

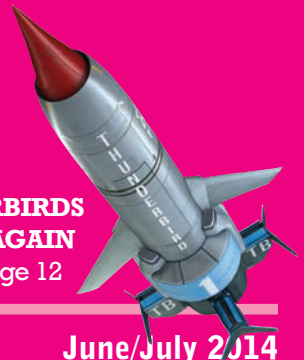
TBI

Television Business International



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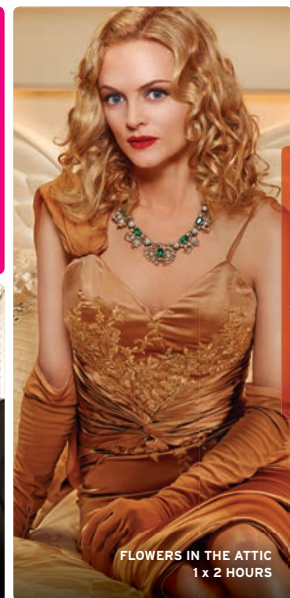
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EDITOR'S NOTE

STEWART CLARKE



In the non-fiction TV world there seems to be a renewed optimism among producers and distributors. Attending a factual conference or market a few years ago meant listening to content makers bemoan the lack of funding and slots for their wares. Today, as we find out in an in-depth look at the factual distribution business, there are several reasons for optimism: one example is the character-led ob-doc series that continue to get widely commissioned and viewed – even though the genre was recently starting to receive critical and industry criticism, not least from commissioners (some of whom have obviously had a change of heart with several such shows in their new slates).

Meanwhile, Netflix and its on-demand counterparts are helping boost the feature doc/festival end of the factual market, new DTT channels are buying in volume and PSBs are still keen on big blue-chip projects. Keen to exploit new platforms and technology, producers, distributors and broadcasters are now looking to 4K to fulfil the promise 3D TV roundly failed to deliver. Some are even, we find, looking to virtual reality.

Of course, funding challenges are still there and many docs are coproduced. In this issue we also take a look at the growing number of

– often UK-based – copro advisory firms that are springing up and speak to them about how they are oiling the coproduction wheels.

Coproduction is a key topic at this year's NATPE Europe with a morning session dedicated to the topic. Big names including Haut et Court's Caroline Benjo, Tandem's Rola Bauer, and *The X Files* scribe Frank Spotnitz will talk about the changing face of multi-partner production. TBI is moderating, so if you're in Prague for the confab, be sure to set a reminder to join us on the Tuesday of the market (June 24).

Also in this issue, we check in with the distributors heading to NATPE to see what new programming they have for the market. The resulting Hot Picks includes the latest Scandi noir, Japanese celebrity quizzes, Latin miniseries and Spanish cooking formats. Elsewhere, we get the lowdown on the new *Thunderbirds*, hear about how to harness Twitter Amplify and interview the CEO of Romania's Antena Group.

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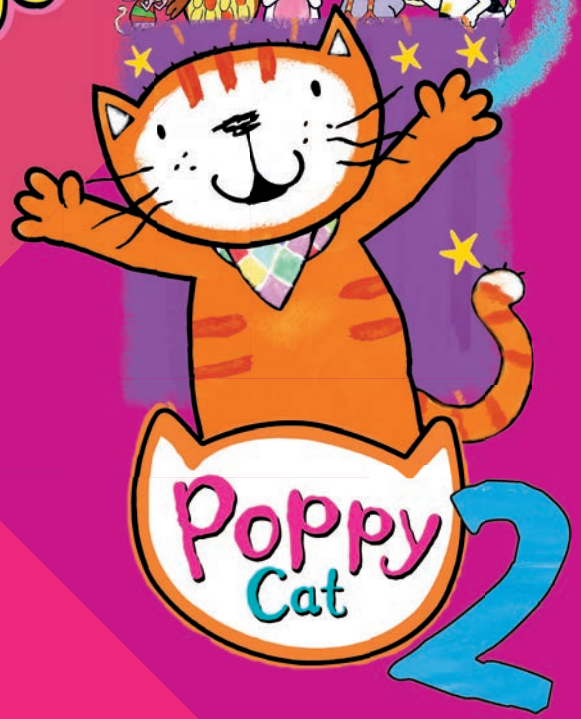
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VIEWPOINT



GARETH CAPON

Twitter Amplified – a new distribution model

It is just over a year ago that Twitter launched its Amplify initiative for content owners and brands. But while all the major US TV networks have now signed up and major European broadcasters are now following suit, awareness and understanding across the industry is still limited. So how does it work and what are the commercial opportunities that it presents to content owners?

Twitter Amplify allows media companies to share live TV clips and video content on the social networking platform and drive viral distribution and discovery of that content. However, the most important aspect of Twitter Amplify is that it allows content owners to use paid media support from sponsors and advertising partners to fund the distribution of their content across Twitter.

One of the challenges when distributing (and consuming) video on Twitter is that many consumers have 'fast' feeds. Twitter Amplify makes it possible to 'pin' the video tweet to the visible part of the feed so the user is more likely to see it and engage with it. Moreover, if a broadcaster sends a tweet from its own Twitter account, it targets only the people that are following that account. However, when a sponsor runs a paid campaign with Twitter Amplify, it can target anyone tweeting about that topic or content at that time, or any other user who may be interested in the content.

Therefore, broadcasters can ensure their video tweets are seen and use paid media distribution

(Twitter Amplify) to extend this reach to a much wider and relevant demographic. Indeed, this audience can be many times the size of their existing (organic) reach, potentially the entire audience of Twitter. Furthermore, paid media Amplify campaigns encourage extended viral distribution. This is because Twitter users that do not follow the broadcaster or rights holder directly will discover these new video tweets in their feed and share them to their own followers, driving a second wave of viral distribution and greater earned media value for the broadcaster and brand.

By enabling broadcasters to have this extended social reach paid for by a brand sponsor, one that wants to align itself with the premium content and push its campaign message across social platforms, Twitter Amplify represents a highly compelling ad-funded distribution model for content. Broadcasters can also use real-time video to promote new shows to their audience. It can also be used to drive interactivity such as voting, betting and payments and, for pay TV customers, selling additional packages, upgrades and content services.

This process closes the virtuous circle for social video distribution: from sharing short-form, live video clips which generates huge levels of engagement across social platforms to driving tune-in, digital content sales, upgrades and entitlements to new OTT services for the broadcaster or rights holder. As such, it will be a key part of the future business models for TV

distribution and consumption.

Twitter Amplify has already had a significant impact in the US market, which serves as a bellwether to the global TV industry. The NFL took control of its real-time video assets and struck lucrative sponsorship deals for clips of live content in one of the first and most significant Twitter Amplify deals in 2013. Real-time video in the US has also shifted from teasers and trailers, the staple of YouTube channels built by the major networks, to premium broadcast content that used to be locked behind a paywall.

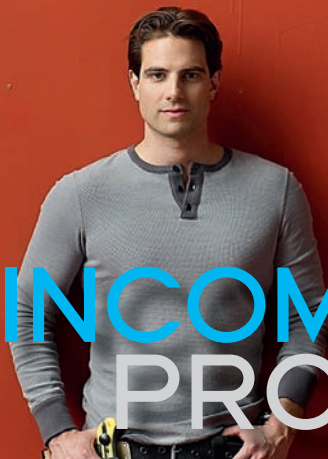
This is indicative of content owners recognising that this new video format drives both incremental revenues and core KPIs. With Twitter now supporting one-tap video playback across its mobile apps – effectively offering the same display format as Vine to Twitter Amplify partners – it will not only enhance the experience of watching TV clips for Twitter's users but will also ensure a higher level of social engagement, distribution and monetisation for rights holders.

Twitter Amplify presents intriguing opportunities and is creating an entirely new market around the new short-form live video format. The impact from a rights perspective will be particularly interesting, as rights holders may look to carve out real-time video as a separate package to maximise its commercial and distribution value in the future. The mobile internet has scant regard for geographic boundaries and mobile offers rights holders a potential audience of billions, not millions. All this without mentioning Facebook, the 1.2 billion user 'elephant' (or is that the 800lb gorilla?) in the room. The social video journey has only just begun. **TBI**

Gareth Capon is CEO of Grabyo, a real-time social video company. Formerly, he was director of product development at BSkyB

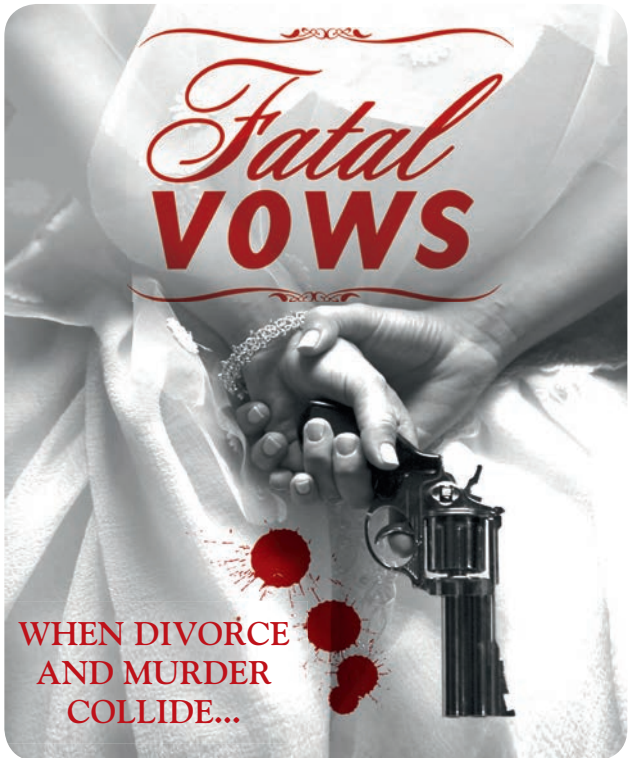
Rights holders may look to carve out real-time video as a separate package to maximise its commercial and distribution value in the future

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Antena tuned to Romanian TV

The Romanian TV market is ultra-competitive with numerous channels vying for ratings and a slice of the modest ad revenues available. Antena Group CEO Sorin Alexandrescu tells Stewart Clarke about his plan for the locally-owned broadcaster to overtake US-backed CME in the battle for eyeballs and about the challenges facing the country's television sector

Seated in his spacious office on the ninth floor of Intact Media's ten-storey Bucharest headquarters, Sorin Alexandrescu turns the interviewer-interviewee tables and wants to know what TBI knows about Antena Group. The initial cautiousness can be explained in part by recent events that have seen Antena and pay TV operator RCS & RDS trade lawsuits and, at one point, Antena Group CEO Alexandrescu arrested on black-mail charges. He rarely gives interviews.

With the legal situation unfolding and the eyes of market watchers on developments, it is a crucial period for Antena, the broadcast group that operates a family of channels spanning general entertainment, news, music and celebrity. Away from legal matters, the good news for the group is the bouquet of channels is now the overall market leader, ahead of Time Warner-backed pan-regional broadcaster CME.

Kantar Media audience numbers for 2013 show that Intact's five channels garnered 22.1% overall share compared with CME's 20.8% for its six-channel offering.

However, CME's Pro TV was the single leading channel with 14.9% against Antena 1's 13.5%. Alexandrescu expects the momentum built by flagship network Antena 1 will see it overtake Pro TV in the ratings. "I believe that will happen and think that it won't take more than two years until we are overcoming them," he says. "Now, we are fully equipped to compete with them directly – there is no doubt about it."

Being 'equipped' in the Romanian market means having the right

talent and the right talent shows. Antena's cause was boosted earlier this year when it lured lauded local producer Mona Segall and her production team from Pro TV. Having been the creative force behind Pro TV's adaptations of the *Got Talent* and *Dancing with the Stars* formats, her first project for Antena 1 will be *Poftiti, va Rog (You're Welcome)*, an entertainment show in which a host will be joined by four celebrities who must attempt to revitalise flagging guest houses.

Despite cost cuts and job losses, Pro TV is not, however, about to quietly concede its ratings crown and, on CME's most recent analyst call, co-CEO Christoph Mainusch touted "a new record in the history of audience measurement in [Romania] by achieving an average primetime audience share of almost 29% during the month of March". The CME boss name-checked *Got Talent*, [local sitcom] *Las Fierbinti* and *MasterChef* as driving the primetime numbers.

In terms of the current crop of big international formats, Pro TV and Antena 1 rival Prima TV has scored local rights to Talpa's buzzy *Utopia*. It is slated to debut later this year as one of the centrepieces of the free-to-air broadcaster's autumn schedule as it attempts to reposition itself and woo younger viewers. Prima will produce the format itself with Talpa providing consultancy services. As well as *Got Talent* and *Dancing with the Stars*, Pro TV has *The Voice* and *MasterChef* formats. The channel also relies heavily on acquired movies.

Alexandrescu says Intact's local ownership – founded by Dan Voiculescu in 1991 and now owned by his daughters Corina and



We have the best content and production teams available in Romania. With all we have done so far, we are fully prepared to be the unique entertainment proposition in Romania. It's too late for the competition to have a different strategy because over the past three years we have managed to get most of the stars available signed to us under our star system”

Camelia (who is company president) – and relationships with local talent will drive Antena 1 from second to first.

“We have the best content and production teams available in Romania,” Alexandrescu says. “Right now, with all we have done so far, we are fully prepared to be the unique entertainment proposition in Romania. It's too late for the competition to have a different strategy because over the past three years we have managed to get most of the stars available signed to us under our star system. More than 80% have a contract with us and the story has not ended yet. In no more than one year, I believe 90% of the most relevant talent will work with Intact and only Intact.”

The effort to secure celebrities and talent has seen the Antena Group bring in local rock star Stefan Banica and entertainer Horia Brenciu as new members of the judging panel for the upcoming season of *The X Factor* (alongside existing judge and local singing star Delia). Both were poached from Pro TV with Banica formerly hosting *Dancing with the Stars* and Brenciu a judge on *The Voice*. In tune with Antena 1's policy of locking in talent long-term fashion, it has recruited Florin Ristei, the winner of last year's *The X Factor*.

Antena 1 also has *Celebrity Splash!* and, in keeping with the local edge Alexandrescu claims, has a big locally-originated talent format in *Next Star*, the channel's biggest show. Various international distributors have made approaches to sell the *Next Star* format and, ultimately, it could start shopping its own shows internationally as more local content is

produced, according to the Antena boss.

“We need the size first,” says Alexandrescu. “We're not pushing as much as we want to in this, [as] we need some more examples to make the [line-up for distribution] quite strong. First you have to have successful content, and then you can write another part of the story by selling those formats outside – the timeframe for this is two to three years.”

Distribution of another kind is also top of mind for Intact – that of its channels on the country's cable and DTH systems. Disputes over carriage are not uncommon in Romania and the Antena boss says the country's media regulators are partly to blame.

“I would say, quite strongly, that the difficulties we see in this market are due to the weakness of the authorities,” says Alexandrescu. “We have a Competition Council Authority which is, I would say, quite favourable [in its decisions] when it comes to all the problems that are created by one big Romanian operator – the biggest one.”

The largest cable and DTH platform operator in Romania is RCS & RDS, and it is locked in several disputes with Intact. RCS & RDS, which is also in the running for a ten-year license to operate five new DTT multiplexes as Romania moves towards digital switchover.

“You cannot rely on somebody taking decisions in years, this is an industry where everything happens today – this hour, this minute, this second – and when you have an authority that is allowing such a player to play unfairly in a very competitive market then there can only

be one conclusion.”

The upshot is that Intact does not have full carriage of its channels on RCS & RDS’s DTH platform. Nor is it on that of Focus Sat, the UPC DTH satellite service ultimately owned by Liberty Global. “I’m confident that we will reach an agreement with Focus Sat,” says Alexandrescu. “I don’t want to put them in the same position as RCS & RDS. They are a different organisation with different people. These are two very different cases.”

As well as cases with the local competition authorities, there are ongoing court cases between Intact and RCS & RDS, including one that saw Alexandrescu arrested and subsequently released. Several of the legal cases in process see the pair seeking compensation from each other. “It is well known that we have a lot of legal cases with them. It is quite difficult to foresee a timeline for a decision while all those cases are in court,” says Alexandrescu.

Meanwhile, the ratings battle with CME is painted by Intact as the local versus the international player. “We are fighting with a group that has operations in several countries, which is owned by some big international players who hope they are going to be one of the strongest propositions in Central Europe, and somehow we have managed to be a very competitive against them. Now we need to look at how we position ourselves within the market that we are playing in.”

The Antena Group channels have been rebranded and repositioned accordingly. The core Antena 1 has started to skew younger, while Antena 2 has become the celebrity-driven Antena Stars. The female-skewed Euforia is another offering strongly targeting women. The only overtly male-skewing channel in the portfolio was sports net GSP TV, the least popular of the Intact quintet of channels in 2013. It was replaced in April by music channel Zu TV, which builds on Intact’s Zu radio brand. Intact’s second most popular channel in 2013 – with a 6.2% national audience share in 2013 – was news and current affairs offering Antena 3.

Intact launched its TV everywhere offering, Antena Play, last June and is debuting its entertainment shows on the service in the mornings ahead of the programmes’ TX the same evening.

As well as the programmes from each of the Intact channels, it also has behind the scenes and extra content such as a round-the-clock feed from the house used in popular daytime dating show *Mireasa pentru fiul meu* (*May I Call You Mom?*). The paid-for service costs RON10 (US\$3.10) a month.

Alexandrescu says a year after launch he is pleased with the half a million Play customers: “If you look at the way content is used now online you see that there is a tremendous grey market. The piracy rate is huge. You will see everything you see on theatrical release on a torrent site in no more than 48 hours [after its debut]. All of the TV series produced outside of Romania are available here immediately. When you have this magnitude of piracy, to have 500,000 people paying to watch via a subscription is a success.

“OTT platforms have grown consistently all over the world, starting with Netflix and now so many other products, and that is not a trend we can change. Consumers want to access content wherever they are.”

Looking ahead there is the possibility of adding to the five-strong TV line-up. A children’s channel is one notable thematic omission. “Kids would be quite perfect for our portfolio and could be one of the options we need to look quite deeply at for the future. It would be a new channel [not a rebrand]. But the most important thing at the moment is to



strengthen the stations we have now,” says Alexandrescu.

In its projections for 2014, Intact is committed to double-digit ratings growth. “We can get there as we managed to make the steps for the growth until now, and I strongly believe that the overall situation is much more favourable than before as the overall platform we have is stronger,” says Alexandrescu. “The [advertising] cake is maybe not the best one, but there is a lot of room for us to grow in this market, by taking a bigger slice of it.”

As a private business there are no quarterly reports to pore over, but the Antena Group boss says that the TV business is in the black. “It is very well known that most of the media in Romania is losing money,” he says. “In this difficult market we managed to be a profitable business.”

But can Intact really compete with a restructured CME, with the might of Time Warner behind it?

Alexandrescu says yes: “At the end of day they are controlled by that entity and we are not. The influence of that entity in CME has been very strong for years, but there is one thing making the difference, this is the only industry in the world where local knowledge cannot be surpassed by international [knowledge].” **TBI**



INTACT
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ANTENA TV CHANNELS, MARKET SHARE GROWTH ON ALL SEGMENTS IN THE FIRST 5 MONTHS OF THE YEAR

Jan-May **2014** VS. Jan-May **2013**

**Market share evolution
18-49 urban**

APPRECIATION

| | | | |
|-------------|------|---|------------|
| 20.5 | 19.8 | ← WHOLE DAY → | + 2 |
| 19 | 18.3 | ← PRIME TIME <small>(19:00-23:00)</small> → | + 1 |
| 25 | 23.1 | ← MORNING → | + 1 |
| 21.2 | 20.6 | ← DAY TIME → | + 1 |
| 21.4 | 20.8 | ← ACCESS → | + 2 |
| 19.4 | 19.3 | ← LATE FRINGE → | + 6 |
| 20.6 | 19.9 | ← ALL DAY <small>(06:00-24:00)</small> → | + 2 |
| 19.1 | 18.4 | ← PRIME TIME <small>(19:00-24:00)</small> → | + 2 |

%

Source: Kantar Media Copyright: ARMADATA

INTACT TV DIVISION includes: Antena 1, Antena Stars, Antena 3, Euforia TV, ZU TV



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

JEAN PHILIPPE RANDISI has been named as Zodiak Kids' first CEO. He joins from ITV Studios Global Entertainment, where he was executive VP and director of consumer products. The appointment came after the departure of long-serving children's programming chief Nigel Pickard in April



BSkyB's managing director of content, Sophie Turner Laing, will leave the company later this year. In addition to overseeing Sky's entertainment, movie and news channels, and relations with studios and other content providers, Turner Laing heads its channel JVs and the international distribution of channels and programmes

Former Discovery Network International content boss LUIS SILBERWASSER has re-emerged as the new president of Spanish-language programming giant Telemundo. Silberwasser left Discovery earlier this year. At Telemundo, he will replace Emiliano Romano, who exited the job in October, and will oversee the US Hispanic broadcast network and its programming wing, Telemundo Studios



Paul Buccieri has been promoted to chairman of ITV Studios US Group, ITV's umbrella division that includes all of its acquired Stateside production companies. In a further change, ITV Studios Global Entertainment's managing director Maria Kyriacou is taking on responsibility for production outside of the US and the UK.

Shine America has recruited MICHAEL BROOKS as its senior VP, unscripted programming. The US division of the Shine Group has poached Brooks from the west coast division of BBC Worldwide Productions and its affiliated prodco Adjacent Productions, where he was senior VP, entertainment programming and development. At Shine, Brooks will report to unscripted executive VP Paul Franklin



Entertainment One has hired Stuart Baxter as president of eOne Television International and he will replace Peter Emerson who is leaving the producer and distributor. Baxter was at Sony Pictures Television in London for nine years until 2012. Emerson has been at eOne since it acquired his distribution business Oasis International in 2008.

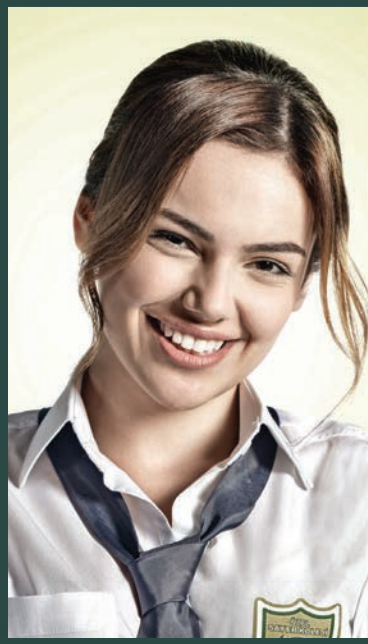
TCB Media Rights has hired MEM BAKER from World Wide Entertainment, the factual arm of Turkey-based Global Agency, to handle sales in Asia, Africa, Spain, Portugal, Latin America and the Middle East. Pamela Martinez Martinez, who was Heaney's first hire after launching the business in late 2012, has left the business



Producer and distributor Sonar Entertainment has recruited former BermanBraun president Gene Stein as its new CEO, replacing Stewart Till who has been in the role since 2012. Before joining BermanBraun in 2008, Stein worked with producer Nina Wass and based at Touchstone Television/ABC Studios for eight years

Strix Holland has hired TATIANA LAGEWAARD as creative director. She joins the production company from Zodiak Nederland, the Dutch division of Zodiak Media, where she was head of development. The move reunites her with Roy Alderink, who was CEO of Zodiak Nederland until March this year when he landed the role of Strix Holland chief exec





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Thunderbirds are go, again

ITV Studios Global Entertainment will next year celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gerry Anderson's genre-breaking puppet series *Thunderbirds* by relaunching the franchise to a new generation to children. Executive producer Giles Ridge tells Jesse Whittock about the project

Those growing up in 1960s Britain will definitely remember the classic phrase, "Five... Four... Three... Two... One... Thunderbirds are go!", which signalled the latest episode of action-adventure puppet series *Thunderbirds*.

Backed by Lew Grade, the British media investor and uncle to Michael (who would later run the BBC, ITV and Channel 4), *Thunderbirds* launched through ITC Entertainment in 1965 on ITV franchisee ATV. The Gerry and Sylvia Anderson-created show spawned two seasons comprising 32 44-minute episodes, and a new mixed-media style of production centred on its use of marionette puppets, suspended and controlled by thin wires dubbed 'Supermarionation'.

Thunderbirds followed the International Rescue agency, a secret organisation led by the Tracy family committed to saving lives using land, sea and space vehicles and equipment.

Five decades on, ITV is bringing the brand back to television, having originally acquired the rights to Anderson's catalogue after ITC was folded into the UK broadcaster following Grade Snr.'s death in 1998. Anderson himself passed away two years ago.

"We felt that with it being the fiftieth anniversary of the show, the time was right to re-engage with [*Thunderbirds*]: from a British perspective it's a much-loved brand," says Giles Ridge, who is executive producing *Thunderbirds Are Go!*, which is slated for launch in 2015 on kids channel CiTV.

"We also felt that where we are with animation technology meant the time was right for us, because you can achieve so much more technically now that you could do even ten years ago," adds ITV Studios' senior VP of content.

The new 26x30mins series – aimed at 5-11s with a sweet spot of 6-9s – will be a mix of CGI animation and live-action backgrounds. ITV Studios is working with New Zealand's Pukeko Pictures, which has A-grade set and prop design experience, having worked on the *The*

Lord of the Rings features.

The idea of returning to Supermarionation was floated, but contact with children and parents proved the concept lacked support. Ridge says the new design could be just as iconic: "If I could pinpoint one aspect of the physical production, it is the CGI combined with the miniatures that will give kids an aesthetic that is like nothing else in the television market at the moment," he says.

ITVSGE has international distribution rights, and Ridge acknowledges that strategically a US deal is a "key priority" – a failure to sell the original to America is cited among the reasons it was cancelled. It will help that showrunner and lead writer Rob Hoegee is an experienced American-based action-adventure animation producer with credits including *Teen Titans Go!*, *Slugterra* and *Generator Rex* to his name. "He has an incredible track record in this space," says Ridge, who EPs alongside former CITV controller Estelle Hughes.

A stellar voice cast has also been put together, including Rosamund Pike (*Die Another Day*) as Lady Penelope; Rasmus Hardiker (*Saxondale*), David Menkin (*Thomas & Friends*) and Thomas Brodie-Sangster (*Love Actually*) playing the five Tracy brothers between them; Kayvan Novak (*Phone Jacker*) as space-based scientist Brains; and, notably, David Graham reprising his Parker the chauffeur character from the original series.

Ridge says the voice recordings were made with as many cast members in the sounds booth together as possible, which is not usually the case with animated series, in order to create natural dialogue. "We felt strongly we wanted cast to bond, and that really showed in the performances."

Another element setting it apart from the

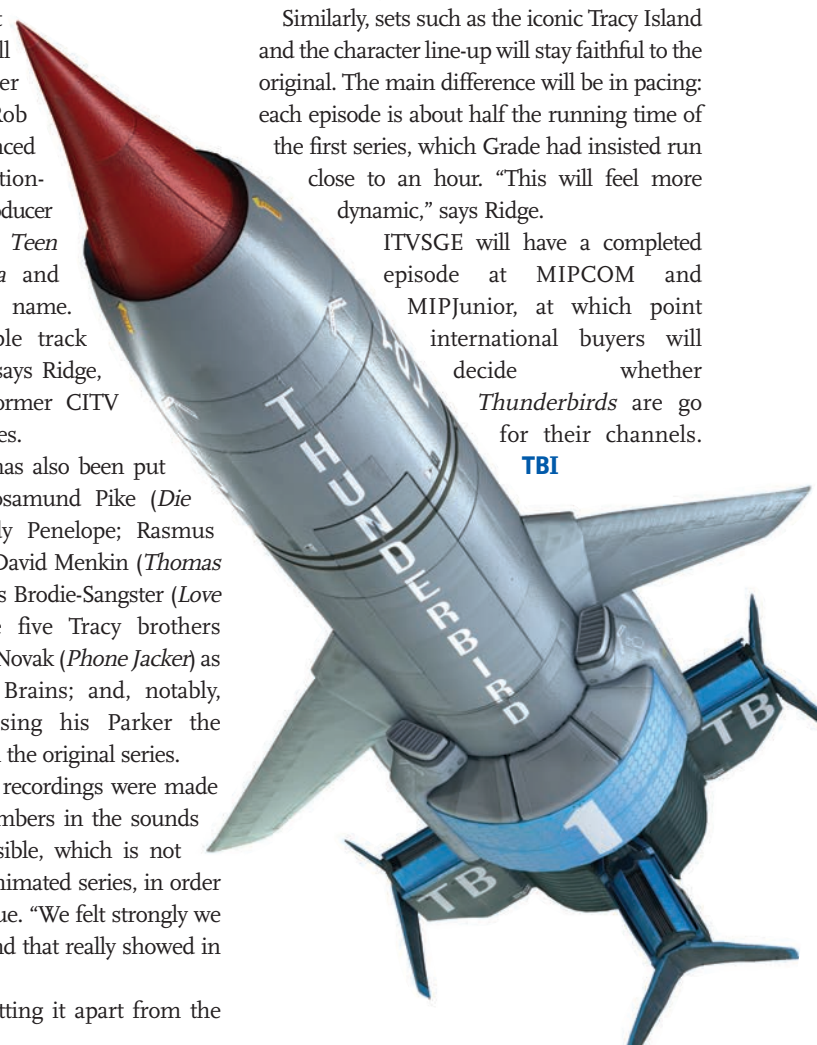
competition is Ridge's assertion that most animated action-adventure series are "rooted in battle, conflict or superhero mythology. *Thunderbirds* doesn't fit into any of that – in my eyes it's in an exclusive sub-set of the action genre based around rescue, saving people and helping".

He says the original series' values of "heroism, bravery and ingenuity" remain "the values of today" and those that parents want to instil in their children. He adds that this will translate in the 2015 series: "Ultimately, there was no need to mess with the fundamental DNA," he says.

Similarly, sets such as the iconic Tracy Island and the character line-up will stay faithful to the original. The main difference will be in pacing: each episode is about half the running time of the first series, which Grade had insisted run close to an hour. "This will feel more dynamic," says Ridge.

ITVSGE will have a completed episode at MIPCOM and MIPJunior, at which point international buyers will decide whether *Thunderbirds* are go for their channels.

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Antony Fraser's new group, Rare TV, is planning to build a UK-based stable of nimble factual prodcos that the increasingly large super-indie monoliths may overlook. The Ingenious Ventures co-founder and his business partner, former Red Arrow Entertainment UK and RHI Entertainment exec Joel Denton, have already acquired one company, 360Production, which is behind BBC Knowledge and BBC HD's new series *Factomania* (pictured). Here, Fraser outlines his plans for future acquisitions and growth to TBI

Why did you decide now was the time to launch Rare TV?

Joel and I watched the first stage of consolidation in the indie market. I was at Ingenious when it started and he was at RHI. That progressed to the point where there were a bunch of super-indies at the top, and some of the talent that had formed part of the consolidation had started to spill out and come back into the market. Most middle market

A Rare occurrence

companies had been bought, and that this gave acquirers a conundrum: private equity and large corporates want to make an acquisition that moves the dial – strategic or financial – for them. We felt there was room for an intermediate model.

Where in the market will you operate?

The strategy is to go and conglomerate smaller production companies. The bottom line for a company attractive to a larger company is EBITDA of around £1 million (US\$1.6 million) per annum. If a well-run company can make a 10% profit margin then that's about £10 million turnover, and that's where we believe corporate businesses and private equity become interested.

We're looking at operating below that level. Our first acquisition, 360Production, turned over about £3.7 million. We will look at businesses that might have been going for a year, and are knocking on the door of £1 million turnover, or those going a few years that are at £2 million. We'll look at companies turning over up to £5 million.

What was behind the decision to focus solely on UK factual producers?

UK producers are not only known for their creativity, but it is only jurisdiction in the world that is governed by terms of trade. That means there is value in hanging on to international rights. It's also about risk: in the factual area, it's possible to find a small production company with a decent, diversified portfolio of projects. Factual budgets are relatively low, the projects are often fast-turnaround and you can develop different kinds of projects relatively quickly: formats, one-offs and returnable series. You've got a real opportunity to create international brands, as factual is a very broad church.

Should we think of Rare as a UK-specific business?

No. The focus for our M&A activity in the early days is going to be the UK because we want to build a diversified group in the factual genre under terms of trade. What Rare brings to indies is the ability to broaden their commissioning relationships, not only in the

UK, but internationally; Joel has very strong international relationships.

The traditional, small indie is often started by someone who came from a major broadcaster, and inevitably that means they have strong relationships within that group. Sometimes it takes a while to develop new ones, and often they've never been abroad, even to the US.

So you'll be looking at cable channels in the US as a key source of business?

Absolutely. The 360Production team are going on their first US trip to meet broadcasters this month.

What else can you offer indies?

We also bring real focus on the development slate and pitching process. Small indies don't have resources coming out of their ears, and when they are producing they are producing. It's only when they're not that they remember to develop new programmes. What you need to do is make sure that development is going on all the time to make sure there's no hiatus. As we get bigger, it will become easier to develop powerful development [strategies] that sits alongside production.

Are you concerned how the current wave of mega-consolidation will affect the business?

I'm not sure we should feel threatened by groups [such as Discovery-Liberty-All3Media or Shine-Endemol-Apollo].

A general trend in business is that managing creativity is very hard to do, and that managing creativity at a larger scale is even harder. There will be creative fall-out when they combine their organisations.

These people will form part of that new indie market and talent pool that we hope will be available to us. Duplication means there will also be some subsidiary M&A activity.

So you expect to carve a niche?

At the end of the day, I believe the cream always rises to the top. It's about the quality of the idea, and if you have quality you will always have a place in the market. It will never be true that the only quality ideas come from large companies.

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Factual Studios



A batch of one-stop shop consultancies from the UK aimed at facilitating global coproduction has emerged in the past year. Jesse Whittock gets the low-down on their strategies as the boom in international drama continues

The copro landscape: meet the fixers



Death Comes to Pemberley

chairman of BAFTA until last year and has more than four decades of experience of packaging projects, says, “The whole business has gone international overnight”.

Internationally coproduced dramas are taking various routes to market, and a new batch of companies – primarily from the UK – has subsequently emerged to help producers capitalise on this opportunity.

“Five years ago in television, the number of places [in the UK] you could approach for development financing was very small – the BBC, ITV and Sky, which was emerging,” says Corrie. “Suddenly, we’re looking at complete globalisation.”

Corrie recently became non-executive chairman of Bob & Co, a London-based media advisory and investment firm that former HandMade Films chairman Bob Benton launched in 2010 to connect content indie producers and talent with finance.

The firm is among a group of new companies that seek to help television projects find coproduction partners, distributors and other financiers.

“Bob & Co recognises content as an asset and a commodity that has both a business and a creative value,” says Corrie, a former agent and co-founder of British talent studio United Artists. His main role at Bob & Co is to identify scripted TV, film and theatre projects that would work across multiple platforms.

Far Moor Media is another UK-based firm approaching drama from a similar standpoint. The firm, which programming veterans Patrick Irwin and Justin Thomson-Glover launched last year, focuses on financing projects for the international market.

After a long period in which the pair had brokered and coproduced dramas including Sky’s *Thorne* and *Combat Hospital*, the latter of which was produced with Toronto’s Sienna Films and went out on Global in Canada and ABC in the US, “it became clear that the financing, presale and non-physical production was a separate skill [to production],” says Irwin of the firm’s genesis.

Far Moor launched in January 2013, though the pair stayed in the production game through their Artists Studio arm, which is the lead producer behind BBC Two’s Gillian Anderson crime drama *The Fall*, itself an England/Northern Ireland coproduction with funding drawn from multiple sources.

The Far Moor business model is to offer

business affairs acumen, sales and distribution capabilities, and deal structuring know-how to indies and others, including investors from the film business. It can also provide legal advice through Lee & Thompson, a media law firm that was a Far Moor launch partner last year, and was a stakeholder until Endemol acquired Artist Studios and, by extension, Far Moor early this year.

“The idea is that instead of having to go to six different groups [to finance and distribute a project], they can talk to us,” says Thomson-Glover. We can hold their hands as executive producers, so when they go into a room with the BBC, [drama controller] Ben Stephenson knows there are people involved who have delivered big-budget drama in the past.”

In some cases, Far Moor takes a step back from production. This was the case with the BBC’s *Death Comes to Pemberley*, a deal that brought together the UK pubcaster, indie Origin Pictures and PBS’s Masterpiece drama strand from the US.

Another ‘fixer’ firm, Grand Scheme Media, which worked on Sky Atlantic’s recent comedy *Mr Sloane*, takes a similar approach. “We’re very happy not to produce shows,” says Graham Smith, a seasoned coproduction broker and one of three Grand Scheme partners alongside Mark Robson and Tony Orsten.

The firm was initially launched as a development consultancy for small indies that would “go in, shake down a project, rewrite it if necessary, and guide the producer in the right direction”, but this proved to be just the beginning.

“It turned out our offer had much more appeal than we anticipated,” says Smith. “We now work with a wide range of clients, [including] a lot of middle-sized production companies with development teams. We can go in and manage those teams on a short-term basis, as sometimes they don’t understand how to match the creative with the commercial.”

Elsewhere, former RDF and Channel 5 coproductions chief Lilla Hurst and Extreme Sports Channel co-founder Ben Barrett last year launched Drive, a coproduction consultancy that similarly uses its experience and deal-structuring expertise to “doggedly get something over the line and into production”, as Barrett puts it.

Drive began life focusing on unscripted programming, and is currently on retainer from around six factual indies as well as taking

It is obvious that, with television drama in a prolonged golden era, broadcasters will increasingly be on the hunt for their own channel-defining scripted product. The growing international production business is spawning commercially-successful and critically acclaimed coproductions such as Sky Atlantic and Canal+’s crime serial *The Tunnel* or the BBC and Starz’s period piece *The White Queen*. As Tim Corrie, who was



Far Moor execs oversaw production on BBC Two drama *The Fall*

on case-by-case projects. It is now moving into international drama coproduction. “When I launched my previous consultancy, Lillavision, in 2008, the high-end drama business was on its knees,” says Hurst. “It’s only been in the last year or so that it’s become viable again, especially for coproduction.”

Drive’s first major scripted brokerage deal was bringing together UK pubcaster BBC Two and US cable net SundanceTV on the Guy Hibbert-written drama *One Child*, which is slated for launch late this year.

BBC production executives had brought Hurst the project late in 2012, at which point BBC Two was attached, though not covering the entire budget. Sundance scripted commissioner Christian Vesper was keen, but progress slowed after the cable channel restructured. Eventually Sundance signed on, and was quickly followed by BBC Worldwide, which paid for the international sales rights. “To be honest, no distributor would go near it until Sundance was on board,” says Hurst.

“It’s an interesting example of how we can

operate with projects from big entities such as the BBC,” adds Barrett. “Because we’re nimble and focused, we can push projects into different places and really get behind them.”

Each of these new players sees continued involvement in the final product that results from their investment as part of the business model; even those not producing take an active monitoring role to ensure their bets pay off.

“We don’t just set something up and say goodbye to it,” says Far Moor’s Thomson-Glover. “We have to ensure that the coproduction works in terms of financing, points or anything else that the project needs, and that is an ongoing thing.”

Larger copro players are now beginning to offer producers similar all-in-one deals as demand for content grows.

“In a way, we are setting ourselves up as a bespoke, boutique player, albeit a larger one with the financial backing of RTL,” says FremantleMedia’s director of global drama Sarah Doole of the production giant’s business model.

“In terms of raising money towards

distribution advances, if there’s a great script and talent at the heart of it, we can go straight to RTL and move things forward.”

Similarly, Carrie Stein, executive VP of global production at Entertainment One Television, says: “We’re bringing a pretty fully developed package to channels, whether that’s a script and three or four top level auspices, for example, and that’s a big change. You can no longer go in on a wing and a prayer.”

FremantleMedia’s latest coproduced drama bets include *Birds of Prey*, an international series based on a Wilbur Smith novel featuring the writing talent of crime novelist JJ Connolly, and with indie Corona Pictures attached. eOne has been working on *Welcome to Sweden*, the TV4 Scandi comedy from Greg and Amy Poehler that NBC has acquired for the US; and *The Book of Negroes*, which has been packaged for CBC in Canada and BET in the US.

The likes of eOne, FremantleMedia, Shine, Endemol and ITV Studios all have established relationships with key broadcasters that they feel set them apart from competition. However, the

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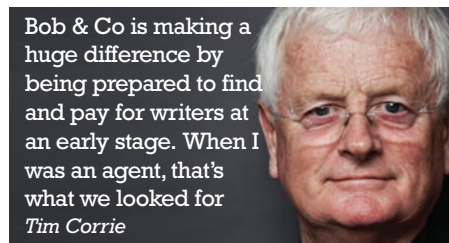
eOne and TV4 coproduction *Welcome to Sweden*

new crop of copro fixers, which also includes Social Construct Media and Simon Vaughan's Lookout Point, are making in-roads in this space.

Drive's success in bringing *One Child* to SundanceTV has seen the consultancy handed a retainer by the AMC Networks-owned cable channel. Drive will now identify drama projects ripe for coproduction and bring them to the network, which then weighs up investment.

"We are retained by Sundance to help them find the next drama that they will internationally coproduce," says Barrett. "We're their eyes and ears on the ground in the UK."

Far Moor recently jetted off to the US to meet the key on-demand players commissioning content to see if new coproduction opportunities are on the horizon, while Irwin says his firm is working with an unnamed US broadcaster. This



Bob & Co is making a huge difference by being prepared to find and pay for writers at an early stage. When I was an agent, that's what we looked for
Tim Corrie

channel is "looking to set up formats it can control and sell to a UK broadcaster" that utilise the UK drama tax credit, he adds.

Elsewhere, Grand Scheme is working with 20th Century Fox and identifying 'broken' pilots

that could be adapted for the UK.

"The American system is so wasteful," says Grand Scheme's Smith of the partnership's roots. "This year the networks funded 100 drama and comedy pilots, and probably only five per network get commissioned. We always thought there had got to be a lot of interesting projects that fall by the wayside, so we're going through Fox's drama and comedy development and pilot slates, analysing them and seeing any can be reversioned for the UK."

A sitcom project has been identified and is currently in the process of script rewrites.

"It's a suck it and see relationship with Fox, and if we can get some traction then we can see a real future in people like us working with busted pilots," says Smith.

Distribution and development execs at US studios and networks clearly see potential in the model these firms are championing, and others are coming round. "What we've found recently is that some of the much bigger, more established companies are coming to us for help," says Drive's Hurst.

This could be because the range of services on offer – from legal advice from Far Moor to sales from Drive. "If distribution rights are still available after we've funded a show, we'll look to do limited territory sales, in which we will try to sell or presell into certain major markets on a reduced commission," explains Drive's Barrett.

"It's competitive proposition and attractive to both us and the producer, as we've spent time

getting to know the project. We can offer 15 per cent against a distributor's 25 plus five."

However, he adds: "We don't want to step on distributors' toes. We want to populate that space between producer and distributor.

"This could be on a project we think is fantastic, but needs significant investment. Distributors can find it very hard to engage with that, because they don't know if there will be an end product."

FremantleMedia's Doole acknowledges these new consultancies have developed a service that "takes on all the hard work and labour to get a project to the point it can be pitched".

"That's all great, but we're trying to do it in a different way – we really want to at the creative heart of these projects," she says, adding that when FremantleMedia International takes sales rights, it will not be "an arm's length distributor, as we want to be a hands-on creative partner delivering finance and success".

Bob & Co's new scout Corrie first made his name in UK drama circles as an agent for the



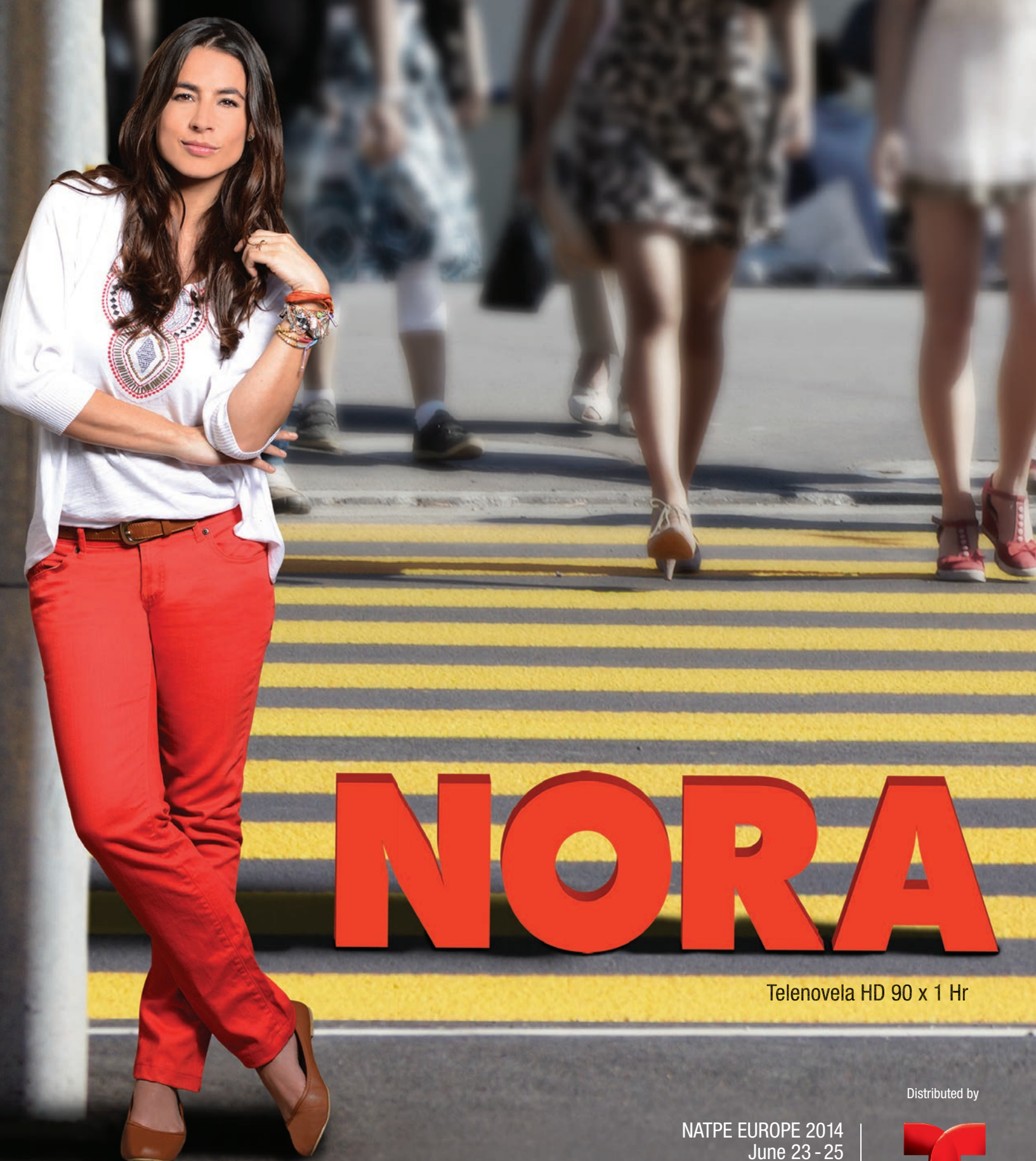
We don't just set a project up and say goodbye. We have to ensure the copro works in terms of financing, points or anything else it needs
Justin Thomson-Glover

Fraser and Dunlop Scripts agency in the 1970s. Nearly 40 years later in 2007, he co-founded United Agents, a London-based talent hub. He hopes to use those skills to effectively become an agent and go-between for British and international talent, and the broadcasters, distributors and platforms seeking their wares.

Corrie says the key difference between a regular production company and Bob & Co is their ability to take early-stage calculated investment risks.

"My colleagues have shown they are prepared to back their own judgement, and invest money into the buying of options. Most of the small production companies have to depend on a broadcaster to come in at a very early stage to help even finance the first hour of a script from development to production.

"What I see Bob & Co doing is making that huge difference by being prepared to find and pay for writers at that early stage. When I was an agent, that's what we were looking for." **TBI**



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Over the top in CEE

The rise of over-the-top video on a global scale is typified by the rapid growth and success of services like Netflix and Amazon Prime Instant Video. Yet in central and eastern Europe, where these US giants are yet to launch, the market is already being defined by a new generation of home-grown players, reports Andy McDonald

A few years in from their initial launch, Ivi.ru, Stream.ru, Tvigle.ru, Player.pl, Ipla.tv and Iplex.pl and others have not only established themselves, but have also grown their market share, and are now focusing on multi-device strategies that are putting them on a full range of connected devices.

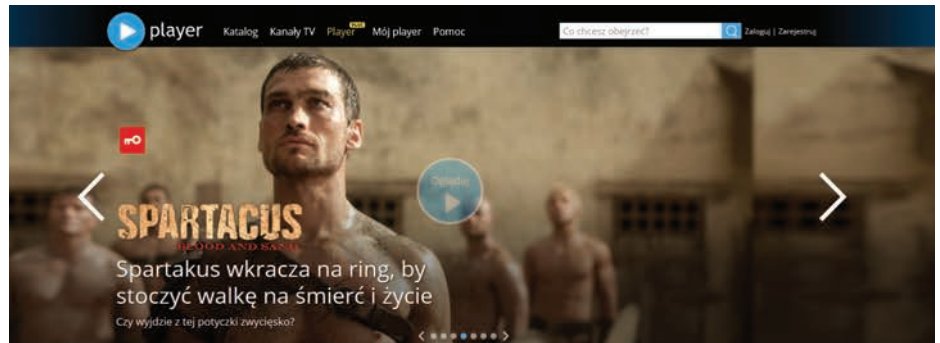
Smart TVs, games consoles, tablets and mobiles are all helping to give these VOD services a foothold in a part of the world that was once better known for its rampant online piracy.

While these issues still exist, the local OTT players are gaining in confidence, and are now setting foreign expansion goals of their own.

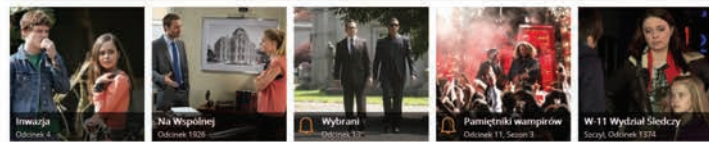
Across eastern Europe as a whole, TBI publisher Informa says that advertising revenues accounted for 99.7% of OTT revenue market share in 2010.

Last year, the balance shifted slightly, with ad revenue share dropping to 77.7% and subscription revenues growing to 16.9%, while transaction revenues made up the remaining 5.4%. By 2017, this is tipped to reach 58.7% ad revenues, 32.9% subscription revenues and 8.4% transaction revenues.

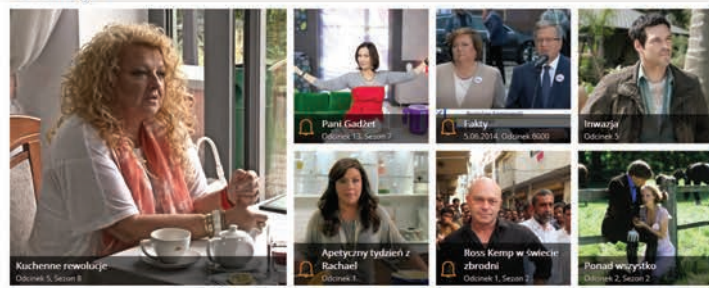
As far as money is concerned, Informa predicts that OTT market revenues in eastern Europe will climb rapidly from a total industry of just US\$26.8 million in 2010 to US\$699.8 million in 2017.



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The gradual shift in business model from an almost entirely free and ad-supported to a system that embraces both subscription and transactional can already be discerned in the approaches being taken by some of the major players in the space.

Russian VOD site Tvigle originally launched in 2007, and now claims a user base of 11 million Russian viewers. According to a recent report by Digital TV Research, around 90% of its revenues are from advertising. Founder and CEO Egor Yakovlev claims that the firm has tried different business models “a couple of times in the past” but is keen to add in a premium layer to the service this year.

“In the past with a paid model we were always in a situation where we’d lost money, but by next autumn we plan to go out with a new subscription and transactional model as well – but we are going to do that only on devices. We are not going to do that on the free-to-air internet, on computers – we will do it on smart TVs and we will do it probably on set-top boxes,” says Yakovlev.

Among the premium content that Yakovlev is keen to secure for the site on a subscription basis is US TV series from Hollywood studios.

“Mostly we are going to target TV series because in this case you will be able, with a relatively compact catalogue, to build a long relationship with the customers and to build loyalty in a longer way than you could do with a single feature,” said Yakovlev. He also aims to offer a “freemium or a mixed type of model” for Russian music videos, allowing users to watch the content on an ad-free basis for a small

The screenshot shows the Tvigle website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links. The main content area features several promotional cards for different channels and collections:

- ГАННИБАЛ** (Gannibal) - Финал сезона (Final Season) - СМОТРЕТЬ (Watch)
- Lady** - Lady — женский канал. Сериалы, мелодрамы, любимые комедии и полезные советы. Коллекция: Город хищниц. Третий сезон. 14 серий.
- KIDS** - Kids — канал для детей любого возраста. Богатая библиотека мультфильмов со всего мира. Коллекция: Алиса знает, что делать. 14 серий.
- ЮМОР** - Юмор — канал хорошего настроения. Комедии, шоу, мультфильмы и сериалы. Коллекция: Трюкачи. 50 роликов.
- небаян** - Небаян — канал для молодежи и о молодежи. Лучшие сериалы, фильмы, юмор, видеоуроки. Коллекция: Misfits. 14 серий.
- Мужской канал** - Мужской — фильмы, сериалы и программы для мужчин. Мужские увлечения, боевики, фильмы чужеземцев. Коллекция: Человек, автомобиль и Гора. 11 роликов.
- ПРОКИНО** - Про кино — самые свежие новости киноиндустрии. Трейлеры, интервью, обзор кинорынка. Коллекция: Сегодня в кинотеатрах. 80 роликов.

Russia's Tvigle claims a user base of 11 million

studios, along with European distributors and the main Russian producers, and offers both ad-supported and paid access models.

Tumanov says this mixed-model is designed to avoid the service becoming a “niche” home for just premiere content, with the site offering paid programming in short release windows alongside ad-supported movies, TV shows, animation and music videos. “As the market changes, more attention is paid to driving

Tumanov. “Subscription services take a longer time to develop. It is our focus for 2014 to make a visible progress in this business model.”

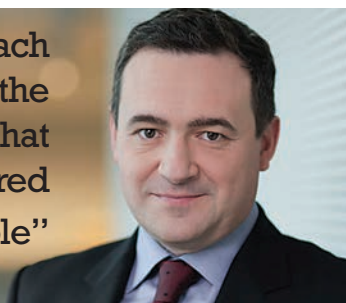
Russia's Stream.ru is slightly different in that it has been paid-for from the start. However, it is also looking to extend its business in different ways. The VOD service is owned by Russian telco Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) and last year, in collaboration with its parent company, it launched a series of value-added services for phone users, including a music offering.

“The first year showed that we can deliver a high quality product especially when demand for voice services in telecommunication is shrinking,” says Stream.ru CEO Artem Zassoursky. We gained efficiency and reached stability in this service. Now we have plans in expanding our cooperation with different copyright holders in order to attract more subscribers and provide a better variety of music.”

Over in Poland, Iplex.pl – a smaller rival to the likes of Cyfrowy Polsat-backed Ipla.tv, TVN-owned Player.pl and online portal Onet-owned VOD.pl – is also looking to mobile to help boost its presence and last autumn launched a special ‘Iplex powered by T-Mobile’ application. Vice-CEO Lukasz Skrzypek says that this allowed T-Mobile customers to not only watch Iplex’s film content on mobile devices, but to add the costs of

“I hope that Netflix will teach people to pay for content, but the biggest problem with piracy is that most of the content that is desired by the audience is not available”

Maciej Maciejowski, TVN



monthly fee or for free with ads included.

Russian rival Ivi.ru launched in 2010 and as of last summer has an estimated 3.7 million registered users and 16 million monthly visitors, with founder and CEO Oleg Tumanov claiming it is the biggest legal VOD service in the country. Ivi.ru has deals in place with the six major US

transactional VOD and SVOD offerings, as these are the opportunity to deliver premiere cinematography and popular catch-ups,” he adds.

“Our audience used to consume pirated content for free and ad-supported movies are still preferable for the most part of Ivi’s audience, but today the situation is gradually changing,” says

the application to their monthly T-Mobile bill.

Iplex offers a catalogue of more than 1,500 film titles focused on world and art-house cinema titles, cartoons, documentaries and shorts. The service works on an ad-supported and a subscription model with roughly 1,000 titles available free with ads. The SVOD layer has two levels, Iplex Plus, which gives access to premium film catalogue without advertisements for PLN9.90 (US\$3.26) per month, and Iplex Zero, which turns off of advertisements before and during free content for PLN19.90 per year.

Like many of its rivals, Iplex offers apps for Samsung, Panasonic and Toshiba smart TVs, as well as on local cable TV via Toya 3G. Its mobile Android and iOS apps are currently only available to domestic T-Mobile customers, though Skrzypek says Iplex is planning a general app release soon.

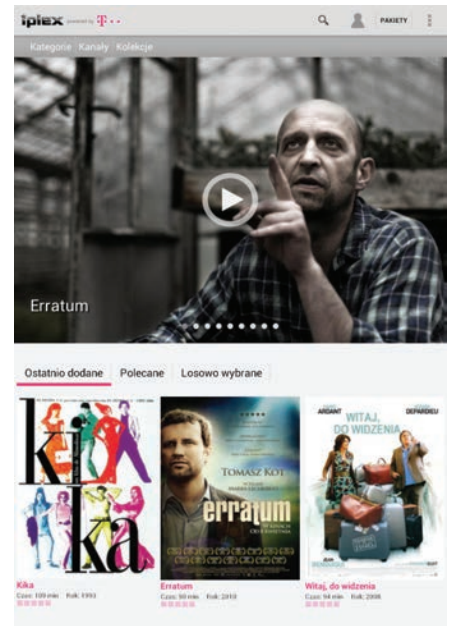
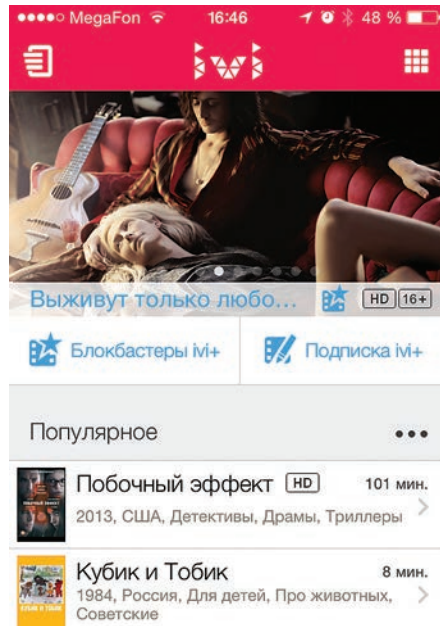
Polish broadcaster TVN recently relaunched its online VOD service on Sony PlayStation 3 consoles with a debut on PS4 due to follow after rebranding it from TVNplayer.pl to Player.pl earlier this year. Maciej Maciejowski, member of the management board in charge of new business development at TVN, says the change in branding came as TVN “enriched the offering with third-party providers”, having initially been focused solely on offering TVN’s linear output on the web.

“We look at Player.pl as a high quality service – that’s an important distinction between things like YouTube or some other providers,” says Maciejowski. He stresses that TVN’s service is focused around full-length TV shows and, to the extent that it can secure the rights, movie content – not video clips.

Currently the service is ad-supported, but Maciejowski says TVN is already trialling a Player+ option, offering “some major Hollywood content and other things that are available only in the paid model.” Maciejowski says: “I think in the future we’re going to enrich the offer with paid content” and that the trial set out to determine “people’s willingness to pay for any online offering.”

“Poland in the market is a little different than the UK, for instance, because we don’t have Lovefilm-Amazon or Netflix here. The majority, and by majority I mean 99% of the online VOD offering, is advertising supported, so that’s the reality that has been created here. Right now, to [be] entering with a paid offer, [you] must be very, very well prepared,” he says.

Maciejowski concedes that subscription



Russia's ivi.ru launched in 2011 and has 3.7 million users

revenues in Poland are currently “not significant”, but claims that studios holding content back for long periods of time also “opens the playground for pirates”. Since the second half of last year, he says there has been a “huge change” in the attitude of the Hollywood studios. “I think that they realise that there is real money in some [CEE] markets [and] there is real money in advertising-supported models.”

While piracy is something that all of the CEE OTT players have had to contend with, it has perhaps also been a deterrent to the likes of Netflix, which has set its sights on a major expansion in Europe this year, but is so far focusing its efforts on western European countries.

“Russia, in my view, represents a challenging environment to Netflix due to high level of piracy, language, local content, local competition and legal system. I wouldn’t see Russia as the next priority for them but can’t comment on Netflix’ plans,” says Ivi’s Tumanov.

In Poland, both TVN’s Maciejowski and Iplex’s Skrzypek believe that a move by Netflix would help to educate the market, promote paid OTT in the country and allow Polish VOD platforms to reach new, mass subscribers as a whole. As Maciejowski says, “I hope that Netflix will teach people to pay for content, but one has to remember, the biggest problem with the piracy issue is that most of the content that is

desired by the audience is not available.”

Tvige’s Yakovlev is more damning about Netflix’s potential to cross over into the Russian market.

“If you take a look at the current Netflix catalogue – and let’s assume all this catalogue would become available translated into Russian – nobody in Russia would be interested in 99.5% of it. Let’s be honest, it’s relatively old movies, it’s relatively few premium titles, it’s almost zero premieres,” he says. “You have to do really complicated homework to be successful in this market if you are coming from abroad.”

With no pledges yet made by the major western OTT players about heading into CEE, the domestic players are instead looking at possible expansion opportunities.

Tvige previously had plans in place to expand into Ukraine this year and had made its first steps towards doing so before the political situation in the country, and its knock-on effect on the ad market there, scuppered its plans.

Yakovlev says there is still potential for Tvige to make a move into this market should the situation improve in future, but says it is now also considering making a move into other former Soviet Union, Russian-language speaking countries – namely Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Stream.ru says it too has plans to expand into other CIS countries this year, while Iplex has plans to move outside of Poland. **TBI**

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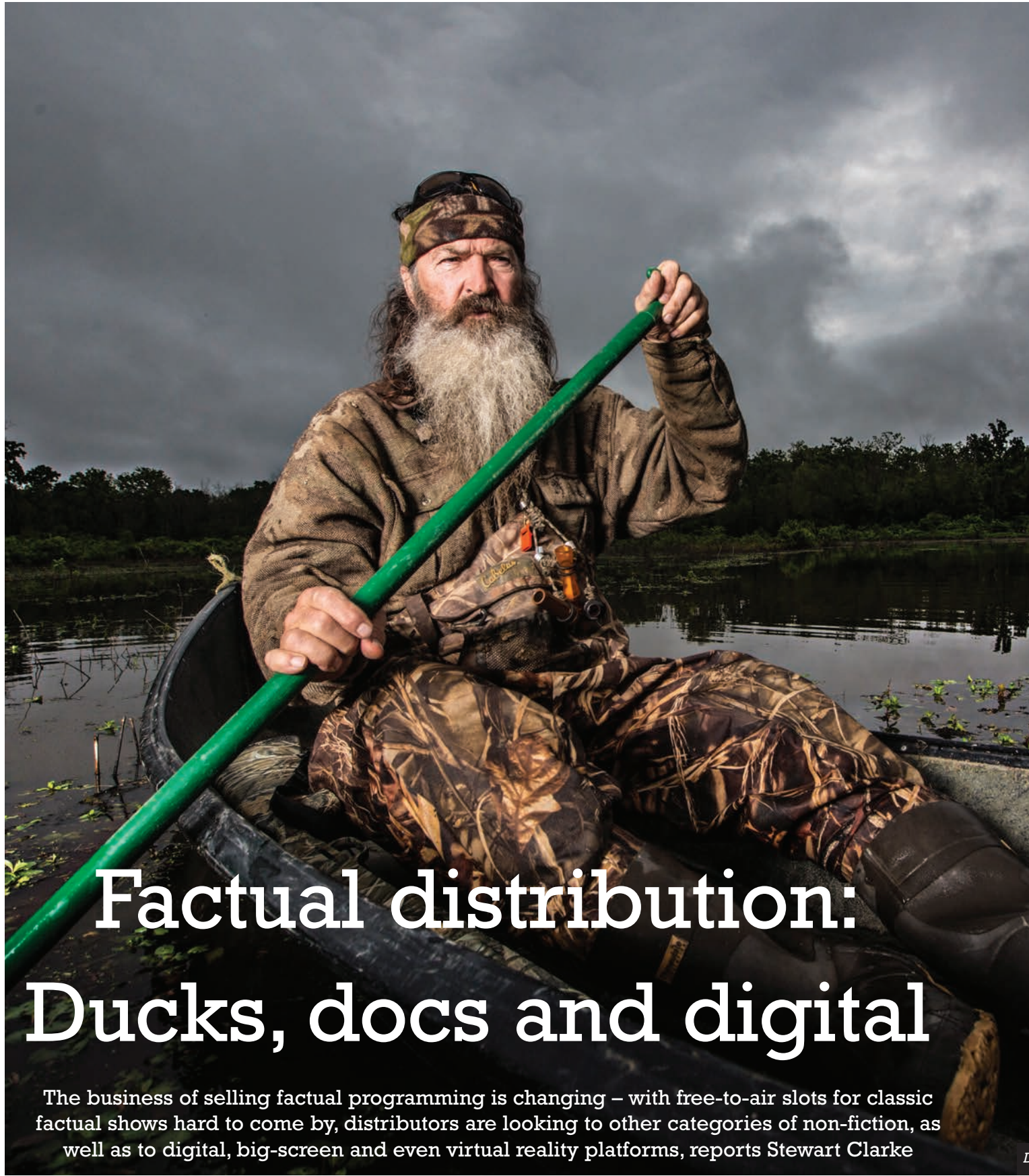
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Factual distribution: Ducks, docs and digital

The business of selling factual programming is changing – with free-to-air slots for classic factual shows hard to come by, distributors are looking to other categories of non-fiction, as well as to digital, big-screen and even virtual reality platforms, reports Stewart Clarke



Duck Dynasty has redefined 'hit' ratings for factual shows

For the largest factual distributors the business has got more complex and, increasingly, about the kind of volume and package deals more traditionally associated with scripted programming and the Hollywood studios.

A+E International has an 11,000-hour catalogue that spans classic high-end docs, true-crime series, character-driven franchises and now scripted content, with Lifetime product in the fold.

The size of the catalogue and off-the-scale ratings success of shows such as *Duck Dynasty* means A+E can do bigger deals, which could span several types of non-fiction programming and include TV movies or other drama fare.

"There are a lot of volume, output and multiyear deals now, as we have programmes that show consistent ratings," says Marielle Zuccarelli, A+E's managing director, international content distribution. "Buyers know what they will be getting and want to lock in rights to further shows. The deal-making process is longer and more complex."

With such a large amount of programming, A+E has reworked the structure of its catalogue so that the target demo for each programme and category of programming is clearer. "It helps if customers can see the split between target demographics, especially with volume deals," says Zuccarelli.

For the distributors-come-channel operators, the sales process is made more complex by the need to service their own networks before making programming available to international buyers. That holdback, which could be between six-to-twelve months, can be a challenge for big acquiring broadcasters in developed territories, which do not want to wait for key shows.

At the other end of the scale, for the large

distributors, deals in smaller territories need to be for sizable volumes of content to be worthwhile. When a broadcaster in a small territory in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, is paying between US\$50 and US\$200 an hour for factual programming, it will need to acquire a number of hours to make it a deal worth doing for the distributor.

Discovery has a 15,000-hour catalogue spanning non-fiction content from ob docs to blue-chip. With more non-fiction channels than anyone else globally, the sale of Discovery content to other broadcasters involves making a territory-by-territory call on how long the holdback should be and what can be offered.

"It needs to be a very strategic approach and we may refrain from selling hundreds and hundreds of hours [to one customer]," says Saevar Lemke, Discovery Enterprises International's regional director, programme sales, EMEA. He identifies the numerous thematic DTT channels that are rolling out as a growth area, and says these channels are good customers for library programming that has already gone out on Discovery channels but remains relevant.

"There are more and more niche channels and all of them are potential clients," Lemke says. "You plan and think about what you will be getting from a particular country for the year ahead, and then a [DTT] channel launches and you do some deals and that changes. In that respect you can land some lucky punches."

At the high end of the classic docs market, demand is steady, according to Walter Köhler, CEO of Terra Mater, the Red Bull Media House-owned factual studio. "Blue-chip natural history content is king – and it get's ever stronger," he says, adding there has been an uptick in demand for high-end series rather than just one-offs. "If there's a discernible

"There are a lot of volume, output and multiyear deals now, as we have consistent ratings. Buyers know what they will be getting and want to lock in rights."

Marielle Zuccarelli, A+E





Flying Monsters in 3D has been a giant screen hit

trend it is that miniseries do extremely well in the market.”

Producers are, meanwhile, more savvy than ever before in terms of what they can command from a distributor. If there’s a large funding gap, the decision over a distributor could come down to who will contribute the most, but programme-makers also want to see a programme-seller present a plan for how and where they will sell a show.

“Producers see what international distribution can do, and ‘international’ is now part of the business plan, not an afterthought,” says Caitlin Meek-O’Connor, acquisitions manager, factual and factual entertainment at Modern Times Group-owned and UK-based distributor DRG.

She adds: “For us it’s about saying to producers, ‘this is what is in our catalogue, this is who we sell to and this is our plan and what we will do with your show’. There is more competition for rights and we now have to work [with producers] from an earlier stage – in drama that was always the case because of the funding model, it’s now the case in factual too.”

DRG reps factual content from Channel 5 in the UK and TV3 in Ireland, and just inked a first-look deal with Latimer Films, the UK independent producer behind dog-fighting doc *Going to the Dogs*.

If producers are more aware of making projects with international legs, they often balance that with country-specific projects. Kate Beale is managing director of Talent TV South, which has made several shows for fledgling UK regional station London Live’s

Platform 8 doc strand, including *Jail Birds*, which is about prisoners’ families, that are unlikely to resonate beyond the UK. However, it also works with A+E, Discovery and Nat Geo. For international sales, Talent works with a range of partners including Content Media, DRG and Sky Vision, and Beale says that a good distributor will nowadays help facilitate deals, make introductions and generally do more than simply sell a finished programme.

While the rights position when working with the largest factual channels does not allow for any international back-end for the producer – they often do not keep any – it is sometimes just as rewarding, and simpler, than

embarking on a project that will require finding coproduction partners, presales and other sources of funding. “You might sign away rights, but then [the channel is] paying for it,” says Beale. “We’d rather keep rights, but to a certain extent, a fully-funded Discovery show can make as much as a commissioned programme you can then sell on.”

The success of *Duck Dynasty* in the US and internationally has got factual producers turning their hand to big-personality ob docs. In many territories broadcasters that want to tap into the character-led trend, but favour local over US content, which how *Oyster Empire* came about. DRG is selling the upcoming series, about a family of Irish oyster farmers for Ireland’s TV3.

“It’s in that *Duck Dynasty* style and it is a learning experience for us,” says Ian Lamarra from the show’s producer, London-based independent Alaska, which has branched out from talent-led fact ent series since launching in 2011. “It’s being exec produced by Paul Sommers, who is ex-Tiger Aspect and has done a lot of blue-chip docs, while this is more akin to a drama series.”

Looking at the bigger picture, Lamarra says it is too early for Alaska to cut a first-look agreement with a distributor. “I don’t think we should tie ourselves into a deal yet. Our programmes are very eclectic and the best person for [Crime & Investigation series] *Gangs of Britain* is different to the best person



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for [Channel 5's upcoming] *Blinging Up Baby*." In a TV world witnessing frenetic M&A activity,

Lamarra makes another point about the implications of an indie agreeing a long-term deal with a distributor: "If the intellectual property is tied up we are less attractive to buy," he says.

If bigger, more involved deals are the order of the day for factual distributors, so is franchise-building. While fact ent series are formattable, classic wildlife and natural history programmes are not, but a franchise delivers a recurring pipeline of content within a recognisable framework.

Amsterdam-based Off the Fence produces the 'Wildest' series of programmes for Discovery. It has already made *Wildest Latin America*, *Wildest India*, *Wildest Arctic* and *Wildest Latin America* series, and is now embarking on *World's Wildest Cities: Manaus*. The programming strand looks at how animals adapt to climates and environments. The new instalment, a copro between France Televisions and Discovery in Europe, has been prebought for Animal Planet in Latin America. It will look at how humans and wildlife co-exist in the largest city in the Amazon, Manaus.

In the blue-chip realm, Terra Mater's Kohler identifies a demand for history projects covering big, international subject matter. "We're discovering a strong comeback for blue-chip science and big international history topics," he says. "We think the global audiences



"The production team now needs to think for TV, 3D, giant screen and now virtual reality, which we will do for our next project – although we don't know where the 'VR window' will be yet"

John Morris, Atlantic Productions

have enough of very nationalised history. There's a big demand for overarching topics."

Like Terra Mater, Atlantic Productions makes high-end 'classic' docs, including several with iconic natural history presenter and expert Sir David Attenborough. It has been at the forefront of distributing content to new platforms and exploiting windows outside of TV. That, commercial director John Morris says, came out of the realisation that it was not making the most of the rights it had. In distributor speak, it wasn't working the rights hard enough.

Having made big-budget 3D offerings for Sky in the UK including *Galapagos 3D*, *Flying Monsters 3D* and penguin doc *The Bachelor King 3D*, a new distribution outlet that opened was the Imax and giant screen market. While these windows involve a holdback from TV and will stymie the ability to presell to broadcasters,

cinema adds to the marketing buzz of a show and generates revenue. A giant screen also offers advantages over a regular theatrical release in that a film might be licensed for six months or a year, and then be re-licensed. *Flying Monsters 3D*, for example, is being licensed for a third giant-screen cycle. As the rights holder, Atlantic gets an ongoing share of the box office, which now surpasses US\$10 million. Atlantic will now take the show to TV.

A cinema holdback can be tricky for sales firms to work with. "For a lot of distributors it is hard to get their head around the fact that they won't be able to sell something for 18 months," Morris says. "Some are factories that churn through content, and not all of them can accommodate that [window]."

Upcoming Atlantic doc *Conquest of the Skies* will debut on Sky in the UK and then have a giant screen release around the end of 2015, meaning international TV sales will not start in earnest until 2016.

Atlantic has made 3D content work successfully with its giant screen strategy and for Sky, the commissioning broadcaster of the 3D shows (Sky and Atlantic have a 3D production JV, Colossus), it makes sense as it needs to programme its dedicated 3D channel. For others, 3D for TV is not a viable option and they are looking instead to the ultra high-definition 4K standard.

"3D is just an option for the big cinema screen, but makes no commercial sense for TV because it increases the production budgets without an equal increase in revenue," Terra Mater's Kohler. "4K, on the other hand, is completely different. This will be the new production standard for the next years. We think the upgrade to 4K will go faster than the change from SD to HD."

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Java Films' *Emptying The Skies* (see box, page 32)

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“We’re discovering a strong comeback of blue-chip science and big international history topics. Global audiences have enough of very nationalised history topics”

Walter Kohler, Terra Mater

platforms is challenging. That holds true for the programme makers who might now need to make several versions to suit each medium.

That conundrum is about to get more

complex as Atlantic is currently experimenting with content for the Oculus Rift virtual reality system. The production team have been testing what can and can’t be done while

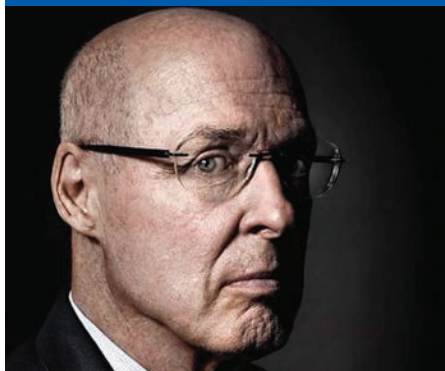
making *Conquest of the Skies* (which will not, as was erroneously reported, have a virtual reality component).

“The production team now needs to think in four or five different ways – for TV, 3D, giant screen and now virtual reality, which we will do for our next project,” Atlantic’s Morris says. “As with 3D we want to be at the front edge with virtual reality – although we don’t know where the ‘VR window’ will be yet.”

Another window, another opportunity, another challenge. Given attendees at factual festivals a few years ago were being fed a doom-laden view of the unscripted business, many are embracing the more involved, layered world of making and selling factual content. More windows are opening than closing. **TBI**

THE NETFLIX EFFECT

There is a new factual buyer in town and it goes by the name of Netflix. Having initially focused on drama acquisitions and originals, the streaming service is now moving into factual, with predictably market-altering consequences.



Its first original acquisition was *The Square*, director-producer Jehane Moujaim and Karim Amer’s film about the struggle for change during the Egyptian revolution, as seen through the eyes of young activists.

It has also picked up premiere rights to Bloomberg Businessweek Films’ debut documentary, *Hank: Five Years From the Brink* (pictured), the Emmy- and Academy-nominated doc maker Joe Berlinger’s Hank Paulson doc. Another acquisition was *The Short Game*, the Delirio Films doc, exec produced by Justin Timberlake and following eight seven year-old competitive golfers as

they prepare for the World Championship of Junior Golf.

The ‘Netflix effect’ when it comes to docs is to provide a boost to theatrical and festival films, which it is then eyeing as ‘original’ programming for its service. However, to qualify as a Netflix Original the streaming service will want all rights, which could mean a first-window in a large number of territories as its international footprint expands.

Its hold back is usually against pay TV, digital and video-on-demand, meaning a distributor can still sell to free-to-air – albeit free-to-air slots for feature docs are few and far between. The free-to-air buyer would, however, likely be precluded from putting the film on its catch-up or on-demand service.

If Netflix is interested it will pay a premium license fee, but some suggest it does not market its docs with the same gusto as its drama originals, meaning a traditional sale to a handful of pay channels, who will promote the film heavily, could see it reach a wider audience. Currently, the on-demand service is mostly buying for the US and adding in other territories, but is expected to start buying docs on a territory-specific basis as its international services roll out and develop.

“Netflix presents a tremendous opportunity for theatrical docs,” says Kathryn Bonnici, head of acquisitions and development at Java Films, the European indie doc distributor that sells *Emptying the Skies*, the feature doc based upon author Jonathan Franzen’s New Yorker magazine article about songbird

culling, and *I Will Be Murdered*, a doc about a wealthy Mexican lawyer’s ill-fated investigation into his lover’s death.

Java opened a separate feature doc division last year, and Bonnici says Netflix is giving the whole documentary film business a boost. “A platform like Netflix makes festival [films] more commercially viable for a distributor as they will pay big money for the cream of that circuit,” she says.

Netflix might provides a shot in the arm for factual films, but the business of acquiring and selling them can come with requirements above those for a regular factual one-off or series. “Especially with issue-driven films, you need to do outreach, arrange screenings and work with charities and that can cost,” says Bonnici.

As with regular features, the feature doc windows are closing so that while the typical festival-to-theatrical-to-TV cycle that was traditionally about 18 months can now be six months or shorter.

Dan and Josh Braun’s Submarine Entertainment is a key player in the feature doc world, repping titles including *Man on Wire* and *Super Size Me* among others. Advisory companies such as former CAA agent Kevin Iwashina’s Preferred Content also play an increasingly important role in packaging content and brokering deals between finance, production and distribution partners. Preferred Content also produces through Preferred Film and TV, a joint venture with producer and distributor Content Media.

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NORTH AMERICA

| | Pre-sale | Acquisition |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| United States | | |
| Network | – | 100,000-1m |
| PBS (national) | 40,000-150,000 | 20,000-100,000 |
| Pay cable | 100,000-150,000 | 30,000-200,000 |
| Basic cable | 30,000-120,000 | 20,000-50,000 |
| Digital cable | 10,000 | 2,500-20,000 |
| Canada | | |
| Network | 12,500-80,000 | 12,500-30,000 |
| Cable | 25,000-40,000 | 2,500-10,000 |

MAJOR EUROPEAN TERRITORIES

| | Pre-sale | Acquisition |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Benelux | | |
| Free-to-air | 10,000 - 20,000 | 2,600-15,000 |
| Pay-TV | 4,000 | 2,000-4,000 |
| France | | |
| Free-to-air | 25,000-120,000 | 7,500-40,000 |
| Pay-TV | 25,000-80,000 | 2,000-10,000 |
| Germany | | |
| Free-to-air | 20,000-150,000 | 8,000-50,000 |
| Pay-TV | 40,000-60,000 | 5,000-20,000 |
| Italy | | |
| Free-to-air | 30,000-100,000 | 10,000-50,000 |
| Pay-TV | 3,500-15,000 | 2,000-10,000 |
| Scandinavia | | |
| Free-to-air | 20,000-40,000 | 7,500-21,000 |
| Pay-TV | 6,000-15,000 | 10,000 |
| Spain | | |
| Free-to-air | 10,000-25,000 | 1,800-13,000 |
| Pay-TV | 18,000 | 4,000-12,000 |
| UK | | |
| Free-to-air | 15,000-200,000 | 2,500-150,000 |
| Pay-TV | 20,000-50,000 | 6,000-20,000 |
| Austria | | 3,500-5,000 |
| Greece | | 1,500-3,000 |
| Iceland | | 380-850 |
| Ireland | | 1,000-2,000 |
| Portugal | | 1,000-5,000 |
| Switzerland (Fr) | | 2,300-3,500 |
| Switzerland (Ger) | | 2,300-3,500 |
| Turkey | | 1,000-3,000 |

MAJOR ASIA PACIFIC TERRITORIES

| | Pre-sale | Acquisition |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Australia | | |
| Free-to-air | 4,000-35,000 | 3,000-20,000 |
| Pay-TV | – | 1,500-2,600 |
| New Zealand | | |
| | 6,500-10,000 | 2,000-4,500 |
| Japan | | |
| Free-to-air | 25,000-150,000 | 8,000-20,000 |
| Pay-TV | 13,200-25,000 | 6,000-20,000 |

CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Argentina | 500-3,000 |
| Brazil | 1,000-4,500 |
| Mexico | 1,000-3,000 |

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Albania | 100-300 |
| Croatia | 500-1,100 |
| Czech Republic | 600-1,500 |
| Hungary | 600-2,000 |
| Poland | 1,000-2,500 |
| Romania | 500-1,200 |
| Russia | 900-6,000 |
| Slovakia | 400-800 |
| Slovenia | 600-900 |

ASIA

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| China | 1,000-2,000 |
| Hong Kong | 1,250-2,500 |
| India | 250-1,500 |
| Indonesia | 250-1,800 |
| South Korea | 1,000-5,200 |
| Malaysia | 600-1,500 |
| Philippines | 400-1,300 |
| Singapore | 600-1,250 |
| Taiwan | 800-1,400 |
| Thailand | 500-1,600 |



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LA Screenings: The class of 2014

Back from LA, Jesse Whittock identifies the dramas that had buyers gripped at the LA Screenings

If the 2013-14 broadcast season tipped toward comedy, the pendulum firmly swung back in the other direction this time around, perhaps because Fox's Golden Globe-winning cop shop laugher *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and ABC's Sony-distributed autobiographical series *The Goldbergs* were the only two network comedy hits from last year.

"This is one of the strongest drama line-ups we've had in years," says Jeffrey Schlesinger, president of Warner Bros Worldwide Television Distribution of his 2014-15 vintage, echoing a sentiment from around most of the Hollywood studio lots this year.

Buyers at Warner Bros.' Burbank base this May found the studio shopping creepy CBS series *Stalker*; ABC's supernatural/romantic-themed drama *Forever*; and NBC's *The Mysteries of Laura*, a remake of a Spanish procedural, starring Debra Messing in full *Columbo* mode.

There was also DC Comics foursome *Gotham* (for Fox), *Constantine* (NBC), *iZombie* and *The Flash* (both The CW). Across the board, buyers were impressed by each, though some were concerned by the number of superhero-inspired products on offer.



Buyers applauded the pilot of CBS procedural *Scorpion*

NBCUniversal International Television Distribution and Universal Networks International president Belinda Menendez agrees drama has taken centre stage. She points to genre series, political and military thrillers, and event series as being among the key trends that can be in the 2014-15 line-up.

NBCU's network dramas include Israeli espionage format *Allegiance* as well as *The Slap*, *State of Affairs* and *Odyssey*. On the ground, buyers were particularly keen on the potential of *Allegiance* and *Odyssey*.

CBS Studios International, meanwhile, had an equally noteworthy selection. Among the headline titles are new *CSI* and *NCIS* spin-offs *CSI: Cyber* and *NCIS: New Orleans*; and *Extant*, which was ordered as a straight-to-series high-end summer show following the ratings success of summer miniseries *Under the Dome* last year. The latter has already been picked up by Atresmedia in Spain and Amazon Instant Prime Video in the UK.

CSI: Cyber is based on the work of Irish cyber crime psychologist

Mary Aiken and stars *Medium*'s Patricia Arquette, while *NCIS: New Orleans* has *Star Trek: Enterprise* lead Scott Bakula in a starring role at the helm of a new forensics team. CBS Global Distribution Group CEO and president Armando Nuñez points to heavy interest in Halle Berry sci-fi drama *Extant*, which was greenlit early in the new season development cycle, as a "testament to the evolution of how the networks are viewing their programming as a year-round, as opposed to a seasonal, strategy". He adds that selling the concept to buyers has been much easier after *Dome* proved the theory.

Familiarity was another theme this year. ABC added another Shonda Rhimes series, *How to Get Away with Murder*, to its schedule, and placed it on Thursday nights alongside the hot creator's other shows for the network, *Grey's Anatomy* and *Scandal*. Disney Media Distribution's senior VP and general manager, EMEA, Catherine Powell, says Rhimes' name gives the new series "the stamp of quality". The slick pilot impressed acquisitions execs in LA.

HTGAWM stars Viola Davis as a law professor who, with her students, becomes embroiled in a murder case. "It's a legal thriller with an overarching case, but it also has a procedural element with the aspect of lawyers being taught [each week]," says Powell. Rhimes is one ABC's most valuable creative assets at the moment, and was recently tied into new four-year deal at the Burbank studio.

Meanwhile, *American Crime* was one of the surprises of the Screenings. Its gritty portrayal of the impact of a heinous crime won over critics, while musical *Galavant* was another unexpected success.

Also from the Disney-ABC camp this year is *Marvel's Agent Carter*, which follows on from last year's most buzzy series *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* That show arguably did not meet the huge expectation critically, but it rated well and has been renewed by ABC. *Carter* will debut midseason after *S.H.I.E.L.D.* latest season wraps. One buyer summed up interest by saying an extended *Carter* teaser trailer looked to have more potential than its Marvel predecessor.

Just as the acquisition of Marvel Entertainment is providing the Alphabet Network with a regular pipeline of comic book-themed TV programming, DC Comics is doing the same for Warner Bros., which this time round has gone four-for-four on its DC-originated pilots.

Gotham, Schlesinger says was "the show that everyone's talking about, and is one of the best pilots we've made in the past ten years". It stars Benjamin McKenzie (*The O.C.*, *Southland*) as a young Detective James Gordon.

The show explores the origin stories of classic Batman villains including The Riddler, Poison Ivy and The Joker. McKenzie and Robin Lord Taylor, who plays Oswald Cobblepot (later the Penguin), were singled out for praise by those watching the pilot on the studio lot.

The biggest challenge, Schlesinger says, has been communicating that though the show is based in the *Batman* universe, it is not about superheroes in costumes. "Last year, there was some disappointment with *S.H.I.E.L.D.* because there was an expectation of seeing superheroes and what you got were humans," he notes.

The overall feeling was that *Gotham* lived up the hype, and sales look assured for Warner Bros.

CBS drama *Stalker*, meanwhile, which is a creepy procedural following detectives at an LA Threat Assessment unit, had buyers squirming in their seats. The reception was good, and CBS can assume it has a potential hit on its hands if ratings follow in the US.

Sony Pictures Television rode into the Screenings on a wave of critical and commercial goodwill following success with NBC's *The Blacklist* and AMC's *Breaking Bad* finale. This is despite seeing its total networks pick-up number fall to two after a bumper 2013-14 total of eight.

Its top priority was *Battle Creek*, a straight-to-series CBS show from *Breaking Bad* creator Vince Gilligan and *House*'s David Shore – a dream team of creatives by any measure. Keith LeGoy, president, international distribution at SPT notes the show is “much more procedural than *Breaking Bad*”.

It follows a fish-out-water FBI agent (Josh Duhamel) and a local detective (Dean Cain) who bump heads while solving cases in small-town America. Execs were pleasantly surprised by the level of humour, perhaps akin to an episode of *NCIS*, and Australia's *Seven* is an early buyer.

Fox, whose outgoing entertainment chairman Kevin O'Reilly earlier this year pronounced the death of the pilot season, has also focused on the straight-to-series model.

Ancient Egypt adventure series *Hieroglyph* and Scandinavian-originated *Backstrom* both bypassed the pilots system. Twentieth Century Fox Television Distribution's senior VP and managing director Steve Cornish says the changing model “allows buyers to plan their schedules to fit around the US schedule, which is a good thing.”

According to buyers, Fox's best-received effort was family drama *Empire*, which follows Terrence Howard as a gangster-turned-hip-hop-mogul who, after being diagnosed with a crippling disease, decides to groom one of his three sons to take over his business.

IN FOCUS: MADAM SECRETARY

CBS Studios International heaped the pressure on *Madam Secretary* before the Screenings by dubbing it ‘*The West Wing* meets *The Good Wife*’. Those two shows have 30 Emmy wins between them and landed countless other awards.

It is a good thing then that the CBS series has pedigree running through it, starting on-screen with Tea Leoni in the lead role as a smart US secretary of state, who attempts to secure American interests around the world, while simultaneously monitoring a conspiracy that could go all the way to the top, and managing family life.

The auspices aren't bad either. Among the executive producers are Oscar winner Morgan Freeman and *Homeland*'s Barbara Hall. Freeman tells TBI the story was inspired by the mystique surrounding former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. “We looked at the attacks on her after Benghazi [the terrorist attack on the US Embassy in Libya in 2012] – that was a real eye opener.”

But though the politics are important, Freeman says the producers were also keen to ask: “What is the conversation when Hilary gets home? What does she talk about with Bill?”

He also notes the lack of “strong” female lead characters in US television (Juliana Margulies in *The Good Wife* and Claire Danes in *Homeland* stand as notable exceptions). “It's a historical issue,” he says, adding gender equality remains behind progress with race issues in Hollywood. “The industry is colour-blind; it only sees green.”



Madam Secretary was described as *The West Wing* meets *The Good Wife*

IN FOCUS: BATTLE CREEK

Sony Pictures Television's *Battle Creek* gave international buyers plenty of reasons to get excited: a script from Vince Gilligan (developed pre-*Breaking Bad*), Dean Cain and Josh Duhamel in the lead roles and *House*'s David Shore as showrunner.

"It's about two guys with very different world views," says Shore. "The big city FBI guy sees the world through a very optimistic filter. The little town cop has a more traditional and cynical outlook. They're a classic odd couple."

Shore was drafted in as Gilligan is working on *Breaking Bad* spin-off *Better Call Saul*. Both men have overall deals at Sony, and according to Shore, "share a lot of sensibilities".

Buyers were pleasantly surprised by a number of laugh out loud moments in the pilot, and interest was certainly among the most intense at the Screenings.

It's worth noting the production is much more procedural than *Breaking Bad* – more akin to the closed episodes of *House*.

Another point is that it is very US story – Battle Creek, Michigan, where the show is set and named after, is small-town America personified. However, Shore says this shouldn't be a concern to international buyers.

"It's about people living together within a community – that's the way I write. It's about questions of right and wrong."

IN FOCUS: THE ODD COUPLE

Matthew Perry says CBS's multi-cam comedy *The Odd Couple* was destined to happen. "I was driving in my car thinking how I would play Oscar Madison," the former *Friends* star recalls. "I think we share a lot of sensibilities, and I understand what he's about."

"I'd just secured the rights and gave him a call," continues Eric Tannenbaum of producer The Tannenbaum Company. "He said he'd do it, and then we went and found the perfect Felix in Thomas Lennon."

Perry describes *The Odd Couple* reboot as "a modern version of old-school comedy", and as being in the same vein as "*Cheers*, *Friends* and *Fraiser* – character driven". However, this series is based on a significantly different premise to those shows: "It's about emotional breakdown," says Perry. CBS Studios International is distributing.

IN FOCUS: SCORPION

CBS's *Scorpion* is based on the real life Scorpion Computer Services, a US company focused on large-scale creative solutions that employs people with genius-level IQ.

Software might not be the sexiest subject, but the quirky procedural about a team of awkward but brilliant problem solvers won over buyers at the Screenings. Its action-packed pilot drew a spontaneous round of applause at the Paramount lot, with acquisitions execs commenting on the humour, and unorthodox stars.

Walter O'Brien, CEO of Scorpion and whom the lead character (played by Elyes Gabel) is based on, tells TBI that the show has a higher cause than simply being good TV: "I want *Scorpion* to do for computer science what *CSI* did for forensic analysis. I made the assessment that to attract



Battle Creek: the new show from Vince Gilligan

more 'geniuses' from around the world to my company – and help save lives through what we do – the company needed greater exposure. Just imagine if computer science became cool like rock 'n' roll."

Executive producer Roberto Orci describes the theme of the show as "being a genius doesn't make you perfect", and says viewers will come back to the show to "watch the growth of these people".

O'Brien adds that *Scorpion*'s unorthodox nature means it could run for many seasons: "Because of what we do, we have a show with no boundaries. The bad guy doesn't even have to be a person."

IN FOCUS: MARRY ME

Many commentators felt *Happy Endings*' cancellation was among the most disappointing scheduling decisions of last year. Luckily for them, its creator, David Caspe, will have a new show on broadcast television this season with *Marry Me*.

The romantic single-cam comedy – which Caspe was given just two



Marry Me from *Happy Endings*' David Caspe

weeks to work on after *Endings*' ending – follows his real-life wife Casey Wilson and Ken Marino as a loving couple that find getting engaged places unpecked pressures on their relationship.

It will be a “little more grounded and relatable” than *Happy Endings*, says Caspe, who is creator and executive producer.

Interestingly, the concept is influenced by Caspe's romance with Wilson, whom he met on the set of *Happy Endings* and marries just

days after speaking with TBI in LA. “I loved making *Happy Endings* and was bummed after it got cancelled, but that allowed me to make something new,” he says.

Caspe says Wilson's casting was key to the new comedy: “People often forget to cast genuinely funny people, and that's what Casey is.”

IN FOCUS: AMERICAN CRIME

There were plenty of surprised buyers at the Disney lot last month who had just seen ABC Studios' *American Crime*. “It's completely different to the usual Disney stuff,” one told TBI.

The plot revolves around a sickening murder and rape case, using the crime to explore the dramatic effects on the friends and family of the victims and the perpetrators, and look at issues of race, wealth, gender and relationships.

Executive producer Michael McDonald agrees the serialised show represents a step change, that revealing Paul Lee and his ABC team had initially had the seed idea of a hard-hitting crime story with elements that have made cable drama successful in recent years – density of storytelling, complexity and character.

“This is different [to normal ABC fare], but at their heart ABC shows are about families and relationships, they're character driven, and at the core *American Crime* is about those families,” he adds.

McDonald says “any country dealing with multiculturalism” will relate to the story, despite the connotation of the title, and the Austin, Texas setting. “It's the idea of a high-profile crime, and how that changed forever.” **TBI**



American Crime was seen as a gritty departure from the usual ABC/Disney fare

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NATPE Europe: Hot Picks

As eastern Europe's premiere programming event gets underway TBI takes a look at the best new shows launching in Prague

THE SHOW: *Eyewitness*

THE DISTRIBUTOR: DRG

THE BROADCASTERS: NRK1 (Norway)

THE PRODUCER: NRK

THE CONCEPT: Norwegian thriller and relationship drama about a pair of illicitly gay teenagers who witness a terrible crime

Nordic noir has become hot category of programming in the international market and *The Killing*, *The Bridge* and *Borgen* have won critical acclaim, notched significant international sales and put Denmark and Sweden on the drama map. Now, Norwegian public broadcaster NRK wants to build its international profile and upon the success it has had with thriller series *Mammon*.

With that in mind, it has struck a programming deal with MTG-owned UK-based distributor DRG, which will be bringing its dramas to market. The deal built on the previous relationship that involved DRG repping NRK's scripted formats. The first new NRK offering DRG will launch is *Eyewitness*, which will go out on NRK1 in the autumn.

The six-part series follows events after Philip and Henning, two teenagers secretly in love, who meet in a remote quarry where they witness a mass-shooting. Unsure if the killer has seen them, the pair vow to keep the event a secret. By chance, Philip's mother is the local police chief and is investigating the case, unaware that her son is a key witness

and also of his sexuality.

"When you think about Nordic Noir you think about murder stories and detectives, but drama from Norway and NRK is often less specifically about detectives with more crime thriller stories with maybe political elements," says Noel Hedges, DRG's senior VP, acquisitions, the exec brought in by the distributor earlier this year to help oversee sales and acquisitions of finished programming. "NRK's slate is so varied it's hard to categorise."

Without pigeon-holing, *Eyewitness* is a good example of NRK's scripted offering. "It's more than a crime drama, it has a murder story at the centre that leads us into a thriller about corruption, drugs and gangs, but it's very much about family, what a family is and how secrets can rupture that."

Bearing out the family and relationship elements of the drama, the cast of characters, alongside the central teenage pair includes a female sheriff, an undercover female cop and her sister who is in the gang she has infiltrated. There are also corrupt cops, Balkan

crime lords and others weaving in and out of the show, which Hedges compares in tone to British dramas such as *Line of Duty* and *State of Play*.

Whereas the six-installment run would once have been an issue for many international broadcasters who would demand more episodes, there is an increasing acceptance of limited-run and shorter series, meaning *Eyewitness* could work in numerous international territories. DRG will be shopping it to buyers at NATPE Europe in Prague and the likely destination for the show in central and eastern Europe is public broadcasters, with the region's commercial channels favouring telenovelas and US drama.

Hedges notes that DRG will be bringing some interesting new NRK titles to market in the coming months, and that the distributor is doing more than simply shopping the Norwegian pubcaster's series internationally. "It's more than looking at their finished shows and selling them, we can help bring in copro partners and financing," he says.

THE SHOW: *Xingu*
THE PRODUCERS: Globo, O2 Filmes
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Globo
THE BROADCASTER: Globo (Brazil)
CONCEPT: Miniseries from Fernando Meirelles (*City of God*) about three brothers fighting for the rights of indigenous tribespeople – reworked from the eponymous feature film

Globo comes to NATPE Europe with *Xingu*, a series from *City of God* director Fernando Meirelles. The period drama, named after the Xingu national park in Brazil, follows the Villas-Bôas brothers' fight for the rights of indigenous tribespeople.

In Brazil the series was a big hit on Globo, generating a 41% share (source: Ibope). Globo coproduced the show with O2 Filmes, Meirelles' production company.

"The miniseries is an extended version of the movie *Xingu*, edited especially for television," says Raphael Corrêa Netto, Globo's executive director of international business. "Doing the movie and series in a single project is an action that has been going on for some time in Brazil."

Globo is best known for its novellas, but Corrêa Netto says: "Channels around the world have space for both telenovelas and miniseries. An example is TVN, in Poland, which licensed *Xingu*, another miniseries *Bald Mountain*, and also *Trail of Lies*, a typical telenovela with its intrigue and love affairs."

Meirelles' connection will spur the sales effort for *Xingu*, he adds: "The fact that the film was produced by a director who is recognised worldwide gives even more credibility to the production. In addition to Fernando Meirelles, it has core direction by Guel Arraes and direction by Cao Hamburger, also very well-respected professionals. The result is a beautiful film and miniseries with interesting information that few people know about Brazil.



THE SHOW: *My Mom Cooks Better Than Yours*
THE PRODUCER: Mandarinina
THE DISTRIBUTOR: FremantleMedia International (ex. Spain and Italy)
THE BROADCASTER: Mediaset España
THE CONCEPT: Parents team with their adult children in a studio-based daily cook-off show

FremantleMedia International's senior VP of global acquisitions and development Vasha Wallace says there were initially three reasons why *My Mom Cooks Better Than Yours* should work as an international format: "Cooking, mothers and the fact it's high volume."

Then, after watching a batch of episodes, she says another facet came to light: "When I dug deeper, I realised it was absolutely hilarious. It plays into family dynamics that we can all relate to."

Interestingly, the show comes from Spain, which may not be the first place buyers think of when considering format creation. However, Wallace says the show's provenance highlights a shift in the formats business: "We're seeing a shift that people don't care where a show comes from as long as it is a good show. Spain is managing to produce a very cost-effective model where they're producing multiple shows a day and we've already had interest from Eastern European buyers."

She says local buyers had been contacting the Spanish producer, Mandarinina, directly before FMI snapped up the global rights, and that these conversations are now continuing.

The format sees two teams of mothers and their grown-up children competing to create the best dish. Multiple episodes are shot a day, which Wallace says makes it a very cost-effective option for cash-conscious buyers.

"I know that our buyers at NATPE are always looking for cost-effective programming," she adds.

In Spain, *Mom* runs as a daily show, with a celebrity version every Friday. "That's great, because you're seeing celebrities under pressure with their parents," says Wallace. Another element the Spanish original has employed is that presenter also gives cooking tips to camera, which offers the viewer some all-important take-away. "Overall, you get a really lovely combination of cooking, comedy and family," says Wallace. "That's why there's been more buzz than we were expecting."



THE SHOW: *Criminal Mastermind*
THE PRODUCER: Venevision Productions
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Cisneros Media Distribution
THE BROADCASTER: Univision Communications (Hispanic US, Puerto Rico), Venevision (Venezuela)
THE CONCEPT: Young adult skewing drama series about a doctor hiding dark, murderous secrets

THE SHOW: *Last Seen Alive*
THE PRODUCER: Cineflix Productions
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Cineflix Rights
THE BROADCASTER: Investigation Discovery (US)
THE CONCEPT: A doc series following 12 families' journeys to locate missing loved ones

This 60-episode offer from Cisneros Media Distribution, the rebranded sales arm of Venezuelan broadcaster Venevision, is being billed as a departure for the company.

CMD's VP of sales Cesar Diaz says buyers may be used to Venevision's regular telenovela fare, but "given an adequate time slot and appropriate promotion, this type of programming will certainly do well and bring in the audiences and market share, and consequently the interest of acquisition executives".

Criminal Mastermind (aka *Criminale Demente*)'s dark plot follows a mother's quest to expose her dead daughter's doctor, a distinguished psychiatrist, as a cold-blooded murderer. It draws on a best-selling non-fiction book, *Sangre en el Diván* (Blood on the Carpet), which investigated a recent real life case that mirrors the series.

"It is based on a true story, which provides an interesting angle, especially when you can share anecdotes of the real story and

characters," says Diaz. "This enables the audience to make a connection, and identify with the series."

CEE buyers looking to schedule programming for late primetime weekday slots for young adult audiences will be most interested, Diaz says. "*Criminal Mastermind* was produced with this demographic in mind, and I definitely think this is when it will be more effective."

He also points to the hybrid 'teleseries' format as a selling point. This mixes the telenovela "hook that delivers ratings" with "the fascination of the TV series: intense and thrilling action-packed stories that the Americans have developed so well".

"There's no doubt that this type of programme fits the competitive landscape of today's eastern European markets," adds Diaz. "As such, it will serve as premium content to all broadcasters, but at a very reasonable fee compared to the products of [US] production houses."

Investigation Discovery's latest series launched on June 1 in the US to ratings that Lucy Rawson, Cineflix Rights' sales executive for Africa, central and eastern Europe, the Middle East and southern Mediterranean, believes could lead to a quick second season commission. "It got around one million, a great number," she says.

Each episode of the 6x60mins series follows two families searching for missing loved ones. The emotionally-charged stories pick up at the point where the individual disappeared, and follow efforts to locate them, often using private investigators and other means.

"Cineflix has produced a lot of crime, but *Last Seen Alive* has much less re-enactment than normal," says Rawson. "It's almost shot in real time. There are real action elements, but it's incredibly emotional too."

Rawson says Cineflix's US crime programming has traditionally performed well on CEE networks' schedules, especially in territories such as Poland, and the likes of Discovery often bulk-buy shows. "We've already sold more than 100 hours into the CEE this year," she says.

Last Seen Alive will offer buyers better flexibility than some other true-crime doc shows as it is light on gore, Rawson adds. "The launch episode went out at 9pm on Investigation Discovery, but it could work at 7pm or 8pm."



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THE SHOW: *Wild Venice*
THE PRODUCERS: Epo Film in association with ORF, ORF Enterprise, Arte, NDR, bmu:kk
THE DISTRIBUTOR: ORF Enterprise
THE BROADCASTERS: ORF (Austria), Arte (France), NDR (Germany)
THE CONCEPT: 4K-shot doc looking at the largely unknown wildlife ecosystem in Venice, Italy

“*Wild Venice* is not only the first wildlife and nature documentary on Venice, but also differs from common nature film productions through its very different way of seeing an extremely familiar and beautiful place from a new angle,” says ORF’s head of international

content sales, Marion Camus-Oberdorfer.

The 52-minutes doc from director Klaus Steindl looks at the wildlife in the Italian water city, including its migrating birds and raptors, exotic lizards and insects in beautiful secret gardens, and deer and foxes

in surrounding woodlands. It even reveals the aquatic life a relatively unknown local coral reef, the Northern Adriatic Sea’s Tegnùe.

Adding to the interest for doc buyers seeing experimental content, *Wild Venice* is shot in ultra high-def 4K.

“Especially for nature and wildlife films this technique creates totally new, overwhelming highlights for the viewers’ visual experience,” says Camus-Oberdorfer.

“The film not only shows the enormous diversity of the city’s wildlife, but adds a whole new dimension with its magnificent, atmospheric 4K photography against the stunning backdrop of a World Heritage city,” says Camus-Oberdorfer.

ORF Enterprises, the sales arm of Austrian pubcaster ORF, is aiming to “broaden” its range of clients, and the 4K medium allows it to target bespoke 4K platforms and cinemas.

Further to this, Camus-Oberdorfer says channels including RTV in Slovenia, CT in the Czech Republic, STV in Slovakia and Fokus TV in Poland have all expressed interest.

The show is in production and will deliver internationally at the beginning of 2015.

Who is the Real Celebrity is one of Turkey-based Global Agency’s major pushes at NATPE Europe. Having acquired rights from Japanese broadcaster Asahi just before MIPTV, the distributor has high hopes for the light-hearted comedy format. “We gave it a soft launch at MIPTV, but at NATPE we’re ready to really give the show its own push, and focus on the format,” says Global Agency’s sales director Brianne Bonney.

Real Celebrity has run on Asahi in Japan for nearly a decade, in which time its popularity and ratings have grown. The original sees seven pairs of celebrities teamed together, and given a series of tasks to prove their ‘celebrity status’ such as identifying which of two bottles of champagne is a high-end product and which is a local supermarket copy. One celeb per team makes the choice by going into either room A or B, at which point the host follows into the correct room. Those in the wrong room have luxuries such as sofas replaced by stools, and ranking reduced. “It’s just a very funny format,” says Bonney.

Eastern European buyers will find the show taps into the region’s growing interest in celebrities, she says. “Celebrity culture is not



THE SHOW: *Who is the Real Celebrity?*
THE PRODUCER: Asahi Broadcasting Corporation
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Global Agency
THE BROADCASTER: Asahi Broadcasting Corporation (Japan)
THE CONCEPT: Celebrity pairs prove their superstar credentials in light-hearted studio format

as established in those areas as in the UK or the US, but is getting stronger. This show allows channels to showcase celebrity talent in one show.” Price-wise, Bonney says the show can feature more or less than the 14

famous faces on the Japanese show. As a relatively cost-effective format, the main investment is the fees to attract the talent. However, in Japan, the popularity of the show is such that costs have dropped, says Bonney.

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LAST WORD

ROB DAVIS



Documentary filming – how much is too much?

I'm a documentary filmmaker who runs Double Act Productions with fellow filmmaker Alastair Cook. Over the years, we've earned a reputation for making fearless and controversial documentaries centered on usual subjects in all sorts of morally questionable subcultures. By delving into these 'other' worlds, we have often found ourselves in situations where we've needed to ask 'should we be filming this? Is it our responsibility to intervene and if so, when?'

We recently made *Dead Famous DNA* for [UK broadcaster] Channel 4. This involved us travelling the world to buy body parts of deceased famous people such as Adolf Hitler and Elvis Presley, with the purpose of extracting their DNA and solving mysteries that surrounded their lives. We found ourselves walking both legal and ethical tightropes. Laws on genetic analysis are constantly evolving and, presently, in the UK, it's illegal to analyse the DNA of the dead without consent of the next of kin. This is not the case in most US states, so we decided to circumnavigate UK law and analyse most of our human relics there. In addition to facing legal obstacles, we had to consider the moral implications of what we were doing: if we

found anything interesting within the DNA, was it in the public interest to reveal it? What were the ramifications for the historical figure's family? How and when should we inform them? What would we do with the genetic codes afterwards? All these big questions necessitated careful thought. That's probably why the series took three years to make.

In 2010, we made another film for Channel 4 called *The Men Who Jump Off Buildings*, which followed two men, Dan and Ian, who were addicted to base-jumping. Our intention was to capture the excitement and danger of this extreme sport, but more importantly, to try to understand why these guys loved to dice with death. Nervous of being personally responsible for a major accident or worse, our protocol was to never direct them where or when to jump. We would wait for their call, scale buildings and climb mountains with them and simply observe their jumps. In Switzerland, disaster struck as we filmed Ian leaping off a mountain top. Complications with his parachute resulted in Ian smashing into the cliff face, landing on the rocks below. Our first thought was 'is he okay?' We immediately called the emergency services, but we had to ask ourselves, 'Shouldn't we

also be shooting this? We're making a film about the perils of base-jumping and one of our main characters has had a major accident - isn't this what we're here to do?'

A crowd of concerned jumpers who had gathered at the scene reacted aggressively to our arrival, to them we were documentary vultures circling around our prey, and no doubt determined to give their sport a bad name. Ian was unconscious – would he be OK with us filming this? After all, we had told him from the start we wanted to document the base-jumping 'warts 'n' all'. We decided to film from a distance, capturing his body being strapped to a stretcher and hoisted into a helicopter ambulance.

When Dan returned from hospital hours later with the good news of Ian's survival, he showed us footage taken from Ian's go-pro camera during the jump. We watched as he desperately tried to untwist his lines before smashing into the cliff. We heard him cough up blood from a punctured lung and finally lose consciousness. This was highly disturbing, but important footage. Through Ian's misfortune, we had captured the dark side of a sport that would have seemed exciting and glamorous to many viewers. Ian allowed us to interview him in hospital and was happy for us to tell the whole story. He wanted the world to see the consequences of having an addiction to base-jumping.

When making documentaries that centre on sensitive and/or controversial subjects, you're always being pushed to your limits both ethically and creatively. There's a constant need to balance a desire to make the best film possible with the concerns of your contributors. It's a bit of a cliché, but these types of films become an engrossing, emotional rollercoaster and when they're completed, you take a deep breath and then you get stuck into the next one! **TBI**

By delving into 'other' worlds, we have often found ourselves in situations where we've needed to ask 'should we be filming this? Is it our responsibility to intervene and if so, when?'

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