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Television Business International

Issue #1 April 2015

The magazine celebrating television's golden era of scripted programming

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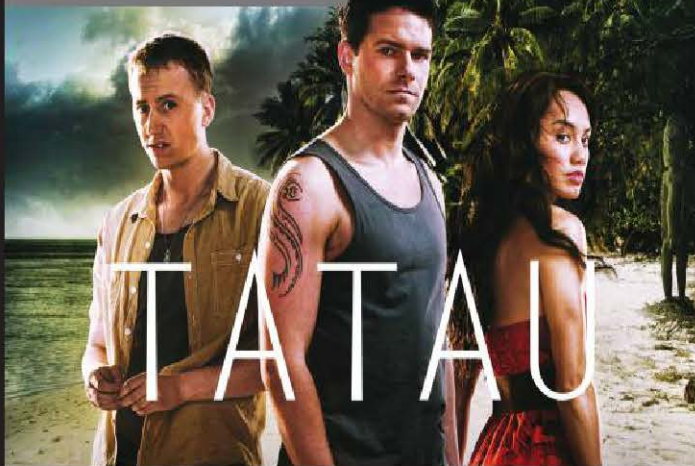
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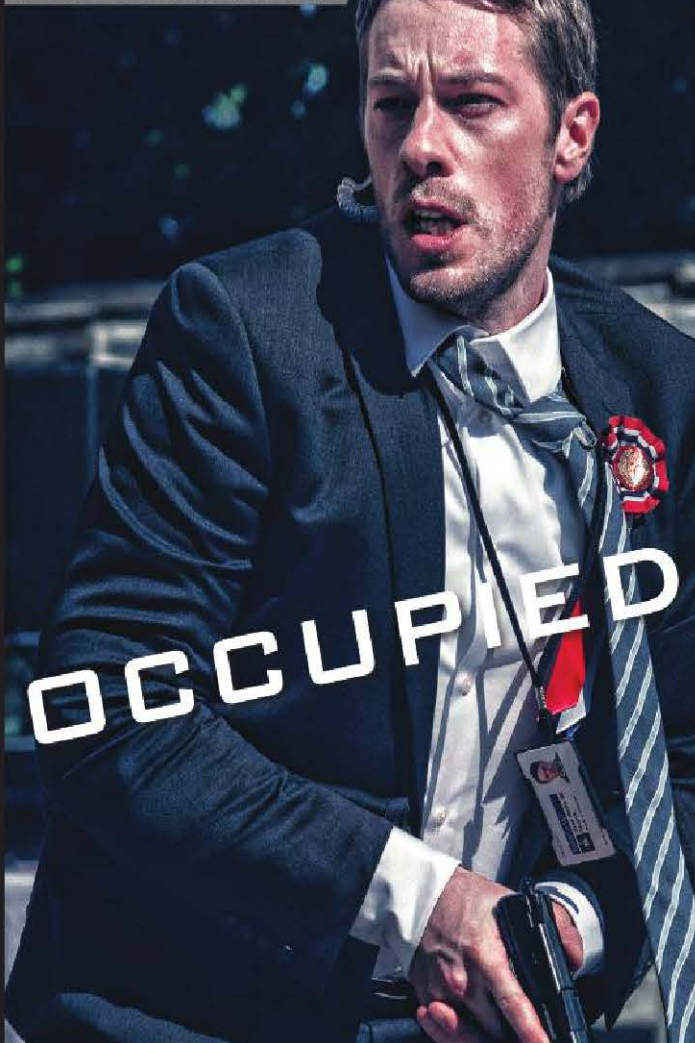
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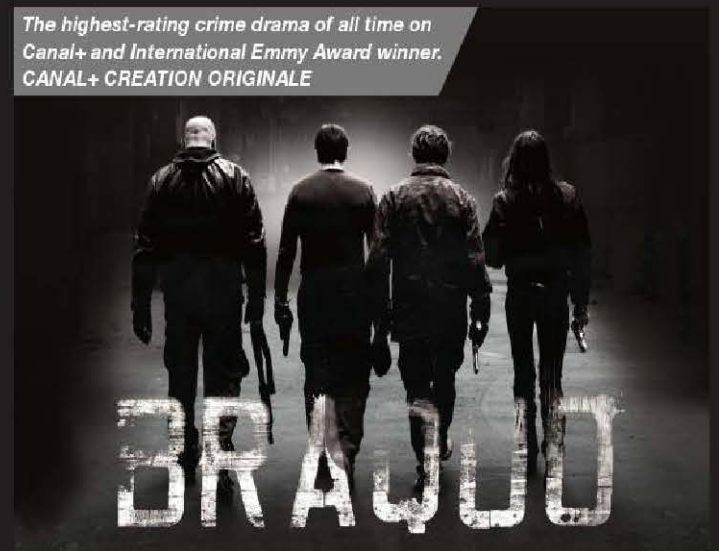
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Editor's Note



Welcome to TBI Scripted, our new magazine celebrating all things great about the current era of global drama programming, while taking a critical eye at the most promising new projects coming to the international market.

For a title all about the burgeoning international television drama business, it's incredible how many times while putting this debut issue together we've heard executives and producers from our industry use the word 'film' to describe their work.

The notion that television is surpassing the movies and bringing feature-film quality programming to small screens is a recurring theme throughout the coming pages.

You'll hear Leslie Greif describing History's new limited western series *Texas Rising* as 'our film' in our lead feature. We've spoken to all the key players behind the epic, which sets out to tell the tale of the formation of Texas in the 19th century, to gain a comprehensive picture of the project, and the consensus is this is small screen fare with big screen ambition.

Lifetime telemovie chief Tanya Lopez uses similar filmic terms to describe the US cable channel's Marilyn Monroe biopic in a series of features that also reveal the secrets behind the BBC's *Wolf Hall*, Canal+'s *Versailles* and Spike TV's first miniseries in almost a decade, *Tut*.

We also hear from a veteran of film, TV and theatre, producer Colin Callender, who pinpoints the moments, people and programmes that have most influenced his storied career in scripted entertainment in our regular In the Spotlight section.

Elsewhere, *Shameless* writer Paul Abbott writes about his passion for cop dramas, and how he has brought his uniquely acerbic voice to the genre in a new effort for UK broadcaster Channel 4.

We also look at how the European drama businesses in France, Spain and Germany are shaping up in a series of articles that shed light on new projects, the evolving coproduction market and new companies making waves on the continent.

Whatever you want to call these programmes, TBI Scripted will provide you with the news, views and developing stories you need to approach the ever-expanding world of small screen drama in the know.

Jesse Whittock

TBI editorial director Stewart Clarke • stewart.clarke@informa.com • @TBIstewart

TBI Scripted editor Jesse Whittock • jesse.whittock@informa.com • @TBI_Jesse

Sales manager Kate Roach • kate.roach@informa.com

Art director Matthew Humberstone • matthew.humberstone@informa.com

Publisher Tim Banham • tim.banham@informa.com

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Tel: +44 (0)20 7017 5000 **e-mail:** tbi@informa.com **web:** www.tbivision.com

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In the spotlight: Colin Callender

Wolf Hall producer Colin Callender reveals the influences that have shaped a five-decade career spanning television drama, film and theatre

Colin Callender's career began in British network television in the 1970s at ITV network Granada. After running indie Primetime Television and launching his own firm, The Callender Company, he moved to the US to work for then fledgling cable channel HBO in New York. Quickly becoming one of the most influential Brits in Hollywood, he rose through the ranks and was eventually named president of HBO

Films. After more than two decades with the premium cable business, he was linked to top HBO job, but this did not come to pass. He left the Time Warner-owned business in 2008 and later launched his own prodco, Playground Entertainment. It has since coproduced shows including *The Missing*, *Dancing on the Edge* and recent BBC hit *Wolf Hall*. Callender reveals what a career in UK-US TV, film and theatre has taught him.



The drama show that has most influenced my career

It's the very first show I produced – *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* for Channel 4; a coproduction with the Mobil Showcase Theatre from the US. It was a television adaptation of the Royal Shakespeare Company's stage play, and was my very first credit as a producer; I didn't know what the hell I was doing. What was exciting was we put together a production team that was a real mix of theatre, television and film talent, and though I didn't know it at the time, that model later became a motif for my work and I've continued to do that over the years. Because it was a theatre production we turned the Old Vic into a sound stage, with single camera video tape, a film cinematographer, a TV series director and a film sound recordist. From a creative and financing standpoint, it's a model I've gone back to time and time again.

The executive that has most influenced me

There's no question, it's Bridget Potter, who was the first head of programming at HBO. She would force you as an executive to ask what the show was about and why you were doing it. Then she would hold you accountable to that as the production went on. She would get you to constantly assess and judge what was being made. She was very tough about that, creating a paradigm that has informed how I look at shows and how they are financed and produced. Bridget is an academic now, teaching at Columbia [University, New York]. When I left HBO I called her to thank her because she created the tools that I used while I was there.

The company that has had the most influence on this 'golden age' of drama television

I was just a kid when I got my first job, back in the early seventies, at Granada Television, when it was run by Dennis Forman and David Plowright. They were firm believers that if you made great programmes, somehow everything else would work and fall into place. I was there for the era of *Brideshead Revisited* and *Jewel in the Crown* (both pictured). Those shows still stand as a benchmark that big event dramas are measured by, and there is still a reverence for them. What I really respect is they were created in the context of a commercial landscape. The BBC has consistently over the years created remarkable work, but in part has been able to do that because of the licence fee. Granada taught me that you could also do that in a commercial context.



I've always wanted to do *The Catcher in the Rye* as a drama, but J.D. Salinger's estate will never sell the rights – one has tried.



The best piece of advice I've ever received

Unequivocally, it's to make sure everyone's on the same page – the creative team, actors, directors and financiers. Channel 4 wanted to play *Nicholas Nickelby* as it played in the theatre – four hours one night and four-and-a-half on the second. Mobil wanted four two-hours to be played on consecutive weeks and the distributor wanted nine one-hours. I didn't know what the hell to do, so I called them all to a meeting at Browns Hotel on Albermarle Street, along with the writer and director. I said we had to come out of the room with one single vision, or we should all shake hands and go our separate ways. I did it out of sheer desperation, but by the end of the day we did indeed have one shared vision. When I looked back on that I realised that casting the financiers is as important as casting the actors. Everybody has to be making the same show.

The source material I would love to make into a TV show

I've always wanted to do *The Catcher in the Rye* as a drama, but J.D. Salinger's estate will never sell the rights – one has tried. Holden Caulfield's character at the centre of the book is just wonderful, and it's a great, complex story. What television is doing now is what the movies used to do, morally complex dramas that show the audience other lives and other worlds; people struggling to get through the world with dignity. That is now happening on television and that's why we're getting shows like *Wolf Hall*. It's about a man, Thomas Cromwell, caught between his desire to do the right thing and to survive in a world in which one wrong step would have his head chopped off. That's why the audience has embraced Frank Underwood and Walter White and Tony Soprano. Those guys live in the complex world we live in ourselves, and that's what television at its best can do. **S**



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Holding out for Hierro

Galician thriller *Hierro* was named best project at the Berlinale's first CoPro Series pitching competition in February. TBI reports on what the award means for its international prospects

Galician-created drama *Hierro* competed at Berlinale's CoPro Series 2015 and beat four other finalists, in the process winning an invitation to participate this month at Series Mania, the Paris-based festival that showcases international TV dramas.

The series is set on the volcanic island of El Hierro, the most southerly of Spain's Canary Islands, where the corpse of a young islander is found floating in the sea following an earthquake. This marks the starting point for a tense drama that revolves around a false suspect and an inexperienced judge.

Pitched at Berlin in front of a massive audience of TV executives, producers and distributors, *Hierro's* presentation received the widespread support of the attendees.

"We made it clear that we offered a great story in an awesome setting," says Alfonso 'Fosco' Blanco, founder and CEO of producer Portocabo, which is part of the Boomerang TV Group. "We wanted to create a thriller in which the setting is very important; in line, for

example, with Israel's *Prisoners of War*, the drama that inspired Showtime's *Homeland*.

"The CoPro Series changed our perspective," he adds. "Nearly all the big European TV players made bids for *Hierro*, which allowed for a more ambitious and viable project," he says.

DeAPlaneta-controlled Spanish media conglomerate Atresmedia is partially financing the series, which will air on its LaSexta channel. Portocabo has taken on the search for the rest of the international financing.

Hierro is now shaping up as a Spanish-German-French coproduction effort. Peter Nadermann's German prodco Nadcon, producer of *The Bridge*, *The Killing*, and the *Millennium Trilogy*, has just joined the project, with Nadermann credited as executive producer, while talks with a French partner are at an advanced stage, according to Blanco.

With production plans well under way, Atresmedia should have the show for LaSexta in the first quarter of 2016. The producers have designed the series as a Spanish-language

project with a 100% Spanish cast. Portocabo's regular production team, which includes director Jorge Coira, executive producers Blanco and Pepe Coira, and screenwriters Alberto Marini, Pepe Coira and Araceli Gonda, are all attached.

"Series Mania will be a fantastic showcase for *Hierro*," Blanco says. "If the project arrives to Paris fully financed, our aim there will be to meet with our partners and even make a presentation, unveiling the key cast."

Hierro's success at the CoPro Series represents another sign of the ground that Spanish dramas are gaining in the international television market, following on from recent sales successes including *The Time in Between*, *Grand Hotel* and *Red Band Society*.

"Without doubt, Spanish TV fiction has become internationally fashionable, as has happened recently with Scandinavian or Israeli series," says Blanco.

"Spain has a very active TV market, which is overcoming the advertising crisis, and a stable local TV fiction sector with lower production costs than other key European territories. It also boasts highly audience-oriented primetime TV shows because of the huge competition for share between two private channels and a public TV operator. All this has made Spanish drama more competitive abroad."

Since its launch in 2010, La Coruña-based Portocabo has looked for opportunities to produce TV series with international appeal such as the English-language teen comedy *The Avatars*, a coproduction with Italy's Fly Distribuzione TV and Brave Film for Disney Channel in Italy.

Low-budget sitcom *Luci*, aired by Galicia's regional broadcaster Televisión de Galicia, marks another international milestone for Portocabo. US TV adaptation rights went to New Media Vision's Todd Lituchy, exec producer of another Boomerang original drama, *The Mysteries of Laura*, which was remade for NBC. **S**

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Rob Schneider's reality check

Saturday Night Live veteran Rob Schneider's new comedy is a self-funded, self-produced family effort from outside the network system, he tells Jesse Whittock in this exclusive interview

After a career in US entertainment spanning appearances on NBC's *Saturday Night Live*, movies including *Deuce Bigolo: Male Gigolo* and a short-lived CBS sitcom carrying his first name, comedian Rob Schneider has turned his attention to a self-financed and produced scripted comedy based on his life.

Real Rob follows Schneider and his real life wife, Mexican television producer Patricia Azarcoya Arce, playing exaggerated versions of themselves within their family and celebrity lives in LA. If that sounds similar to the set-up in the king-of-faux-real-life comedy genre *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, Schneider wants to dispel the comparison.

"Shows like *Curb* and *Louie* are great, but I really think cynicism has reached its apex and at the end of that [cycle] is love," he says. "Our show is funny, but it's about a family that loves each other. We wanted to do a show that we'd want to watch that doesn't just have an abject world view – my wife and I have a baby."

"As any actor will tell you, the toughest thing to play is yourself; it's the biggest risk. I'm at the point in my life where I'm not afraid to risk that, and we'll see how that is received," he adds before quipping: "*This is I Love Lucy*, except I'm Lucy."

Speaking to TBI from the set of Adam Sandler's Netflix movie *The Ridiculous Six*, Schneider says the ambition to create a 'close to the bone' comedy came after CBS cancelled his 2012 sitcom *Rob*. Critically unpopular but popular with audiences, it was hampered by network meddling, he says, recalling one incident in which he received a note about his in-show wife, also based on Azarcoya Arce. This, he says, suggested she should not remove eye make-up while watching TV as "the network doesn't believe it".

The resulting experience of making his own TV show was been eye-opening: the creative elements of writing, producing and directing, offset by the daily trip to the local Starbucks to get the "good coffee with the froth" for the staff.

He also learned extra costs could come from anywhere. During a scene that used a smoke generator, one extra complained, aware this would bank another US\$35. "There were 100 extras, so that was an extra US\$3,500," he says.

Azarcoya Arce's multi-tasking capabilities proved invaluable, allowing her to juggle roles as mother to a one-year-old baby, actress and production chief. "It would have been impossible without Patricia," says Schneider. "Thank god I'm married to someone smarter than me."

And though *Real Rob* went "three times over budget, of course", the result was a "real family effort".

After the shoot, Schneider applied wisdom he'd learned from British comedy great John Cleese, who wrote classic Brit comedy *Fawlty Towers* with his then-wife, Connie Booth.

"At this point in my career – 50 movies in, literally hundreds of television episodes – I realised I would have to change to do something great," says Schneider. "I've been lucky enough to have met [Cleese] a few times and he said the thing that was different with *Fawlty Towers* was that he really made it in the editing. Most half-hours had about 200 to 250 edits; he did 400. That's what I've done: I've been in the editing suite for six months."

Having produced the show outside the network system, *Real Rob* does not have a US home. Canada's Tricon Films & Television backed the project and will launch it at MIPTV, meaning it could debut internationally.

"I'm not allowed to go into the financials, but Tricon has a significant investment in this," says Schneider. "They get the show and what it can potentially do; *Rob* premiered to 13.8 million viewers and averaged 11 million. That went around the world, as have my movies. With good physical humour, you can do a lot and get a lot back." **S**

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The golden age of drama... docs



All the talk is of the quality of television drama, but the drama-doc is being reinvented. Stephen David tells TBI about scripted documentary

Stephen David Entertainment is leading the drama-heavy-doc charge. The New York-based prodco was acquired by France-based production and distribution group Banijay in January, meaning its content will have a new, wider life internationally.

“It is different to doing it by yourself,” David says about life post-acquisition. “We’d really not done much in terms of international sales as we’d been getting [fully funded] commissions. We were missing that part of the business.”

Drama docs and drama reconstruction are not, of course, new. Where shows like *World Wars* and *The Men Who Built America* differ is the degree to which the Stephen David shows play like a drama rather than a doc with some dramatic elements.

Announcing the SDE deal, David Goldberg, Banijay group president and Banijay Studios CEO, said: “We believe there is a great deal of opportunity for growth of the non-scripted and scripted documentary genres.”

An ex-screenwriter, David is himself on the writing team. “We call these hybrid scripted/unscripted shows,” he says. “They are mostly drama mixed with voiceover. They’re fun to watch, and they feel like scripted, but are docs.”

It is not lost on David that given the enormous cost of premium drama, his shows provide a cost-effective way of getting some of that scripted audience without the expense.

“They are more towards the budget of a doc than a drama, but probably fall somewhere in between,” he says.

His prodco has honed the production process, and uses two full crews that shoot simultaneously. Name talent is not only not sought, but actually could work against the feel of the hybrid shows.

“It’s a mix of archive and our footage, and with the drama component you want it to feel as though you are watching footage we have found,” David says. “That’s why we don’t need names, because it would be distracting. We try to go out and find people that look like the real people.”

One of the shows greenlit pre-Banijay, and which is being distributed by Entertainment One, is *Making of the Mob* (above). The six-part drama-doc for AMC tells the story of the New York mafia, spanning five decades running through to the early 1960s.

“It’s in the non-fiction category, but it feels scripted and will fit with [AMC’s] scripted programming and the AMC audience.”

The series TXs this summer and eOne launches it internationally at MIPTV. David says there’s a baked in international appeal to the series.

“These are stories everyone knows; all over the world people know Al Capone and Lucky Luciano,” he says. “The stories also end up taking on an international angle. All of these mob people came to the US because they were kicked out by Mussolini, so they helped the US government to overthrow him. Then they went to Italy and set up [drug trafficking scheme] the French Connection.”

If the show works for AMC, the natural second and third seasons would move the action to Chicago and Las Vegas. **S**

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The French revolution

French drama series are attracting the type of attention that made Israel and Scandinavia so hot, largely thanks to Canal+'s originals. But has local fare really changed, asks Pascal Paoli-Lebailly



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“We still are at the beginning of the French wave of drama series and primetime drama,” says Pascal Breton, founder and CEO of French producer Federation Entertainment, the mini-studio behind Netflix’s *Marseille*. “We still have to make it bigger.” He is optimistic about the local’s industry’s chances of making that happen.

As North American players seek to work more closely with their European counterparts and coproduction ramps up, France is stepping into the drama spotlight. Over the last four years, a glut of international English-language TV

series have originated there and found success abroad. In Cannes, Zodiak Rights will launch the long-awaited *Versailles* (see page 30), a 10x52mins series created by Simon Mirren and David Wolstencroft. It goes out first on French pay TV next autumn on Canal+, which has been key to the growth of French drama.

The pay TV operator’s Création Originale slot, which launched Lagardère-produced *Borgia* and Shine France-Kudos copro *The Tunnel*, has just broadcast Tandem’s 10-hour, Marc-André Grondin-starring crime scene series *Spotless*.

With Son & Lumière’s *Engrenages* (Spiral), Capa Drama’s *Braquo*, Haut

et Court TV’s *Les Revenants* and recent Oligarchs Productions series *Le Bureau des Légendes*, Canal+ leads the way among the French broadcasters, and has paved the way for high-profile local drama series to launch internationally.

“French drama draws its strength from realism and very good pitches; it now has its own voice, like Scandinavian drama,” says one veteran French producer. “There are five or six groups now including Gaumont TV, EuropaCorp and Lagardère that initiate ambitious drama series that have a French touch, compared with US series. Canal+ has taken the lead, and Arte is also investing money into key dramas, but we still have

great expectations of France Télévisions, and hope they get new motivation to invest.”

The final point must be seen in the context of a new president coming in next year at the media watchdog, the Conseil Supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), with producers hoping for fresh regulation in their favour.

Emmanuelle Bouilhaguet, CEO of distributor LE Rights, confirms French fiction is doing better than ever on the international market, even though UK series still out-sell them by six to one.

“There is a high demand for series from Canal+, but also from TF1, Arte and France Télévisions,” says Bouilhaguet. LE Rights, Lagardère Entertainment's sales division, thus feels confident about Arte's anticipated 6x52mins series from Kelija, *Trepalium*.

However, all of this positivity doesn't mean French fiction has become a hugely profitable activity. Despite a significant 14% year-on-year rise in sales in 2013 – with *Les Revenants* shopping to 40 territories and shorter formats like My Box Productions' *So for Canal+* and *Dear Neighbours*, which Ango and Aubes Productions created for TF1, doing well – exports only generated €26 million (US\$28.4 million) in revenue, according to trade association TVFI.

Financial returns remain modest is because of the French drama production model. The 52-minute episode (and most international-friendly) format represents just one third of the total French drama offering, while 26-minute formats account for 43% overall and one-off 90-minute TV movies make up another 22%. Meanwhile, only 782 hours of drama were produced in 2013, compared with 2,000 hours in Germany. This includes 263 hours of 52-minute series and 207 hours of shorter formats. Added to this, the sector has become more and more concentrated, with larger production groups creating distribution businesses.

“The French drama market is shaped by the big groups,” says Matthieu Viala, the CEO of New Media Group, better known on the international scene as Makeover. The company is the parent of prodcos Making Prod, Scarlett Productions and JPG Films, and delivers more than 50 hours of primetime TV content every year. Its shows include *Chérif* and *Kaboul Kitchen*.

Among leading French drama production outfits, Makeover is the sixth largest. The



market leader is Lagardère, which is run by Takis Candilis and operates 24 subsidiary companies, including DEMD (*Joséphine, Ange Gardien*), Merlin Productions (*Clem*) and Image & Compagnie (*Mafiosa*). It makes more than 78 primetime drama hours broadcast each year and creates around 800 to 850 hours overall.

With an overall 700 hours produced in 2014, Newen – which owns Telfrance (*Plus Belle la Vie*) and Capa Drama and recently bought 17 Juin Media – is another major supplier. It comes in ahead of companies such as Gaumont (*Hannibal*) and Europa Corp (*Taxi Brooklyn*). Meanwhile, companies like Beaubourg Audiovisuel (*Falco*), Macondo (*Les Hommes de l'Ombre*) and Tetra Media Studio also play in the fiction space.

“Local returning series remain at the heart of our activities and help to generate volume,” says Guillaume de Menthon, president of Telfrance.

Laurence Bachmann, deputy general manager of Telfrance and boss of Barjac Productions, the producer of France 2 series and international seller *La Source*, says: “In parallel to English-language copros, we absolutely need to develop a French premium drama with international potential.”

Barjac, which is developing France 2's 8x52mins medical series *Nina*, also hopes French broadcasters will commission more 26-minute formats for access prime slots and late night dramas for post-primetime.

Producers are also urging public broadcaster France Télévisions, whose

Cinétévé-produced *Witnesses* could be the next France-produced hit, to take more risks, and surf the ‘French wave’.

Prodcos often feel trapped by broadcasters' demands. After embarking on international projects such as *Crossing Lines*, TF1 had said original French dramas were a key genre. However, it has since commissioned several 90-minute event TV movies and miniseries adapted from non-French formats.

Les Disparues du Lac is a 6x52mins effort from Elephant Story in the style of Endemol Shine Group's crime drama *Broadchurch*, while *Sam*, another 6x52mins format this time Authentic Prod, is a comedy based on TV2's Danish soap *Rita*.

While channels now invest in international coproduction, the creators have to campaign to keep the distribution rights. “We need the broadcasters to share the success and create value with us, but we want to keep the creative lead,” says Federation's Breton.

No side has yet won that battle, but the second phase of French drama's rebirth will profit from two factors. Firstly, the biggest buyers of US series for primetime – TF1 and M6 – are facing a scarcity of US programmes that meet their requirements. Local prodcos hope this will lead broadcasters to raise the level of primetime French fiction above its current 13% level.

Secondly, local dramas is winning greater favour with French viewers, with comedies, crime series and historical fiction among the favourites. The audience will ultimately decide, after all.

Pascal Breton, CEO, Federation Entertainment

As boss of Marathon Images, Pascal Breton was the producer of France-originated, international hit series including *Sous le Soleil*. He launched mini-studio Federation Entertainment last September with the announcement of Netflix's first French drama series, *Marseille*. Specialising in premium TV drama, with a move into animation expected to follow, the group's strategy is also to bring worldwide talent into coproductions and maximise the distribution rights. He reveals his plans to Pascale Paoli-Lebailly

With Federation up and running, you have plans to announce the arrival of an executive director in May. How have you decided to structure the company?

Our executive director will be in charge of developing business in Europe, in the US and will supervise all our activities in Scandinavia, the UK and Italy so that the [productions] can be sustainable over the time. Based in Paris, with marketing and development offices in Los Angeles run by Ashley Stern, Federation works as a mini-studio specialising in international drama series.

There will be a mix of US and international series?

The focus is not only US series – half of the activity is set to come from outside the States. Besides in-house projects that we initiate like *Marseille*, we're looking to federate a network of talent and creative companies into international drama coproduction deals. The first deals have already been inked with key French, UK, US, Israeli and Scandinavian independent producers, authors and showrunners. We try to offer them partnership opportunities so as to supply international channels and platforms like Canal+, HBO, Netflix, Amazon, and Sky with a wide range of creative talent and projects.

How much is in development, and what's in the pipeline?

There is around 15 projects in development, including seven with US channels. Five projects are already progressing, including a mainstream twelve-hour medical series, budgeted at US\$3 million per episode. We concluded a copro deal with Tim Kring's company Tailwind Productions (*Heroes*) and the showrunner is Carroll Barbee (*Falling Skies*) for it. Casting has started and the series will be penned this summer and production is set to start just after. We want to produce US series by bringing European financing, which we're finalising.

We're also part of futuristic 12x44mins Finnish medical series *Replacements* from Fisher King Productions, which will run this year on Nelonen.

Also, with Spielberg's *Tintin* executive producer, Stéphane Sperry, and Liaisons Films & Television, we are working on *Clippers*, a project in style of *Scream*.

What about MIPTV debuts?

At MIPTV, we're also launching the international distribution of ten-part spy series *Le Bureau des Légendes*, directed by Eric Rochant, which is a copro with Alex Berger's The Oligarchs Productions and Canal+.

What about your *Lucky Luciano* project?

In Cannes, we will also unveil a coproduction deal with Italian group Mediaset for a TV series about the crime father Lucky Luciano. Writing is in its first phase and we're trying to secure financing in the US.

Marseille is the Netflix's first international drama project and has been called the 'French House of Cards'. How challenging is it producing an eight-part drama for the US streaming company?

Compared to well-established groups like Gaumont TV, EuropaCorp or Lagardère, we were the outsider pitching to Netflix. We're discovering a new way of working with a young web platform whose decisional chain is very different from that of a TV channel.

Where are you at with it now?

The writing is over and the casting search has begun. It has been given the green light by Netflix to start production this spring for delivery in at end of 2015, with subtitles on Netflix international platforms. Penned by author Dan Franck (*Carlos, Les Hommes de l'Ombre, Résistance*), the action is set ahead of city elections. The project also gives us



in-house projects, two for the US and three European. We want to secure the production, financing and distribution of programmes with international appeal and 80% of our overall revenues will come from drama series, but platforms are giving more attention to animation and youth programming too, and we do have plans in animation. Three series are currently being developed with a French producer.

And distribution plays a key part in your strategy?

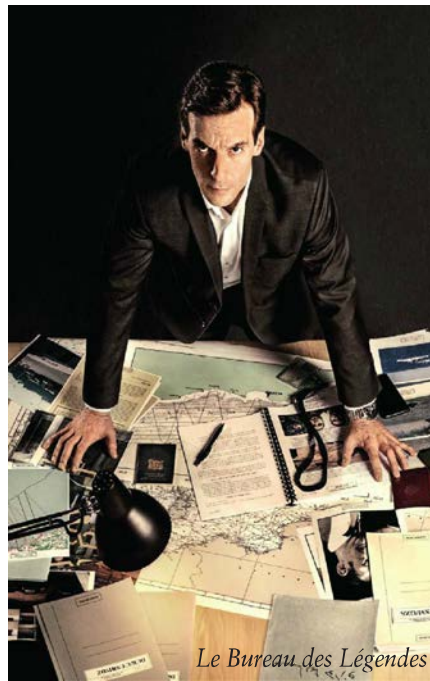
Yes, definitely. Run by Jean-Michel Ciszewski, our international distribution arm already sells drama series and youth drama. We have secured series including Israeli teenage drama series *The Greenhouse*, which is broadcast on Nickelodeon. Overall, we hold the rights to four series and that will be eight at the end of the year. We also distribute the season two of Chayim Charir's Israeli series *Hostages*, which we're now coproducing and which is currently being shot. It will premiere in 2016 in exclusively on Canal+. Plus we have plans to move into animation, as three series are currently being developed with a French producer.

How do you think the drama market is evolving?

The premium series market is set to explode and our aim is deliver drama that finds a place on the international market. All platforms worldwide are currently accelerating their plans and our goal is to initiate exceptional projects, whether this is in the medical, thriller, heroic fantasy or politics genres.

You personally invested in Dafouk, the next generation digital platform. Why?

I'm playing the business angel to find out where new talent is. Dafouk is like a testing platform in this new video market for a new generation. It will allow us to analyse what kind of talent works, and for what kind of audience. **S**



new opportunities to talk with other digital players and SVOD services.

What are Federation's longer-term objectives? In what way is animation part of your plans?

We're anticipating having ten projects in development per year. In 2016, we plan to have three European series and four US ones in production. The current list includes five

Three to watch from Spain

A trio of Spanish primetime dramas are set to make international headlines

Spain's TV advertising slump has hit local fiction budgets hard, but with US imports banished from the primetime schedules of the main broadcasters, local drama continues to connect strongly with audiences. In the cutthroat world of Spanish free TV primetime, three new series illustrate some of the innovative moves taking place in local TV fiction production.

TVE's sci-fi adventure *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (*The Department of Time*), Mediaset España's military miniseries *Los Nuestrós* (*Our Guys*) and Atresmedia's thriller series *Bajo Sospecha* (*Under Suspicion*) are all hitting the international market as their domestic runs continue.

In Spanish TV primetime, established, traditional TV shows such as Mediaset España's comedy *La que se Avecina* (*What's Yet to Come*) and TVE's La 1 nostalgic drama *Cuéntame cómo Pasó* (*Remember When*), remain audience favourites. Sci-fi TV series are thin on the ground, but *The Department of Time*, La 1's biggest new fiction play for 2015, enriches the formula with doses of adventure, humour, emotion and a didactic edge.

Produced by Cliffhanger TV and Onza Entertainment, with Javier Olivares as showrunner, the show's premise is there has been a secret government department since 15th century Spain, which knows the secrets of time travel.

The civil servants working in the department are in charge of watching the doors of time, with the aim of preventing any intruders. In order to do this, time patrols must travel to the past to prevent time-travel crimes.

The Department of Time debuted Tuesday February 24, scoring a healthy 14.8% share and three million viewers. It improved La 1's daily average by two share points, although it was clearly beaten by the second

episode of *Under Suspicion*, which snagged a successful 19.6% share and 3.9 million viewers for Atresmedia's Antena 3.

A victim of the relentless ratings war between broadcasters, TVE shifted *The Department of Time* to Monday primetime, setting up a face-off against another freshman series, *Our Guys*. Broadcast by Mediaset España's Telecinco and launching on March 2, *Our Guys* won a 19.6% share and 3.7 million viewers, also surpassing *The Department of Time*.

However, *Department's* middling ratings – it was pulling in a 13.2% share and 2.8 million viewers after five episodes – have been offset by the enthusiastic response in social networks and unanimous critical approval. There are suggestions it is the best Spanish series of 2015, and that it presents a model for public service broadcaster-funded drama. TVE has greenlit a second season.

"As a public broadcaster, TVE must bet on different and innovative fiction that brings new ideas to the national TV landscape," says Fernando López Puig, TVE fiction director.

At MIPTV, Onza Distribution is selling *The Department of Time* format, while TVE's international sales division is shopping the finished version. As tape, it is more likely to lure interest from territories with cultural and historical affinities with Spain, such as many of those in Latin America.

The format is, according to Onza Distribution boss Gonzalo Sagardía "highly exportable and very easy to adapt in territories with a long historical tradition, such as those from Europe or Asia". "What the market is looking for is originality; stories told with intelligence that captivate TV audiences," he adds. "It is true that Spanish fiction doesn't usually cover the realm of sci-fi, but it is not a genre that we had ever vetoed."

Our Guys, meanwhile, is a pioneering drama in the Spanish market. The military

action drama was developed in collaboration with the Spanish Army. It follows a rescue operation to save two Spanish children after they are kidnapped by a terrorist group while on holiday in Mali.

It has a star-studded cast led by Hugo Silva (*Paco's Men*) and Blanca Suárez (*The Boarding School*) – who plays a female sniper. The show combines adventure, romance and army strategy and is the first series to look at the inner workings of Spain's special forces. *Our Guys* averaged a strong 19.6% share and 3.7 million viewers over its three-episodes.

Although a mini, Boomerang TV Group's subsidiary Multipark Ficción is looking at the possibility of further seasons, with new international missions for the special ops team, says executive producer Tedy Villalba. Boomerang TV International is shopping *Our Guys* internationally.

Produced by Bambú Producciones, disturbing drama *Under Suspicion* follows events after a seven-year-old girl disappears from a close-knit community. After six episodes it had generated an average 19.7% share and 3.8 million viewers for Antena 3, proving resilient despite being moved in the schedules, in late March, to compete against *The Department of Time* (again).

It also had to contend with the overwhelming success of *The Voice*, which registered an extraordinary 28.1% share for the March 23 debut of its third season on Telecinco.

The psychological thriller has a tone and style reminiscent of TVE's acclaimed mystery series *Desaparecida* (*Vanished*), a 2008 Monte Carlo Television Festival and Seoul Drama Awards winner, which was exec produced by Bambú founders Ramón Campos and Teresa Fernández Valdés.

Under Suspicion's twist is that the police agents can't be revealed and have to go



Under Suspicion



Our Guys



The Department of Time

undercover, posing as ordinary neighbours, which allows them to become inside observers of suspects. The series debuts at MIPTV as one of the highlights of Beta Film's slate, following the same path as two previous Bambú-produced dramas that went out through the German company: *Grand Hotel* and *Velvet*.

For the last couple of years, Spanish TV fiction has become more commonplace on the international market.

"By obtaining good performances at home, Spanish dramas are attracting strong international attention," *Our Guys* exec Tedy Villalba says.

One of the most recent, standout moves happened in February, when Portocabo, another Boomerang TV subsidiary, won the Berlinale's first copro pitching award with thriller series project *Hierro* (see page 8).

As part of a more international-friendly trend in Spanish drama, thrillers and female-skewed dramas are travelling well and far better than the comedy series that struggle internationally, but are still in demand locally. Spanish drama's relevance abroad is also thanks to the international success of *Grand Hotel* and *Velvet* and Boomerang's *The Time in Between*. The US network remakes of *The Red Band Society* for Fox, *The Mysteries of Laura* for NBC and *Star Crossed* for The CW have also lifted the profile of Spain's content creators, as has Bambú and Atresmedia's participation in European sci-fi coproduction *Refugees* and Portocabo on the *Hierro* project with Germany's Nadcon.

"Until recently, nobody talked about the international success of Spanish drama, but TV networks here are increasingly aware that they can find alternative financing, selling series abroad," says Bambú's Campos.

The success of local dramas outside Spain encouraged Atresmedia to launch in 2014 Atres Series, a pioneering TV channel dedicated to Spanish TV fiction, which is currently being delivered to over four million homes in Latin America and the US.

"Local TV fiction production is going through a period of unparalleled growth," Campos says. "In just 15 years we have evolved hugely. Imagine what will happen 10 years from now, when the young people that today can watch all TV dramas from around the world are leading Spanish TV networks and production companies." **S**

Epic drama Rising

The story of History's new historical miniseries, *Texas Rising*, according to the key players behind its creation

Words: Jesse Whittock



Act 1

The patriotic rallying call Commander William B. Travis delivered in an open letter to his fellow Americans on February 24, 1836 sets the scene for US cable channel History's biggest drama launch of 2015. A day before, Travis's Texian (non-Hispanic white residents of Mexican Texas) troops were surrounded by those of Mexican general Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana

at the Alamo. Defeat seemed almost certain and duly followed. The famous incident provides the backdrop to *Texas Rising*, but as the show's creator, Leslie Greif, says, it is by no means the singular focus of the series, which has Roland Joffé (*The Killing Fields*) attached as director, and is epic in every sense of the word. "Of course people know the Alamo, but that wasn't the end, it was the beginning," says Greif.



Thinkfactory Media founder and CEO Greif has a long-held interest in this period of American-Mexican history, and has even had a network television set in and around these events before. Twenty-two years ago, he began producing Chuck Berry vehicle *Walker, Texas Ranger* for CBS. It ran for eight years, cementing Greif's admiration for the Texas Rangers, the US's "oldest law enforcement organisation," he says.

"The formation of law and order and a police force was something that always fascinated me," he says. "At the same time, the Texas Revolution was a very interesting part of American history. Texas was not part of America at that stage, it was its own country, self proclaimed, which tried to separate itself from Mexico, but it was also made up of US and European settlers coming into this disputed territory."



This, he says, is where the public's knowledge of the history often ends. The lessons from the period are what makes *Texas Rising* relevant to television audiences in modern-day American (and beyond), he adds.

"What we did differently with *Texas Rising* was to tell a huge saga. Our journey is called what it is because it's not just about the Rangers and the US position. It's about the settlers, the frontiers, the Indians fighting for their land, Santa Ana fighting to expand his footprint. We will see how all these people's lives are affected."

Geopolitically, the show touches upon themes that helped define a century, he adds. "Mexico was freeing itself from Spain [and] Canada was a British territory at that point: what a great period to look at how the modern 20th century formed, during those geopolitical conversations."

Act 2 Greif sold his production company to ITV Studios nearly two years ago for a reported US\$30 million, giving him access to UK broadcaster ITV's investment clout and global distribution network. A year before that he had struck ratings gold for History with another drama set in 19th century America, four-part miniseries *Hatfields and McCoy's*, scoring a then cable record 13.9 million viewers. With History parent A+E Networks last year launching A+E Studios to create a pipeline of self-produced drama for its channels, the stars were aligning to bring *Texas Rising* to TV.

Convinced that the cable network was the right place for the show, Greif approached A+E president Nancy Dubuc and History general manager Dirk Hoogstra with his new project soon after *Hatfields* had landed so dramatically.

"The philosophy Nancy and Dirk preach harks back to why we had great movies in the seventies – the last time studio executives allowed producers and directors to go and out fulfill their visions," he says. "And we want to deliver for them because they delivered for us."

His vision quickly won over the A+E executives. Hoogstra, who is History and H2's general manager and executive VP, recalls: "Leslie pitch began at the Alamo, and as he went on I couldn't believe all of these surprising elements to the story I didn't know about."

ITV Studios was already aware of market gossip around the project, and after taking over Thinkfactory was a willing investor, especially if it meant gaining worldwide sales rights to take to increasingly-hungry drama buyers. Accordingly, ITV Studios America joined the project as a coproducer alongside A+E Studios, and sales division ITV Studios Global Entertainment picked up international distribution rights.

"We essentially set it up as a co-studio project between A+E Studios and ITV Studios US, with GE coming in as distributor," says Dan Gopal,

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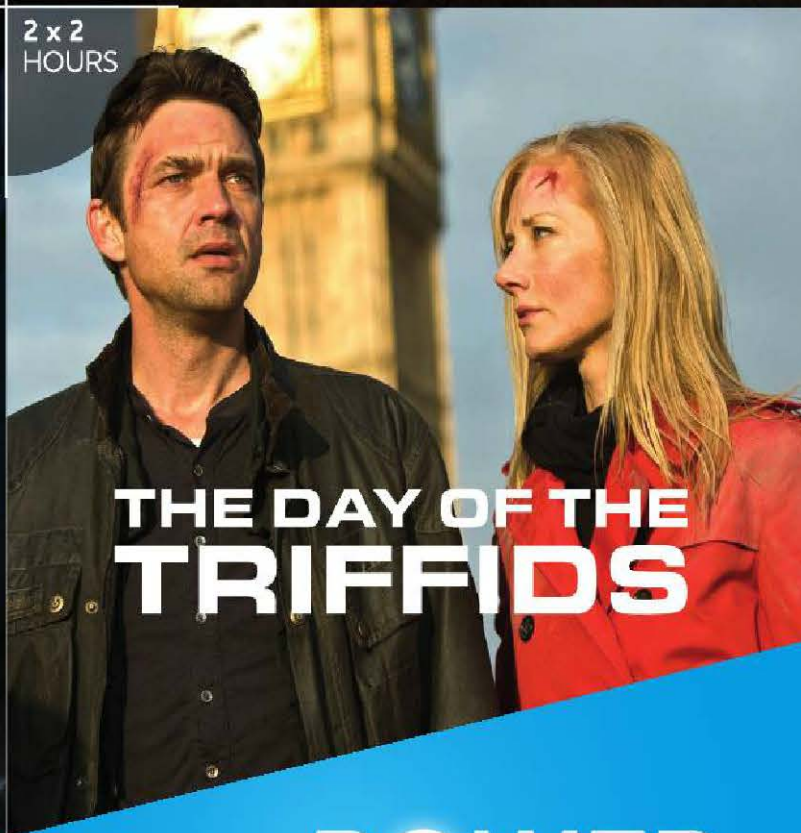
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ITVSGE's executive VP, EMEA, distribution and global digital partners.

Serendipitously, ITVS America chairman Paul Buccieri, who had backed the project from the off – “he knew it had international and US appeal,” says Greif – switched over to A+E this year, becoming Hoogstra's direct report as president of History and sister channel A&E.

With financing in place, Greif gathered together a cast including *Hatfields* actor Bill Paxton as General Sam Houston, Ray Liotta (*Goodfellas*) as Lorca, an Alamo survivor hell-bent on revenge. Chad Michael Murray (*One Tree Hill*) came on as Texan soldier and politician Mirabeau B. Lamar, Olivier Martinez (*S.W.A.T.*) as Santa Ana, Kris Kristofferson as President Andrew Jackson and Jeffrey Dean Morgan (*Grey's Anatomy*) as Texas Ranger Erastus ‘Deaf’ Smith.

Added to the melting pot was Joffé as director – the English-French film auteur had been a fan of *Hatfields*. “He told me a story that he popped in the show at 6.30pm before he was going out one Saturday night ahead of an 8pm dinner, and by 7.30pm he had cancelled the food,” says Greif.

Shot in CinemaScope (like the classic Westerns), the five-month shoot took place near Durango, Mexico, and began last May. “It is always about the film with Roland,” says Greif. “He speaks and thinks about the film, not the budget. The actors and crew knows he is a general and that we are going to get the maximum out of the shoot that day. Bill Paxton has worked with the greats and said [working with] Joffé was the best experience of his life.”

Hoogstra was impressed with the results. At a conference earlier this year, he let slip that he delivered Greif just one note during filming, which read: “F*cking awesome.”

Reminded of the incident, the History exec smiles. “It's true, that was the only note: it's infamous now! But Roland Joffé is amazing and the cast performances are amazing,” he says.

Act 3 Those following the progress of History and Thinkfactory know that the success of *Hatfields* poses questions for *Texas Rising*. What constitutes a good return for your new drama when the last one set records that have only topped by subsequent mega-hits such as *The Walking Dead*?

Hoogstra says an “apples-for-apples” comparison is hard to gauge in the modern era, and only getting more problematic as TV audiences fragment further.

“I'm always loathe to make comparisons, and what we're going to be proud of [regardless] is the film itself. In just a few years so much has changed about the way people watch TV: when *Hatfields*

launched channels didn't even report the +3 ratings.”

Nethertheless, the scale of the investment from the network is clear. “*Texas* is our biggest project of the year”, says Hoogsta.

History is launching the series on Memorial Day (May 25, traditionally a strong day for the channel's ratings) and will run it as a four-episode event mini. Before that, A+E has secured a 500-theatre run in American cinemas to generate hype and awareness.

“For promotional purposes we're putting it in a certain amount of theatres that people can attend in advance of the TV debut,” says Hoogstra. “We're getting promotion now in theatres, and we're hoping to build on the buzz after those screenings.”

In typically upbeat manner, Greif says that these various windows and screens, added together, mean *Texas Rising* will be seen by up to 30 million viewers in the United States.

ITVSGE, meanwhile, is bringing Joffé, Greif and Paxton to Cannes for an exclusive global premiere screening at MIPTV. Internationally, the mini will also be available as a one-hour series.

“My goal is to get this to market, identify the right partners and get good deals done quickly,” says Dan Gopal. “Windows have to be close to the US launch as we all know about the potential for piracy.”

“If we could find a strategic way of doing that – certainly in the key territories – as close to the US debut as possible, it is in our interests, and those of A+E and the show.”

In marketing terms, Gopal says shows based on historical events present “a good hook on which to build a story around”, and he expects buyers to be impressed by the ambition and scale of *Texas*. “You've got action sequences, love, bravery, tragedy, drama and more tender moments,” adds the ITVSGE exec.

Gopal says he's satisfied ITVSGE's investment has been reflected on-screen. “It's been shot in 6K, and the film director's perspective really comes across in every shot. We're very lucky, it has been devised as a television series with a filmic sensibility.”

Greif is already working on the next act for the show. While *Hatfields* was always going to be a closed mini, *Texas Rising* has far wider scope, and a second season is in development.

Currently titled *The Comanche Wars*, it takes the story of season one, which ends at the Battle of Jacinto, forwards five years. Some core characters will remain, with new ones added and new stories explored.

The war cry from Commander Travis 179 years ago marked just one key point in the history of the creation of America, and there are plenty of others to examine, says Greif. “Our intrinsic saga is a story about both the Texas Revolution and about the formation of a nation.” **S**

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German TV makes historic move

New investment in drama by local channels and a willingness to greenlight risky, edgy projects is resulting in a new wave of German drama, much of it with historical themes, reports Michael Pickard

As one of the first international backers of Scandinavian crime drama, ZDF Enterprises, can lay claim to helping spark one of the global television industry's biggest ever acquisitions rushes.

The German distributor's catalogue boasts series including *The Killing*, *The Bridge* and *Arne Dahl* that have become household names around the world.

A decade on, ZDFE and other local producers and distributors are now behind

a range of eye-catching drama series that are playing out amid a new domestic broadcasting landscape, one that is driven by the emergence of drama-hungry pay TV networks.

Most notably, acclaimed miniseries *Generation War* proved to be ground-breaking for German television when it drew record ratings to ZDFE's parent, pubcaster ZDF, in 2013, and was sold to dozens of broadcasters around the world, including BBC Two in the UK. The drama, produced by TeamWorx and ZDF in association with Beta Film and ZDFE,

later won the International Emmy award for best TV miniseries/movie in 2014.

Alexander Coridass, CEO of ZDFE, says: "We like it when there is hype and buzz, but German drama has been globally successful for the past three decades. What's new and where we haven't had that international attention before is with edgy six- or eight-hour miniseries.

"ZDFE was deeply involved in the very start of Scandinavian noir. Ten or 12 years ago, we were the first to realise something



Deutschland 83



Naked Among Wolves



The Team

was growing there and have been coproducers and distributors right from the start. Now shows like *Blochin* are getting international attention.”

Blochin is a ZDFE-distributed 4x60mins crime thriller from Real Film Berlin. The distributor is also on-board pan-European crime drama *The Team*, produced by Network Movie. Both were commissioned by ZDF.

Eric Welbers, managing director of Beta Film, says: “Germany was one of the first European countries to export its programmes, but mostly to the dubbing countries, like France and Italy. For TV movies and crime, German drama has always been very hot.

“Now the landscape in Germany is changing and channels are becoming more

open to new formats and genres, and new players like Sky and TNT are getting involved in drama. Public networks are also becoming more experimental.”

Nico Hofmann, CEO of UFA Fiction and a producer on *Generation War*, believes there’s a lot of pressure on terrestrial channels from emerging players such as HBO, Sky, Amazon and Netflix. “They have to react,” he says. “Nobody can stand still and say they don’t like fiction. They have to produce and now there are new possibilities for TV series. I am meeting with Netflix and Sky, and I think they will both put money into the business in Germany. That’s quite a game-changer.”

Beta Film is behind *Line of Separation*, which Welbers describes as a “sort-of sequel”

to *Generation War*. The distributor is also shopping a new US\$10 million TV movie called *Starfighter*, which follows a widow’s fight to discover the truth behind the death of her pilot husband in one of Germany’s new fleet of Starfighter planes in the 1960s. It is produced by Zeitsprung Pictures for RTL.

“Now, creating impact is more important for broadcasters than creating an audience, because there’s more competition in terms of outlets,” Welbers explains. “There’s Sky, Netflix, TNT, Fox. All of these want to get involved in high-end drama.

“Channels will take more risks, because it pays off. You can do shows that might not create a big audience, but create a big impact. That’s important.”



Generation War

Germany has traditionally been associated with crime procedurals and made-for-TV movies, but Sarah Doole, director of global drama at FremantleMedia, says there are now opportunities for new types of scripted stories.

“The Germans have a massive passion for crime storytelling, which is fantastic, so I think that will still be the heartland of German high-end drama, but there are openings now for different stories to be told, especially historical fiction.”

One of these is *Deutschland 83*, which follows a 24-year-old East German man who is sent to the West as an undercover spy for the Stasi security service.

Created by Anna Winger and Joerg Winger, it is executive produced by Winger and Hofmann for RTL in Germany. FremantleMedia International distributes the series.

“Broadcasters are getting much more radical with storylines,” adds UFA’s Hofmann. “It’s really going away from the old-fashioned TV movie-style of ten or 15 years ago, and away from melodramatic storytelling. There’s

a much wider range of possibilities.”

UFA Fiction is also developing a series with writer Annette Hess called *Berlin Kurfürstendamm*.

The story follows five women in the 1950s and addresses subjects including female emancipation and sexual liberation.

“It’s about sexual issues in those days, a suppressed and oppressed time,” Hofmann says. “That’s a story that could not have been told ten years ago. There’s a big appetite for much fresher, much more radical content at the moment.”

There is also an appetite for radical financing arrangements. Germany’s regional funding structure has long supported coproduction, but Sky and pubcaster ARD are charting new territory by collaborating on *Babylon Berlin*, an adaptation of Volker Kutscher’s 1920s era crime novels, under showrunner Tom Tykwer. Beta Film is handling international sales.

ZDFE’s Coridass says *Babylon Berlin* will help build new production alliances in Germany. “It is not yet clear if there will be more projects between public and commercial

broadcasters. Everybody, at least in Germany, is waiting to see how this experiment works, but in general, I’m sure there will be new and innovative collaborations and ZDFE is extremely flexible as far as partnerships are concerned.”

But what impact are Germany’s broadening horizons at home having on the markets beyond its borders?

When US cable network SundanceTV acquired *Deutschland 83*, the official announcement trumpeted it as “the first ever German-language drama to be aired on a major US network”.

Doole describes the impact of Sundance’s acquisition as “seismic”, and says the effects of the deal will reverberate not just in Germany but across Europe.

“It’s not just about *Deutschland 83* or German drama, it’s about European drama,” she says. “It’s good for all of us in the business. Sundance are coproducers and very involved in giving notes and storylining for seasons two and three, *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*, when the Berlin Wall falls.”



Blochin

Sony Pictures Television Germany has two scripted series currently on air, a crime procedural called *Heldt*, which is going into its fourth season on ZDF, and dramedy *Der Lehrer* (*The Teacher*), also moving into its fourth season but for RTL.

“If you look at German shows, it’s historical dramas that are travelling very well,” says managing director Astrid Quentell. “Germany is an interesting country history-wise, due to the Second World War and the time afterwards until reunification. You have lots of possibilities to tell stories based on that.”

Global Screen’s head of TV sales, Marlene Fritz, says the distributor’s catalogue reflects the strong tradition of crime series on German television, though many new titles are now disrupting that dominance.

These include 1x102mins Holocaust drama *Naked Among Wolves*, 2x90mins love story *A Dangerous Fortune*, 2x90mins biopic *Serengeti Will Survive*, about a conservationist who helped to establish Serengeti National Park, and another historical series, *After the Fall*, also 2x90mins.

“Some of Germany’s most prolific producers, like UFA Fiction, Constantin, Ziegler Film and Bavaria Film have developed highly interesting TV movies and series, which can compete in the international market more and more,” says Fritz.

“We have established a great relationship with US-based channel MHz Networks, which will air the award-winning family drama *Weissensee*, set in 1980s East Berlin, with English subtitles.”

Meanwhile, Hofmann’s UFA is exploiting Germany’s fondness for Scandinavian drama by forging links with fellow FremantleMedia-owned producer Miso Film.

The two firms are developing a series called *Berlin Zero Hour*, set in the city in 1945 at the end of the Second World War, with a writers’ room being set up between Berlin and Miso’s base in Copenhagen.

In the future, he says borders across Europe will be further broken down to the point where dramas can no longer be attributed to one territory.

“Since *Generation War* won the

International Emmy, people from the UK and US are starting to contact us for the first time,” Hofmann says. “We’re not running to them. The whole thing is mixing up, it’s really getting more international and there are more coproductions.

SPT’s Quentell is looking forward to more scripted series on German pay TV networks, and an increasing number of timeslots being filled with drama.

“Second tier broadcasters like Vox, RTL2, and Kabel Eins have existed on US series, but now they’re starting to think about a way to get more scripted on their networks and they’ve started piloting and developing, so there’s more coming up,” she says.

For Coridass, this is “only the beginning”. “This year and during the next few years, we will see a lot of innovative and successful German drama, especially limited series,” he says.

“Germany’s definitely on a roll, there’s a real confidence in their storytelling,” adds FremantleMedia’s Doole. “They’ve got lots of stories they want to tell.” **S**



Holding court with Chelli

Claude Chelli from Capa Drama on what to expect from Canal+'s lavish Louis XIV drama *Versailles*

Using the building of a now-famous structure as the backdrop to a scripted series is a tried-and-tested method – AMC's *Hell on Wheels*' story about the creation of the Transcontinental Railway is just one recent example. The writers and producers behind *Versailles* have taken that blueprint and transferred it to the building of the French royal palace in 1667.

The show focuses on the megalomaniacal ambitions of a young King Louis XIV. Having recently lost his mother, the ruler decides to consolidate the monarchy by creating a palace on the site of his father's hunting lodge, in the process attaching all nobles directly to his court.

"Louis wanted to build absolute power," says Claude Chelli, head of coproducer Capa Drama. "It's basically the story of a 28-year-old man who starts to build Versailles, although not the palace we know today.

"We didn't want to do a historical drama – that's not the right label; this is about kids getting into power," he continues. "The setting is just a backdrop for the story. *Versailles* is about applying dramatic codes to a historical context."

The English-language show focuses on Louis and his attempts to disempower those around him, including his brother, Monsieur, an openly gay warrior. Monsieur's capacity for love contrasts with the young king's lust for power, and in this sense *Versailles* is a psychological study as much as a serialised drama.

Chelli notes the histories of co-writers and showrunners Simon Mirren and David Wolstencroft – who took on the project after the exit of Andre and Maria Jacquemetton – as proof. "This is about the mind of Louis

In focus

Format: 10x52mins series from Capa Drama, Canal+, Zodiak France and Incendo. Zodiak Rights has international sales rights

Cast: George Blagden (*Vikings*) as Louis XIV, Alexander Vlahos (*Merlin*) as Monsieur. "We have some of the best up-and-coming actors in the English game," says Claude Chelli



executive producer and showrunner]. There is a connection there," says Chelli. "Then we found that David had studied Louis at Cambridge."

Canal+ commissioned the show as a branded Canal+ Original Creation. It has been long in the making, but there will be a finished episode for buyers at MIPTV. Funding to the tune of 20% of the budget came from Canadian coproducer Incendo with the other 80% equally shared between Capa and Zodiak France. This, in part, allowed the production to take place in France, historically not the easiest place to

produce, given taxes and requirements for a fully French crew. Some purists will question the decision to shoot in English, but the explanation is simple enough, says Chelli. "To get that kind of budget you have to create in English, there's no question," he says. "A standard French drama is maybe €1.2 million [US\$1.3 million] per episode and this was about €2.5 million. Shooting in English was the only solution. We will be criticised by some of the Parisian press, but people who make series will understand what we have done." **S**

In focus

Format: 2x120mins / 4x60mins miniseries

Positioning: Lifetime's latest fictional biopic miniseries aims to shed light on the side of Marilyn Monroe few know existed

Talent: Kelli Garner as Monroe; Susan Sarandon as Gladys Baker, Marilyn's schizophrenic mother; Emily Watson as Grace McKee, Norma Jeane's guardian; Jeffrey Dean Morgan as Joe DiMaggio; Stephen Bogaert as Arthur Miller

Framing an icon

Lifetime's telemovie supremo Tanya Lopez on how the network approached America's original sweetheart

Successfully framing a global icon is always a challenge for TV companies, but Lifetime has more experience than most. In the past 12 months alone it has told the stories of singers Whitney Houston and Aaliyah, but tackling the myth of Marilyn Monroe was a bigger undertaking altogether.

Lifetime's senior VP of original movies, Tanya Lopez, says the channel's effort to depict the woman who came to define Hollywood-style femininity and 20th century sexuality differs from others because "what this film does is really show the vulnerable side of Marilyn, or Norma Jeane, as she was first known".

Using the narrative device of a therapist's chair, the Asylum Entertainment-produced show stars Kelli Garner (*Pan Am*) as a damaged Monroe looking back at the key moments in her life, including marriages to baseball star Joe DiMaggio and playwright Arthur Miller, her emergence as a star and her troublesome relationship with her bi-polar mother, played by modern-day movie star, Susan Sarandon (*Thelma & Louise*).

That mother-daughter relationship plays a most significant role in *The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe*. "The film looks at Marilyn's emergence from Norma Jayne into the Marilyn we know, and at the ghosts of her past that she carried with her," says Lopez.

"Her mother really had such an effect on her and left a deep scar that all the accolades, love and adoration could not replace.

"This is about her most authentic side," adds Lopez. "The image we have, putting this woman on a pedestal – a woman who embodies everything about beauty and sexuality – is challenged. We learn she is actually an everyday woman."

Marilyn is based on J. Randy Taraborrelli's book *The Secret Life of Marilyn Monroe*, which explored the darker side of the siren's life. It landed with A+E a few years back.

"We were surprised [when the project came to us], as you do think you know everything about her," says Lopez. "Once we'd read the book, we developed it and wanted to see if we could translate it into a film. There really are secrets the audience will learn." **S**

s

Wolf Hall:

period drama with ratings bite

In focus

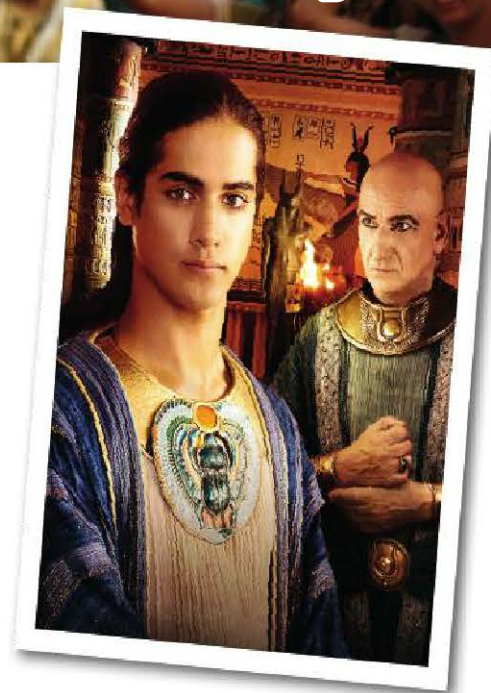
Format: 6x60mins/3x120mins
historical event miniseries

Positioning: Beat other projects to become Spike's first miniseries in eight years as it transitions from a purely male-skewed channel to a more balanced proposition

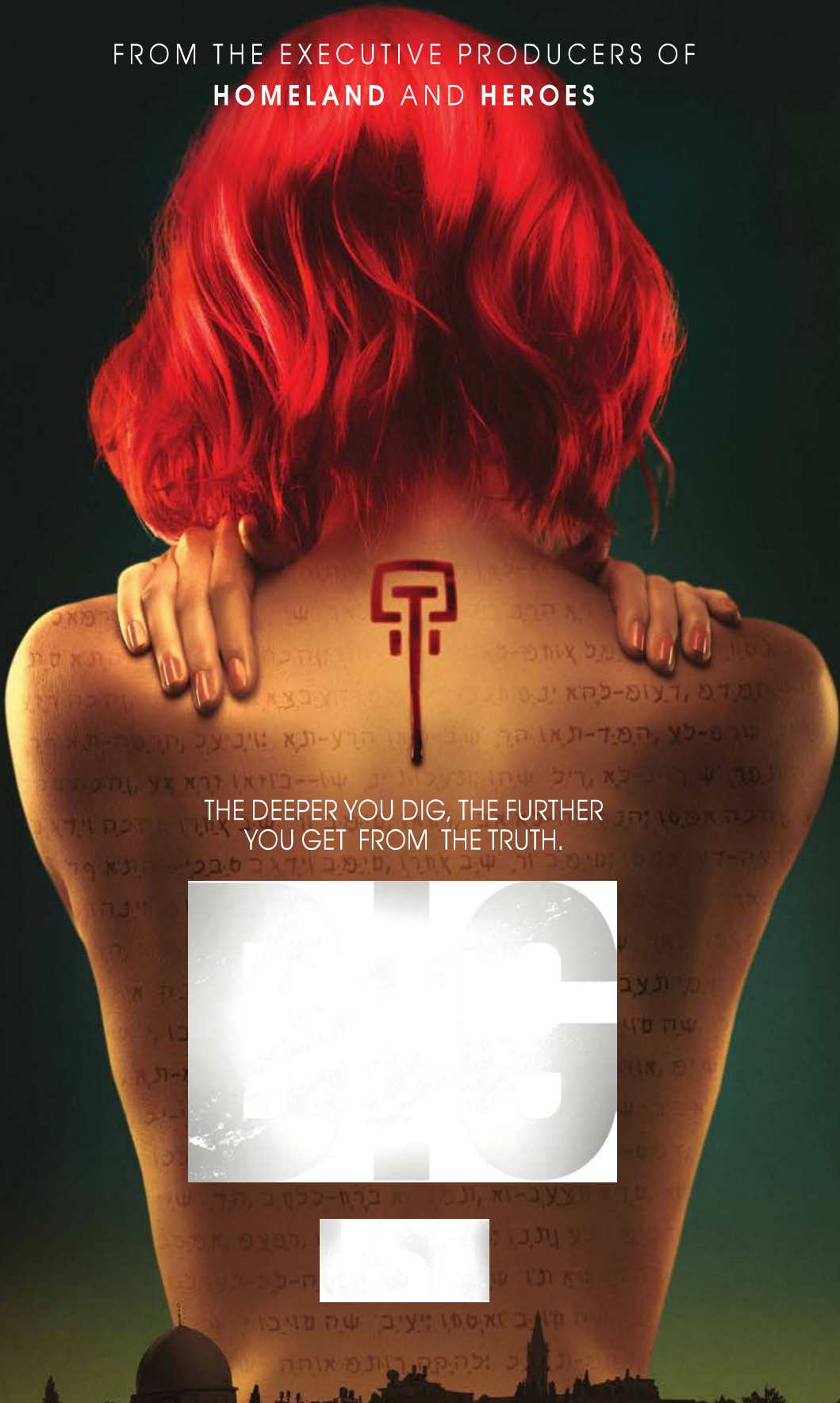
Talent: Sir Ben Kingsley plays Ay, the grand vizier to the young King Tutankhamun, who wields vast power. "When we thought of the cast, Ben Kingsley was first choice for Ay and we were delighted to find out he was interested in the role after reading the script," says producer Michael Prupas. The award-winning actor was also enticed by the opportunity to return to Morocco, where he had filmed 1995 TNT telemovie *Moses*



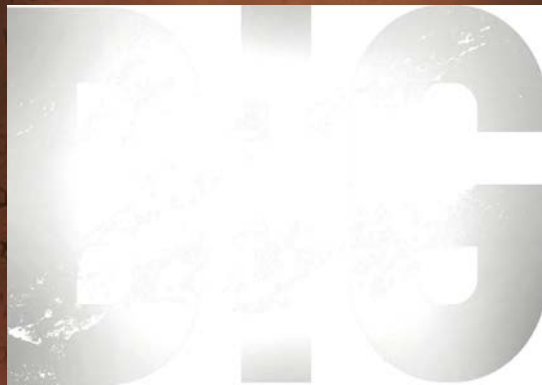
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Writer's Room:

Paul Abbott says take No Offence

Paul Abbott is the BAFTA Award-winning writer who cut his teeth on *Coronation Street* and *Cracker* before creating drama hit *Shameless* for Channel 4 in the UK, which went on to be remade for Showtime in the US. His other credits include *Clocking Off* and *State of Play*. His new cop series for Channel 4 is *No Offence*

The biggest thing you're taught do as a writer is to 'give your enemies the best lines'



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