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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

Cartoon Network president **STU SNYDER** is exiting the Turner Broadcasting System-owned kids channel after six years in his current role. Snyder, who is president and COO of Turner's animation division, is exiting after John Martin became CEO of Turner Broadcasting and David Levy became president in January



France's Gaumont Animation has restructured following the departure of the long-serving Jean-Pierre Quenet at the end of 2013. Marc Dhrami will replace Quenet as head of production, and will also oversee studio operations and coproduction. Additionally, Heath Kenny has been named VP, creative



Spanish animation producer and distributor Imira Entertainment has hired former Nickelodeon exec **GILES BONES** to become its international sales and marketing manager. Bones will in part fill the duties of former head of distribution Christophe Goldberger, who left to launch his own firm, Gold Bee, last year (see page 36)

David Michel has followed Vincent Chalvin-Demersay out of the door at Zodiak-owned Marathon Media, the company they co-founded 13 years ago. Zodiak Media Media president and CEO Marc-Antoine d'Halluin becomes Marathon Media chief exec and Ambroise Delorme and Eryk Casemiro have day-to-day control



Technicolor has upped to **TIM SARNOFF** to president of a new production services group. This unit will integrate creative services and digital productions and will include Technicolor's original animation efforts. Previously he was president, digital production



Barbara Uecker has left Australian public broadcaster the ABC. The exec, who was head of programming and acquisitions for ABC TV Children's, exited on March 28. Her former boss at ABC, Tim Brooke-Hunt, was set to hook up with Flying Bark Productions as board president but opted against the move

Canadian kids and family content producer Shaftesbury Film has handed former Galakids and Teletoon animation exec **NATALIE DUMOULIN** a consultancy role. She will oversee creative development of shows such as *Totally Amp'd*, *Life with Derek*, *Overruled* and *Connor Undercover*



HIT Entertainment has replaced VP, global brand management Shari Donnerfeld, who exited last year, with ex-Nickelodeon and FremantleMedia exec **Kate Schlomann**. At HIT, Schlomann will oversee brands including *Thomas & Friends*, *Mike the Knight* and *Bob the Builder*

Marvista Entertainment has appointed Martin Chase Productions exec **GAYLYN FRAICHE** to become its VP, development and production. At Martin Chase, Fraiche coproduced *Lemonade Mouth* for Disney Channel. Marvista also has hired Michael McGahey as VP, scripted development and production



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VIEWPOINT

PAUL ROBINSON, CREATIVE MEDIA PARTNERS



Investor relations

If you work in kids TV, you can't help but look over the fence and wonder whether the competition's grass is greener. One of my favourite animated shows, which I had nothing to do with, is Disney's *Phineas and Ferb*. It's a brilliant concept, totally kid-connective and has run for four seasons and 113 episodes; Perry the Platypus is my hero. But whilst taking nothing away from Disney's creative brilliance, what didn't happen, as a major Hollywood Studio production, was a struggle to finance the show.

Once the decision is made to go to a first season, Disney will create a Ten Year Ultimate (a sales forecast), consisting of the sum of licence fees from all their Disney Channels (or Disney XD or Disney Junior) worldwide, plus the third-party distribution sales to free TV broadcasters, VOD, streaming and other customers. They'll add some overhead and then create an investment case to calculate the internal rate of return (IRR) based on a prescribed discount rate, to take account of the time value of money. And that's it. The show is greenlit, and then it's all the fun of the creative bit.

It's not quite so simple if you are an independent content creator. What are the steps to finance your show? The first issue is intellectual property. This is the gold dust, and you should hang onto as much of it as you can.

If you are pitching for coproducers, my advice is try not to give away more than 15%. You may well have more than one coproducer, so you risk surrendering a big slice of your IP. Be as mean as you can to get the deal.

The coproducer(s) will provide you with partial funding, but probably not enough to go into production. It's tempting to start animating straight away, but don't. Never greenlight production unless you have at least 80% of the funding committed.

So how do you fill the gap? A distributor will normally pay you an advance when they see your demo tape or first full ep, but the most you can expect to get is perhaps US\$400,000, so you will likely still be below that 80% bar. Crowdfunding is becoming increasingly popular but carries a risk, particularly one of time.

Is a better route is to pitch to a VC? A financial investor will assess your project against a number of criteria, but critically will need to believe that your project has a market – namely broadcasters that want it – and that you are willing to give a good rate of return on their investment. By that I mean a rate that beats the market, perhaps 12% to 15%. A prospective VC will want to drill down into your project and know that you are taking some risk yourself. In other words, you need to demonstrate that “you have skin in the game”.

The first document that the VC will scrutinise is the budget. This needs to be realistic and detailed. One tip is build some margin in yourself for the production, but also accept that the VC will want to earn some of your reward as sweat equity – or effort, as it is better known. Provide letters of intent from prospective clients and talk up the creative. A strong independent and passionate creative voice is a key ingredient of the convincing process for a VC.

And be clear what the deal is. How much of the profit distribution is the VC going to get and what percentage of the IP are you providing them with? The bigger the investment, the more that you will have to surrender. Have a rationale, and be fair but tough. Accept, though, that if you decide on half the production budget in cash, you are going to need to surrender perhaps 30% of the property to get it made. And finally, keep the VC updated. Provide regular written status reports, meet regularly and keep them committed. For the VC, a dialogue with a kids animator is probably one of their most enjoyable conversations of the day.

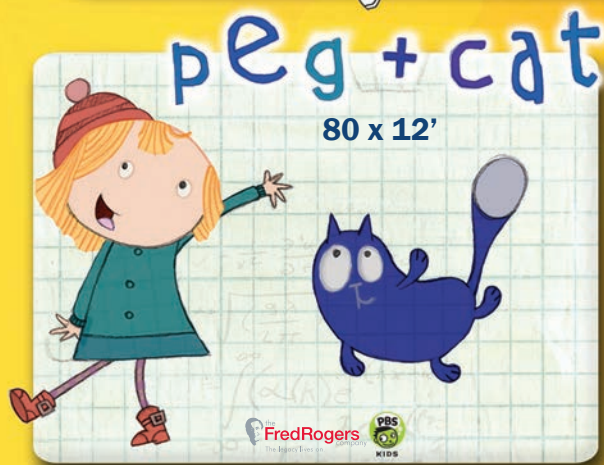
Remember that profit share must be after the distributor's fee, so be clear what percentage you are talking about. Typically a distributor will want 30% or 35% (including expenses) of the gross revenue, excluding tax, for selling the show to a broadcaster or another customer. That means the profit share to the VC is a percentage of the 65% or 70% that is left.

Ultimately, your creative idea has to be stunning. Getting the money is something that requires huge effort, but don't get discouraged. If it's not for you, why not try getting a job at a studio (wink, wink)? **TBI**

Coproducers will provide you with partial funding, but probably not enough to go into production. It's tempting to start animating straight away, but don't. Never greenlight production unless you have at least 80% of the funding committed

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Live-action takes a step forward

The value of investing in live-action programming is becoming abundantly to broadcasters around the global, reports Claire Mitchell of Eurodata TV Worldwide

While animation still makes up the bulk of children's programming in terms of volume in most countries, live-action is becoming increasingly popular.

Across the European countries of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, live-action series accounted for 12% of the titles appearing in the top-20 children's programmes by country, over the second half of 2013.

While children have always appreciated the genre, it has traditionally been the preserve mainly of the US and northern European countries, where the public service broadcasters produce local live-action series.

The increasing availability of both free-to-air digital and pay TV cabsat children's channels in recent years has widened the offer, allowing children in other countries, where animation has previously dominated, to appreciate live-action. Although often viewed as a genre that mainly appeals to tween girls, this kind of format has a broad appeal (see graph).

The age of the viewers of live-action is, of course, partly determined by the skew of the channel. TVE Clan in Spain has a generally younger audience than Disney Channel in the US, for example. Beyond this, however, they can draw in viewers of all ages. It is interesting to note that in Spain *iCarly* gathered a child audience that was 56% boys aged 4-12 on Boing, while *Victorious* brought in a similar proportion of boys aged 4-14 (55%) for Gulli in France.

So what series are kids watching? It very much depends on where they are. Although children in some countries mainly enjoy local fare, imported series also generally perform well. Indeed, children seem to have little objection to dubbing and enjoy the glossy, aspirational look created by the major US production houses.

In the Netherlands, the long-running children's series *Spangas* on Ned 3 was the top performing kids' programme through the month of February, with 181,000 children aged 6-12 tuning in, to give the broadcaster a 42% market share. In the UK, meanwhile, CBeebies

demonstrated the strong potential for live-action among the youngest viewers with the success of the preschool drama series *Topsy and Tim*. It ranked as the best-performing children's programme over the second half of 2013, based on average ratings on both children aged 4-15 and 4-6. Both of these markets have a strong tradition of local live-action programming, although their live-action formats only occasionally travel internationally.

Meanwhile, in the US Disney and Nickelodeon continue to renew their live-action series, which are enthusiastically received both at home and abroad. Summer last year saw the launch of *Liv & Maddie* for Disney Channel and *Sam & Cat* from Nickelodeon. The Mouse House production went straight to top place, ranking as the top children's broadcast in July 2013, with the top episode gathering 3.2 million children aged 2-11.

Sam & Cat, meanwhile, a crossover featuring the characters from *iCarly* and *Victorious*, gathered an audience of more than 1.8 million children aged 2-11 for its best-performing episode in the month.

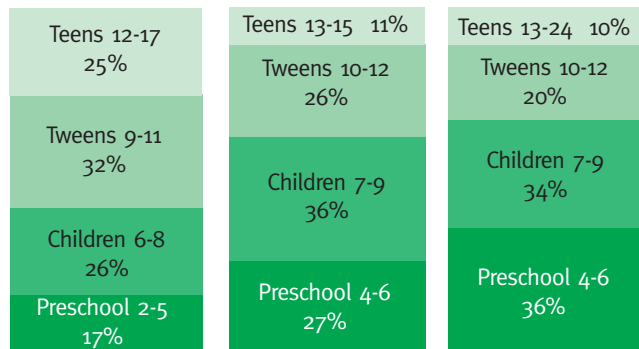
These series are now looking to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and carve out successful international careers. Over the second half of 2013 the titles *Victorious* (on Gulli in France), *Jessie*, *Good Luck Charlie* (both on Super RTL in Germany) and *iCarly* (on Clan in Spain) all appeared among the top-twenty performing children's titles in their respective countries.

The US is not unique in having international appeal, however. Youth telenovelas from Latin America have long been popular in Italy and Spain, and over the last year or so *Violetta* has marked itself out as a huge international hit. It ranked, once again, among the top-20 children's programmes over the second half of 2013 in both Italy on Rai Gulp and in Spain on Disney Channel.

2013 was also the year *Violetta*-fever spread to France, where the Disney Channel launched it cautiously in 2012, unsure of whether the Spanish-language telenovela would take off. By the time the second series came on air, it was one of the channel's top performers, with its star, Martina Stoessel, performing several sell-out concerts in Paris.

Violetta is also a good example of the importance of the second-screen, and of fan communities, in youth live-action. Stoessel has 884,000 followers on Twitter as of mid-March 2014, while a voting system on the French Disney Channel website encouraging fans to pick between her two admirers has received more than 2.2 million votes. In Spain, fans were encouraged to send in webcam auditions to the singing competition *Violetta: Tu Sueño, Tu Música*. This translated back into strong TV ratings as the broadcast of these auditions and the final sing-off gathered, on average, 122,900 viewers aged 4-12 for Disney Channel, a 12.4% market share. **TBI**

LIVE-ACTION TV CASE STUDIES BY DEMOGRAPHIC



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France: kids TV at a crossroads



Moonscoop France has folded, Method Films and On Entertainment have merged and Lagardère exited animation, while the Chalvon-Demersay/Michel years have come to an end at Marathon Media. France's kids market is moving on, and the changes are more than coincidence, reports Pascale Paoli-Lebailly

The French animation industry is renowned for its creative output in both TV and the cinema. The sector – which can in part thank production quotas, state and European funding, and tax breaks for its vitality – accounts for 35% of French TV exports or €43.9 million (US\$61.1 million) in sales revenues in 2012, a 24.3% increase year-on-year.

Positioning itself as the-third-largest worldwide exporter of kids content, the French kids production industry ranks first in Europe. However, since 2012, the market has entered into a slower production cycle, with the volume produced down 16% in 2012 to 298 hours compared with an average of 316

hours in the 2008-2012 period. Foreign investment has also declined, by 31% in 2012 to €42 million. That total covered only 23.1% of the budgets of shows in production.

For many French kids content companies, international sales and the strength of deep catalogues allow survival from one production to another, albeit without always generating much profit or at worst adding to debts.

The collapse of Moonscoop France, which filed for bankruptcy in the summer of 2013, is beginning to look like a textbook case for the country's toon companies, as well as the end of a great adventure. The firm, created in 2003 from the merger of Antefilm Production and France Animation, and which

was still the second-biggest French producer in 2012 after Xilam, had accumulated a significant amount of debt.

This collapse will “clean up” the market, according to some observers. Ellipsanime, one of Dargaud's prodcos, will take over Moonscoop France's assets following a decision from a Paris trade court. They include a library of 60 series and 700 hours and represent 30 years of French animation, with titles such as *Titeuf*, *San Sam*, *Geronimo Stilton* and *Code Lyoko*. Moonscoop in the US was not part of the process, and Moonscoop LLC, rebranded Splash Entertainment, is back in the hands of Mike and Liz Young, alongside co-CEO and partner Nicolas Atlan.



Linkers will go out on Canal J and Gulli

Ellipsanime's offer was €600,000, with only two staff out of the 25 formerly working at Moonscoop staying on. The acquisition deal should be cleared soon and Claude de Saint-Vincent, Dargaud Group's CEO, forecasts the total amount to be paid will range between €200,000 and €300,000 for about 30 to 50 TV series.

"We do not know yet know what the full scope of the acquisition will be, as it could also include coproduction projects, and rights owners and coproducers still can preempt some series," says Saint-Vincent.

"However most of [the rights] have been secured with creditors. It will take time to stream revenues from this catalogue but



potentially it is a good opportunity to strengthen our own 1,800-hour library. It will help [Ellipsanime sales arm] Mediatoon Distribution to reach a strategic size, and answer the demand from traditional customers and new entrants looking for volume deals such as Netflix. Digital already represent 20% of our sales."

Dargaud's TV division comprises Dargaud Media, Belvision, Dupuis Audiovisuel, Ellipsanime, Storimages and Les Cartooners, scale that means it doesn't need to add new prodcos. However, it does want to enrich its catalogue, with titles from its own companies and third parties.

"The problem is not selling [content], it is to cost-effectively produce it," says Saint-Vincent. "Production is under-financed by broadcasters, and only 40 to 45% of the budget of a 26 half-hour series comes from France.

"The French industry is successful, but that success remains frail, and a catalogue like ours softens the ups and downs of the

production sector. It also helps us reach the size to better negotiate with global players."

Iconic companies such as Futurikon, Xilam, Télé Images, TeamTo, Marathon Media and Millimages are still very active in the French and international markets. Furthermore, the advent of younger companies such as GO-N, TAT and Zagtoon prove there is space for newer players. However, consolidation is in the air.

Last year, Giorgio Welter, former VP, animation at Télé Images Productions, and Christian Davin, founder and former CEO of Alphanim, joined forces with Jean-François Boyer's Tetra Media Studio. The JV is called Monello Productions, and it aims to become a key player in the French animation scene.

Then in December, Aton Soumache's TV producer Method Animation and animated-features producer Onyx Films merged with Dimitri Rassam's Chapter 2, giving birth to a major new company, On Entertainment.



"As costs rise and margins drop, producers are currently looking for stability and to secure capital. Method's evolution is not surprising"

BORIS HERTZOG, CO-FOUNDER OUIDO PRODUCTIONS



Alvin!!! and the Chipmunks will go out on M6 and Nickelodeon

Dedicated to animation and live-action cinema, the holding has positioned itself as a kids content company with international ambitions.

An expert in adapting well-known properties, Soumache is currently producing the third season of *Le Petit Prince* for France 3; *Robin Hood*, *Playmobil* and *Ladybug* for TF1; and, with Zagtoon, *Seven Seas* for digital channel Gulli. It is also making the upcoming €57 million feature film *Le Petit Prince*, directed by Mark Osborne (*Kung Fu Panda*). Rassam will also work on Andrea Di Stefano's upcoming *Paradise Lost* with Benicio del Toro. Soumache and Rassam each have major stakes in On Entertainment.

The three companies posted revenues of €34 million at last count, and On forecasts a yearly production volume ranging from €50 to €100 million for three TV series, four big-budget films (English- and French-language) and one animated movie every 18 months.

To expand and attract talent, the new entity also raised €12 million via a capital increase, notably backed by distributor and pay TV operator AB Group. Over the next five years, AB will also hold the French and international distribution rights to two TV series per year from Method, with an option to coproduce these shows as well. This industrial partnership marks AB's return to animation and significantly strengthens its catalogue.

"It gives us a real visibility too," says Soumache. "In France these days, there is no other way; you're either small or pretty strong. A merger is a natural but essential evolution to reach a critical size. Our vision is both

economic and artistic. Besides original creations, adapting classic properties is the clever way for an indie producer to work on

international kids properties is also the strategy of newly formed OuiDO Productions. The company is headed up by former Lagardère executives Boris Hertzog, Sandrine Nguyen and Billy Frédéric Richard, who launched it after Lagardère's move out of animation last October to focus on fiction and unscripted programming.

The current assets of OuiDO come from Genao Productions and include international series *Alvin!!! and the Chipmunks* for M6 and Nickelodeon, coproduced with *Alvin* rights owner Bagdasarian Productions; and *Sonic Boom* for Gulli, Canal J and Cartoon Network US, a coproduction with Sega. Both are set for 2015. OuiDO is also preparing season two of *Mini Loup* for France Télévisions and developing an adaptation of Delcourt's comic strip, *Les Légendaires*, with commercial broadcaster TF1.

"As costs rise and margins drop, producers



"Current movements within French companies are both due to internal reasons and to market trends"

DAVID MICHEL, FORMER MD, MARATHON MEDIA

the level of the US studios, as we do not have the same marketing capacities."

Working with renowned national and

are currently looking for stability and to secure capital," Hertzog says. "Method's evolution is not surprising." He adds that



OuiDO's Mini Loup is on France Télévisions

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OuiDO plans to find a financial partner or attach itself to another group within two years.

“[Today] broadcasters commission fewer series, and the market is shrinking. Having access to strong properties is strategic, though it must not prevent people from creating original series,” says Herzog.

Properties like *Alvin!!!* and *Sonic* give access to international US networks and to toy giants like Tomy, with which we have inked a worldwide deal.”

Besides working well as international copros, well-known properties also meet the needs of both commercial and public broadcasters.

On the channels side, the industry was buoyed by the news that France Télévisions’ DTT channel France 4 would from the end of March become a kids channel in the daytime, with young-adult-skewed programming in the evening. The significance of the announcement was underlined by the fact that the French pubcaster accounts for 50% of the French broadcasters investment in animation and kids programming.

“Current movements within French companies are both due to internal reasons and to market trends,” says David Michel, who in February stepped down as managing director of Marathon Media, the company he co-founded in 2001 with CEO Vincent Chalvon-Demersay, who himself left last November.

The pair co-created and coproduced 13 international series including *Totally Spies*



PGS Entertainment is distributing Playmobil series *Super Four*

broadcasters take longer to decide upon a project, imposing at least one year of development. They also focus on classical properties.

“Paradoxically, there’s more risk taken by France Télévisions than from commercial channels, except for DTT channel Gulli and pay TV nets Canal J and Disney France.”

The decreasing investment from French channels means the most affected animated projects are those wholly financed in France by one channel, as opposed to the international copros, where more than half of the money comes from outside of the country.

Michel says the US market is more dynamic now, with OTT platforms such as Netflix and Amazon shaking up the sector as

colleague Chalvon-Demersay goes even further: “[Marathon hit] *Totally Spies* was a risky business, but TF1 let us handle the whole process,” he says. “We couldn’t produce it now in France given the stiff competition. Globalisation is the solution big indies can find to keep innovating and being creative.”

A two-speed market is also what Ellipsanime/Dargaud Media senior VP and executive producer Maïa Tubiana highlights, with a lot of thought given to whether you are on the “slow trend or the fast one”.

“Besides traditional proposals based on properties and catalogue, you need to be intuitive to invent new multiplatform content,” she says. “Between Europe and the international market, consumption models are different, and so are priorities. The biggest challenge for a producer is to marry the slow and the fast trends. It can demand huge concentration.”

Her company, which is delivering season four of *Garfield*, is currently starting production alongside Belvision for France Télévisions on new CGI project *Boule + Bill*. The €7 million project is based on Jean Roba’s comic strip.

Ellipsanime is also delivering the first episodes of original interactive series *Linkers* to Canal J and Gulli. The show will also be on Italy’s Rai 2, and it will have second-screen content, a dedicated website and a virtual-world extension.

The quality and innovation of French animation is still envied worldwide. What the sector suffers from the most is the slower pace at French broadcasters seem to operate. **TBI**



“We couldn’t produce *Totally Spies* in France now given the stiff competition. Globalisation is the solution big indies can find to keep innovating and being creative”

VINCENT CHALVON-DEMERSAY, EX-CEO MARATHON MEDIA

with TF1. Company COO Ambroise Delorme and chief creative officer Eryk Casemiro are now in charge.

“We must distinguish the European market from the US one,” Michel says. “With advertising revenues dropping, French channels’ investments also decrease and

they look to recruit subscribers.

“US networks commit to more innovative productions like fresh comedy *Sanjay and Craig* on Nickelodeon,” he says. “The kids audience is also different. Both markets have never been so far from each other.”

Now living in Los Angeles, Michel’s former

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Big Three programming goes forth

Cartoon Network latest programming slate in the US includes its first ever animated event miniseries, *Over the Garden Wall*. The mini stars voice talent including Elijah Wood (*Lord of the Rings*), Dean Collins (*The War at Home*) and Melanie Lynskey (*Two and a Half Men*) and is billed as a fantasy series about two brothers trapped in a mysterious world.

The ten-part series was created by Pat McHale and is produced in-house by Cartoon Network Studios. Americana-style music will feature heavily in the show.

Other new season series include *Clarence*, which came out of the same shorts programme at Cartoon Network Studios that spawned *Adventure Time* and *Regular Show*, and comes from Skyler Page. The animated series is about an optimistic boy who wants to do everything and is penciled in for an April 14 debut.

Elsewhere, *We Bare Bears* is a comedy, again from Cartoon Networks Studios, this time about a trio of bear siblings who awkwardly try to assimilate into human society. *Toy Story of Terror's* Daniel Chong is the creator. Cartoon Network, which recently saw president Stu Snyder exit the top post at Turner Broadcasting System-owned channel, is also launching new versions of *The Tom and Jerry Show*, and *Scooby-Doo*, the latter titled *Be Cool Scooby-Doo!*

At a new season launch in the UK Patricia Hidalgo, Turner's EMEA's chief content officer, said that she wants to work with the best international kids producers.

"We're looking for content from wherever it comes from," she told TBI. "If there is a great idea from a European production company we will look at it and it could be part of our global slate. Or, it could come from Asia-Pacific or Latin America and we can work together and make it a global show."

Anthony Lukom, Turner UK's managing director, said that 2013 was the best year for Turner's kids channels for a decade. Cartoon Network posted an 80% year-on-year ratings increase. For 2014 it has US shows *Uncle Grandpa*, *Steven Universe*, *Teen Titans Go!* and *Mixels*. There will also be more of its UK-originated series *The Amazing World of Gumball*. Classic toons channel Boomerang will also run the new *Tom & Jerry* series (pictured).

Nickelodeon has also unveiled its 2014-15 programming line-up in the US, with greenlights for a trio of animated toons and new live-action shows. The network plans to launch one of the animated series, *Welcome to the Wayne*, on a new digital Nick Jr. App.

DISNEY LOOKS TO UK FOR LIVE-ACTION

Disney Channels EMEA and Disney Channel US have co-commissioned UK indie Lime Pictures to produce a multi-part live action series that will premiere in 160 territories worldwide. *Evermoor* will be produced in the UK and represents the first time a longform live-action series produced in Britain will air on Disney Channel in the US.

All3Media-owned Lime (*House of Anubis*) is attached as producer and the show will go out in the autumn of this year. *Evermoor* will be a "mystery adventure punctuated with comedy" and follows an American teen girl, who moves to an isolated Middle England village with her novelist mother and step-father and soon finds herself involved in a mysterious plot.

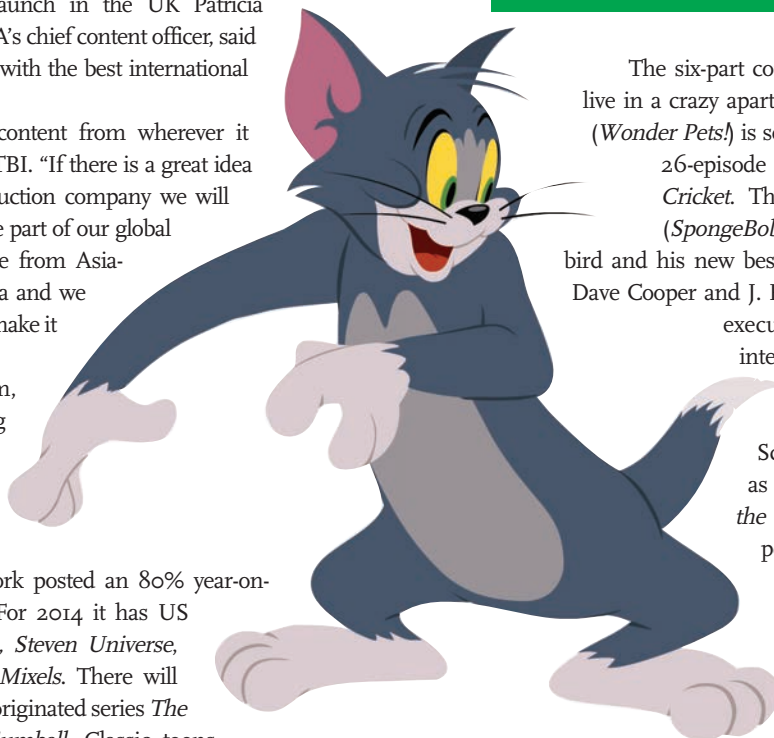
Disney Channels EMEA general manager and Disney EMEA chief marketing officer Tricia Wilber billed *Evermoor* as "our most ambitious EMEA production yet that builds on our experience of coproducing the global hit series [Argentine telenovela] *Violetta*".

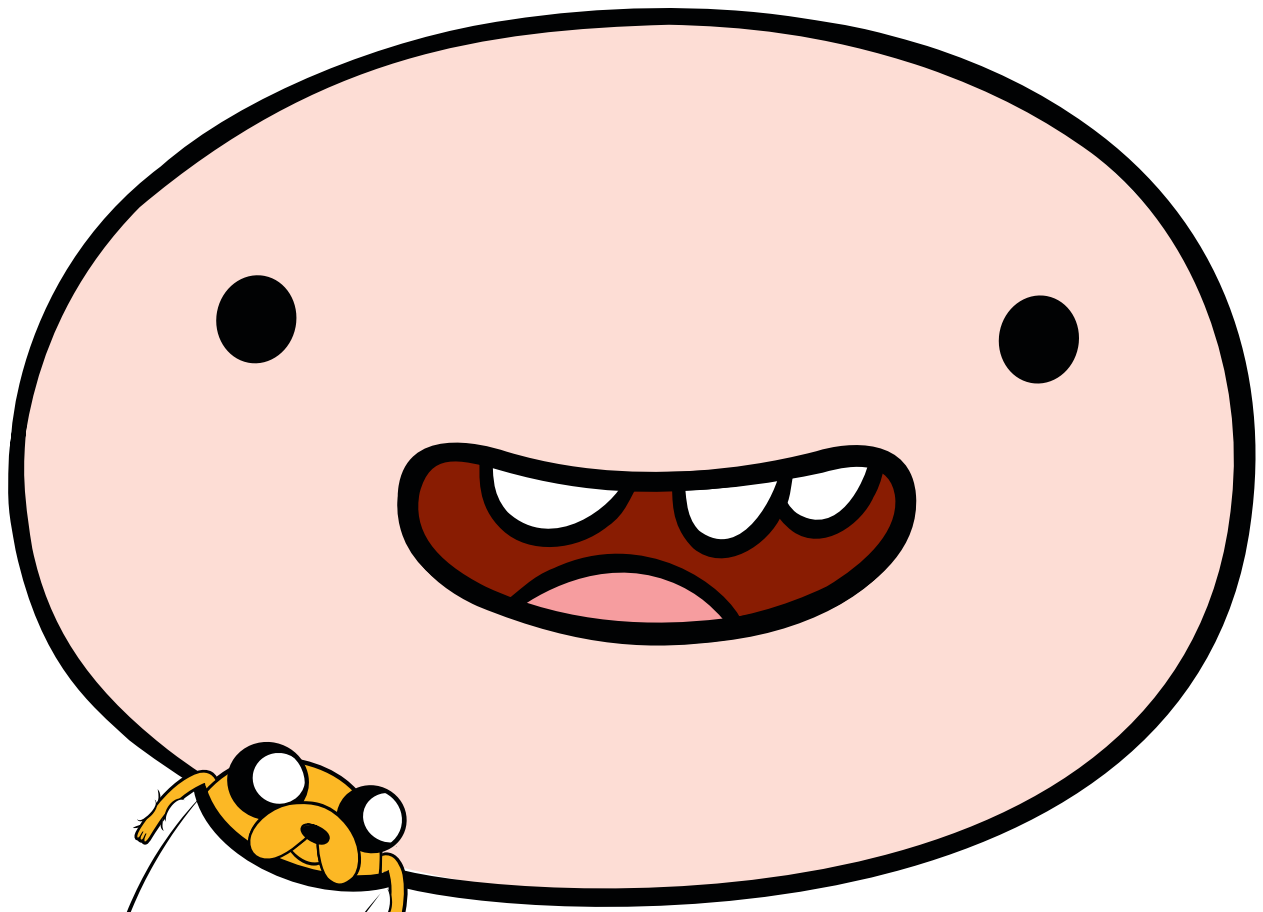
The move comes after Disney launched a UK production office for the pilot of ABC musical comedy *Galavant*. Disney was one of the loudest voices pushing for the introduction of UK drama and animation tax credit systems, which were implemented in April last year.

The six-part comedy series follows two young boys who live in a crazy apartment block called the Wayne. Billy Lopez (*Wonder Pets!*) is series creator and writer. There are also two 26-episode toons, *Bad Seeds* and *Pig Goat Banana Cricket*. The former comes from C.H. Greenblatt (*SpongeBob SquarePants*) and follows a well-meaning bird and his new best friends, who are imps. The latter, from Dave Cooper and J. Ryan with David Sacks (*Regular Show*) as executive producer, is billed as "absurd interwoven stories about four friends and roommates".

On the live-action front, *iCarly's* Dan Schneider has created *Henry Danger*, billed as a 'crime-fighting comedy', while *Bella and the Bullfrogs* is a 12-episode show about a perky high school cheerleader who becomes the school team's quarterback. It comes from Gabriel Garza and Jonathan Butler (*Fanboy & Chum Chum*), who were discovered through the Nickelodeon Writing Programme. *Nicky, Ricky,*

Dicky & Dawn, meanwhile, was created by Matt Fleckenstein (*iCarly*), who executive produces and Michael Feldman. The half-hour comedy follows a 10 year-old, who is the only girl of a quadruplet of squabbling siblings. **TBI**





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Kids TV health warning?

Kids channels strive to have a positive impact on the lives of their young viewers, but new research suggests that too much viewing can have a detrimental effect. Medical writer Joanna Lyford speaks to experts in the field

Children's use of electronic media can have a detrimental impact on their physical health and psychological wellbeing, according to a series of articles published in medical journal JAMA Pediatrics in March 2014.

Key findings from the studies include a negative impact of TV viewing time on children's sleep duration, an association between electronic media use and emotional problems, and a link between having a TV in the bedroom and weight gain. The research adds to growing evidence of harm associated with excessive TV and electronic media use by children, according to Paediatrician Dr Robert Scott-Jupp, from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

"While the studies do not prove 'cause-and-effect' they nevertheless support a general policy of restricting access to TV and other media devices among young children," Dr Scott-Jupp says. "At present there is no UK-wide guideline for what constitutes a 'safe' amount of screen time, and any such limit would be arbitrary rather than evidence-based."

Any attempt to limit screen time among children could be a challenge. According to TV Licensing's recently published TeleScope 2014 report into UK viewing habits, 4- to 15-year-olds spent two hours 23 minutes a day watching TV on average. Furthermore, more than half of children in the survey had a TV in their bedroom.

One of the studies in JAMA Pediatrics looked specifically at the health impact of bedroom TVs among US boys and girls aged 10-14 years. Interestingly, having a TV in the bedroom *per se* – rather than the amount of TV viewing time – was associated with excess weight gain among the children. The authors speculate that the association could be due to disrupted sleep patterns or greater exposure to child-targeted food advertising. "Removing bedroom televisions may be an important step in our nation's fight against child obesity," they conclude.

Another study, also conducted in the US, found that the extent to which mothers – but not fathers – monitored their children's electronic media use was strongly associated with the child's weight at age seven. The researchers suggest that interventions "aimed at parental supervision and control of child media exposure may promote healthy child weight development during middle childhood."

Another of the studies examined TV viewing time among Spanish children aged 2-9 years. It found an inverse relationship between TV time and sleep time, such that the more TV a child watched at a given age, the less he or she tended to sleep two or three years later. The researchers conclude that parents "should consider avoiding long periods of daily television exposure among preschool and school-aged children."

Professor Kevin Fenton, National Director of Health and Wellbeing at



Public Health England, says that there are well-established links between everyday behaviours and children's wellbeing. "The amount of time children spend looking at screens including TVs is important: increased screen time is associated with attention difficulties, increased feelings of loneliness, emotional distress, anxiety and depression," he says.

A large European study examined the emotional consequences of excessive screen time in very young children. Use of electronic media at age 2-6 years was associated with poorer wellbeing two years later. TV seemed to be worse than electronic games or computers, and the risks of emotional problems and poor family functioning increased for each additional hour the children spent using electronic media.

Linda Pagani, Professor of Psychoeducation at the University of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, says: "Between 0 and 5, children's brains best learn by contact with humans, and excessive screen time, especially passive TV watching, creates a time debt that generates deficits in teachable moments for social interaction skill-building. These deficits could later translate into emotional distress."

While the UK does not have any national guidelines on screen time for children, in the US, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends an upper limit of two hours per day, with no TV whatsoever for children under two years old. However, this advice is questioned by an AAP advisory panel member, Dimitri Christakis, a physician and associate editor of JAMA Pediatrics. Dr Christakis notes that touch-screen devices – although not TV – share many attributes with traditional children's toys, such as reactivity and portability, while offering additional features such as interactivity. On this basis, he argues that "judicious" use of interactive media is acceptable for children aged under two, up to a limit of 30 minutes to one hour a day; "admittedly, an arbitrary number." **TBI**



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Zodiak's Rekkit Rabbit

Kids OTT: On-demand rising

As the gamut of entertainment mediums for children grows ever wider, Andy Fry profiles how over-the-top programming services are adapting their offers to garner attention, and attract eyeballs, from kids of all ages

In the last five years, kids' media consumption has changed beyond recognition in advanced economies. The advent of OTT and on-demand technology, coupled with widespread uptake of tablets and smartphones, means every kid from preschooler to teen can tailor their content choices to suit their interests.

New research from Viacom and Nielsen shows that this hasn't harmed the TV business, with TV usage up 12% since 2005, but it has changed the way kids access and interact with content. Younger audiences have decoupled from linear TV, with mobile devices emerging as electronic babysitters. For older kids, it has created a media maelstrom, with teens becoming their own channel chiefs, as shortform content vies for attention with user-generated content, social media and gaming.

All of which is having a profound impact on the kids business, encouraging new players to challenge the dominance of Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. From

global platforms like Netflix and Amazon to niche players like Toon Googles, Kidobi, Kidoodle, Ameba and Hopster, there are more places to go for content. This in turn has drawn a reaction from the Big Three, which have responded with their own online and VOD services such as Viacom's My Nick App.

New entrants have focused on the three-to-eight year-old market, where the consumer proposition is more easily defined. At UK-based start-up Hopster, the aim is to offer safe, ad-free content for kids aged two-to-six, says company CEO Nick Walters, a former Viacom executive.

"We have 1,000 episodes under licence from Entertainment One, DHX, Nelvana and Millimages, including *64 Zoo Lane*, *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* and *Little Bear*. There's also a suite of games that are fun, but with a learning dimension."

Given the age group, Hopster's pitch is to parents looking for a controlled content environment for their kids. "It's available as an iPad App at £3.99 (US\$6.63) per month,"



Tablets are a key driver for kids' OTT consumption

says Walters. “For that price, parents know that there will be no commercial messaging and no chance of their child clicking on to inappropriate content, which is a risk with letting them loose on YouTube. Being on an iPad means it is also more stimulating and interactive than TV.”

In broad terms, Hopster’s approach resembles that of Canada’s Kidobi, whose director of research and content Eric Sorenson says: “We’ve carefully selected content that can have a positive effect on a child’s behaviour. It avoids the situation where kids watch content that is not aligned with their specific learning needs.”

Like Hopster, the service is available via mobile devices for a monthly fee but it differs in four main ways. Firstly, says Sorenson, there is a free tier, designed to encourage trialing. “Then there is a strong personalisation component, so as kids build up their profile, they get tailor-made video playlists that reflect their preferences,” he says. “Thirdly, there is content directly related to the educational curriculum. Finally, we source some of our content from non-traditional platforms.”

YouTube is one such source with content from the Google-owned online platform sitting alongside shows from the likes of

Foothill Entertainment [*Eddy & the Bear*] and Endemol [*Bananas in Pyjamas*], “We found a fantastic kids yoga channel that we embed on Kidobi,” says Sorenson.

This echoes the road taken by Toon Goggles, a US-based service that has built a registered user base of two million kids (primarily in the four-to-eight age range). “We started out as a VOD service,” says managing director Stephen Hodge, “but we see

ourselves much more as an entertainment on demand platform these days. Our experience is that it’s very hard to keep the attention of users over an extended period of time, so in addition to high-quality shows like *Bernard*, we have a growing portfolio of games, music, educational and shortform content.”

Toon Goggles has established its user base by partnering with digital services ranging from Roku to Samsung’s smart TV platform.



Transformers Prime has benefited from multiplatform deals

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According to Hodge, the base could rise to five million by year-end. “We approach the market with the mindset of a software company,” he says. “Wherever the kids are, that’s where we want to be. It’s about growing like a virus.”

Toon Goggles has a freemium model that allows kids to access ad-supported content for free, or pay US\$5 for a premium ad-free service. Some older kids use the service, which has prompted Hodge to think about whether there is a need for an older-skewing element. If that does happen, it won’t contain social media components. “I haven’t seen any successful examples of the Facebook for kids model,” says Hodge.

The commercial insight behind all of this is the new landscape opens up gaps that didn’t exist in the two-track world of free and pay TV. However, there are challenges turning this into a reality, notably pricing, marketing and content acquisition.

Hopster, Kidobi and Toon Goggles are asking families to divert discretionary spend that could be spent on pay TV, Netflix, Moshi Monsters, game apps, comics, partwork hobby publications or DVDs.

For Hodge, it’s a reasonable ask. “We fill a need for children amid all of the entertainment options, and there is great content out there, particularly among the indie studios with archives,” he says.



Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom on Hopster

Hopster’s Walters is equally upbeat. “Research suggests UK parents spend £10-15 a month on digital preschool content, over and above pay TV, so our job is to offer a great, keenly-priced service,” he says. “As for marketing, we need to avoid getting involved in an expenditure arms race and build out via user recommendation.”

One VOD platform that seems to have reached the critical mass required for survival is Splash Entertainment’s Kabillion, which is currently in 50 million US homes and is on course to hit 60 million by year-end. Nicolas Atlan, co-CEO at Splash (fka Moonscoop US) and president of Kabillion, says several factors have contributed.

“Strong brands are key, so we have mixed the best of our shows, like *Hero 108* and *Code Lyoko*, with great third party shows like *Power Rangers* and *Dragonball Z*,” Atlan says.

In its current form, Kabillion is an ad-funded service that is available free as part of a cable subscription or via a dedicated YouTube channel. “For now, our approach is to offer individual episodes of shows rather than entire series,” says Atlan. “The next step for us would be to look at the viability of launching a subscriber-based application where we offer entire series.”

The new landscape has big implications for independent content studios, which now have to weigh up the benefits deals with established players against the opportunities from OTT and on-demand.

For Hasbro’s senior VP, international distribution and development, Finn Arneson, the priority is to maximise distribution revenues and generate mass awareness for the company’s toy-based franchises.



Hasbro's Littlest Pet Shop goes out on Netflix

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VOD sales are 'invaluable' for *Totally Spies*

"If you can get one of the dedicated kids broadcasters to pay a reasonable amount for your rights and get international exposure for your show that's still a very attractive proposition," he says. "We will always talk to broadcasters about opening up windows for on-demand platforms like Netflix and Hulu, but we're unlikely to give a pay TV platform complete exclusivity".

A good illustration is the series of big brand on-demand deals the company has done with Netflix in the US. In 2012, it granted the VOD platform rights to series including *Transformers Prime* for its Just For Kids section. A year later, it expanded the deal to include *Kaijudo: Rise of the Duel Masters* and *Littlest Pet Shop*.

The Jim Henson Company's executive VP distribution Richard Goldstein also sees

opportunity. "We did some significant library deals with Hulu, Amazon and Netflix," he says, noting that hit show *Dinosaur Train* is present on all three. "We also launched Jim Henson Family TV as an ad-free SVOD channel on YouTube and as a branded channel within the Hulu Kids."

However, the market has changed, he adds. "Netflix, Amazon and Hulu are getting more selective and looking for original or exclusive content, so that means I tend to view them like a TV platform," he says. "Now, when Henson is developing a series, we talk to them at the same time as the 15 free and pay TV players we've always dealt with." This has had tangible benefits: Henson is making a pilot show called *Teeny Tiny Dogs* for Amazon Instant Prime.

DHX Media's senior VP, distribution Josh

Scherba says his company wants to work with the widest range of partners possible.

"Netflix and Amazon can only tailor their services so much, so a dedicated kids app that manages to get a few hundred thousand subs at a few dollars a month looks potentially viable to me," Scherba says. "From a content owner's point of view I'm happy to work with services like this in return for a licence fee with a minimum guarantee."

Like his peers, Scherba has seen the shift towards cherry-picking, "but that hasn't diminished the need for library content," he says. "For us one of the big appeals of [DHX's] Ragdoll Worldwide acquisition was the number of good-quality episodes of *Teletubbies* and *In the Night Garden*".

Karen Vermeulen, senior VP, global sales and coproduction, Zodiak Kids, endorses this view, saying library title VOD deals have proved invaluable.

Last year, Zodiak sold 270 episodes to on-demand service Ace Entertainment in France, including *Totally Spies* and *Martin Mystery*. There were also deals with Maxdome and Watchever in Germany and Hulu for titles including *Rekkit Rabbit* and *Gormiti*.

"A smart windowing strategy can be a win-win for everyone," she says. "The real challenge going forward will be around catch-up rights. Broadcasters expect [these] to protect their position, but if that period extends too long it has a knock-on effect on the value of the secondary SVOD window".

For Vermeulen, a vibrant VOD market has an additional benefit, which is that it makes dubbing affordable. "Lots of platforms taking non-exclusive rights can help amortise those kind of costs," she says.

While some VOD platforms are likely to fall by the wayside, the good news is that there are enough players to keep the market interesting for content owners. There's also evidence that retailers are getting interested in VOD.

In the US, both Walmart and Toys R Us have seen VOD as a way of extending their relationship with customers and brands, though the latter has shuttered its effort.

New activity is all good news, according to DHX's Scherba. "Ultimately, the more leverage you have in negotiations, the better the windowing arrangements you come out with," he says. "Having great shows and a lot of platforms interested in them provides that leverage." **TBI**



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KIDS HOT PICKS

THE SHOW: *Breadwinners*

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Viacom International Media Networks

THE PRODUCER: Nickelodeon Animations Studios

THE BROADCASTER: Nickelodeon (US, international)

THE CONCEPT: Madcap series emanating from Nick's Global Shorts Program about a pair of duck delivery men

Breadwinners is a first – the first full series commissioned as a result of Nickelodeon's Global Shorts Program, which launched in 2012. The series is based upon a shortform show from Italian animator Gary 'Doodles' DiRaffaele. Keen on the project, Nickelodeon buddied up DiRaffaele with Steve Borst (*Teen Titans Go!*), and the result is a twenty-part series that bowed on the kids network in the US in February. It will roll out internationally from the autumn.

The series follows best friends SwaySway and Buhdeuce who are employed delivering bread to their fellow ducks, prompting madcap adventures and heaps of physical

comedy. The duo live and work together and make their deliveries in a jet-propelled rocket van.

In the US, the series opener went at 7:30pm on Monday, February 17 (Presidents Day), ahead of settling into its regular 11am Saturday morning slot. The curtain-raising episode was Nick's second-most-watched show of the week, trailing only *SpongeBob SquarePants* and garnering 1.7 million viewers in the 2- to-11-year-old demographic and 2.8 million viewers across all demos.

Viacom International Media Networks will launch the series internationally at MIPTV, and with a chunk of episodes and US ratings

in hand, it makes an interesting and fully-formed proposition for buyers. Some, however, might find themselves disappointed. VIMN's senior VP, international programme sales Caroline Beaton says that although the ink has yet to dry on sales, she already knows where the series will land in five to ten key territories.

"We know where it will go and who wants to buy it [in some territories] in the same way we did with *Turtles*," she says, adding that this is a classic Nick series in the making.

"It's very creator-driven and it does what Nickelodeon does best with shows like *Ren & Stimpy*, where the mayhem builds and it is frantic, bold, raucous and in your face."

THE SHOW: *Transformers*
THE PRODUCER: Hasbro Studios
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Hasbro Studios
THE BROADCASTER: The Hub (US)
THE CONCEPT: Latest animated series based on the transforming robots-in-disguise franchise

Transformers was created in 1984 by US toy company Hasbro. In the intervening years there have been numerous series, films and toys, and 30 years after the launch Hasbro's content division is launching a new animated series based on the iconic property.

Finn Arnesen, senior VP of international distribution and development at Hasbro Studios, says the new show has been 18 months to two years in the making and builds on Hasbro's experience with the franchise. "We learned a lot in the production and distribution process on the award-winning *Transformers Prime*, and whilst some of the world's favourite *Transformers* characters are back, we will also have an all-new cast of cool Autobots and Decepticons," he says.

The new show follows on from *Transformers Prime*, which wrapped last year and culminated with the *Predacons Rising* movie. "2015 is the perfect timing to kick the new show off, with the fourth [live-action] movie *Transformers: Age of Extinction* launching in July 2014, ready for a new TV series in the first quarter of 2015," says Arnesen.

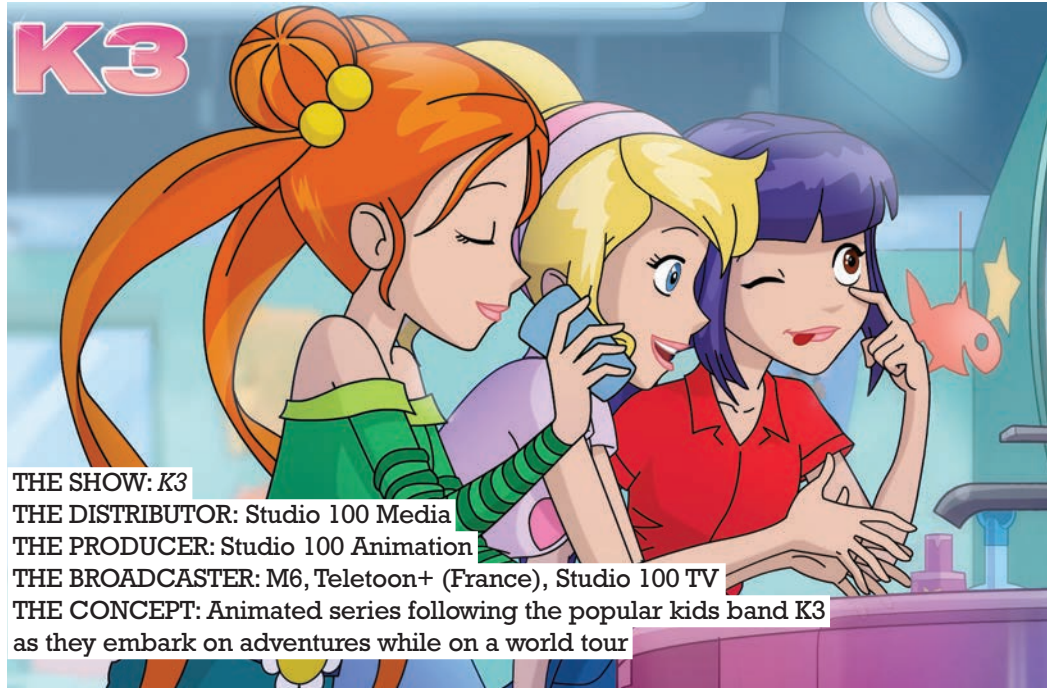
The series will have a lighter, more comedic tone than its predecessor. Visually it will have 3D characters blended with hand-painted backgrounds, giving it, Arnesen says, a "slight anime contemporary style and feel".

Hasbro will launch the series internationally at MIPTV. "Traditionally China and south-east Asia are very important as the early adopter markets and the series has already sold in the US to the Hub Network," Arnesen says.

"It will launch in Q1 2015 and we will be speaking to major broadcasters at MIPTV."



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THE SHOW: *K3*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Studio 100 Media
THE PRODUCER: Studio 100 Animation
THE BROADCASTER: M6, Teletoon+ (France), Studio 100 TV
THE CONCEPT: Animated series following the popular kids band K3 as they embark on adventures while on a world tour

Kids pop band K3 are big news in the Benelux region and already have a presence in TV with live-action series *The World of K3* and *Hello K3*. There have also been movies featuring the group, but Studio 100's new series is the first time Kim, Kylie and Kate will be on screen in animated form.

Katell France, managing director at Studio 100 Animation, says that visually the show is a "kaleidoscope of colour in 2-D". She adds: "It is in a stylised cartoony, semi-realistic graphic style, with bright colours and patterns."

In Belgium the band holds the record for the longest run of number one hits, outperforming The Beatles. The emphasis in the show will be on existing rather than new songs, and Studio 100's France says the girls' bouncy bubblegum pop is the perfect soundtrack for the 'toon series. "Songs are played during a rehearsal, a short end concert, or during the climax of a chase to illustrate visual gags," she says. "These upbeat beats and catchy rhythms are well suited to a cartoon soundtrack, though we are ensuring they don't swamp the show."

The concept was created by Alan Gilbey and Jan Van Rijsselberge and will be directed by Eric Cazes at Studio 100 Animation. The series follows the girl group as they unravel mysteries while on a world tour. Each episode opens with the girls on the road in their tour van alongside long-suffering driver, chaperone and bodyguard, 'X'. Their

manager appears on a screen with information about the show the band is headed to, after which various escapades unfold. Each instalment is rounded off with a song from the band at their concert.

"The adventures the pop teenage girls face may have one foot in a kind of reality, but major flights of fancy are explored," says France. "Extraordinary encounters derived from myths happen, and monsters, ghosts, aliens and crazy creatures often show up."

The music-comedy-adventure series is aimed at 6-to-8 year-olds and is being made by Studio 100's French studio. The company's distribution arm is selling it internationally and will come to market with a trailer.

The show is in production and will deliver next year to M6, the French free-to-air broadcaster that commissioned it. Canal+'s Teletoon+ kids channel has prebought the pay TV rights in France, while in Flemish Belgium the show will go out on Studio 100 TV, Studio 100's digital TV channel.

But will the series resonate in territories in which K3 are not household names? "One of Studio 100's strength is the support chain that we can offer to broadcasters with promotional material such as online dedicated bonus content, websites, music and, of course, a well-selected cast of actresses/singers for the dubbing of the show and to explore the musical possibilities," Katell says.



THE SHOW: *Dino Paws*

THE PRODUCERS: Impossible Kids, Kindle Entertainment, Guru Studio

THE DISTRIBUTOR: BBC Worldwide

THE BROADCASTERS: CBeebies (UK, international), Treehouse (Canada)

THE CONCEPT: Prehistoric preschool show about three dinosaurs exploring the world

Preschool series featuring dinosaurs are not in short supply, but the team behind *Dino Paws* is convinced it has something different.

“Alan Gilbey [*Mike the Knight*] was looking at the world of dinosaurs and researched a lot of other shows, and a lot looked the same. He wanted to find a new way in,” says Nathan Waddington, children’s genre manager at BBC Worldwide, which is distributing the show outside the UK and Canada. “We knew kids like dinosaurs – they’re massive and they stomp around – and kids love sharing facts about them. What Alan did was to imagine dinosaurs were preschoolers and discovering a brand new world about them.”

The resulting series has three preschool dinosaurs called Bob, Gwen and Tony exploring their world. “Every episode is a quest as they see and try everything,” Waddington says.

The show has been made by Impossible Kids, the children’s unit of Impossible Pictures, which counts dino series *Walking with Dinosaurs* and *Primeval* among its credits. Impossible Kids also has made another dino-themed show for young viewers, *Andy’s Dinosaur Adventures*, also for CBeebies and Worldwide.

Copro partners on the new series are another UK prodco, Kindle Entertainment, and Canada’s Guru Studio.

“International coproductions are important because it means a bigger pot of money, but editorially this is very author driven,” says Waddington.

The CGI show launched on UK channel CBeebies in February, and the Canadian broadcaster is Treehouse. Worldwide’s international CBeebies offerings in Poland, the Nordic region, Africa, Australia, Asia and the Latin American and US Hispanic markets will also get the show, as the company steps up efforts to deliver original content to its global channels.

Worldwide is launching the series globally at MIPTV.

THE SHOW: *Billy Green Builds!*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Little Airplane
THE PRODUCER: Studio 100 Animation
THE CONCEPT: Preschool series in which a seven year-old and his chums use environmentally friendly solutions to help animals in trouble

US theme park and wildlife centre SeaWorld has been making moves into TV with projects including *Yonaguni* (fka *The Octo Force*) with DQ and Rollman Entertainment and a tie-up with Nelvana on *Franklin and Friends*. The latest small-screen move is *Billy Green Builds*, a coproduction between SeaWorld and Josh Selig's Little Airplane, the prodco behind *3rd & Bird* and *Small Potatoes*.

The preschool series follows seven-year-old Billy Green who, along with his animal sidekick Moxy and transforming, solar-panelled vehicle the Chuggy Buggy, travel the globe and build environmentally-friendly solutions that help animals in trouble.

Selig created the series after meeting the SeaWorld team at MIPCOM 2011. "We started

talking about making a show together, and these [talks] evolved into all-day meetings with educators, storytellers and designers, where we shared our ideas about how best to use media to convey a respect for the natural world," says the Little Airplane founder.

Little Airplane's art director Cassandra Gibbons designed the show and characterises the visual style as "natural colour/natural texture", with a palette based on the natural world.

Selig says all of Little Airplane's shows have an underlying curriculum. "For *Billy Green Builds!*, together with SeaWorld we decided on two primary goals: respect for nature and creative problem solving, and these will be central to every episode," he says. "For secondary goals, we chose appreciation of diversity and basic geography, since Billy and his crew will travel to a new country in every episode."

The educational themes are in tune with SeaWorld Kids' conservation and wildlife commitments. The aquatic theme park is a fully fledged copro partner and actively involved in the development of the show, but it does not have any on-screen branding or presence.

Little Airplane is distributing and will launch

Billy Green Builds! at MIPTV.

Selig says that in a crowded preschool market, it has unique elements that will make it stand out. "I believe we are the only preschool series that has made respect for the natural world the absolute central focus of an entire brand," he says. "Since children first learn to appreciate and enjoy nature during their preschool years, I think we are well positioned to attract broadcasters from all over the world."

No broadcaster is currently attached. Selig says that North American channels are expressing interest and that the partners hope to lock in a production schedule this year.



THE SHOW: *Talking Tom and Friends*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: BRB Internacional
THE PRODUCER: Screen 21
THE CONCEPT: Animated series based on the hugely successful *My Talking Tom* app

The Talking Tom app (recently updated to 'My Talking Tom') is the sixth-most-downloaded ever on the iPhone and the tenth most on the iPad. It is now set for TV.

The app was created by developer Outfit7 and is one of only two to have been downloaded over a billion times, alongside *Angry Birds*, which has already had its cartoon makeover. However, Screen 21, the Spanish producer making the Talking Tom show, is aiming for a different look with a full-length CGI comedy series.

Barcelona-based Screen 21's sister company BRB Internacional is distributing the series, and CEO Carlos Biern says the coproduction followed discussions with Outfit7 that started last year.

With the app boasting 230 million active users, Biern says there is a wealth of consumer

opinion to aid development of the series.

"There is a direct relationship with people using the app and we can use that feedback rather than testing or doing a pilot," he adds.

In the show Tom and his friends Hank, Angela, Ben and Ginger build and work out of a basement studio making, appropriately, entertainment apps. The animated show is set in a fictional sunny, coastal city and secondary characters include the cats' long-suffering neighbour, rival talking cat Tim and a fan who is jealous of Tom's friends and obsessed with him.

With a core target of 6-to-10s, Biern says that by including edgy and absurd comedy, the show will also pull in a wider audience in the same way as the app.

He likens the humour to some of the classic Looney Tunes toons and notes that there will be US and Canadian writers attached.

The series has a budget of €5.1 million (US\$7.1 million). Production is slated to start this autumn, making autumn 2015 a realistic launch date

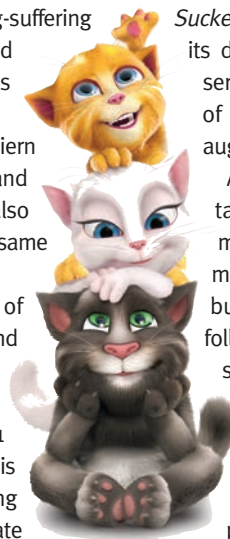
for broadcasters. In addition to the core 11-minute episodes, which broadcasters will likely run back to back to fill a commercial half-hour, there will be 26 shortform web episodes.

Outfit7's London team, headed by COO and ex-HIT Entertainment senior VP Alessandro Traverso, will retain the rights to the online-specific content.

BRB, best known for shows such as *Suckers* and *Angus & Cheryl*, is building on its digital experience with the *Invizimals* series based on the Sony video games of the same name and which had augmented reality components.

All TV rights sit with BRB, with Outfit7 taking charge of licensing and merchandising. There will be a few minutes of animation available for buyers at MIPTV, and Biern says following the announcement of the show in March, buyers in Italy, Scandinavia and the Middle East have expressed an interest.

Biern and BRB will be looking for new coproduction and broadcast partners at MIPTV.





THE SHOW: *Bing!*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Acamar Films
THE PRODUCERS: Acamar Films, Brown Bag Films, Tandem Films
THE BROADCASTERS: CBeebies, ABC (Australia), KiKa (Germany), RTE (Ireland), S4C (Wales)
THE CONCEPT: Animated series based on the Ted Dewan book series

Several years ago, then-CEO of Ealing Film Entertainment (part of Ealing Studios) Mikael Shields was on the hunt for IP that could be developed into a fully fledged kids franchise. A field of hundreds of properties was narrowed to three, he says, two of which were *Peppa Pig* and *The Gruffalo*.

The third, and the one EFE picked up, was Bing Bunny, a successful book series from UK-based US author Ted Dewan that was “the strongest of the three,” says Shields, now chief exec of Acamar Films.

So, what happened to Bing and why did the titular rabbit not make it to our screens and become a mega hit in the same way as *Peppa* and *The Gruffalo*? The answer is that the show was going through an arduous development process – and only now is *Bing!* ready to make his small-screen debut.

When Shields set up Acamar, he took the Bing Bunny IP with him (although EFE will

share in any upside). The development process has been so long partly because of an unusual approach that has involved assembling a five-strong in-house writing team. “It’s *The West Wing* of preschool,” says Shields. “As a concept it tells a range of stories about the life of a three-year-old. The way we have developed it as a TV property is not plot-driven, it’s about the tiny moments, the boisterous energy and the overcoming of challenges that three-year-olds face. Each seven minutes is a single experience – we have christened them ‘micro-dramas’ – with a beginning, a middle and an end.”

Brown Bag and Tandem Films came on as production partners, and ex-Nickelodeon UK boss Howard Litton joined as an exec producer. He helped shop the series to UK kids net CBeebies.

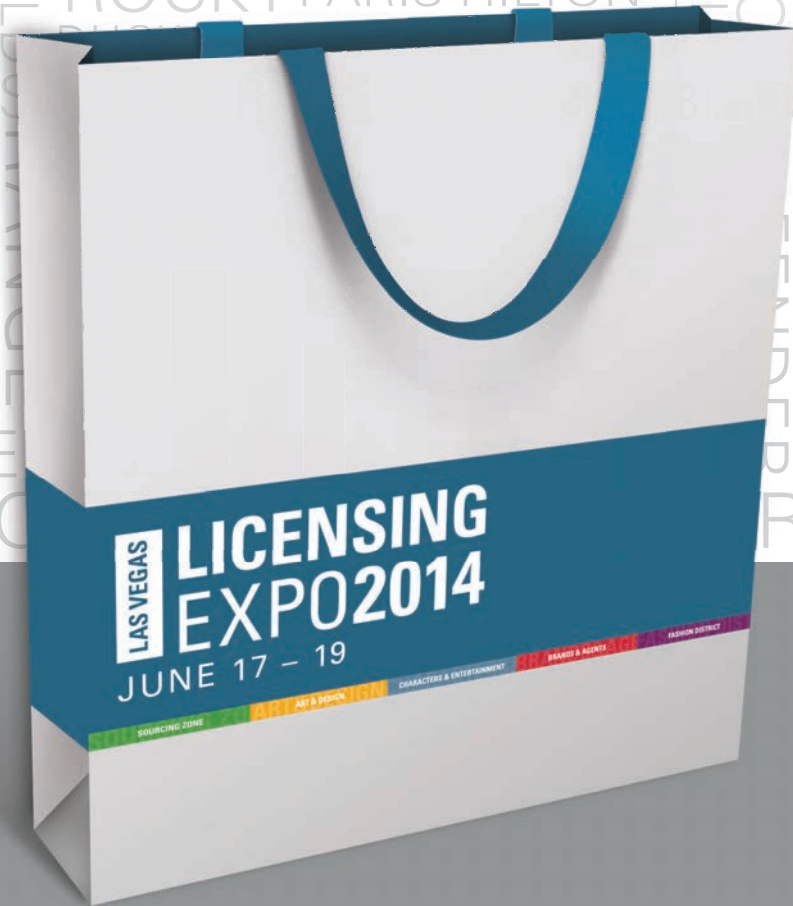
Shields says the intense development

process and team effort on production – there are 200 people working in the show – is reflected in short-film quality animation. The result is also that the budget is double that of a standard kids show, he adds, noting that about US\$1 million has been spent on reversioning the series for the US.

Acamar is handling sales in-house and has cut presales with Australian pubcaster ABC, Ireland’s RTE and Wales’ S4C. It will start delivering to CBeebies in the second quarter and is likely to launch on the channel in the UK in the autumn.

Dewan originally created the books as a way to relay what life was really like for preschoolers, over and above the saccharine version served up in many kids’ books. Harper Collins has started reissuing the books to coincide with the series, and licensing and merchandising partners are about to be announced.

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LAST WORD



CHRISTOPHE GOLBERGER, GOLD BEE

Flying solo in Spain

After almost 15 years in the industry, as a producer and head of distribution and marketing at Imira Entertainment and head of business affairs at Moonscoop in Paris, I decided to launch my own company last autumn, a distribution consultancy called GoldBee. It was a big decision but I felt confident I could branch out on my own.

The industry had certainly changed a lot since I'd started at Montreal, Canada's Klik Animation in 1998. Back then, financing was easier to access, and business models were stable with broadcasters leading the way. With the arrival of the internet, the multiplication of digital platforms and the rise of multi-screen consumption by kids of all ages, the business has been forced to evolve and reinvent itself. I decided I needed to do the same.

As audiences have been fragmented, as each target group has divided into sub-groups and as kids have become more proactive in their search for their favourite content, it has become crucial to offer strong innovative properties, articulated around a brand, which are available on numerous platforms. The concept of exclusivity has changed enormously. It's a complicated puzzle to assemble, and it can't be solved only by creative or business skills:

experience is key in getting the balance right.

Spain's economy has been very tough for some years, and this has led to some well known animation companies falling away as money became scarce. The past five years have been very hard – a lot of economic destruction has happened here – so you had to be very strong and make the right decisions to face and survive the contraction.

The Spanish animation industry had to learn to diversify or die, and diversify it did. Creative financing structures were put together. These included animated projects stemming from the toy industry that were financed by the toy industry, which was something new. Private equity investment funds supported innovative content in a country with almost no track record in that area. So there has been, and will be, innovation. If one looks closely at the long-lasting Spanish professionals, one will see that most of them are still doing business and managed to pull through these difficult times. After all, this industry is about long-term relationships.

As Spain is starting to show signs of recovery, I look to the future with enthusiasm. New opportunities are arising. The plan for Gold Bee is to go global, but the structure will stay lean until the dust settles.

My company provides distribution and consulting services in all areas related to the

different steps of creating, financing and exploiting successful IP and brands, and helps raise a company's profile and reach in the international industry. That's what I know best and what I can offer my partners on a global level.

Though I'm not an expert in all things Spain, this is where I live now. I have lived and worked in two countries before, so my backyard starts in Latin America and ends in Asia. This means I can target business with the whole world while remaining nimble.

I recently joined forces with ZDF Enterprises in order to exploit the rights of its Junior catalogue in Iberia, Latin America and Asia. ZDFE has a fantastic catalogue of award-winning kids programmes, ranging from pre-school hit such as *Q Pootle 5* and *JoNaLu* to great comedy shows like *Rusty Knight* and international teen live actions hits including *Mako Mermaids*, *Sam Fox Extreme Adventures* and *Wolfblood*. They also produce new takes on classics with *Lassie*, *The New Adventures of Peter Pan* and *The Jungle Book*, which are a hit with buyers around the world. It's a privilege to partner and contribute to the success of such a fantastic team.

Looking ahead, Gold Bee will continue focusing on kids properties and brands, reinforcing its position as a distributor and consultant.

Short term, I am looking for strong properties to distribute in the rest of the world. But the challenge will be to grow the business, find new ways of monetising content in the digital world and develop new projects originating from the interactive and toy industries, the biggest entrants in to the kids market in the past few years. **TBI**

With the arrival of the internet, the multiplication of digital platforms and the rise of multi-screen consumption by kids of all ages, the business has been forced to evolve and reinvent itself. I decided I needed to do the same

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