a great curriculum team attached? If you want to do comedy, do your lead writers have a good track record for creating laugh-out-loud TV scripts?

If you want to do the best toy-driven show, who on your team has ever successfully crafted and launched a consumer brand?

What about production and financing? You have your great original concept and your great editorial team, but it's still not enough to get a US\$10 million cheque and time to deliver your show. The market has been getting tougher and tougher, and blank checks are a thing of the past.

Unless you've found some millions under your mattress yesterday, you'll need to be attached with leading financiers and leading producers at an early stage.

Having the ability to show that you can bring your part to the mix is critical, because whatever time and energy have been dedicated to great images and a 20-page creative bible, if that's all you have, it's going to be hard to have potential partners see your project as worth their millions.

What I have seen is that the best producers have the ability to communicate their passion, while also having all the boxes ticked.

If you don't have something that stands out from the pack, has a great editorial team attached, and a production partner that can deliver on-time and come up with a part of the budget, as well as entice potential partners to jump in at a reasonable price, you don't have anything. **TBI**

If you want to do a superhero series, what makes your character more interesting and exciting than any in the Marvel franchise? If you create a great comedy series, how is it better or different than *SpongeBob SquarePants*?

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