

# TBI

Television Business International

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first interview  
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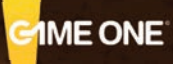
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

STEWART CLARKE



**T**he CEO of Zodiak Media, Marc-Antoine d'Halluin, gives his first interview in this issue of TBI, talking about changes at the global producer. Zodiak is a major player in unscripted and kids in particular and d'Halluin sat down with Jesse Whittock to explain how he is attempting to get the various parts of the business to work more closely in the quest for international hits.

Kids TV, meanwhile, is going through a nostalgic moment with the likes of *Thunderbirds* (re)launching at MIPJunior and new *Wombles*, *Inspector Gadget* and *Alvin and the Chipmunks* not far behind. Whether this is because broadcasters are fighting shy of taking risks on new shows, there is a lack of stellar new ideas, or simply some commissioners are placing bets on shows that had them glued to the small screen in their youths, is something we examine in our main kids feature.

We also select the best new shows launching at MIPJunior, as it moves further down the Croisette to the Palm Beach for the first time. With increased competition for the time (and money) of conference/market delegates, the organisers will hope their extra walk will be repaid with new business.

Outside of kids, we also take a look at the biggest new dramas for MIPCOM. In a great era for drama, these are the shows that will be setting the pace internationally, from new Scandi thrillers to the best of US cable and broadcast's new offerings and fresh British period dramas, it is clear the quality threshold in drama – as seen in these Hot Picks – is at an all-time high. So are the related budgets, which is why international content companies have a better chance than ever of getting a US broadcast or cable partner for their new scripted projects. We look at how and why the US is more open than ever to international coproduction.

Digital TV Research chief Simon Murray also gives his reading of the impending Sky Europe pay TV operation, while Viacom research boss Christian Kurz explains how a new wave of smart 'edutainment' shows are connecting with young viewers across different platforms and devices.

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# Signs of the Zodiak

In his first interview since becoming Zodiak Media's CEO, Marc-Antoine d'Halluin outlines his plan to turn its group of worldwide production companies and studios into a unified confederation, while putting international format development at the heart of the business. Jesse Whittock reports.

**W**ith an office perched at the summit of a west London business village, Zodiak Media's CEO Marc-Antoine d'Halluin literally has a top-down view of his company. After a year with the business he says that Zodiak's different units are getting better at talking to one another.

"What we were was a federation, and what we are gradually becoming is a confederation or a group that's trying to leverage our assets in a more coordinated way," he says.

After travelling to meet Zodiak staff at companies in 16 markets, his view of the firm's strengths and weaknesses crystallised. "What I saw was a great federation of excellent production companies in many of these markets, which were still at the very early stage of working together."

This is where opportunity lay, he says. However, before any progress could take place, d'Halluin made a series of management-level changes at many of Zodiak's top companies. Having replaced Zodiak Media founder CEO David Frank in November last year, the French-born chief exec named new bosses at Italian prodco Magnolia, Marathon Media, Yellow Bird, Zodiak France, Zodiak Russia, Zodiak UK, Zodiak Nederland, Zodiak Kids and Zodiak Rights. Some were strategic moves, while in other cases execs had decided to move on.

The move that sparked the changes – Frank's decision to exit – was less dramatic than it might have first seemed, says d'Halluin: a case of a seasoned media CEO (d'Halluin) taking the reins from a creative

entertainment entrepreneur (Frank) who was keen to create something new, but shackled by the restraints of running a multinational business.

"David is an entrepreneur," says d'Halluin, "and entrepreneurs' DNA is special and different to the rest of us. They like to create, develop and that is what he cherishes and is good at. He wants to create, and that is what he is doing with his new company. Perhaps you need a different kind of skillset to drive this bus, and maybe he realised that."

Since leaving Zodiak, Frank has launched Dial Square Eighty Six, a digital and production investment start-up. His brother, ex-Zodiak Rights CEO Matthew Frank; former Zodiak Kids chief Nigel Pickard; and former Ludorum COO Charlie Caminada are all involved. d'Halluin describes the changeover at Zodiak as the "most constructive transition" he has experienced and predicts success for Frank's new vehicle. "He's a great guy, very funny and we speak all the time," he adds.

So what happens now and why is d'Halluin the man to effect change? His CV gives some clues. Before joining Zodiak, he was at Rubis Media Partners, an investment and advisory consultancy that he launched with the now-Zodiak UK boss Rod Henwood in 2011. Prior to that, he was CEO of Middle Eastern pay TV broadcaster OSN, where he oversaw the 2009 merger of Orbit and Showtime. Further back, he was chief executive of Canal+ Nordic and before that worked in the children's TV business as managing director of Fox Kids Europe. This range of roles gives him a unique perspective on the global content business, but d'Halluin is under no illusions as to where his strengths lie.

## “We’re being a bit more systematic at capturing opportunity, favouring a few formats with international potential. We were incredibly strong at delivering local successes in local markets, but in reality not as good when we came together to make them travel”

“What is absolutely clear is that I’m not a producer by background,” he says. “I’m from the broadcasting world, and channels tend to produce in-house, so I have an understanding. Now I’m 100% production, but my role is to coordinate and make sure we leverage our strengths in the best possible and way, that we are as rational as we can be when we make investment decisions, and that we understand the market place and generate proper returns.”

To d’Halluin, this means one key thing – landing a knock-out format hit. “We’re being a bit more systematic at capturing opportunity, favouring a few formats with international potential,” he says. “We were incredibly strong at delivering local successes in local markets, but in reality not as good when we came together to make them travel.”

Zodiak has some winners in its locker – *Wife Swap*, *Fort Boyard* and *Secret Millionaire* – but a key initiative has been the establishment of an International Development Board, which aims to identify and create Zodiak-branded formats.

Grant Ross has been drafted in from Endemol as executive VP of global creative development and format acquisitions to lead the IDB with former Zodiak Nordic creative chief Joel Karsberg, who has been transferred from Scandinavia to LA along with Cem Yeter (“We’re parachuting in the Vikings,” d’Halluin says).

“This board is not meant to develop centrally, but to provide a selection process for in-house formats and formats from outside the group, and try to identify those three or four formats that we will systematically push across our network of companies,” says d’Halluin. “It sounds simple, but it wasn’t really in place before. There was some central development before, which I think was a little bit of a hindrance and a disturbance. Now, when things are very clear they can move very fast.”

The first show to benefit from this process was TV4’s Swedish adventure format *Dropped* (pictured), which launched at MIPTV and is now in “final stage negotiations” for format adaptations in six territories. “We have quite a few others in pipeline, some of which we will push at MIPCOM,” says d’Halluin.

The new Zodiak boss hopes this will help the company’s UK and Stateside firms better penetrate the US cable market. “We’d done a good job at ignoring it. That’s US\$25 billion of content, so it’s good time to engage with it,” he says, pointing to recent commissions such as MTV’s *Beyond Dance*.

“We also want to engage a bit more practically in premium scripted,” he continues. “We have two big high-end scripted shows in the pipeline – *Versailles* and *Occupied* [see page 22]. Both of them have the opportunity to become worldwide successes.”

Meanwhile, ex-BBC Worldwide drama chief Caroline Torrance has

joined Zodiak Rights as head of international scripted in a bid to better connect Zodiak’s numerous drama outfits.

However, don’t expect to see Zodiak following Endemol or Banijay in launching a US studio. D’Halluin says the pilot process is far too risky and expensive, and sees more value in packaging its drama formats with local production partners. “We’ve brought Keith Quinn, the ex-Paramount Digital Entertainment exec, in to look at our scripted IP from Europe – and there are plenty of them such as Swedish comedy *Solsidan* – that have incredible potential to be adapted in the US.

“He’s looking at it deal-by-deal, property-by-property, at agreements whereby we don’t produce ourselves, but have an involvement and gain production fees and take international distribution rights to the shows. That’s the right model for us.”

The growing trend for straight-to-series commissions in the US offers an “interesting model”, but another emerging area offers more opportunity, he says: “What’s for sure is that the incredible rise of the new digital players, Amazon and Netflix, has changed the game and opens new doors. To some degree they can take more risk; they’re less under pressure of ratings.”

In the week’s following TBI’s talk with d’Halluin, Zodiak Kids announces it is selling a pair of Amazon kids TV series at MIPJunior [see page 45] and, separately, that its UK-based children’s producer The Foundation will produce preschool toon *Buddy: Tech Detective* for the SVOD service. D’Halluin’s vision is beginning to come together. **TBI**



## READING ZODIAK'S HOROSCOPE

Marc-Antoine d'Halluin stresses Zodiak Media is a younger company than many would think. "It's only seven years since the story started with Zodiak TV's acquisition of Magnolia, but only three years ago that RDF joined Zodiak. We are only really three years old, which is by any standards very young."

France-based Zodiak Entertainment and the UK's RDF Media merged in 2010 in a deal that saw Italian publishing firm De Agostini take majority control of the new Zodiak Media Group, and the John de Mol-affiliated Dasym Investments convert shares in RDF into Zodiak holdings.

D'Halluin describes this set up as "very productive", as both Dasym and De Agostini "know what the industry is about".

"They understand production and the lead times, the importance of attracting the right people, and that making creative people work together is a delicate process that doesn't allow you to be brutal or just look at the bottom line," he says. "I feel blessed and lucky to have these shareholders because they are what is needed."

Dasym, which was an investor in Endemol before losing control to Apollo Global Management and is also close to de Mol's Talpa Media, has a "very interesting perspective as a production investor and good connections", d'Halluin says, while De Agostini provides pipelines to its children's channels in Italy and Spanish broadcaster Atresmedia, which it part owns through a joint venture with The Planeta Group.

"There's a lot of discussion about the upside of making things bigger," says d'Halluin, which is unsurprising given the huge consolidation moves taking hold of the production industry at present. However, Zodiak is unlikely to be subject of another major M&A deal just three years after the RDF merger at this stage, d'Halluin predicts. "Of course, it could happen tomorrow or in six months, but the plan we have agreed upon with our shareholders is to develop the company to its full potential. We still have some way to go there."

He talks about working to timeframe of between two and four

years to achieve that growth, and adds: "Along the way it's quite possible that we look to create something bigger out of Zodiak, and it could happen this way as much as the other way. It's still very early days, and I'm not distracted by it."

"I'm very optimistic about our growth. We have the right ingredients, and with the right ingredients you can make the cocktail. Right now we have all we need to make a very successful company."



*Fort Boyard*



*Wife Swap*



*Secret Millionaire*

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# HBO hangs hopes on Euro drama

HBO Europe has made a concerted push into both the local scripted and non-scripted markets. Jesse Whittock heads to Bucharest to hear about its drama series *Umbre* and future programming plans from executive VP, programming and production Antony Root



**D**angling metres above a yellow Bucharest taxi and suspended by a thick metal cable, the stuntman braces himself as the local camera crew below him move into place and the director gives the order. The stuntman free-falls down onto the taxi, with multiple cameras capturing the heavy landing.

The crew is filming *Umbre*, HBO Europe's latest scripted drama out of eastern Europe. Since producing a Polish version of *In Treatment* in 2010, production values have been fast improving, says HBO's VP, original programming and production Wayne Henry.

In Romania, where *Umbre*, a remake of Australian crime drama *Small Time Gangster* is being created, Henry says TV producers are beginning to reap the benefits of a highly-developed film industry. "The underlying thing is we have good standards of professionalism. With *Umbre*, we have taken the essence of

what could be the standard television series and made it more filmic."

HBO is coproducing the 8x45mins black comedy, which follows a Bucharest taxi driver who wants out of his double life as a debt collector for the mob, with local prodco Multimedia Est.

Screenwriter Bogdan Mirica, who HBO Europe executive VP of original programming and production Antony Root describes as an "absolutely wonderful talent", penned the scripts.

"I have a commitment to growing the cadre of screenwriters amongst the people we meet," says Root, the former Sony Pictures Television drama exec who has been with premium paycaster HBO since 2011. He plans on "building up a generation writers who can then write originally for us at the level and depth we would expect from an HBO project".

At this stage, HBO Europe has primarily commissioned long-form scripted dramas in Poland, Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary.

Root says this has been "a little out of necessity" because of there being few TV screenwriters available, but adds: "We will grow over time."

These dramas are various versions of Israeli-created therapy drama *In Treatment*, two remakes of *Shall We Kiss*, and now *Umbre*. The latter came from Australia's Boilermaker Burberry via distributor DRG Formats, and will broadcast on HBO Romania in early 2015.

HBO Europe's biggest success to date is, however, an original story. *Burning Bush*, the three-part miniseries about Prague student Jan Palach who self-immolated in 1969 in protest at the Czech communist government, was produced by Nutprodukce and had Germany's Beta Film attached as distributor.

It was nominated for a Foreign-Language Oscar and marked a step-change in both the scale and ambition of HBO Europe drama.

Another Europe-originated series – and HBO Europe's first original drama series – *Wataha* (*The Pack*, WT), launches this year.



The six-part crime drama has been shot in the Bieszczady mountains on the Ukrainian-Polish border and follows a events after a group of border guards is mysteriously attacked. While the writing team is Polish, British writer Julie Rutterford (*Shameless*) was drafted in as a co-writer.

Root plans for the pendulum to shift from formats to local scripts as HBO Europe moves forward. "It is an absolute ambition that should happen, though not exclusively," he says.

Root notes that even within those scripts it has licenced there has been origination. "People take original material and find new ways of reinventing it. *In Treatment* in Poland

does a show and gets out again".

He adds: "We need to be part and parcel of the ecology of the country we are in, so I would not be in favour of taking advantage of a tax break in the UK [for example,] to shoot a Romanian-language series."

True to his word, each of HBO Europe's original productions have been entirely produced within the country in which they were commissioned. That said, a UK-based exec, Steve Matthews, has joined to offer further support.

The wider point, Roots says, is that HBO Europe is entirely standalone from the US mothership "other than premiering new

HBO is a seller – its programme sales unit operates out of the US, selling premium series including *Game of Thrones*, *The Sopranos* and *True Blood*. However, Germany's Beta Film sells *Burning Bush* internationally (see box), while its *In Treatment* remakes haven't been pushed on the global market.

Root says there is no "grand principle" for distribution. "In the case of *Burning Bush* we felt for a number of reasons, not least the fact [Beta founder] Jon Mojto is a Czech and runs a company with a very strong history of distributing foreign-language films, which made Beta a good choice. We're not about to announce a blanket distribution deal with



HBO's original drama *Umbre* in production in Bucharest

saw three of the five episodes from the last season written originally."

HBO's push into European production markets comes as its parent, Time Warner, ups its own efforts in the region by recently taking control of broadcast group Central European Media Enterprises.

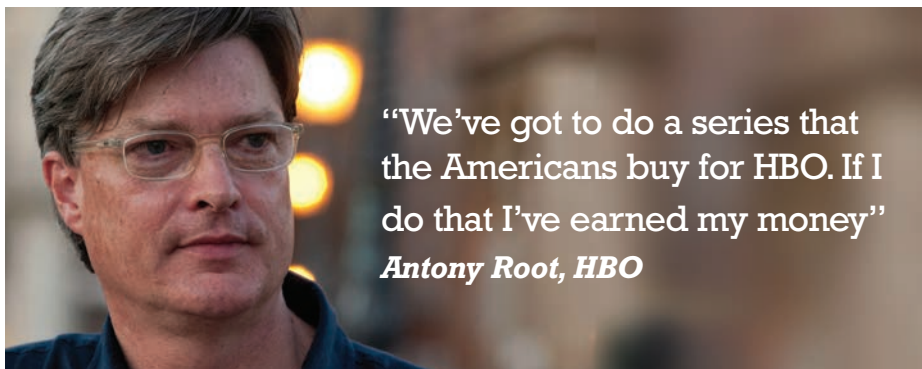
Root says it is vital HBO is not seen as a "visiting American company that comes in,

shows day-and-date".

Root says: "We develop these shows, [my local country managers] put together the budgets, and then I tell [HBO Europe CEO] Linda Jensen that we really have to do them. She knows how much money we have, greenlights them and off we go. It's an enormously privileged position to be both the buyer and the seller."

anyone any time soon."

However, landing a HBO Europe title on the American HBO premium cable channel is a key priority for Root, at least on a personal level. He says: "We'll soon be able to talk about a couple of things that are coming out and are amazing. From my own personal goal sheet, we've got to do a series that the Americans buy for HBO. If I do that I've earned my money." **TBI**



"We've got to do a series that the Americans buy for HBO. If I do that I've earned my money"  
**Antony Root, HBO**

**BURNING BUSH SALES**

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- Rai Cinema Italy
- HBO Nordic pan-Scandinavia
- HBO Latin America pan-South America
- Arte France & Germany

Beta Film has confirmed sales in **Israel, the Baltic countries, Benelux & Austria**

# VIEWPOINT



SIMON MURRAY, DIGITAL TV RESEARCH

## Coming up next: consolidation

**F**ew were surprised by BSkyB's announcement in late July that it wanted to buy 21st Century Fox's stakes in Sky Italia and Sky Deutschland – the three companies have been cooperating for some time. Several ex-Sky senior managers work in Germany and Italy, while the firms share the same technologies. Furthermore, both the German and the Italian operations have adopted successful consumer strategies from the UK. The clue's in the name.

The deal is valued at US\$9.3 billion, with 21st Century Fox intending to retain its 39.1% stake in the expanded Sky. If it goes ahead, Fox will be able to concentrate on content: part of the deal involves the transfer of BSkyB's 21% stake in the international version of National Geographic Channel.

The combined group has 20 million subscribers across 97 million TV households in five countries. The UK and Ireland provide 11.5 million of the total, followed by Italy (4.8 million) and Germany and Austria (3.7 million). The lower penetration in mainland Europe is an enticing factor for Sky.

Even more mouth-watering is that the UK and Ireland will provide 34.8 million of the 48 million subscription products of Sky Europe. Germany and Austria have only six million and Italy 6.7 million. Tellingly, British and Irish subs buy an average of three products, but the proportion is only 1.62 in

Germany/Austria and 1.4 in Italy – that's plenty of room for growth.

One of Sky's priorities would be to expand the product offerings such as DVR, HD, OTT, and on-demand in Germany and Italy. The German operation has considerably fewer channels on offer, for example.

So what about triple-play bundles? Sky has had considerable success with its offer, but its German and Italian counterparts do not offer them, and instead partner with telcos.

Content-wise, football rights are hugely important to all three companies. The loss of rights to the local league would severely dent subs numbers. Sky is extremely mindful of this, given that the English Premier League rights are up for auction later on this year. It received a bloody nose when it lost European Champions League rights from 2015/2016 to telco and pay TV rival BT.

I doubt that the expanded Sky will multiply geographically beyond the three core markets. Considerable European consolidation has already taken place, so any expansion by Sky Europe would be extremely costly.

Scandinavia and Poland are very competitive, while Russia is a no-go area. Telefonica recently increased its stake in Spain's Canal Plus, and the French regulators would have a lot to say about a bid for Canal Plus France.

Meanwhile, Liberty Global has expanded into Germany and the UK, is bidding for Ziggo

in the Netherlands, and is extending its stake in Belgium's Telenet. Liberty also acquired a small stake in UK free-to-air network ITV, which has led to speculation about a joint Virgin/ITV bid for the English Premier League rights and murmurs of a wider takeover.

Our forecast at Digital TV Research is pay TV revenues in western Europe will be flat for the next few years. In fact, we expect them to fall in the UK. The main reason is the conversion of subscribers to bundles – bundled subscribers pay less for TV products.

The number of pay TV subscribers to traditional platforms won't grow by that much either, and this isn't good news for Sky Europe's satellite TV platforms. However, the company will always benefit from its control of premium rights, especially football.

Online provides one area for subscriber expansion: Sky's SVOD service Now TV has the advantage of screening movies a year before its competitors. However, Now TV provides a much more limited choice of titles than the likes of Netflix.

Operational – and successful – in the UK and Ireland since January 2012, Netflix plans to launch in six more European markets later this year, including Germany and Austria. Digital TV Research estimates that Netflix had 4.3 million paying subscribers in the UK and Ireland by June 2014.

However, there is no evidence – yet – to suggest that European pay TV operators are losing subscribers to the SVOD platforms – in fact, Sky is clearly embracing the concept.

Digital TV Research forecasts that there will be 28.8 million SVOD subscribers (across all platforms – not just Sky) in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the UK by 2020; up from 10.5 million by the end of 2014. SVOD revenues will grow from US\$1 billion to US\$2.8 billion over the same period. The game is changing. **TBI**

**There is no evidence – yet – that suggests that European pay TV operations are losing customers to the subscription video-on-demand platforms. In fact, BSkyB is clearly embracing the concept**

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# ON THE MOVE

TBI takes a look at the latest comings and goings in the international television business and reports on who's moving where

Dutch broadcaster SBS Broadcasting has appointed PETER DE MÖNNINK as its new CEO, as part of a management rejig by parent company Sanoma. He is already CEO of Sanoma Media Netherlands, and at SBS replaces Hans Edin, who has been interim chief exec since last year



Sony Pictures Television has hired former Disney producer Vadim Sokolovsky to run its production business in Russia following the exit of Maria Smirnova to CTC earlier this year. He was The Walt Disney Company Russia between 2007 and 2010, and has since been an independent writer/director

Zodiak Media has hired former Paramount digital programming chief KEITH QUINN to take its European scripted formats into the US. He has taken a consultancy post, which sees him working closely with Zodiak Rights drama chief Caroline Torrance and Zodiak's local scripted bosses to take the company's dramas and comedies Stateside



Eileen O'Neill has been promoted to global group president of Discovery Studios. Lee Bartlett had been leading the production division. He remains in charge of other units, including business affairs. Both will sit on All3Media's board when Discovery closes its £550 million (US\$930 million) deal, along with Liberty Global, for the super indie



Former Discovery Communications and BBC factual programming boss ANDREW JACKSON has joined ex-Zodiak USA boss Grant Mansfield's fledgling prodco. He joins as executive VP, international production at Plimsoll Productions, which Mansfield launched in September last year to create unscripted shows for the US and UK markets

Anni Faurbye Fernandez is to leave her post as CEO of Zodiak Media's Swedish prodco Yellow Bird in order to launch her own TV and film production firm. Zodiak Nordic chief executive Johannes Jensen will add her duties to his remit as a result



STEVE GREEN, formerly of UK-based IP group Galleon Holdings, has joined ITV Studios Global Entertainment's children's unit. He will be executive VP, kids' content and distribution, reporting to ITVSGE's managing director, Maria Kyriacou

Turner Broadcasting System has recruited SBS Discovery buyer Karin Lindström as programme director of its entertainment channels in the Nordic region. The duties covered by the role were previously handled from Turner's London base



NIGEL PICKARD is set to join Dial Square Eighty Six, the new content company launched by RDF founder and former Zodiak Media boss David Frank. Another kids TV veteran, Charlie Caminada, has also joined the company

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# Competition heats up for Netflix



**N**etflix has shaken up the whole content world – from production with its programme of huge-budgeted originals, distribution with its big cheques for exclusive rights, and transmission with low-cost month-long subscriptions. The same could be said, albeit to a lesser extent, of Amazon with its Prime Instant Video service.

Having disrupted the whole TV business, Netflix and Amazon have also validated their SVOD business model. Some of the companies most threatened by the US-based firms – and others simply mindful of the opportunity they have proved exists – are now taking the fight to Netflix.

In Canada, rival cablers Shaw and Rogers are launching Shomi, a new subscription video-on-demand service that will roll out in November. Announcing the new service the cablers said that Shomi will use “algorithmic technology to help you pick what you actually want to watch”. The investment in content is clear, with Shaw and Rogers having secured SVOD rights to 340 series and 11,000 hours of TV shows and 1,200 feature films. They added that 30% of that content will be Canadian.

A raft of US drama series will be available at launch including *The Strain*, *Modern Family*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *24: Live Another Day*, and *Sleepy Hollow* from Fox, MGM-distributed *Vikings* and NBCU-distributed *Chicago Fire*. Priced at the same C\$8.99 (US\$8.29) point as a

new Netflix subscription in Canada, the cablers are clearly fighting back and keen to retain their existing customers and offer cord cutters and others a new alternative.

In Australia, Nine Network’s parent company is partnering with publishing group Fairfax Media to create a A\$100 million (US\$93.3 million) Australian subscription video-on-demand service. Mike Sneesby already in charge of the venture, StreamCo., and both Nine and Fairfax will invest up to A\$50 million in to the business. It will roll out in 2015 with a “a broad range of local and international programming”. Netflix is also expected to launch in Australia in 2015 with about 200,000 Australians thought to be accessing the US service via a VPN.

StreamCo. will compete with existing SVOD services including Quickflix and Foxtel’s Presto, but says it has secured “a number of cornerstone content deals ahead of its launch”, without giving further detail.

In Belgium, BeTV, the pay TV operator formerly known as Canal+ Belgium and owned by cable operator Voo, has launched a streaming service ahead of Netflix’s launch in the European country. Although a TV Everywhere, rather than SVOD, service, it will provide Belgian pay TV customers with another streaming option. It is available to subscribers at no extra price. BeTV Go will include channels Ber, BeS”ries, BeCin” and BeSport along with the service’s on-demand offerings.

BeTV has access to premium Hollywood

content via deals with the major studios, with rights to movies ahead of their free-to-air showing. Forthcoming US series to be aired on BeS”ries include season three of Netflix’s own *House of Cards* and season five of HBO’s *Game of Thrones*.

Netflix has not reached Africa yet, but Netflix-style services are rolling out in the continent. Aflix, a premium OTT service featuring more than 2,000 hours of content, including new releases from major Hollywood studios, went live in late August. The new service is available on smartphones and tablets in Sub-Saharan Africa and was launched by connected platform provider Vonetize, and billing solution provider SmartPay.tv. It offers Hollywood and Bollywood movies, TV series, kids content, telenovelas and sports, lifestyle, nature, science and music programming.

It will compete against rival African content services such as Pana TV.

Programming deals are in place with Disney, Warner Brothers, MGM, Lionsgate and Miramax and Aflix has popular shows including *Mad Men* and *Anger Management*. Vonetize plans to expand across Africa during 2015, making the service available on LG, Toshiba and Samsung smart TVs, as well as set-top-boxes.

Netflix, meanwhile, is continuing its expansion, announcing its first-ever original drama in France, ahead of its launch in the country. *Marseille* will be an eight-part drama about “power, corruption and redemption” for the internet TV service, set in the French port of the same name. It will focus on a long-serving city mayor, who faces a young and ambitious rival in upcoming elections in which he has already chosen his heir. The pair will stage a merciless fight that brings in drug lords, politicians, unions and other political players from the city.

International subscriptions will account for one fifth of Netflix’s overall business in four years time as it completes its planned raft of launches in European countries, according to a recent study by IHS Technology. IHS estimates that Netflix’s launch in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Switzerland and Germany later this year will add five to six million new subscribers to its customer base. **TBI**

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# MIPCOM: Drama hot picks

The new dramas set for Cannes include a Norwegian invasion story, a David Duchovny detective series and a big-budget mystery set in the Arctic. TBI runs down the best of the best



THE SHOW: *Occupied*  
THE PRODUCER: Yellow Bird, GTV  
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Zodiak Rights  
THE BROADCASTERS: TV2 (Norway), Arte (France)  
THE CONCEPT: Scandi drama from Jo Nesbo about a Russian invasion of Norway

In an era in which Russia is embroiled in a territorial dispute with a European neighbour and is at the centre of international events, *Occupied* looks like a fast-turnaround drama inspired by real-life. It is in fact a thriller from the mind of best-selling novelist Jo Nesbo, the inspiration for which predates anything happening in the real world.

The drama follows events in the close future when Russia has, on behalf of the EU, invaded Norway in order to take control of its oil resources.

Nesbo came up with the idea with Yellow Bird executive producer Marianne Gray when they were working on *Headhunters*, but Karriane Lund, writer of Norwegian series *AF1*, was the lead writer on the series.

The series producers, Yellow Bird (*Wallander*, the *Millennium* film trilogy) and

GTV, are both part of Zodiak Media, and its content sales arm will launch the show at MIPCOM. Former BBC Worldwide head of drama Caroline Torrance joined Zodiak earlier this year and inherited the project.

“When people first talked about *Occupied* it seemed like a fantasy that Russia would invade another country, but now it is very topical,” she says. “It’s almost a [sales] hook, when you talk about the story the parallels become obvious.”

She adds: “In the series the Norwegians almost invite Russia in – it is a ‘silk glove’ invasion – and supposed to be temporary, but the Russians get more entrenched and involved and in episode five it becomes clear that they are here to stay. *Occupied* is about how different people and characters react to living in an occupied country.”

The cast of characters spans the upper reaches of government, journalists and members of the public. Filmed in Norwegian, Russian and English – the Russians and Norwegians speak in their own tongues and in English when talking to one another – and audiences are increasingly more interested in the story rather than the language in which a drama series is made, Torrance says.

*Occupied* is in production ahead of hitting Arte in France and TV2 in Norway next year. Zodiak travels to MIPCOM with the first finished episodes and English-language scripts for buyers interested in formats.

Torrance says: “The scripts are there: broadcasters could take them and think how they could be adapted. It does not have to be oil at the centre of it, it could be another vital resource, so we could see different versions.”





**THE SHOW:** *Manhattan*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Lionsgate Television, Skydance TV, Tribune Studios  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Lionsgate  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** WGN America, Hulu (US)  
**THE CONCEPT:** American scientists race to create the world's first atomic bomb during World War II

**THE SHOW:** *The Brittany Murphy Story*  
**THE PRODUCER:** MarVista Entertainment  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** MarVista Entertainment  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Lifetime (US)  
**THE CONCEPT:** One-off drama tracing the life of the late movie star

MarVista was talking to Brittany Murphy some years ago about a TV movie project that never came to fruition and now, following the untimely death of the actress in 2009, the producer and distributor has a TV movie about her life.

Commissioned by US cable net Lifetime, which debuted *The Brittany Murphy Story* in early September, MarVista will launch the one-off internationally at MIPCOM.

"After her tragic death we had her story in mind, and it's been five years now since her passing, so it felt like the right time," says Vanessa Shapiro, MarVista's executive VP, distribution.

MarVista cast Amanda Fuller (*Grey's Anatomy*) as Murphy and *Twin Peaks* star Sherilyn Fenn as her mother. Over 90 minutes, the unauthorised biopic traces Murphy's life. "It covers the early years to the end and it tries to explain what happens amid the huge controversy," says Shapiro. "It's a story about an appealing personality, a star, and a tragedy."

The MarVista sales chief says France, Spain and the UK remain good markets for TV movies, and that the film will sell well in Asia and there is growing demand for telefilms in Africa.

The distributor often packages up its movies – for example selling a package of Christmas-themed titles – but expects *The Brittany Murphy Story* to also sell as a one-off. Shapiro says: "This is so unique that it will sell as a standalone."



Lionsgate's MIPCOM entry in many ways mirrors the indie studio's recent history. The studio was an early producer for Showtime with *Weeds*, AMC with *Mad Men* and Netflix with *Orange is the New Black*, and as managing director, international, Peter Iacono notes, it has been "at the forefront of creating drama for new networks and those looking to have their voice heard".

*Manhattan* represents US basic cable channel WGN America's second scripted series, and Lionsgate hopes it will be a network-defining effort in the same way *Weeds*, *Mad Men* and *OITNB* have been for their respective platforms.

The 13-part show follows the New Mexico scientists who raced to create the atom bomb during the Second World War. Iacono says a central theme is the "moral imperative" these people felt to create the devastating weapon, to save lives. The bomb eventually dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima.

"There is this over-arching theme of a deadline looming – the characters feel like there's a ticking clock above them," he adds.

Set in what creator Sam Shaw and executive producer Thomas Schlamme define as the US's first suburb, Los Alamos, it is just as much about the murky

relationships of the town's families and neighbours as it is the dread of war, Iacono says. Besides those pushing through their part of the bomb's creation, few know or are at liberty to discuss their work. "It's the quintessential American suburban setting, but built on secrets and lies," he adds.

Having Shaw, an emerging writer best known for work on Showtime's *Masters of Sex*, working with former *West Wing* showrunner Schlamme has given the show "a wonderful dynamic that comes across on screen", Iacono adds.

Deals have already been concluded in China, with European and Latin American interest understood to be strong. In the US, Hulu has acquired first-look streaming VOD rights and is launching episodes a day after their Sunday bow on WGN America. Hulu is offering the most-recent five episodes free on its basic service after a three-day delay, while new eps come through Hulu Plus.

*Manhattan's* first episode on July 27 took a total audience (including Live +3 numbers) of 2.2 million, and initially critical reaction has been broadly positive.

Channels seeking good alternatives to *Mad Men*, which ends after its upcoming seventh season, should pay a trip to Lionsgate's Riviera Beach stand, Iacono says.

# Gawayn 2

## BROADCASTERS



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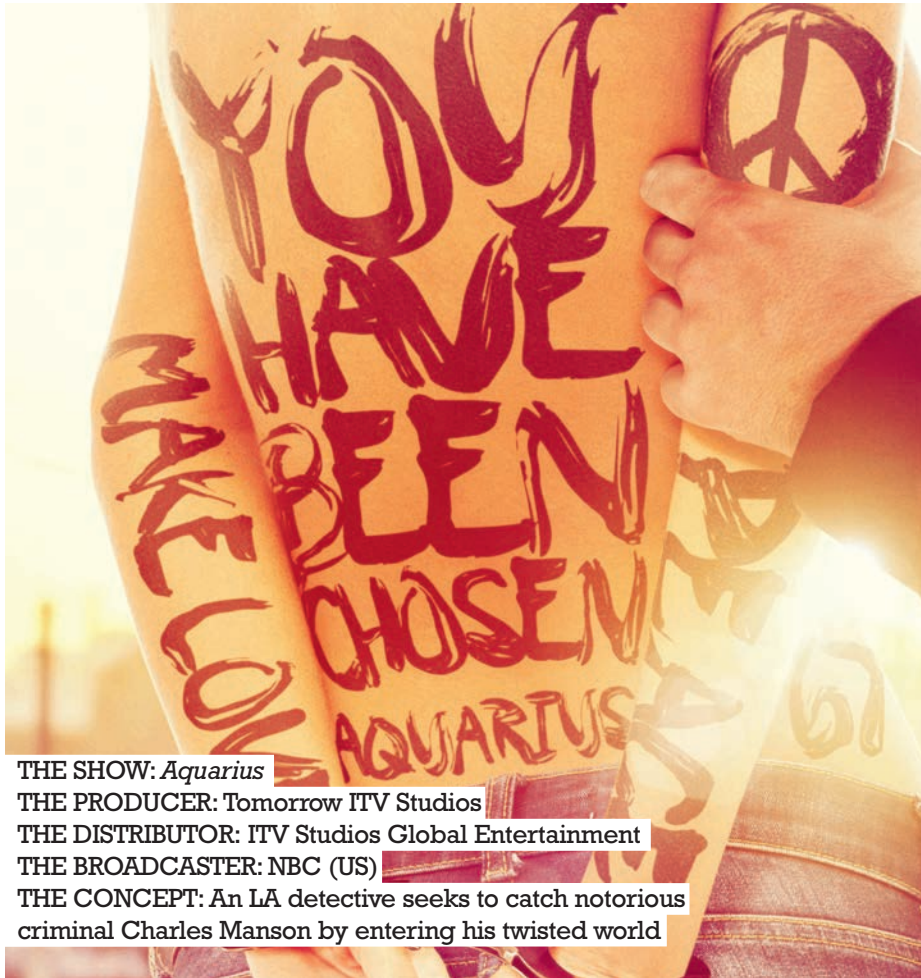
BROADCASTERS



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**THE SHOW:** *Aquarius*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Tomorrow ITV Studios  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** ITV Studios Global Entertainment  
**THE BROADCASTER:** NBC (US)  
**THE CONCEPT:** An LA detective seeks to catch notorious criminal Charles Manson by entering his twisted world

**THE SHOW:** *Indian Summers*  
**THE PRODUCER:** New Pictures  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** All3Media International  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** Channel 4 (UK), Masterpiece (US), BBC (Australia)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Epic period drama set in India as British rule begins to come to an end

*Aquarius* is the first project out of Tomorrow ITV Studios, the new joint-venture prodco ITV Studios and Endeavor Talent Agency co-founder Marty Adelstein created earlier this year to make straight-to-series projects.

The US broadcast networks' increasing openness to the straight-to-series model has opened the door to independent studios such as ITV, which cannot enter the risky and expensive pilot system. Accordingly, NBC has ordered a full 13x60mins of *Aquarius*, which will play on the US network's midseason or summer grid next year.

*Aquarius* stars David Duchovny as a troubled detective in late 1960s LA. He is investigating a small-time criminal who turns out to be a much more sinister figure than he initially appears: Charles Manson, played by *Game of Thrones*' Gethin Anthony. Duchovny's younger partner goes deep undercover, as both cops become involved with Manson's twisted world.

The drama is based on an original idea

from John McNamara, who exec produced another ITV Studios straight-to-series show for NBC, the US adaptation of *Prime Suspect*.

"It's grounded in something real, which is something that is helpful in the international market," says Ruth Clarke, director of global acquisitions and coproductions at ITV Studios Global Entertainment. "Duchovny plays a fictional cop, but the stories are related to real murders. He's a complicated character, and his partner ends up in the Manson tribe."

ITV Studios will premiere the opening episode at MIPCOM in October where the drama gets its international launch, with (schedules permitting) behind the camera and on-screen talent in attendance.

Clarke says she is hopeful of a UK deal for the show, and the likes of Australia, France and Germany are also key sales targets. "With the majors, [acquisition execs] buy into the idea of a show based on the pilot and we're hoping they do the same with *Aquarius*," Clarke says.

The latest big-budget period piece looking to take a seat at the drama top-table is *Indian Summers*. Made by Charlie Pattinson's indie, New Pictures, for Channel 4 in the UK and PBS Masterpiece in the US, it covers a period in Indian history that has hitherto been untouched by scripted TV.

"It's a period in time that has not been covered, the end of the Raj as power is being taken from the British," says Elaine Pyke, who joined New Pictures from UK pay channel Sky Atlantic and who is exec-producing *Indian Summers*. "It is also unique in that it tells the story from the point of view of an Indian family as well as a British family."

Writer Paul Rutman delivered a spec script to New Pictures before Pattinson had him develop it as a series for Channel 4. Masterpiece then came on board. Set in Simla, a 'Little England' in the foothills of the Himalayas, the central British family – the Whelans – is headed by Ralph (*The Inbetweeners*' Henry Lloyd-Hughes) who is the secretary to the viceroy, the only character in the series based on a real person.

The ten-parter opens with a 90-minute special before settling into a one-hour format. Penang Hill in Malaysia doubles for 1930s India and the show will debut early next year. Each season will span one summer and the plan, should it rate well, is to cover five watershed summers between 1932 and the British handover in 1947.



LEADING TELENOVELA IN SPAIN AND ITALY

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**THE SHOW:** *Intruders*  
**THE PRODUCER:** BBC Worldwide Productions  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** BBC Worldwide  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** BBC America (US), BBC Two (UK)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Dark drama involving an immortality-chasing cult and a cop with a violent past

BBC America's latest original drama follows a similar theme to previous efforts – British and North American sensibilities meshed together with production expertise and stylings from both sides of the Atlantic.

*Intruders* tells the story of a former LAPD

officer who becomes involved with a secret society devoted to chasing immortality by taking control of others' bodies. The officer (British actor John Simm), a man with a dark, violent past, is thrown into turmoil when his wife mysteriously disappears.

Unusually for Canadian public broadcaster CBC, two of its new dramas will debut to some fanfare at MIPCOM. Entertainment One is launching slave story *The Book of Negroes*, which is a coproduction with US network BET, while Modern Times Group-owned DRG will represent period piece *Strange Empire*.

"This is a breakout for CBC," says DRG's CEO Jeremy Fox. "It's not unfair to say it used to do dramas that worked mainly for public service broadcasting, but this is HBO or AMC territory."

The 13x60mins show follows three independent women from the 1860s fighting for survival in and around the wild boundary frontier that separated Canada from the US at the time. They are brought together after a series of brutal murders.

*Strange Empire* comes from renowned Canuck showrunner Laurie Finstad, whose previous hit, *Durham County*, is the only other Canadian drama for which DRG had previously pitched. Former CBS president Jeff Sagansky is an executive producer.

DRG landed the show thanks to senior VP Noel Hedges, who knew the production team. The producers needed a distributor to fill a



**THE SHOW:** *Strange Empire*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Janestown Productions, Johnson Production Group  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** DRG  
**THE BROADCASTER:** CBC (Canada)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Three 19th century women from the US-Canadian border are thrust into danger by a series of brutal slayings

funding gap early on in development, and DRG came on board. This model removes any chance of larger distributors such as Endemol or Shine International snapping up the rights at a later stage, explains Fox.

Writer Glen Morgan (*The X Files*) says the BBC Two coproduction closely follows the source material, author Michael Marshall Smith's novel of the same name. "The book really mashed up several genres – a Raymond Chandler 'my wife is missing' story and an Omen-type story, for example. I really drew on that, with multiple stories converging on one plot."

Morgan also looked to Alan J. Pakula-directed movies from the 20th Century such as *Parallax View* and *All the King's Men* and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation*, which he describes as having "the same paranoid tone" as his series.

The initial commission is for eight episodes, and season one will have a closed ending. However, Morgan has a plan to run the show for up to five seasons, with an ending at that point already conceived.

Meanwhile, thanks to having LA-based BBC Worldwide Productions on producing duties, the show has plenty of "European sensibilities" along with Morgan's trademark horror genre influences, which he honed while a writer on Chris Carter's science-fiction series *The X Files*.

The exec expects sales to premium cable and public broadcasters. "We take the slightly off-centre stuff that might not play in primetime on a commercial channel; stuff that is off-beat, tough and critically acclaimed," he says.

# AUDIOVISUAL FROM SPAIN



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◀ **The Secret of Old Bridge**  
Soap Opera, 1105 x 50'  
BOOMERANG TV

▶ **The Sea Chef**  
Documentary Series, 13 x 50'  
MEDINA MEDIA



▶ **No Identity**  
Drama, 9 x 90'  
ATRESMEDIA

▶ **The Shower**  
Format, 90'  
SECUOYA C.D.

▶ **Remember When**  
TV Series, 234 x 75'  
GRUPO GANGA PRODUC.



▼ **Don't Say It, Bring It!**  
Format / Game Show, 30'  
PHILEAS PRODUCTIONS



▶ **Genocide in the Jungle**  
Documentary, 1 x 90'  
ONZA DISTRIBUTION



▲ **Bandolera**  
Drama, 534 x 45'  
COMERCIAL TV

◀ **Jelly Jamm**  
Animation Series, 52 x 11'  
ANIMA KITCHENT



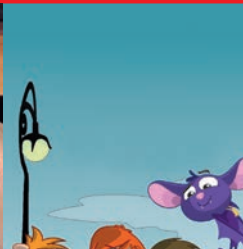
▼ **Pepe's Beach Club**  
Comedy, 10 x 70'  
MEDIASET ESPAÑA



▼ **Majorca is not Magalluf!**  
Documentary, 60'  
RAYS OF SUNSHINE

▲ **Foosball**  
Animation Film, 90'  
FILM FACTORY ENT.

▼ **Second Screen Technology**  
MOVIELANG



▲ **I Know Who You Are**  
Drama, 20 x 45'  
FILMAX INTERNATIONAL

▶ **Tesis**  
Feature Film, 126'  
SOGEPAQ



◀ **Bat Pat**  
Animation Series, 52 x 11'  
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**THE SHOW:** *Fortitude*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Fifty Fathoms, Tiger Aspect Productions  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Sky Vision  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Sky Atlantic (UK), Pivot (US)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Big-budget mystery thriller in which a mismatched pair of detectives investigate a brutal murder in an idyllic Arctic mining town

**THE SHOW:** *The Gods of Wheat Street*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Every Cloud Productions  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** DCD Rights  
**THE BROADCASTER:** ABC (Australia)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Family drama about a modern Aboriginal family in middle class Australia

With a budget rumoured to be one of the biggest out of the UK in some time, *Fortitude* is already drumming up excitement. Distributor Sky Vision, which is selling the show internationally, says presales to around ten territories have already recouped its investment.

For Sky Vision's paycaster cousin Sky Atlantic, the Simon Donald (*Low Winter Sun*)-written show is the latest foray into high-end drama. The 12x60mins series, set to launch at the end of this year, is set around a grizzly murder in the seemingly quiet Arctic town of Fortitude, which has never previously experienced a serious crime.

Patrick Spence, founder of Endemol-owned producer Fifty Fathoms, says murder is used as a vehicle "to explore the lives of people that have chosen to live in what its effectively a frontier town".

Following the death of a British national, Stanley Tucci's English forensics detective is flown in to investigate alongside the inexperienced local sheriff (newcomer Richard Dormer, pictured), who has never worked a murder case before. It soon becomes clear

Tucci is investigating a separate incident, for which Dormer's character is the prime suspect. "There's a lovely dance going on between them," says Spence.

While Sky Atlantic funded the series as part of BSKyB's push into original UK drama, US premium cabler Starz was initially attached as coproduction partner, but pulled out because of scheduling issues.

Emerging cable channel Pivot has stepped in as copro partner, and now has first-run rights in the States. "Pivot has bought into the show because it perfectly marries with the profile of their channel," says Spence. "If you look at the films their parent company, Participant, has created they are high-end, authored pieces with a social conscience, and this fits very much within that."

Spence adds the inclusion of Tucci as part of a cast that also includes Michael Gambon (*The Singing Detective*), Sophie Gråbøl (*The Killing*) and Christopher Eccleston (*Doctor Who*) was not down to him being American.

"In my experience of coproductions, this idea American channels need American characters is just totally untrue," he says.

DCD Rights' latest Australian drama for the international market is *The Gods of Wheat Street*. Having taken rights to *The Slap*, *The Code* and *The Straits* among others, DCD will give *The Gods of Wheat Street* its international launch at MIPCOM after it debuted on Australian pubcaster the ABC's flagship channel in April.

Magical and social realism both play a part in the story of a modern Aboriginal family in middle class Australia. The Freeburn clan is headed by eldest brother Odin after the death of the family's mother, and the ensuing drama tells their story. "It's an intimate journey into the heart of an Aborigine family and their trials and tribulations as they move into middle class Australia, which has always been white," says Rick Barker, senior VP, sales and acquisitions at DCD.

Produced by Deb Cox and Fiona Eagger's Australian indie Every Cloud, DCD has six episodes for international buyers and the short run – ahead of a possible second series – means that public, not commercial, broadcasters are the most likely buyers.

"It suits public TV," Barker says. "We see Asia, Latin America and eastern Europe as significant opportunities, while Scandinavia has been very supportive of Australian drama and broadcasters there still have slots for this type of family-focused programming."





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# The new vintage





Heidi

The international kids TV market will soon be swamped by much-loved heritage brands that are set to relaunch. Jesse Whittock investigates whether looking to the past is the way to secure future TV hits

**Q**uestion: what do the years 1965, 1969, 1973, 1980, 1983 and 1997 have in common? Answer: they all represent years that now-classic children’s brands first launched on television.

In the past few years, rebooted shows such as Nickelodeon’s *Peter Rabbit* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* performed well after relaunching. The fear among producers is that broadcasters are less likely to commission new ideas when offered the option of tried-and-tested alternatives — and around half a dozen heritage brands are soon coming back to TV in new guises.

However, the situation is more complex and each kids show, new or reboot, has its own origin story, says Genevieve Dexter, founder of kids consultancy Serious Lunch and executive producer of UK terrestrial Channel 5’s upcoming *Wombles* remake. “When you look at the finance models of the shows coming back, they are all completely different,” she says.

Michael Dee, director of content at UK-based IP group Coolabi, agrees. “It is very strange, and I don’t know what’s in the ether, but these things take a long time to pull together. They emerge in different ways and they all have their own lives,” he says.

The re-emergence of Oliver Postgate’s other-worldly 1960s UK preschool series *Clangers* is down to the programming team at US kids cable channel Sprout. “The broadcaster saw we had merchandising rights to *The Clangers*, and asked us whether we could bring it back, and whether the Postgate family would be happy with that,” recalls Coolabi’s director of production development Zoe Bamsey (nee Scurfield).

Meanwhile, “the nostalgia around *Danger Mouse* was coincidental” to FremantleMedia Kids & Family Entertainment bringing the classic British animated spy back to TV, says the RTL-owned content company’s executive VP and general manager Rick Glankler. “We brought back the brand because the story is timeless, and because *Danger Mouse* was

one of the leading British brands in the eighties that travelled the world. There was global appeal.”

The return of a perennial favourite often offers one clear advantage over a new brand: a well-developed ancillary business. In the US, Cartoon Network is in 2016 relaunching *The Powerpuff Girls*, which it claims has generated US\$2.5 billion in retail sales since launch in 1998.

In Canada, Teletoon has tasked DHX Media with creating a new version of *Inspector Gadget*. DHX’s senior VP, distribution Josh Scherba says *Inspector Gadget* already has lined up a “significant” group of broadcast partners, highlighting the continued impact of a show that first hit screens in 1983.

“We’ve got a generation of people who grew up on it that are going to want their kids to experience it too,” he says. “*Gadget* is such a classic character – we’re keeping the physical comedy very much alive as that remains very relevant for audiences in 2015.”

For Dan Gopal, whose employer ITV Studios Global Entertainment is planning a major screening of the rebooted supermarionation kids series *Thunderbirds Are Go!* at MIPJunior, brand awareness helped score a presale for the new show with Australia’s Nine Network.

“Many of our clients are aware of the classic 1960s series and some have a history of licensing and exploiting that version. Equally, we are also talking to partners with no history of the original. They still understand how we have embraced the heritage and positive attributes of the classic series while creating a very modern version,” he says.

But how do you stay true to a brand’s values in a world that rarely resembles that of even even a few years ago – let alone two or three decades? It’s an issue Mike Young, creator of 1980s superhero toon *SuperTed* and now founder of Splash Entertainment, is mindful of as he works up a new 26x30mins version of his show. He is aware that tastes and sensibilities have changed.

“The original was made in an era when anything went and I don’t want to lose that,”



*Thunderbirds Are Go!* first hit screens in 1965

he says. “Political correctness and awareness are to the fore now, but we want to retain the spirit of the original. I’ll be damned if I do it any other way.” Young has a bible ready for potential partners at MIPJunior.

Keeping the uniqueness of a brand is absolutely key, says FremantleMedia’s Glankler, referencing how the spy-thriller spoof elements and unique relationships in *Danger Mouse* are timeless facets of the show. The new show will have Danger Mouse wearing an ‘i-patch’, which Glankler considers a nod to the present and the past. “Spy technology is always going to be exciting and appealing for kids,” he adds.

Similarly, Coolabi’s Dee says “there are certain things in *Clangers* that are perennial and don’t change”, such as the themes of community spirit and promotion of recycling. These “have never been more relevant than today”, he adds.

Patrick Elmendorff, managing director of Belgium-based Studio 100 Media, references recent improvements in CGI production technology as another driving force behind the trend for revisiting heritage brands.

“Technological advances make it worthwhile,” he says. “Even five or six years ago there were fewer possibilities, but now you can recreate and bring back some of these classical brands.”

Studio 100 is currently working on remakes of classic Swedish morality tale *The*

*Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (see page 46) and *Heidi* (pictured, main), which Studio 100 Animation is recreating for French broadcaster TF1, Germany’s ZDF and Nine Network in Australia. “We’ve tried to create the same look and feel as the original *Heidi* – the characters look very similar,” says Elmendorff.

ITVSGE’s senior VP, digital global media Gopal says he expects *Thunderbirds are Go!* to resonate with new audiences because of “the balance achieved between creating a series with the core characteristics of the original show at its heart, while embracing current technology and production techniques to give it an incredibly modern look and feel”.

DHX decided to call on the services of a UK company – Darrall MacQueen – to produce an updated version of preschool megahit *Teletubbies*, having acquired the rights from creator Ragdoll Productions in 2013. “Britain was where the series was founded, and we didn’t think there was any substitute for being that close to the original DNA,” says Scherba.

Elmendorff suggests evergreen stories can increase viewership with “the three-generation phenomenon” of parents and grandparents watching with the little ones.

Consumption patterns have changed significantly in the multimedia era, and this represents another challenge for producers looking to remain true to their classic brand. While Studio 100 is keeping *Heidi* at its

original 22-minute episode length, others such as *Maya the Bee* have been reduced to 11.

DHX made a similar choice with *Inspector Gadget*. “One of the big things was go with an 11-minute format, rather than the 22-minute that was the norm in 1983,” says Scherba. “That definitely brings it up to date.”

Kids TV is, of course, much more of a business than it was when *Clangers* arrived on the BBC in 1963, or the *Wombles* first set foot on Wimbledon Common a decade later. Animated children’s programmes rarely survive if they do not lead to successful consumer products businesses.

“These series were made at a time when CP was a vague concept,” says Serious Lunch’s Dexter. “If you liked *The Clangers*, you couldn’t go out and buy a *Clangers* cup, as strange as that may seem now.”

Dexter notes that while international networks had success with shows like *The Wombles* and *Danger Mouse* first time around, others such as *Clangers* were very much local brands.

Dee and Bamsey say *Clangers* was not considered as a BBC heritage show internally at the UK pubcaster, but this did not stop BBC Worldwide taking on international sales rights. “It’s been totally embraced as a new show,” says Bamsey.

“Internationally, we have to think about it as a brand new preschool show,” adds Dee. This will also mean working up a CP strategy from

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scratch, but the weird and wonderful characters and their quirky actions mean “it is really unique from a consumer products angle”.

FremantleMedia’s Glankler warns reputation alone is not enough: “Rebuilding classic brands might help break through to a few retailers or manufacturers, and there might be some consumers that are move aware of it, but that’s as far as it goes.”

But before international sales and licensing and merchandising strategies can be drawn up, there is often the thorny issue of where the rights actually lie with these brands.

Mike Young took a year to bring all the *SuperTed* rights back under one roof, while *Wombles* co-creator Mike Batt spent even longer regrouping the *Wombles* IP, which had been sold in parts over a number of years.

Batt is now seeking long-term equity partners for the brand and reveals he has turned down one offer of £10 million (US\$16 million) from a UK-based kids company acting on behalf of a larger private investor.

“We are setting up our own animation facility with the help of the UK’s best production and technical talent, and look forward to sharing the adventure with the right commercial partners who can bring energy, vision and financial muscle to assist the ambitious international roll-out of the property,” he says.

Rights to other shows such as *Danger Mouse* and *Thunderbirds* were already housed in one place with major TV distributors, while some older IP is now out of copyright.

What is true of all of the reboots is the ultimate rights owners believe these shows –



the biggest and most-enduring of their eras – will be modern days smashes.

But where does this leave new development, and what do the heritage brands says about broadcasters’ willingness to take risks?

“I believe we see a relatively restrictive policy from broadcasters in regards to investing in and coproducing new content,” says Studio 100’s Elmendorff. “Heritage makes things easier – establishing a new brand is much more difficult than one everyone is already aware of. There has been a certain tendency towards [heritage properties].”

The networks are less certain. “In the past two years there have definitely been more reboots than in the past and I don’t know why; it could be commercial, or it could be

editorial,” says Nickelodeon’s senior VP, global acquisitions and international programming Jules Borkent, whose network has relaunched *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Peter Rabbit*.

“It could be seen as being risk-averse, but the challenge is still that the audience will decide. If something was big in the 1990s [kids today] don’t have a point of reference.”

Elmendorff says having a mix of library and original development is key, something with which DHX’s Scherba agrees. “New content is the lifeblood of this business, and while we have a great library, it’s critical to be consistently developing new content.”

Serious Lunch’s Dexter says success for the heritage brands will help to develop the industry and create more money for development: “If we make some money out *The Wombles*, you can bet we’ll try to make the next big kids brand, but the money has to be there for it to happen in the first place.”

FremantleMedia’s Glankler reference’s Entertainment One-sold *Peppa Pig* and Cartoon Network pair *Adventure Time* and *The Amazing World of Gumball* as sign new properties can break through.

Whether today’s young audiences take to yesterday’s classics remains to be seen. The ones that work will successfully harness a mix of pop culture, ratings and CP revenues.

Coolabi’s Dee says: “All of the new heritage shows have different merits and are from different eras, so it’s really hard to box them into the same bracket.” **TBI**



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The 'Golden Age' of drama as it pertains to the US has yielded a large number of increasingly ambitious, critically acclaimed scripted hits. Now international players are joining the party like never before and, instead of being the passive partner in the relationship with the US channel, are looking to take the lead, reports Stewart Clarke

## A feast of US coproduction

**O**penness to non-US-originated ideas was heightened, out of necessity, during the 2008 writers strike, with Canadian series *Flashpoint* getting on CBS's air and paving the way for shows including *Rookie Blue*, which is still running on ABC in the US and Global in Canada after five seasons. Fast-forward six years from the strike and the architects of some of the early 'Can-Am' shows say the possibilities of getting international-originated content away in the US are better than ever.

"Everyone in the US is paying attention to shows from abroad in a way that they weren't a

couple of years ago, but we still need to shout about them from the rooftops – it hasn't become easy," says Carrie Stein, executive VP of global production at Entertainment One Television. She is looking to set up film-to-TV project *Rambo* as coproduction, and the expectation is that it will have a European copro partner.

With the US networks under greater pressure than before, in a world where they need to compete with an ever-growing number of commissioning cable channels as well as the deep-pocketed Netflix and Amazon, sharing the financial burden on a series is clearly a welcome relief, albeit still only on one or two projects each year.

The move to commissioning original content for the summer months has only heightened the need to drive more from a network programming budget. The necessity for content at the networks and cable channels also means showrunners are in short supply in Hollywood, another reason to look further afield.

"The reality is no-one would coproduce if they didn't have to, but we're in a 'Golden Age' of scripted programming and when there is a shortage of writers people look to new territories," says Lilla Hurst, the former coproductions chief at the UK's Channel 5, who last year launched copro consultancy Drive.

Having brought UK pubcaster BBC Two and



US cable net Sundance together for two-part drama *One Child*, about an Anglo-Chinese girl finding her identity, the company is now officially the UK eyes and ears of the US cable channel following a pact signed in June.

The US networks' first impulse when presented with a hot international drama project remains to remake it, not look to a copro partner, and while financial realities are altering the picture, the idea of coproducing still does not come easy.

"We've had execs say 'this really makes sense for us, but I'm not sure we can sell it internally' – the economic model can be right, the pitch good, the script good, but there's still resistance," says one LA-based copro expert.

There is, however, greater openness than ever before from US TV execs to getting involved with international partners.

"I've noticed a trend toward a new, global marketplace in terms of where an idea comes from," says industry veteran Joel Denton, who recently joined A+E Networks as managing director, content sales and partnerships. "The newest and freshest ideas could come from Russia, Turkey, Israel or France. Ideas are the currency, and the US is looking to the world for the next great thing."

Entertainment One-distributed *Welcome to Sweden* is a prime example of a show set up in Europe and making it as a US copro. The comedy series, from Amy Poehler's brother Greg and based on his fish-out-of-water experiences as a US citizen living in Sweden, was commissioned by Swedish commercial broadcaster TV4. With the added attraction of star turns from Amy

attention than with a fully funded original that has made it through the pilot process. However, NBC got behind *Welcome to Sweden* in terms of on-air marketing and, crucially, truly bought into the idea. "The whole thing we have learned about coproduction is that if the network isn't invested it is not real," says eOne's Stein. "They need a real sense of ownership if it's going to work."



**"As an independent studio, the things we are most excited about are the copro models that involve international and US broadcasters"**  
**Noreen Halpern, Halfire-Core**

Noreen Halpern, the ex-eOne drama boss and one of the architects of Canada-US shows including *Rookie Blue*, last year set up her own indie, Halfire. She agrees that unless two parties are fully invested the copro won't work. "It's hard to pull off, but where *Rookie Blue* helped was to cement the idea in the international market that a US-Canada show can be a success and last many seasons. Now as an independent studio, the things we are most excited about are the [copro] models that involve an international and a US broadcaster."

Halfire's busy first phase has seen it team with the Marc Graboff-helmed Core Media to create Halfire-Core, and bag a three-show deal with broadcast net NBC. Separate to that pact, Halfire-

in with season two suggestions.

Stein says NBC will have greater editorial input second time around, but that *Welcome to Sweden* remains a TV4 show.

The deal shows a European partner can wield influence, but that was not always the case. "The Americans always loved to see our money, but when we asked to influence the show, it was always very, very difficult," Thomas von Hennet, VP, international coproduction at German broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1, said during TBI's coproduction panel at NATPE Europe this year.

One effect of this historical imbalance is that those on the European side can be wary of a US-originated project when they are asked to come on board as a copro partner. "They can be sceptical about the partnership, as they know the American partner will impose a particular process – and that can make them a little gun shy," says one US-based dealmaker.

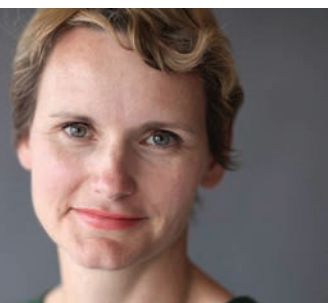
The situation is different again in Canada, where, one executive tells TBI the broadcasters are telling producers to go and find a US partner if they want to get their project to the front of the commissioning queue.

The roster of potential US partners for international players continues to grow. PBS Masterpiece is already a partner on hit period drama *Downton Abbey* alongside UK-based, NBCUniversal-owned, Carnival Films. With Channel 4 in the UK it has now co-commissioned another UK-originated period piece, the upcoming *Indian Summers* (see page 26), which is being produced by All3Media-backed New Pictures.

All3 and its international arm have also been

**"No one would coproduce if they didn't have to, but there's a shortage of writers in this 'Golden Age', so people are looking to new territories"**

**Lilla Hurst, Drive**



Poehler in half of the eps and a guest appearance from her *Parks and Recreation* co-star Aubrey Plaza, the show has fared well on US net NBC, which chose to come on board. Another season is coming.

The risk with a network partner remains that it gives its straight-to-series copro less marketing

Core got *Working the Engels* away with the broadcaster, marking the first time NBC in the US and Shaw in Canada had joined forces for a half-hour comedy. Halfire-Core, Shaw and NBC are now co-developing *Rope*, a procedural about a parole team tracking down repeat offenders.

*Working the Engels* was scheduled in the

active in putting together copros such as *The White Queen* with premium cable net Starz and *Missing*, which is a copro between Starz, the BBC, New Pictures and another All3Media-owned prodco, Company Pictures.

Starz and HBO are among the most active cablers in terms of international coproduction. Starz has a pact with UK pubcaster the BBC and

drama. Lionsgate recently set up shop in the UK as the territory transforms into a key coproduction base for US studios. The British Film Institute recently said that since the tax break was introduced in April 2013, 40 high-end TV series worth £400 million (US\$663 million) have benefitted. "It's been hugely important," says A+E's Denton. "It used to be

American cop sent to Stockholm to investigate a series of grisly murders. The twelve-parter is being produced by US prodco Fabrik Entertainment, Munich-based Red Arrow International and Sweden's Strix.

Fabrik is based in Los Angeles, but is now part of the Red Arrow Group and as such the series is being 100% financed out of Europe for Sweden's Kanal 5 and German pay TV operator Sky Deutschland. Despite the influence of Moresco, the resulting show has a European sensibility, says Red Arrow International co-managing director Irina Ignatiew.

"The look and feel is more gritty than a US or Anglo Saxon show. Bobby was excited by the fact it was not a traditional US show and as showrunner has been able to go deep into the Scandi mentality and way of creating crime."

Ignatiew adds that she senses a greater appreciation of the international market among US channels. "It's because of a shift in revenues and where the money comes from: more and more comes from international and, in the US, even the studios are questioning the pilot system."

The demand for drama in the US is such that the next big broadcast hit – the next *Under the Dome*, *Sleepy Hollow* or *The Blacklist* – stands a good chance of hailing from outside of the States.

That would also move the copro output beyond the 'quirky' or 'dark' style of drama that still characterises much of the US-international fare.

**"There has been a shift in where the money comes from: more and more comes from the international market"**

**Irina Ignatiew, Red Arrow**



BBC Worldwide and, having worked together on *Da Vinci's Demons*, the pair is now teaming to adapt Richard House's thriller novel series *The Kills* for TV. Former HBO Films boss Colin Callender's indie, *Playground*, is also attached.

HBO's Cinemax, meanwhile, teams with BSkyB in the UK on action series *Strike Back*, which is produced by the Sony Pictures Television-backed UK prodco Left Bank Pictures. Cinemax and the BBC also worked together on *The Hunted*, which came from 21st Century Fox-owned super indie Shine Group and Frank Spotnitz's Big Light Productions.

Further back, the BBC-HBO connection also yielded *Rome* and Ricky Gervais comedy *Extras*.

Other notable examples of the UK-US premium cable relationship include Showtime and BBC Matt LeBlanc comedy *Episodes*, which is produced by UK indie Hat Trick.

While the premium US cable nets are seasoned coproducers, their basic counterparts are newer to the game, with many just moving into original programming. "It's harder with the [basic] cablers because they don't make as much and cling very tightly to every project," says one veteran of the US-UK copro scene.

BBC Worldwide's BBC America channel has also been coproducing, notably with the BBC. The pair made supernatural series *In the Flesh* and their latest projects are *Intruders* (see page 28) and *The Living and the Dead*, a period ghost-hunter drama from the writing team behind *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*.

One reason US-UK relations are particularly healthy is the British tax break for high-end

20-25% more expensive to shoot in the UK than Canada, the Czech Republic or Hungary, and it has made a huge, huge difference."

Meanwhile, European producers are starting to use a US production model. "The US showrunner model is important; [the idea of] someone who has complete creative control," says Denton. Indeed, US showrunners including Frank Spotnitz (*The X Files*) now base themselves on the continent.

"There are all these new channels that want



**"Everyone in the US is paying attention to shows from abroad in a way they weren't a couple of years ago"**

**Carrie Stein, eOne Television**

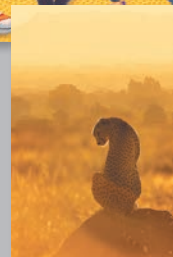
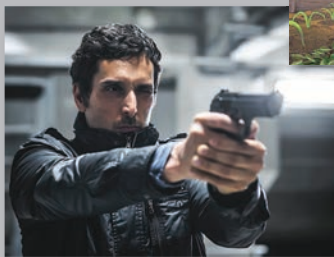
original programming and, to quote a line I know well, 'they want to believe'." Spotnitz said at the NATPE Europe panel this summer. "They can't afford to pay millions an episode for a show so they want to believe in your [non-US originated] show."

*Crash* producer Bobby Moresco is also in Europe at the helm of another Europe-US-produced multi-language project.

He is showrunner on *100 Code*, which is a hybrid of sparse Scandi noir and US detective fare, starring *Lost*'s Dominic Monaghan as an

"There is a greater recognition among US broadcasters that a story may need to be told outside of the US – and if the story demands to be shot in France, why not bring in a French partner," says Halfire-Core's Halpern.

In this new world, international companies are aiming high, keen for the kudos (and revenue) that a US broadcast show brings. "I want to have a mainstream network drama on air that goes out in the fall, and I think it will happen within the next year-to-eighteen-months," says eOne's Stein. **TBI**



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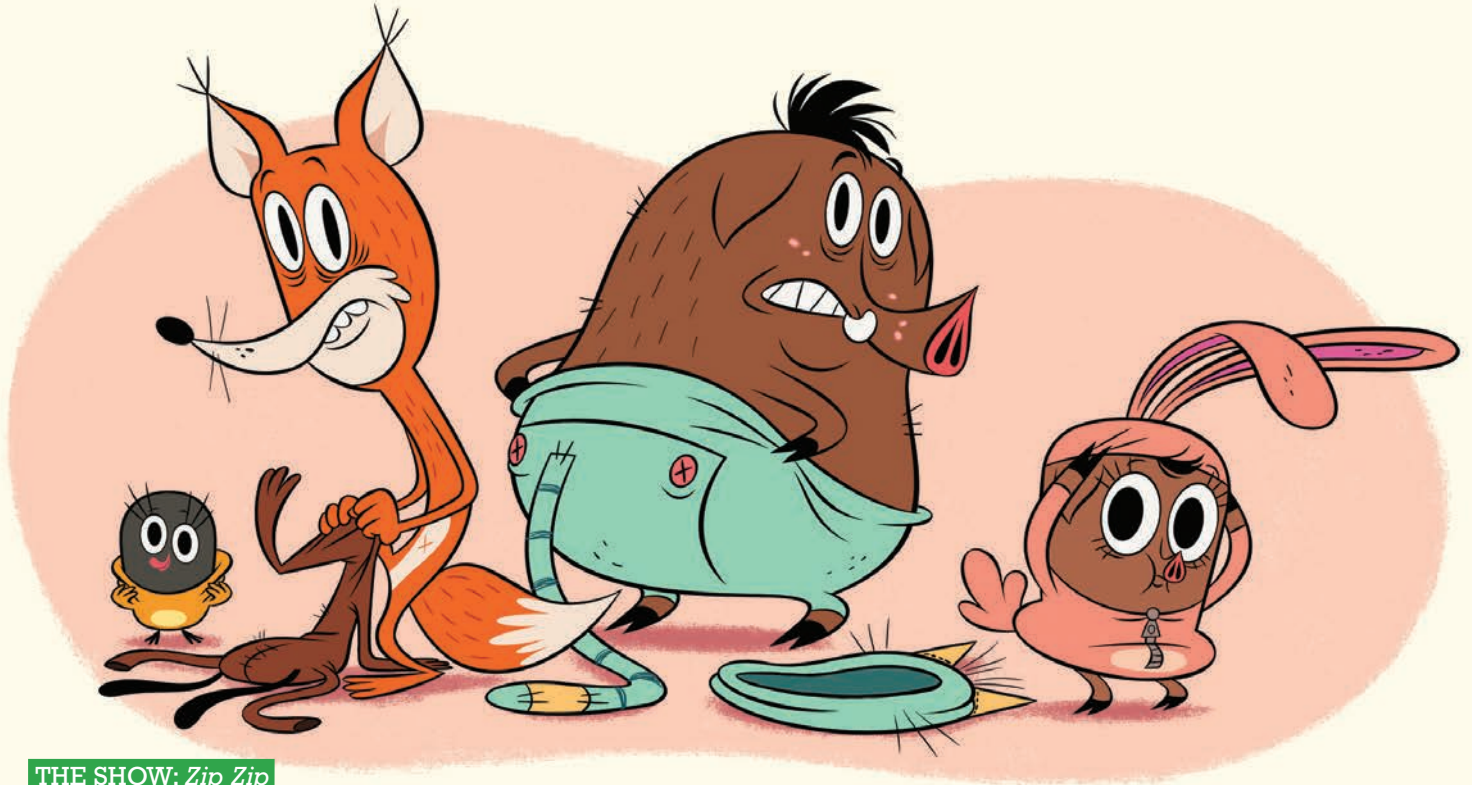
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# KIDS HOT PICKS 2014

TBI identifies nine kids series sure to make waves in Cannes



THE SHOW: *Zip Zip*

THE PRODUCER: Go-N

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Go-N

THE BROADCASTERS: France Télévisions, Super RTL (Germany)

THE CONCEPT: Slapstick comedy in which a group of wild animals don disguises and try to fit into city life

When a group of wild animals move to the big city to enjoy what they think will be the good life with a suburban family, they have no choice but to disguise themselves as domestic pets using zip-up costumes. The premise gives rise to abundant slapstick possibilities and provides the set-up that caught French pubcaster France Télévisions' attention when it commissioned 2D series *Zip Zip* from Go-N.

The French indie producer, which is also working up a new version of *Tootuff*, subsequently brought on broadcasters including Germany's Super RTL, which came in as a very early prebuyer on the €6 million (US\$7.9 million) project.

The writing team of Cynthia True (*The Mighty B*, *The Fairly Odd Parents*) from the US and Ian Carney (*The Octonauts*, *Tree Fu Tom*) from the UK give the French-produced and commissioned show an international sensibility.

The show has seen buyers in some regions addressing issues around immigration, as the animals move to a new part of the world and try to fit in. However, it is more than anything a straight-up comedy with an ensemble cast including a fox in a dog outfit, a blackbird in a canary suit and pigs dressed as rabbits and cats.

Aimed at 6-9s, Go-N says the 52x11mins

show will appeal to kids on different levels. "It's a simple concept that generates a lot of funny situations," says Go-N's Eric Garnet. "Younger viewers will be attracted by the visuals and older kids by the ironic tone and relationships between the characters."

Final voice talent has yet to be confirmed, but Tom 'voice of *SpongeBob SquarePants*' Kenny played Washington the fox in the pilot. (Although Kenny might struggle to come on full time given his commitments with the Nick series, unless of course the Viacom net buys the show, which would help secure his services.) Buyers will have the pilot to peruse at MIPJunior.



**THE SHOW:** *Hi Opie!*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Marblemedia, The Jim Henson Company  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** The Jim Henson Company  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** TVO, Knowledge Network ( Canada)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Live-action preschool series with new Henson-designed puppet Opie

Opie is the latest creation out of the venerated Jim Henson's Creature Shop and the star of new preschool series, *Hi Opie!* In the preschool series Opie interacts with classmates (real children) as they start school, meeting new friends and teachers and tackling the kind of challenges preschoolers face on a daily basis.

The show concept comes from Barbara Slade (*Angelina Ballerina* and *Rugrats*). Canada's Marblemedia and The Jim Henson Company are making the series.

Marblemedia and Henson had been talking about a collaboration, and *Hi Opie!* ticked the right boxes, says Richard Goldsmith, executive VP, global distribution and international consumer products, The Jim Henson Company. "Puppetry is The Jim Henson Company's heritage, and remains one of our core specialties, and Marblemedia has an incredible reputation for creating stellar live-action kids properties, which resonate with international audiences – so the association was perfect."

Marblemedia developed the idea with Canadian broadcaster TVO, and the finished series will be sold internationally in 13x30mins and 39x7mins formats. Henson will also be selling it as a format with Opie and Henson puppets involved and local kids

and environments replacing their Canadian equivalents.

Goldsmith says there has already been an enquiry about a local version from a Latin client. "The series has been designed to be produced in other markets because you simply need a classroom and children, one Henson puppet and one puppeteer," he notes. "Henson has a talent pool of puppeteers all around the world that networks can hire, and by taking outlines for each episode and the scripts available, it's a format that is easy to produce."

In Canada the series will bow on TVO, City Saskatchewan and Knowledge Network in September. An accompanying online component will offer interactive stories, activities and games.

Goldsmith says that the live-action and puppetry hybrid is something different. "The preschool market is heavy with animation, but very few companies are making either live-action series, or puppet series," he says. "This happens to be a combination of both – the perfect hybrid. As such, we believe *Hi Opie!* is going to fill the huge void for fresh, innovative content. The networks are excited because unlike animated characters, they can use the puppet for promotion of the channel and the series itself."

**THE SHOW:** *EVE*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Leopard Drama  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Argonon International  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** CBBC ( UK)  
 HBO Latin America  
**THE CONCEPT:** Live-action drama about a sentient robot living with a human family

Leopard Drama's first foray into the world of kids drama, *EVE*, has already garnered international attention, with HBO Latin America a prebuyer. The high-concept show was ordered by the BBC's CBBC kids channel in the UK and part-funded by Ingenious Media.

Leopard's factual arm produces kids competition reality series *Trade Your Way to the USA*, which "opened our eyes to the possibilities in kids TV", says *EVE* series producer Jez Swimer. "In the UK we sometimes talk enviously about the big, wide stories that are told in US drama, but here we have a big, wide story for kids."

The show was created by Leopard Drama's David Chikwe and *Tracey Beaker* writer Emma Reeves. Nineteen-year-old Poppy Lee Friar (*Mr Selfridge*) plays Eve, a sentient robot who goes to live with a human family after her creator vanishes. The family drama plays out alongside sparkly and futuristic sci-fi elements as genres combine, with an overarching narrative and standalone stories for the casual viewer.

Leopard is part of Argonon and its distribution arm is selling *EVE*. Swimer is confident that although it is shot in suburban Scotland, it addresses themes wide enough to attract kids from different parts of the world. He says: "It should resonate everywhere, it's a localised story but it's really about asking, 'who am I, should I be good, how much do I want what my parents want, and what do I want to do with my life?'"





**THE SHOW:** *Pumpkin Reports*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Motion Pictures, Sample, Young Jump Animation  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Motion Pictures  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** TVE, TV3 (Spain) Italy ( Rai) Gloop ( Brazil) MBC ( Middle East)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Boy seeks to save the world from his adopted siblings, who are actually aliens planning an invasion of Earth

Motion Pictures' big MIPCOM launch has been a long time coming. Initially conceived and developed by the Barcelona-based animation producer and distributor, its financing phase came as Spain's toon business – and wider economy – was plunging into crisis.

However, Motion eventually got its money

from Spanish broadcasters TVE and the Catalan region's TV3, while bringing in new investment from Malaysia and Italy. "We wanted to find an Asian partner and noted how the skills were quickly improving in Malaysia," says Motion's director of development and coproductions Xavi Mas.

Young Jump Animation was recommended after Motion contacted the country's Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC), and is now handling the CGI animation, while Italian post-production firm Sample, which is moving into content ownership, was brought on to handle music and audio elements.

Having Sample onboard led to Italian broadcaster Rai investing, meaning Motion had raised its €4.8 million (US\$6.3 million) budget. Production began last year, but Motion is only now launching the show as "we wanted to have all the elements together", says Mas. Thirteen completed episodes will be available to view in Cannes.

The show, a comedy for 6-12s, follows Max Green, an 11-year-old boy living in the idyllic pumpkin-growing capital of the world who discovers his new adopted sister and her younger brother are in fact an advance party for an alien invasion.

Only Max's close friends believe him that danger is looming, meaning he is constantly forced to save the day. "Every episode will see him save the world, but nobody will care much because they don't believe him," says Mas.

Pay TV presales have been secured in Brazil and the Middle East. The show launches in Europe next spring.

**THE SHOW:** *Henry Danger*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Schneider's Bakery, Nickelodeon Productions  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Viacom  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Nickelodeon  
**THE CONCEPT:** Dan Schneider show about a part-time superhero sidekick in training

Dan Schneider is the kids hit-maker behind some of Nickelodeon's biggest shows, including *iCarly*, *Zoey 101* and *Victorious*. His latest offering is *Henry Danger*, about a 13-year-old part-time crime fighter.

"It has the key components of a 'Dan Schneider show', it is hugely humorous and you know if you have a new Dan Schneider you are in a good position in terms of international take-up," says Caroline Beaton, senior VP, international programme sales, Viacom International Media Networks. "His name is a huge door-opener, as buyers know his shows have done well

and are the nearest thing to getting a guaranteed live-action hit on air."

Unlike his recent offerings, Schneider's latest has a male hero, Henry (Jace Norman), aka Henry Danger. He is sidekick-in-training to superhero Captain Man, played by Cooper Barnes (*The Perfect Host*). The gender mix is balanced with one of Henry's best friends, Charlotte, and his little sister, Piper.

The show, which launched on Nick in September, follows Henry's adventures and family life as he tries to keep his superhero exploits hidden.

"There's intrigue and hilarity because he has a normal family and must keep his new job a secret, so he sits in two completely different worlds," Beaton says. "It suits the aspirations of kids but is relatable and identifiable, which our research tells us is what kids want."

VIMN will launch the 20-episode series internationally at MIPJunior and MIPCOM.





**THE SHOW:** *Pirate Express*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Atomic  
 Cartoons, Sticky Pictures  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Breakthrough  
 Entertainment  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** Teletoon  
 ( Canada) Nine Network ( Australia)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Animated series  
 about the madcap and unruly crew  
 of a pirate ship

**THE SHOW:** *Tumble Leaf*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Amazon Studios, Bix Pix Entertainment  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Zodiak Rights  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Amazon Prime Instant Video ( US, UK)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Fig the Fox and his best friend learn about adventure  
 and play in science-themed preschooler

MIPJunior will be the first international market to showcase programming from Amazon Prime Instant's push into original children's content.

Zodiak Kids, the children's arm of Zodiak Rights, has snapped up rights to two out of three of Amazon's debut kids shows, *Tumble Leaf* and *Creative Galaxy*.

*Tumble Leaf* follows an inquisitive blue fox called Fig, who embarks on adventures with his best friend, a caterpillar named Stick. Coming from creator Drew Hodges and California's Bix Pix Entertainment, the preschool show subtly encourages science-based learning through "creativity and play", says Zodiak Rights' senior VP, global sales and coproductions Karen Vermeulen.

The stop-motion show launched on May 23 on Amazon Instant Prime in the US and UK, and will be of interest to both public service and commercial networks as it fills an increasing desire for programmes to have 'STEM' (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) elements.

"They're looking for more and more STEM-driven shows, and because it's playful, not didactic, it has a really broad appeal," says Vermeulen.

Zodiak has one problem particular to

distributing a Netflix or Amazon original – no ratings data. Vermeulen says online ratings sites as well as critical and general audience response have prompted Zodiak to back it as the firm's major MIPJunior launch.

That other classic issue with VOD originals – binge-watching – is unlikely to be a problem, she adds, because of preschoolers' tendencies to watch programmes over and over again.

"With 6-12s, there are questions in terms of how to manage transmission, number of runs and scheduling across Amazon's release pattern, and [therefore] how a pay or free TV broadcaster can schedule it. With this being preschool I don't see the same issues."

With subscription streaming services relatively new to children's programming, the potential for licensing and merchandising is likely to lie further down the road, but Vermeulen says Amazon – as a retailer, hardware producer and content creator – is uniquely placed to take advantage.

"It's not going to happen overnight, but ultimately one would hope that Amazon's ability to build deep connections with audiences will drive a shift in how traditional retailers see this content and how it can build quickly," she says.

The *Pirate Express* is a ship captained by Poseidon's son Newt who oversees an unruly crew on its seafaring adventures. Pitched at a core audience of 7-to-11s, the series was ordered by Teletoon and Australian free-to-air broadcaster Nine Network.

The Canada-Australia connection is borne out in the production credits with Sydney-based Sticky Pictures (*Dennis & Gnasher*) and Vancouver's Atomic Cartoons (*Atomic Betty*) coproducing. Breakthrough Entertainment is selling the 52x11mins series and will give it its international launch in Cannes in October.

"*Pirate Express* is not the obvious pirate series that one might expect," says Breakthrough's president of distribution Nat Abraham. "It has lots of pirates, which kids love, but our crew is extra motley, doing things out of typical character, putting character-driven comedy and the on-it's-head situation into sitcom. The cartoon is chock-a-block with strange creatures, gods, demigods and assorted pirate weirdos."

The series will launch next year and there will be finished episodes for MIPJunior and MIPCOM. Breakthrough will begin the presales push at the market.

"We anticipate that our brand will sell well being that the pirate crew and their world are both so diverse that there will be something for people everywhere to enjoy," Breakthrough's Abraham says.





**THE SHOW:** *Wild But True*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** Beyond Screen Production, Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Beyond Distribution  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Discovery Kids (Asia)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Robert Irwin, the son of the late 'Crocodile Hunter' Steve Irwin, presents a science and natural history show

**THE SHOW:** *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Studio 100 Animation  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Studio 100 Media  
**THE CONCEPT:** The latest reimagining of Swedish children's character Nils Holgersson

Australia's Irwin family has handed the world another TV star. Ten-year-old Robert Irwin's small screen debut pairs him with 13-year-old Queensland student Isabel Yamaguchi as presenters of Discovery Kids Asia's latest series *Wild But True*. Robert is the second Irwin child to get his own show after family patriarch and natural history TV guru Steve's death in 2006; Bindi Irwin took a starring role in ABC3's *Bindi's Bootcamp*, which sold to the likes to Starz in the US.

*Wild But True* is the result of a chance meeting of Discovery and the Irwin family at Singapore Zoo. Discovery Networks Asia-Pacific already had "generic science programme" in development for its kids network, says Kevin Dickie, the regional channel operator's senior VP, content group, but after Robert expressed interest, this was quickly re-developed, leading to a greenlight in 2013 with Beyond Screen Productions brought on board to produce.

"The series explores the fun of biomimicry, an exciting branch of science that studies nature's most clever inventions and then imitates these designs and processes to solve human problems," said Dickie. "It will

serve as an excellent showcase of Robert Irwin's amazing knowledge and enthusiasm for the natural world."

Dickie says the biomimicry themes will appeal to children's natural curiosity, and says introducing Robert Irwin to audiences is an "exciting prospect".

For Discovery Kids, the show is an opportunity to showcase its 'Smart Fun' strategy that aims to develop kids' cognitive, social, emotional and personal skills. For the wider market, it will cater to an underserved area of programming, says Dickie.

"On the whole, particularly in the pay TV environment, primary school age content that is both educational and entertaining is in relatively short supply. There's no shortage in the preschool space but it's a different story for content targeting kids aged 6-12."

Moreover, Dickie and his Discovery colleagues believe *Wild But True* is the first international children's TV show focused on biomimicry. "With biomimicry we are able to delve into both the natural world and the man-made world of science and engineering, both key areas of focus for the channel."

Studio 100 Media's new CGI reworking of the classic Nils Holgersson character is the first since ARD's 2011 two-part live-action telemovie, and the first animated version in more than three decades.

"The original was a coproduction between Germany and Japan's Nippon TV," says Studio 100's managing director Patrick Elmendorff. "We're currently at a financing stage with the new version. We're going to have a teaser trailer and a bible for MIPCOM."

*The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* is based on Selma Lagerlöf's Nobel Prize-winning 1906 story about a mischief-making young boy who goes on adventures with a flock of wild geese after he is shrunk to a miniscule size.

"It is a story that's very well known in Scandinavia and Germany, where the original series is still running on KIKI," says Elemendorff.

With the story more than 107 years old, its copyright has long returned to the public domain, prompting Germany-based producer-distributor Studio 100 to begin working up its new show, which will be a CGI effort. "The CGI capabilities give the story even more added value," says Elemendorff.

Though the story is well-known in Japan and throughout northern Europe, Elemendorff acknowledges sales into the UK and US, where it has little to no heritage, are a tougher proposition. "Of course, we're happy if broadcasters show interest," he says.





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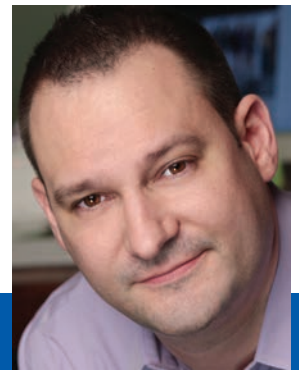
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# LAST WORD

CHRISTIAN KURZ



## S.M.A.R.T 'Edutainment'

**T**he power of TV to educate has been a subject of debate for years, but the fact remains that kids learn best when they are engaged in activities that they enjoy and care about. They always have. Who doesn't remember learning with Ernie, Big Bird, Elmo and my personal favourite, the Cookie Monster? *Sesame Street* has been the leader in utilising a detailed and comprehensive educational curriculum with specific educational goals in its content for the past 25 years.

The fact is, in today's age of "living media" (an active consumption of content made available anytime, anywhere, on any platform), TV has become S.M.A.R.T – Social, Mobile, Accessible, Relevant and Tailored. Even the youngest viewers inhabit a 'media-rich' environment of multichannel television, smartphones, tablets, the web and computer games.

This creates enormous opportunities for content creators to embrace and revolutionise the concept of "edutainment" for an 'always on' generation. Today's challenge is not only about working out what needs to be programmed on these devices, but also establishing the interface; how it should be constructed to appeal to kids preschool-plus and their parents.

The truth is: digital literacy doesn't start at 10-years-old. Our most recent research in the US shows that 65% of 3-to-5 year olds regularly use smartphones and tablets, which are present in 89% of those households.

The usage numbers increase to 76% for the 6-11s – that's higher than computers and games consoles for the first time. Internationally,

penetration numbers among households with preschoolers are very similar, and kids, as we all know, like to spend time in front of screens, particularly touch-screens.

So here lies the challenge and opportunity for kid's content creators everywhere: to expand the traditional preschool-plus offering and enable kids to get up close and interactive with the big purple dinosaur, the pink pig and the yellow sponge through learning-based games, appisodes and more.

Although certainly effective, it is no longer sufficient to simply implement 'edutainment' into the linear concept with a colourful character shouting questions out from TV land.

When it comes to the post-Millennial generation, it's all about engagement on every platform. Even the youngest kids demos today, 2+, are super savvy, demand immediate gratification and have an insatiable curiosity.

Regardless of which end of the spectrum you look at, the fact remains: If you can't engage kids, you can't entertain or edutain them – and vice versa.

There's no disputing that technology has been the fundamental game-changer in how kids play and subsequently learn.

With the influx of new technology and tablets and the advent of new distribution platforms, incorporating learning-based games and appisodes like *Dora's Learning Adventure* to support early development by creating a place for kids to play, grow, learn and develop is now even more essential.

Since many early experiences come from TV, it's no coincidence that for most kids their first

online destinations are related to TV content. Kids go to the web or apps to forge deeper relationships with content they already know and love, with interaction moving beyond a single screen experience to engagement across multiple platforms.

This provides an infinite number of digital opportunities to play; real world play can be replicated virtually; virtual play can offer new experiences not available in the real world; kids can express creativity via videos, avatars, in games and apps, etc.

More now than ever, kids networks are presented with huge opportunities to be innovative and creative with their content – taking the "what" and turning their attention to the "where" and the "how".

With shows like Nick Jr.'s *Wallykazam* and more recently *Welcome to The Wayne* launching on mobile before linear, there's greater opportunity for networks to blur the lines between an ever-proliferating number of screens.

Looking closely at the "how", our research has reaffirmed that parents value security, entertainment and education for their kids' TV viewing, spanning four distinct styles: the '*Babysitter*' (the parent has low involvement); '*tribes*' (the parent co-views with the child), '*dialogue*' (the parent uses TV content to strengthen communication between themselves and their child) and '*control*' (over the entire TV viewing experience).

So, the key to edutainment in the era of living media? Simple-ish. Create captivating content with social and educational values at its core – don't knock the power of a green frog or a pink pig – and combine the way kids want to watch it with the tools necessary to interact with it, a camera, a microphone and a touch screen.

The result? A plethora of opportunities to create engaging, entertaining content for kids of all ages to learn through play. **TBI**

**The key to edutainment in the era of living media? Simple-ish. Create captivating content with social and educational values at its core, and combine the way kids want to watch it with the tools necessary to interact with it**

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