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Television Business International

Issue #3 January 2016

The magazine celebrating television's golden era of scripted programming



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## Editor's Note



In the international television business of January 2016, the concept of 'packaging', which underpins the American film and TV industries, is not normal procedure. Fast-talking agents and demanding talent representatives exist everywhere, of course, but only in the US do you have that kind of standardised process that links actors, directors and writers to scripts doing the rounds.

Now, with US channels keener than ever to work with international partners on high-end drama series, the American agent is branching out from Los Angeles and New York City. Not only that, they see the skill set their regular days jobs have provided – negotiation tactics, rights ownership knowledge, contracting and, crucially, the gift of the gab – as proof that they can sell these packages overseas.

In our lead feature on new BBC-AMC spy thriller *The Night Manager*, William Morris Endeavor's head of global television, Chris Rice, explains how the famous LA agency became player in international distribution. Rather than pass the rights to BBC Worldwide or another third-party, WME Global itself sold the John le Carré project, with some success.

Elsewhere in our first issue of this year, we further explore how the international and US scripted markets are coming together, with celebrated Irish comedy writer Sharon Horgan (*Catastrophe*, *Pulling*, *Divorce*) penning an article on how the British and American production systems differ. Clue: it's virtually the same... apart from the shoots, the 'crafty', the budgets, the executives and the resources.

We also get the lowdown on a Swedish coming-of-age miniseries that owes everything to British punk-pop pioneer Morrissey, take an in-depth look at the Spanish drama market, and investigate how the likes of Netflix and Amazon Prime Instant Video are being joined in the original subscription on-demand scripted space by local rivals.

This all goes to show the international drama space is constantly in flux. Just don't call Rice and his WME Global compadres a traditional distribution company. "We are a sales engine," he tells TBI. "We represent people and companies, but they are in control and choose what they do, and we try to approach sales of content in the same way."

Jesse Whittock

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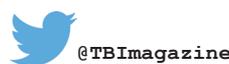
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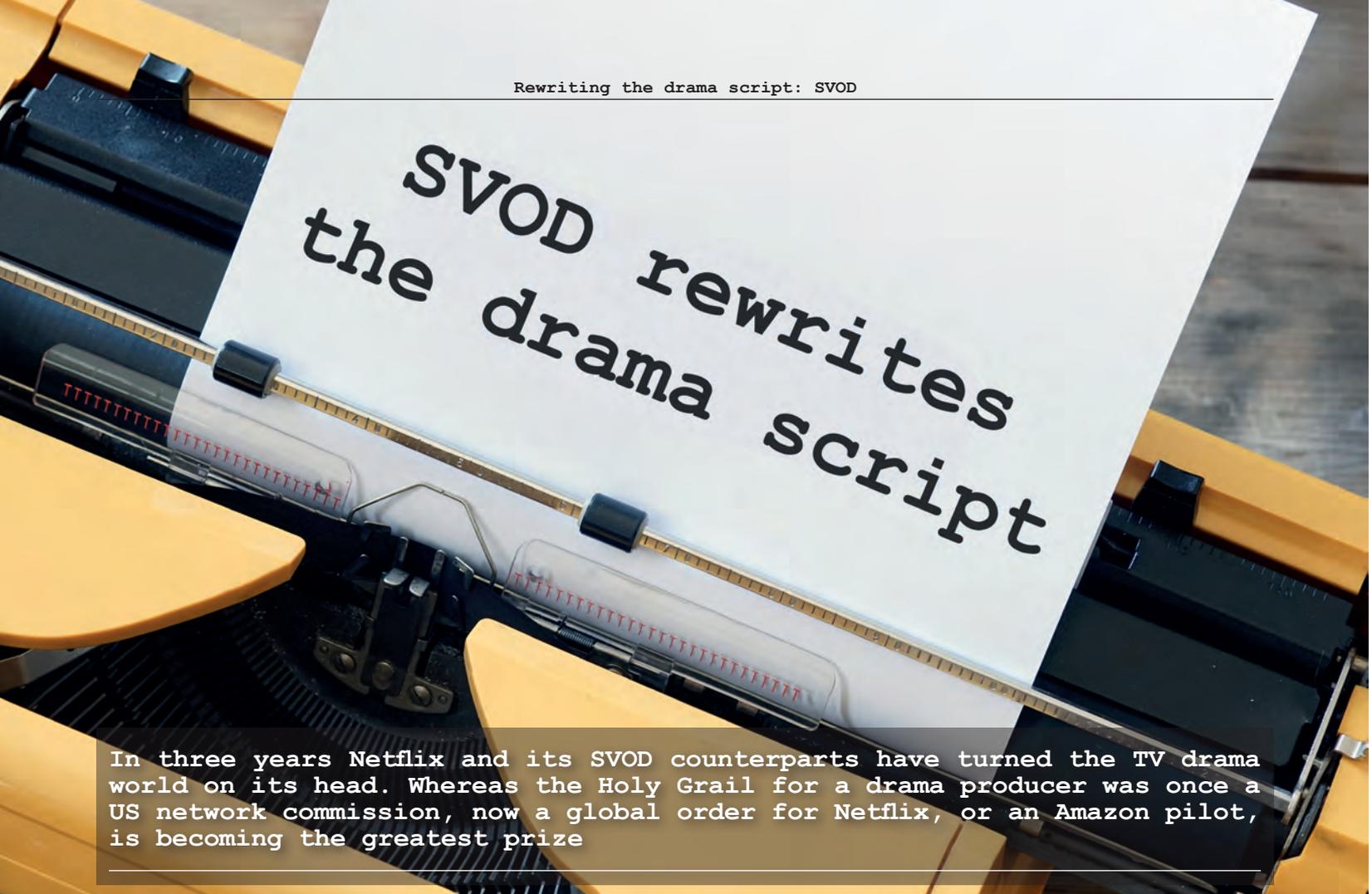
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# SVOD rewrites the drama script

In three years Netflix and its SVOD counterparts have turned the TV drama world on its head. Whereas the Holy Grail for a drama producer was once a US network commission, now a global order for Netflix, or an Amazon pilot, is becoming the greatest prize

**What's** the difference between pitching a drama series to Netflix and to TV? One distinction between SVOD and traditional TV is the speed at which the new players move.

"The initial pitch is really the same: you have to convince one or two of their guys," says Federation Entertainment founder Pascal Breton. "What changes after that is you have to move much faster." His fledgling company is making *Marseille*, a political drama set in the titular southern French port, and the first original for Netflix in France after it launched there last year.

"Once they like the idea they go fast, and they want the whole package," says Breton. "They want a script, talent and a director, or it just doesn't feel real to them."

There is also a competitive element to the quick decision-making. Andy Harries, boss of Sony-backed prodco Left Bank Pictures has said Netflix bought the idea for *The Queen* in the room. Amazon reportedly did the same for *The Collection*, the period fashion drama from Lookout Point that will be its first original out of the UK for its Prime Instant Video service. "They don't want to miss out," says Dan Whitehead, head of drama and digital at TV trends research firm K7. "It's better for them to say 'yes' than let it end up on another service."

In contemporary TV terms, three years is an age, and has been long enough for Netflix to rewrite the rules of producing and selling drama. That is the length of time since Netflix's *House of Cards* was released, garnering plaudits and critical acclaim, and propelling Netflix into the world of high-end scripted TV.

For TV scribes, there were ramifications from the moment that Netflix released all episodes of Steve Van Sandt drama *Lilyhammer* simultaneously, spawning a new era of binge viewing. Viewers had binged on DVD box-sets before, but getting new series at the touch of a remote rewired the way audiences consumed TV, and how shows are written.

Producers talk about making a 'long movie' when they make an SVOD series. Without weekly installments, cliffhangers became redundant (if the gap between episodes is seconds, the tension is removed). 'Story of the week' procedurals are also out as they don't fit the binge model in the same way as highly serialised shows.

The streaming model also changes the way success is measured. No longer are ratings the currency that dictates whether a show gets a second season (or in the case of the US networks, a second episode). "When you talk about drama in the VOD world it's not about the overnights, and that allows you to have a slow burner," says Gary Woolf, executive VP, commercial development, All3Media International.

The best example of the phenomena Woolf identifies remains *Breaking Bad*, which slowly won an audience via Netflix after middling ratings on AMC, building to a huge final two seasons on linear TV.

"These platforms have the freedom to ignore commercial requirements," says K7's Whitehead. "They have changed the end product; it is no longer about eyeballs for ads. The content is the end product, and they can take a chance on something like [Amazon's acclaimed original comedy] *Transparent*. If you can get 500,000 people paying for Prime Instant Video then it makes sense, and the whole idea of ratings isn't part of the equation."

Netflix is often used as shorthand for SVOD, being the service that others follow. It launched original drama first, Amazon and others followed, and the same is true of original SVOD films. It also has greater volume of originals, and spends more than anyone else, with Amazon behind in second.

*Transparent* gave Amazon its ‘*House of Cards* moment’; it was the show that made people take notice of its originals. “For a show to deal with such complex social issues, so sensitively, dramatically, and comically; and to receive such broad global recognition, shows the power of television shows and their ability to change our perception,” says Chris Bird, Amazon’s London-based director of content strategy.

Crucially, when success is measured in buzz, *Transparent* delivered gongs. “Raising the profile of the transgender community and the stories within has been a huge global success, and winning ‘Best Comedy Series’ awards is a supreme reward to the team behind the show,” says Bird.

But is there substance – and volume – as well as style to the SVOD drama revolution? Netflix will soon be in 200 countries and already has over 70 million subs. With that global footprint, it delivered 16 original series in 2015.

Chief content officer Ted Sarandos told a US media conference organised by investment bank UBS last December that there will be 31 originals this year, and the emphasis is not on quantity. “I think that if you want a lot of volume you could go to YouTube for free and get a lot of volume,” he said. “This is high quality stuff. Last year we had 34 Emmy nominations, Oscar nominations [and] ten Golden Globe nominations, so we’ve got programming that people want to watch.”

Netflix’s local output remains limited. *Marseille* out of France, *The Queen* out of the UK and 3% from Brazil are among the exceptions. The best opportunity for international prodcos is to set up in LA and package programming from there. “They don’t want to always work with major US studios because they are tougher on rights and the budget than indies,” says one prodco boss that has a West Coast base.

What producers often talk about when they talk about making an SVOD Original is the creative freedom they are afforded. “We do get notes, but they are bullet points and they are fair,” says Federation’s Breton. The situation is complicated when it is an international project such as *Marseille*, with Netflix operating out of LA, but again, the streaming service moves fast: “We send them scripts and the next morning our time we have notes,” the Federation chief says.

The SVOD originals are at the very highest end of the drama spectrum in budget terms; season one of *Marco Polo* cost a reported US\$90 million, and upcoming UK production *The Queen* will reportedly cost more, at £100 million (US\$155 million). *Marseille* is understood to have a more modest, albeit respectable, budget of about €10 million (US\$10.8 million). With linear TV budgets strained, the levels of largesse are not lost on traditional broadcasters: UK pubcaster the BBC has touted the fact it can make 14 licence fee funded series for the price of one of Netflix’s.

The net result of the huge programme spend is that the US-listed Netflix now outspends the BBC, HBO and Discovery, according to research house IHS, and globally only trails pay TV firm Sky (which spends billions on sports rights). Amazon, meanwhile, spends less, but still more than German broadcast giant ProSiebenSat.1, says IHS.

About a fifth of Netflix’s spend is on originals, and subscriber numbers have increased in line with the marketing hype and press attention. “We do plan to continue to expand Originals,” says spokesman Joris Evers. “One key reason is because we can make those titles available everywhere at the same time and they clearly differentiate Netflix.”

The SVOD drama originals story is no longer the sole preserve of Netflix and Amazon as other services seek to stand out from the crowd by investing in their own scripted fare. For example, Icflix in the Middle East is getting into the original movies game for its SVOD service with the likes of *Burnout*, a Moroccan drama from Nouredine Lakmari.

“Original drama does not only differentiate Icflix as a brand but also helps to enhance Arab content production,” says Icflix CEO Carlos Tibi. “This enables Icflix to become the only place for viewers to watch [this] original content.”

In a fiercely competitive Australian OTT market, Nine Entertainment and Fairfax Media service Stan is attempting to steal a march on Presto, Quickflix and Netflix with its first original, a series adaption of the 2005 *Wolf Creek* horror movie. The film’s creator and director, Greg McLean, returns along with star John Jarratt as Outback serial killer Mick Taylor.

Banijay International will be selling the series after its mid-2016 debut on Stan. With its built-in marketing punch from the *Wolf Creek* movies, the series has strong international appeal. Banijay International boss Emmanuelle Namiech says SVOD players, even local ones, have a more international outlook than traditional broadcasters.

“SVOD commissioners might have a local audience in mind but also tend to have an ambitious view of what a series can become,” Namiech says. “Look at *Man in the High Castle*; it was developed at the BBC which embraced it but at the same time couldn’t see how relevant it would be for its UK audience, which is why in the end it went to Amazon.”

Stan also has *Enemies of the State* coming through, a political drama from the production team behind ABC legal drama *Rake*. Essential Media and Entertainment and Little Mates are on production duty.

For some the impact Netflix has had on drama has been overplayed. “In terms of how Netflix/SVOD is impacting the content itself, I’d say we haven’t seen a shift yet, or not one as significant as the development of cable-led dramas, where content grew up and was allowed to deal with dark issues and adult themes,” says Nick Thomas, practice leader, digital media, at research house Ovum.

He adds: “In that sense, Netflix hasn’t had the impact of an HBO or AMC, it is essentially carrying on in that tradition. The rules of what constitutes premium video content are being rewritten elsewhere, in the short-form video space and with services like Twitch. Netflix has innovated plenty around the distribution of content but the content itself follows the structures of TV.”

For distributors, meanwhile, the advent of new platforms is a boon, although the market has naturally leveled as the SVOD platforms move from buying huge packages to more targeted acquisitions.

International pay channels are increasingly looking to worldwide releases – with the likes of *The Walking Dead* going out globally within 24 hours after the US TX – but with its global roll out Netflix wants global rights, and not all distributors are ready, Sarandos told the UBS conference.

“We’re embarking on something that is fairly new in terms of in the media space; global licensing and programming,” he said. “Because there has never been a global buyer, it makes complete sense that Sony and Disney and Warner Brothers would have regional sales teams.”

Global deals leave distributors comparing a single license fee against a patchwork of deals. “You work out what the trade-off is, the global value versus what you can get locally,” says All3Media’s Woolf.

Netflix’s Evers says: “Selling rights worldwide in a single transaction is much easier than shopping a title around the globe.” **S**



*El Príncipe*

# Spanish fiction: dramatic times

With the country's recession now over, Spanish TV producers are cautiously resuming plans for growth. More international coproductions, greater involvement from pay TV operators in original fiction, and several overseas adaptations of local drama series are all leading to renewed confidence in Spanish drama production. TBI reports from Madrid

**T**he green shoots of recovery are sprouting in Spain's TV fiction industry, with TV ad market investment expected to grow 8.7% this year to reach €2 billion (US\$2.2 billion). However, this doesn't mean a full recovery: the figure is still far from 2007's €3.5 billion pre-crisis peak.

The Spanish TV production companies that survived the country's deep recession are gradually being restored to long-awaited stability, which allows them to formulate and supercharge their plans for growth.

The top three free-to-air TV groups – Atresmedia, Mediaset España and pubcaster RTVE, which have dominated scripted production in Spain – are now watching

closely as Telefonica-owned pay TV operator Movistar TV joins the big boys' club.

Consolidation in the production sector is also happening, with leading company Boomerang TV acquired in May by French media giant Lagardere Studios. This move, alongside the 2013 purchase of José Manuel Lorenzo's DLO Producciones by Banijay Group, leaves Ramón Campos and Teresa Fernández-Valdés' Bambú Producciones and César Benítez and Aitor Gabilondo's Plano a Plano as the only independent companies among Spain's top TV drama producers.

“For Spanish TV operators, local series are an expensive but necessary investment, since local audiences are willing to follow Spanish series over those from abroad,” says one

Madrid-based TV expert.

On the TV content side, “the main changes this year have been the proliferation of shorter-term fiction products, and the bet on projects shot on location, away from sets, in order to create certain atmospheres,” says Toni Sevilla, head of fiction at Mediaset España.

“Spanish TV audiences are becoming so much more demanding; they have better knowledge of international drama and their tastes are maturing,” adds Juan José Díaz, Boomerang TV's senior manager. “Acknowledging this new perspective, Spanish fiction is evolving, and we are producing high quality series that are valued in and outside Spain.”

For the first time, Mediaset España this year released an original drama on its thematic free-to-air channel Divinity, the youth-oriented series *Yo Quisiera*. “The birth of thematic channels took place in the midst of the crisis, so specific production for these channels is marked by the market’s economic evolution,” says Sevilla.

After new TV frequencies were allocated by the Spanish government, Atresmedia launched the Atreseries channel on December 22, dedicated to Spanish and international fiction. The network already reached six million homes in Latin America.

“With the creation of dedicated fiction channels such as Atreseries, we will begin producing more content,” says Nacho Manubens, deputy director of fiction at Atresmedia. “As these channels are consolidated, we will see if producing specific dramas for them fits within the programming strategy.”

Primetime Spanish scripted, meanwhile, continues to be in good health. Produced

by Plano a Plano, new series *Down Below* exploits cultural contrasts between Basques and Andalusians. It topped new season ratings among new dramas, averaging 4.3 million and winning a 22.5% share at Atresmedia’s Antena 3. It has now been taken abroad as a format, and a Ukrainian remake is underway.

In its second and last season, thriller-drama series *El Príncipe* has been the most-watched scripted series this year, with 4.6 million viewers and a 24% share on Mediaset España’s core channel, Telecinco.

Set in Spain’s North African enclave of Ceuta, the show, another Plano a Plano creation, has been widely picked up internationally, by networks including OnDirectTV, which took Latin American pay TV rights, Canal 13 (Chile), Telefé (Argentina), Canale 5 (Italy) and RTP (Portugal).

Debuting on September 22 at Antena 3, Boomerang TV-produced thriller *Plastic Sea* placed four and five episodes among Spain’s top 20 programmes in October and

November respectively, and was the only scripted show in those rankings. It had 3.7 million viewers and a 20.8% audience share.

Selected by television trends analyst The WIT as being among the year’s most outstanding international fiction series, *Plastic Sea* began a worldwide assault at MIPCOM in October. TV deals in several territories are being negotiated, while a second season has already been confirmed by Atresmedia in Spain.

“The international market is slowly changing for Spanish TV dramas,” says Rafael Bardem, deputy director, programmes and product sales at pubcaster RTVE. “Maintaining an international presence requires constant work. Fortunately, several years of stability have allowed our presence to gradually increase. There is enough room for growth in Spanish fiction.”

Meanwhile, SVOD is the window through which Spanish TV fiction is entering many territories, including the US. “American free-to-air TV was hardly, if at all, receptive to



Velvet

our productions, but SVOD is allowing us to reach that market,” says Bardem, who highlights RTVE’s period drama *Isabel* as a show that has performed well on-demand.

“We have recently closed several deals in Latin America,” says Christian Gockel, senior VP, international sales and acquisitions at German distributor-producer Beta Film, which handles some of Spain’s most successful primetime TV dramas, including *Bambú* and Atresmedia’s *Velvet*, *Gran Hotel* and *Under Suspicion*.

“Besides the more common pay TV deals for foreign products, we have also been able to place Spanish series on free-to-air TV stations across the entire region,” he says. “That’s very unusual and may be a new phenomenon.”

“For the last two to three years, the Italian market has been very receptive to Spanish drama, which is generating excellent results in the primetime slots of big networks,” adds Gockel.

A growing number of Spanish fiction formats have captured the interest of top international TV companies in recent years, mainly from the US. “Spain has become a TV market the big US players analyse, since

this is one European country where local TV fiction is strong,” says Ramón Campos at *Bambú*, which is prepping high-profile Atresmedia thriller-drama *La Embajada*. Beta Film will distribute that show.

Televisa USA and Latica Media are producing an English-language adaptation of *Bambú*’s *Gran Hotel*, one of Beta’s biggest recent sales hits, exec-produced by Stephen Kronish (*24*, *The Kennedys*).

Boomerang TV, meanwhile, continues to perform strongly in the US market with ABC Studios adapting its format *Motivos Personales*. This came after NBC brought on Warner Bros. to create an English-language remake of *Los Misterios de Laura*. *Motivos Personales*, a pioneering thriller that was broadcast in Spain by Telecinco in 2005.

“Luckily, territories that in the past were completely closed to non-English speaking language product [such as the US and UK] are opening up, thanks largely to the success of Nordic series,” says María Cervera, head of international copros at Plano a Plano.

“In Spain, we produce for a generalist TV market, aimed at all TV audiences,” says Ramón Campos. “Also, we sometimes bring telenovela tropes to TV primetime dramas,

which draws international attention.”

According to Beta’s Gockel, “Spanish scripts have changed from being slow to very fast paced in recent years. Whether genre, thriller or romance, Spanish dramas provide their audience with enough to keep viewers for more than one season. Furthermore, networks went for genres not seen before on Spanish TV, surprising people, and found new viewers” as a result.

As a result of the financial crisis, many local TV companies were forced to look abroad for the financing they lacked at home. That continued in 2015, with Spanish producers seeking more international partnerships.

Plano a Plano, consistently one of Spain’s most successful drama producers, is developing the pilot screenplay episode for new high-end international drama series *Salazar*. A coproduction with France’s Making Prod, part of the Makeover Group, and international distributor Eccho Rights, *Salazar* is inspired by true events related to the witch-hunting that struck France’s Basque Country and northern Spain in 1608.

Gerardo Herrero’s Tornasol Films, producer of Juan José Campanella’s Oscar-winner *The Secret in Their Eyes*, is making a



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Plastic Sea

debut in the television drama arena with Félix Viscarret's miniseries thriller *Four Seasons in Havana*. The show is an international coproduction with Peter Nadermann's Nadcon, sold by Wild Bunch TV, and was prebought for Spanish free-to-air broadcast by pubcaster TVE.

Now part of Lagardere Studios, Boomerang TV aims to consolidate its strategic growth, especially in Latin America. "Our new scenario has increased our interest in participating in international coproductions, and we are already working on developing projects," says Boomerang's Juan José Díaz.

Boomerang TV's Galicia-based arm Portocabo coproduced English-language teen comedy series *The Avatars* with Italy's Fly Distribuzione TV and Brave Film in 2013. The show became a sales hit, and deals were closed with KIKA in Germany, Globosat in Brazil, SABC in South Africa and Teletoon+ in Poland.

Portocabo's Spanish-language thriller *Hierro*, which also has German prodco Nadcon on board, was chosen as best project at the Berlinale's first CoPro Series pitching in February, as we reported in this magazine last year.

"The Spanish market's ability to take on new riskier or bigger-budget productions is limited," says Plano a Plano's Cervera, "so it is logical to seek partners outside our borders to make larger scale productions viable."

International coproduction faces several challenges, however. In another pioneering move, Bambú Producciones teamed in 2014 with Atresmedia and BBC Worldwide on sci-fi drama *Refugees*. Broadcast May to June on Atresmedia's La Sexta primetime, ratings didn't live up to the huge expectations.

Although recognised with awards such as the Reflet d'Or for best international series at Geneva's Tous Ecrans Festival, the drama averaged a so-so 7% audience share in Spain.

"Everybody is looking for TV coproductions," says Bambú's Ramón Campos. "What I am not clear about is whether we have found the right coproduction model.

"We tried to convey to the audience that, although shot in English and dubbed into Spanish, *Refugees* was a Spanish show, but I think the audience saw it as a series from outside, and foreign series are not working in Spain."

This summer, Mediaset España released international miniseries *La Dama Velada* and *Bella y Bestia*, which were part of a broader TV drama coproduction deal with Italy's Lux Vide. Both generated huge ratings in Italy, but had more modest results in Spain.

According to Pepa Sánchez-Biezma, head of TV movies and mini-series at Mediaset

España, "the main attractions of these series are the high level of production, the spectacular mise-en-scène, the universality of the stories portrayed, and their ability to transcend borders".

Some of the most hopeful news for local TV drama is coming from the pay sector. Movistar TV, which is part of Telefonica, has begun developing its first drama productions over the past year.

In January 2015, Movistar inked a deal with Madrid-based producer José Antonio Féléz and director Alberto Rodríguez, the team behind 2014's multi-award winning feature film *Marshland*, to produce a yet to be titled, Seville-set historical thriller series.

Movistar has also partnered with film and TV director David Trueba (*Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed*) to develop a TV drama about couples of different ages and, more recently, announced a local adaptation of Lisa Kudrow's comedy *Web Therapy* with popular Spanish TV star Eva Hache. These will all be released on Movistar's premium channel #0.

"Original production will be an essential part of [SVOD service] Movistar Series," says Domingo Corral, Movistar TV content director. "As players in Spain's cultural industry, we are obliged to bring viewers the best international fiction, as well as getting the best national dramas produced."

Meanwhile, after years of rumours, Netflix finally arrived in Spain in October 20. The SVOD giant has so far limited its initial commitment to the local TV industry to the acquisition of finished dramas such as Atresmedia's *Down Below*, *Boarding School*, *Velvet*, *La Reina del Sur* and *Grand Hotel*, and TVE's *The Department of Time*. However, links with Spanish TV production community will be strengthened in the future, as Netflix co-founder and CEO Reed Hasting said in October.

"We are producing content around the world, and we will produce in Spain as we have done with *The Crown* in the UK, with *Marseille* in France and with *Narcos* in Colombia," he said.

SVOD offers are set to play a defining role in Spanish TV's future, but expectations are high with regard to what pay TV operators may mean for Spain's TV drama production sector in the medium term. **S**

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# Television spies le Carré's return

The first television series to adapt a John Le Carré novel in a quarter-century is set for screens around the world. Stewart Clarke reports

John le Carré is one of the world's best-selling novelists, and his classics *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Smiley's People* and *A Perfect Spy* have all been adapted for TV. There has not, however, been a small-screen le Carré since 1991's *A Murder of Quality*, with the author's work transferring more readily to the big screen in the subsequent 25 years.

*The Night Manager* looked set for the same movie treatment and there have been two attempts at theatrical versions. One was set up at Paramount with a Robert Towne (*Mission: Impossible*) screenplay and Sidney Pollack (*Out of Africa*) set to direct. The other was through Brad Pitt's Plan B, which optioned the novel, with Pitt set to star. Neither, however, came to fruition, partly because of the sheer breadth of the 429-page novel.

"When people have tried to get such a huge story, and characters of

that scale, and compress it all into two hours, it hasn't quite worked," says Simon Cornwell, le Carré's son and co-founder of The Ink Factory, which exploits his books across TV and film. "The book moves through an extraordinary world, and people will want to spend time there and see the characters and sub-plots develop."

David Farr (*Spooks*) penned the six-part high-concept thriller and had le Carré's blessing to rework some of the core elements of the book for the series. "Generally, my father always looks at the book as the raw material for filmmaking or TV, and this adaptation did not need to adhere slavishly to the plot of the book, as long as it captured its spirit," says Cornwell.

The novel was penned in 1993 and is loosely based on the Iran-Contra affair in the 1980s. It follows former soldier Jonathan Pine as he



### In focus

**The show:** *The Night Manager*

**The producer:** The Ink Factory

**The distributor:** WME Global

**The broadcaster:** BBC One (UK), AMC (US)

**The concept:** Contemporary reworking of John le Carré's 1993 novel, starring Tom Hiddleston and Hugh Laurie

navigates Whitehall and Washington amid a murky secret arms deal that is being sanctioned by western intelligence agencies. Tom Hiddleston (*The Avengers*) plays Pine as he seeks to infiltrate the illicit weapons trade, with Hugh Laurie (*House*), playing Richard Onslow Roper, a major arms dealer.

“My vision for the series was basically I wanted people to be seduced by Richard Roper in the same way that Jonathan is seduced by him,” says director Susanne Bier. It was the job the Danish film-maker, who won an Academy Award for *In a Better World*, to shape David Farr's script into a series. It was her first foray into TV and she brought all of her big-screen experience to bear. “The main difference with this and a feature was it was six hours, not two,” she says. “I shot it in the same way as a film, not as individual episodes.”

Olivia Colman (*Broadchurch*), Tom Hollander (*Rev*), Elizabeth Debicki (*The Great Gatsby*) and David Harewood (*Homeland*) round out a cast that is A-list, even by today's lofty TV standards.

Bier says that despite Hiddleston and Laurie's star power, *The Night Manager* is an ensemble drama. “I wanted all of the characters to be both forceful and intriguing,” she says. “If there are some strong characters, and some that are not, you can lose the tension, and we needed all of the protagonists to balance out against each other.”

There were three big and radical decisions made by Farr, Cornwell, le Carré and the team. The setting was moved to the present day, the action was moved from Central America to the Mediterranean, and a key intelligence officer character is now a woman (Colman's part).

The new setting provides a modern feel, but avoided the Middle East region, which has been done elsewhere. “We wanted a contemporary resonance, but we didn't want to make a Middle East-focused political thriller, which, given there is *Homeland* and *The Honorable Woman*, was not where we wanted to go,” says Cornwell.

The result is a show with “a fast-moving contemporary feel, but that has achieved that without Hollywood-ising” says Cornwell, adding: “It feels very authored, considered and layered and it also has enormous explosions.”

“It couldn't be slow, but it also couldn't be shallow,” adds Bier. “You can't do interesting characters without giving them space, so while it is pacy and has big set-pieces and fireworks, we also gave the characters that room to develop.”

UK pubcaster the BBC bought into that vision and took the series, but more partners were needed to cover the US\$30 million budget.

Chris Rice, WME Global's head of television, takes up the story. “After it was sold to the BBC and was in development we helped to cast the show,” he says. “Because it was so ambitious and the budget was large, it needed to be a partnership, so we then worked to find the US partner. Hugh and Tom elevated the profile of the project in the US market, and there were multiple networks vying to buy it. We brought on AMC.”

Instead of parking the rights with a distributor, WME then sold the series to a raft of broadcasters. Tele München Group took it for German-speaking territories, while C More Entertainment and TV4 have it in the Nordics. Elsewhere in Europe, pay TV operator Sky has taken the series in Italy, while further afield BBC First and SBS have it in Australia and TV3 has rights in New Zealand. The rest of the world is largely accounted for by a deal with AMC Networks that gives the channel operator the rights in Iberia, eastern Europe, Russia, Asia (ex-Japan), Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

WME Global brokered the deals in the clearest sign yet that the talent agency, having bought IMG, is moving beyond repping clients and packaging projects, and into working with buyers directly. It has done deals for HBO, Canal+ and Sky series *The Young Pope* and, earlier, for ABC series *Black Box*, but its efforts on *The Night Manager* are its most extensive yet in terms of international deals.

“We did all of the presales, and sold the entire world through multiple deals,” says Rice. “We are a sales engine rather than a traditional distributor. We represent people and companies, but they are in control and choose what they do, and we try to approach sales of content in the same way.” **S**

# Viva Hate

How Morrissey's brand of misanthropic indie rock inspired SVT's Prix Europa 2015 award-winning miniseries *Viva Hate*

Morrissey's influence on today's musicians is undeniable. SVT's *Viva Hate* shows he's also influencing the modern drama television producer, too.

Unsurprisingly, the forces behind the drama-comedy have dabbled in music. Writer Peter Birro, a popular Swedish television and film writer and punk poet, was part of the Gothenburg indie rock scene in the 1980s, while producer Martin Persson from Anagram Film & TV directed music videos early in his career.

SVT executive producer Marcos Hellberg, meanwhile, was a school peer of Birro's and was in a band. "We are all failed musicians of some sort," says Hellberg. "TV is full of people who failed as rock stars."

SVT had first read *Viva Hate*'s script when the project was known as *Love is Stronger Than Death* and the department was under the control of Gunnar Carlsson. "You could say music has been the soundtrack to my life, so I felt a personal engagement with the project," says Hellberg, who picked up the project after Carlsson left, later to join Anagram.

After asking Birro to retool the script, SVT contacted Persson, Anagram's managing director, to become involved. Film i Väst was also drafted in as a coproducer and production began.

The resulting 3x60mins series follows an avid Morrissey fan, Daniel, in 1991 Gothenburg, who creates a punk band in a bid to win the appreciation of the world (and his mother), while falling madly in love with a young girl and getting into trouble along with his brother, a petty thief. The title is a tribute to Morrissey's debut album.

"The script is well-written, dramatic in both a comic and serious sense about young men growing up," says Persson. "Though the music is 20-years-old, the energy comes from that script."

Persson cast the young Tom Ljungman as the lead. Along with appearing Swedish series such as *De Halvt Dolda* and *Livet Enligt Rosa*, Ljungman has his own band, which Persson says gave him the life experience needed for the role. The rest of the main cast was made

up of relative unknowns.

The show debuted on Christmas Day 2014 to poor ratings. Hellberg says the scheduling was a "mistake; we didn't have a strategy as we were all blinded by the story", but adds: "It is the kind of story that grows an audience over time because it has great storylines and acting."

Indeed, *Viva Hate* built strong viewing numbers on SVT Play, the popular on-demand service of the Swedish pubcaster, throughout 2015.

As viewers found the show, so did critics. The series was nominated for a number of international awards, and in October last year *Viva Hate* won the coveted Prix Europa award for 'Best European TV Fiction Serial or Mini-Series'.

"At some point that kind of story reaches out," says Hellberg. "We were lucky that it grew by itself and people found it. Some of them came to know about it because of the music. A good story survives, and I had faith in this story."

The show now looks set to reach out even further, after Germany-based distributor ZDF Enterprises acquired international sales rights outside of Scandinavia, where Anagram holds them.

"*Viva Hate* is a very unique take on pop culture in the 1980s," says ZDF's VP, drama, Robert Franke. "It's unique in that it is not your typical Scandinavian crime drama, but is about culture and coming-of-age."

He notes that people "spend almost 30% of our lives exposed to music in some form or the other", and that *Viva Hate* includes "a compelling story, and great music, which is a very important piece of the puzzle".

Franke expects the show to continue building. "It caters for a young demographic, and also lives in the digital space very well," says Franke. "It really does have the potential to be aired on a major TV channel and on digital platforms. It will build momentum, and we can probably sell this for a long time: it is artistic, visual and works multiplatform." 



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# Ghost writer

Bentley Productions is best-known for making worldwide detective hit *Midsomer Murders*, but things are about to take a paranormal twist for the All3Media-backed prodco with its new ITV show, *Harry Price: Ghost Hunter*

Based on the adventures of Harry Price, the UK's first-ever ghost hunter, as relayed in Neil Spring's novel *The Ghost Hunters*, Bentley Productions new drama one-off for ITV is penned by Jack Lothian.

Lothian, whose credits include *Shameless*, *Skins* and *Strike Back*., says: "The real Harry Price was something of a showman who courted publicity, and wasn't above certain deceptions in his own work, so we've tried to stay true to that spirit. He was a man who wanted to be remembered, so hopefully we've helped him with that."

Price is a contradictory character who, as the show starts, has lost his way and is conducting false séances for cash. His chance for redemption comes when he has the opportunity to investigate a haunting at the house of a local politician.

Price (played by Rafe Spall) teams up with the politician's family maid, Sarah Grey, played by *Downton Abbey*'s Cara Theobald, and the pair set out to investigate the ghostly goings on.

Commissioning the show for ITV last summer, the network's director of drama Steve November said: "Harry Price is an intriguing character at the very heart of the drama. Jack Lothian's wonderful script is a skilful blend of fact and fiction as Harry's past, his fascination with the paranormal and his faith in science are all real yet set against a fictional backdrop of political conspiracy and scandal."

With its paranormal themes, there are some frights along the way. "It's a piece about the supernatural, so hopefully it's scary, but we're trying to be a little restrained with it as well," says Lothian. "The main thing is that hopefully the central story – about a woman [the politician's wife] who fears she's losing her mind and the husband

trying to save her – draws the audience in and they care about the characters. And if people feel the need to sleep with the light on afterwards, then all the better."

The one-off 120-minute format is similar to film-length, but for commercial TV presents a particular writing challenge. Lothian says: "It's near movie-length, but because you're writing for commercial television you have to be aware of the ad breaks, so rather than using a traditional three-act structure you end up with a seven-act structure."

The series, which is being shopped internationally by All3Media International, is set in 1920s London at a time of rapid technological development. Should the show be a hit for ITV in the UK, Lothian says he has plenty of other *Harry Price* ideas ready should more specials, or a series, be ordered.

"There's a whole folder full of stories worked out, many of them ones that Harry investigated in real life, and it would be a great opportunity to see Rafe Spall's excellent work on the character developed even further," says Lothian. "I think it's a show that can cheerfully work in any format, be it specials or a series." **S**

## In focus

**The show:** *Harry Price: Ghost Hunter*

**The producer:** Bentley Productions

**The distributor:** All3Media International

**The broadcaster:** ITV (UK)

**The concept:** Ghost-hunting drama from the *Midsomer Murders* stable

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# Writer's Room:

The difference between the US and UK? Craft services

Irish comedy star Sharon Horgan on the quirks she and production partner Clelia Mountford found working in US TV after launching their UK-based production firm, Merman, in the States

**T**he difference between working in the UK and US can be summed up in two words: craft services. Affectionately known as 'crafty', this service provides sets with everything from jars of jellybeans and industrial-sized polo mints to crab chowder and hot-from-the-oven cookies. Everyone loves crafty. Except me. I see their staff as feeders and consider them to be evil. Crafty is there all through the day, and everyone from camera loader to number one star on the call sheet graze there during the long filming hours. The UK equivalent is a tin of Family Circle and some ropey tea.

So that's it really. That's the only difference. I guess it's lucky it's there because often you run so far over lunch that you need a bit of sustenance to see you through. So that's another difference then. The hours are longer in the US because there's overtime and lunch penalties. You find yourself without any kind of structure or ability to make social plans involving a life because if you've not finished your pages you keep going until you do.

Oh and the money I guess. The money that's spent on 30 minutes of American entertainment is, shall we say, more. My last pilot in UK cost approximately ten times less than my last pilot in the US. So there's that.

And crew size. Crew size is different. In that there is a lot of them. The English director of *Catastrophe*, Ben Taylor, turned up to direct an episode of *Divorce*. His first scene was a two-hander in a small bar in Harlem and for that we took up two blocks of sidewalk. Big footprint.

And everyone has an assistant. I'm not sure about this, but I think some of the assistants might even have an assistant because there's at least 50 people on the shoot whose jobs I don't know or understand.

And I suppose another difference is the toys; the big boy's and girl's filming toys. There are fewer limitations to your film-making vision, which is unusual when making comedy in the UK, I



think. With smaller budgets than drama, the comedy production often has to limit itself, at least visually. There isn't the time or the money to get funky. In the US if you want a crane, a second camera, a third camera, 50 different lenses and a steady cam on stand-by ever day, that's just fine. All of this is available to you and your 30 minutes of TV.

I suppose if I think about it another difference is the luxury of multiple writers who are there to help you make your half-hour. That's very different. The writers' room, in particular. Never having used this method in the UK it took a bit of getting used to, but once you try it, it's hard not to marvel at its merits. Multiple brains working as one. The wonder is that all those writer brains give enough of a shit about your show to put their best work into it. God, I love our writers.

On that note there are also rather a lot of executives. A lot of people to answer to. Although making a cable show in the US differs enormously to making an American network show. Network show executives sometimes attempt to crowbar the script that you originally brought them into a different show-shaped hole. Cable is different. I don't know why particularly, different audience I guess. And more trust. When a cable channel buys your show it's to buy not just the idea but your voice specifically. And then they sort of trust you to make what they bought. Because why would they employ you to a job that they don't think you're capable of doing? That's the most similar the US cable show experience is to the UK, certainly in my experience. They buy your script to make your show. Which sort of makes sense.

So that's it. Not much difference really except craft services, longer hours, more money, bigger crew, better toys, more writers, more execs. And, sometimes, less freedom. **S**

In the US, everyone on set has an assistant. I'm not sure about this, but I think even the assistants have assistants

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