

The TBI 20

Compiling a list of the most influential TV professionals of 2002 is no easy feat. So, we turned the task over to you – our readers – to nominate those individuals who, in spite of a demanding year, succeeded in the face of adversity. While too many to count were closing up shop or consolidating, and too few were actually turning a profit, this diverse group combined creativity and vision with business know-how to have a truly stellar year



Dawn Airey, Managing Director Sky Networks

All eyes in the UK TV industry will be firmly focused on Dawn Airey this January, when the outspoken new managing director of Sky Networks arrives at BSkyB to lead its biggest push ever into original programming.

Airey's decision to defect from Channel 5 to Sky last September shocked the entire industry, not least the Granada and Carlton executives who spent three months wooing her for the chief executive position at ITV.

Germany's RTL, Channel 5's largest shareholder, was relieved she hadn't accepted ITV's offer, but it was a blow to lose Airey,

after her successful career with the fledgling broadcaster.

The 41-year old Cambridge graduate, who once famously said that Channel 5 was about "more than just films, fucking and football", joined the upstart broadcaster

from Channel 4 at its launch in 1997 and took on the role of chief executive in 2000, after the departure of David Elstein. She immediately set about moving the channel upmarket, poaching Channel 4's Kevin Lygo to head up programming and ditching late-night soft porn in favour of primetime arts documentaries and acclaimed US series such as *CSI* and *The Shield*. The results speak for themselves: ratings rose from 5.75% in 2001 to 6.29% last year, while advertising revenues were up 20%. Increasingly, producers refer to the newly rebranded Five as the new Channel 4.

Airey leaves Five "in the rudest possible health", as she put it in a memo to staff prior to her departure. But can she work the same programming magic for Sky, where she takes on responsibility for all Sky programming and channels (other than Sky Sports)? She will need to do better than Elisabeth Murdoch, whose efforts to boost Sky's original programming were short lived, and she will face increasing competition from digital channels such as E4 and BBC3. One thing is for sure – with three music services and a Sky entertainment channel on Freeview in the works, she will certainly have her work cut out for her.

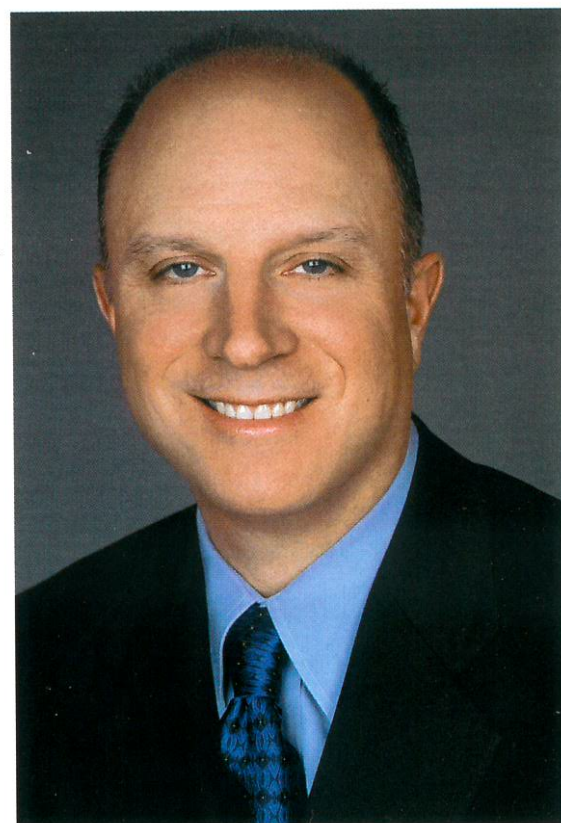
Chris Albrecht, Chairman and CEO, Home Box Office

In an otherwise turbulent year for AOL-Time Warner, pay-TV giant HBO continued to go from strength-to-strength in 2002, as *Sex and the City* and *Six Feet Under* picked up another clutch of Primetime Emmy Awards, and *The Sopranos* broke yet more ratings records. And it was no surprise when Chris Albrecht, the man responsible for HBO's original programming, was elevated to the network's top spot last July.

Albrecht, who oversees the management of all of HBO's premium networks – including international joint-ventures which reach over 50 countries and 16m subscribers – must now deliver new programmes that can live up to the high expectations set by such favourites as *The Sopranos*. Looking to repeat that success are new dramas such as *Baseball Wives*, a look at baseball from the point of view of the wives of the players, and *Carnivale*, which follows a travelling carnival. Both have the edge that HBO viewers have come to expect.

That edginess has also resonated around the world, with *Sex in the City*, *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* all proving popular overseas, and has enabled the channel to pick up more risqué imports, such as new comedy series *Da Ali G Show*, based on the hit UK show. It also makes HBO an attractive partner for international coproductions. "Band of Brothers was an unprecedented financial, as well as creative, undertaking and we benefited greatly from the partnership with the BBC," says Albrecht. "With the right project, we find coproductions very beneficial to our business."

Albrecht's key goal for 2003 is to expand the HBO brand. "Whether it be creating programmes for other networks, exploiting our library inventory, expanding our subscription video on demand offering, or venturing further into theatrical releases, we need to extend the HBO name beyond the pay channel."



Susanne Boyce, President CTV Programming

As president of Canadian broadcaster CTV, and chair of CTV Media Group, Susanne Boyce is credited with engineering a turnaround in fortunes at the network that has led to it overtaking media powerhouse CanWest Global. Yet Boyce finds it almost agonising to choose only one stand-out achievement in 2002, saying it is "like trying to pick a favourite child".

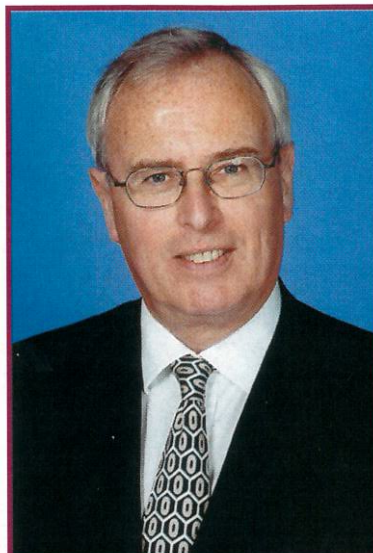
2002 saw CTV win the ratings war for the second year running, and the channel boasted seven of the 10 top-rated shows on Canuck TV. Boyce lists among 2002's highlights the success of such US imports as *CSI Miami*, *Law and Order CI*, and expletive-ridden cult hit *The Osbournes*, which CTV opted to run uncut following a similar strategy for its broadcast of *The Sopranos*. "The audience response to taking some risks is particularly satisfying," notes Boyce.

Breaking convention and running imports out of simulcast with the US networks was another strategy that worked particularly well, according to Boyce. And indigenous programming is also crucial to her programming slate. Long-running Canadian series *Degrassi* is still popular, and Canadian MOW's, which Boyce describes as "rip 'n' read in the best sense" also do very well. In addition, CTV added the Junos, the Canadian equivalent to the Grammys, to its roster in 2002.

"We look for a balanced schedule, ways to get different programming on our channels," explains Boyce. "It is an inclusive strategy, with news, comedy, dramas, and [something for] younger demos – things for a variety of people."

Besides the CTV Network, Boyce also oversees programming for specialty channels The Comedy Network and talktv and she maximises synergies as best she can. "If you look at CTV Inc, we try to find those synergies. Take a show like *Open Mike with Mike Bullard*, it came from The Comedy Network over to the main channel, and we also have shows from TSN – those synergies are really exciting."

Calling 2002 the 'year of the turn-around', Boyce is planning for more of the same in 2003: "For next year we just want to keep our eye on the ball, or should I say TV screen!"



Alan Boyd, President, Worldwide Entertainment, FremantleMedia Production

Pop Idol might have been the brainchild of 19 Television's Simon Cowell and BMG's Simon Fuller, but it was FremantleMedia's Alan Boyd, a veteran of UK light entertainment TV, who oversaw its transformation from a paper format into ITV's most successful show of 2002, and a show

that has become a phenomenal global hit.

"Although the idea was very simple, it was the execution," says Boyd, who was approached by Fuller and Cowell to turn their idea for a new music show into a pitch. "What I did was try to work out all the issues. We had to put together a huge set of logistic exercises to say 'how does this work?'" This included everything from working out whether BT could handle the number of calls, to the process of auditioning thousands of children and the choice of music.

Now Boyd is applying the same mix of passion and painstaking attention to detail to the growing number of international versions of the show. "It's going like wild-fire now, the roll-out is huge," he says. "When we sell a format, what people buy from us is a skillset and a knowledge."

Upped to his new worldwide role last October, Boyd is also leading FremantleMedia's search for new entertainment formats. "I'm always looking at it now with a world hat on, saying is that an international format or a very local format? The beauty of the company is, if we can get out the show, we can get it round the world in days."

Boyd has high hopes for four big shows coming up from Fremantle in 2003, all of which he believes could play around the world. One of these is in its final development stages and, according to Boyd, "has got the event status of a *Big Brother*. It takes the nation by storm for two or three weeks and then has a mammoth final."

Olivier Bremond, CEO, Marathon

Marathon's daytime drama series *St Tropez* has long been a strong seller in the international market, but it was the break-out success of its animated series *Totally Spies*, that put the 13-year old French producer in the spotlight last year.

"What was great with *Totally Spies* was we came up with something at the worst time, because the market was very bad," says Olivier Bremond. "But we managed to place the series in every single country, I don't think we have any territories left."

Created by Vincent Chalvon-Demersay, who joined Marathon in 1999 to develop animation production, and creative director David Michel, the series was coproduced with Fox Family in the US, Fox Kids Europe and TF1 in France, and has been a strong ratings performer on such networks as Teletoon in Canada, Channel 4 in the UK, Pro7 in Germany, and even TV Tokyo in Japan.

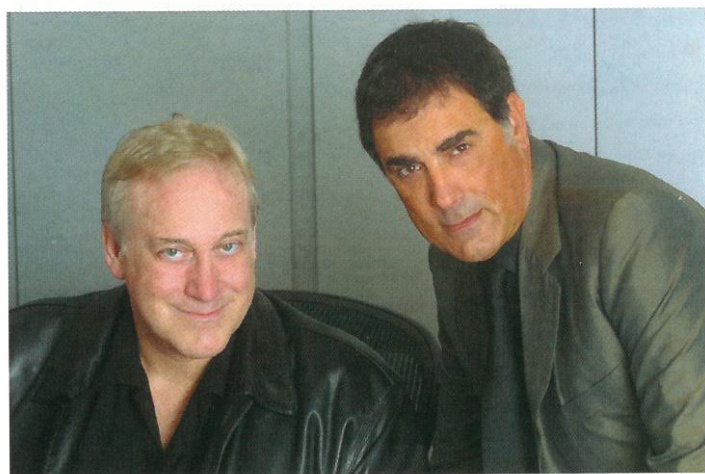
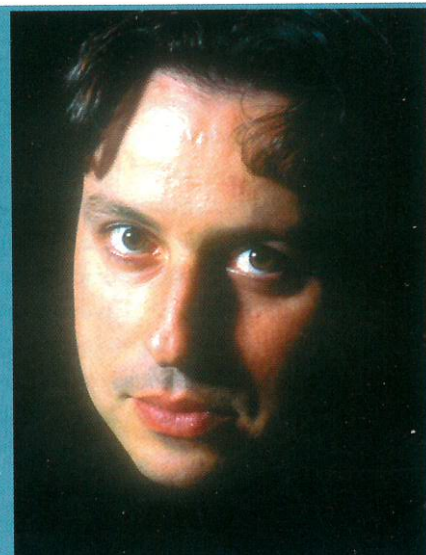
Bremond attributes the success of the show to its mix of comedy and adventure, which has succeeded in attracting both girls and boys. "What is special with this is it's a girls shows that can work with boys," he says.

Also important was a strong marketing and merchandising campaign, which focused on fashion and music. French fashion agency Promostyle designed outfits for the three main characters and in Germany Pro7 recruited a *Totally Spies* band to sing the theme song, which was released as a single. "All together it looked like a unique property," says Bremond.

St Tropez, meanwhile, continues to do well on TF1 and is now the longest running drama series in France. "I think we created a very specific format," says Bremond. "What is great with *St Tropez* is it's a weekly format that works very well as a daily programme."

New for 2003 are the drama series *Dock 13* for M6, animated series *Martin Mystery*, a new series of *Marsupilami* and two new documentary series for children. According to Bremond the company might also move into reality TV, but the focus remains on animation, drama and documentaries, which account for around a third each of Marathon's international distribution business.

"It was a very good year for us," says Bremond. "Our costs are not high, we're a small company and we sell extremely well. All together that makes us very profitable, despite the difficult market."



Toni Cruz and Josep Maria Mainat, Managing Directors, Gestmusic Endemol

When Gestmusic Endemol threw a huge party in Barcelona to mark its 15th anniversary last November, there was much for Toni Cruz and Josep Maria Mainat to celebrate. After producing many of Spain's biggest TV hits of the past 15 years, the company finally cracked the international market in 2002, with its musical reality series *Operación Triunfo*. And last September Endemol enlarged its stake in Gestmusic from 60% to 100%.

Cruz and Mainat agreed to stay on for at least another four years as managing directors.

Founded by the musical group La Trinca – formed by Cruz, Mainat and Miquel Angel Pascual – in 1987, two years before the launch of Spanish private television, Gestmusic has flirted with many television genres, though all the programmes basically exude entertainment. Comedies, home video and hidden camera shows, quiz shows, music programmes, talk and reality shows are its trademark, from the late night chat show *Crónicas Marcianas*, now in its sixth successful year, to its biggest hit *Operación Triunfo*.

Launched in 2001, *Operación Triunfo* has become Spain's most widely watched programme, excluding sports, of the last decade, with a peak audience last year of 13m viewers. Today, its second season is also a ratings winner, drawing an audience of six million people. The programme has become a social phenomenon with a Midas touch, spawning hit CDs, books, clothes, a movie and a thematic channel all of its own on Canal Satellite Digital. Internationally the format has aroused the interest of some 50 broadcasters around the world and has already aired in Mexico, Brazil, Italy, Greece, Portugal and the UK.

Following the success of *Operación Triunfo*, the company is looking for further international expansion, but is also concentrating its efforts on developing new productions. In the works are three other programmes in a similar format to *Operación Triunfo*, but based around football, quiz shows and singers.

John de Mol, CEO and Chief Creative Officer, Endemol

Formats were the international programming success story of 2002, and it was Telefonica-owned Endemol that continued to set the pace, with *Big Brother* still going strong around the world and new formats such as *Fear Factor* and *Operación Triunfo* taking off.

That Endemol is still seen as the company to beat is testament to the vision of CEO John de Mol, who founded John de Mol Productions in 1979 and remains the creative driving force behind the company, which today boasts subsidiaries and joint-ventures in 22 countries, including the major European markets, the US, Latin America, South Africa and Australia.

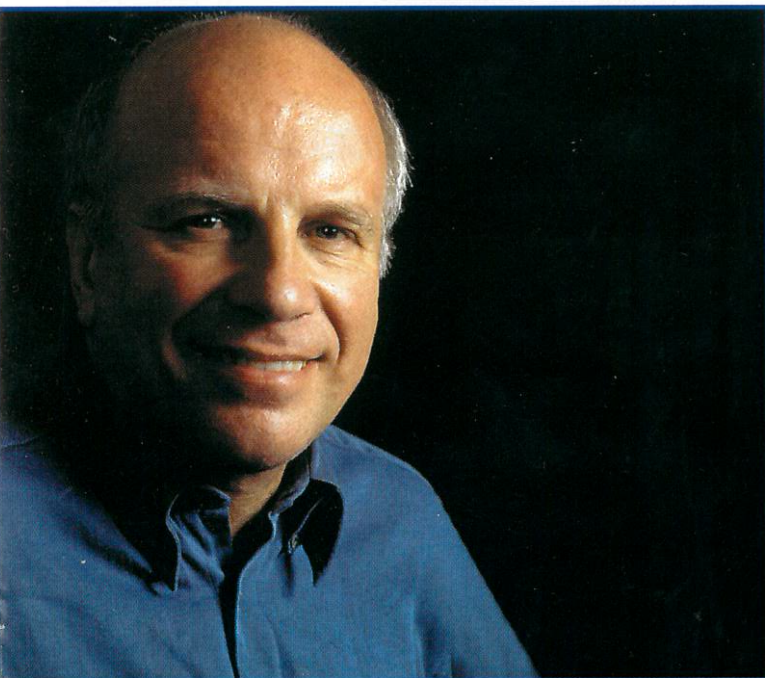
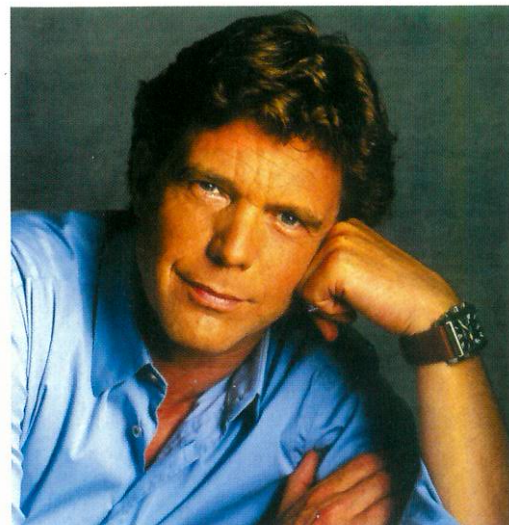
Besides producing local versions of Endemol's existing formats, this international network is now beginning to generate its own hits, such as Spain's *Operación Triunfo* and Endemol USA's *Fear Factor*. But it is *Big Brother* that remains the flagship. "*Big Brother* is still doing very well," says de Mol. "In several markets we produced third or even fourth series in 2002."

With each new series the show continues to evolve, while new territories are still signing up for the format. New in 2002 were *Big Brother Brasil* and *Big Brother Hungary*, while a Russian version is also in pre-production.

"With the production of Endemol formats in Russia, our programmes are now broadcast in all time zones of the world," notes de Mol.

Endemol's performance last year looks set to match 2001, when it recorded a turnover of €914m (\$960m) and produced more than 15,000 hours of television. "From 2000 to 2001 Endemol made a giant step," says de Mol. "We'll manage to keep 2002 at the same level as the year before, which in my view is a very good performance regarding the difficult times the business is in."

Looking ahead, the company is developing new formats across a range of genres, from entertainment and infotainment to reality and fiction, and the company has plans for further international expansion. "Endemol is heading for Russia, China and Japan," says de Mol. "Of those markets I see China as a difficult but very interesting one."



Greg Dyke, Director-General, BBC

Forward-thinking saviour of the BBC or a ratings-obsessed philistine? Opinions are sharply divided over Greg Dyke's management style. But there's no denying that the public broadcaster has enjoyed a highly successful three years since he became director-general in January 2000.

Dyke started 2002 urging his staff to "Cut the crap – Make It Happen", and across the board that's exactly what they've done. After overtaking ITV

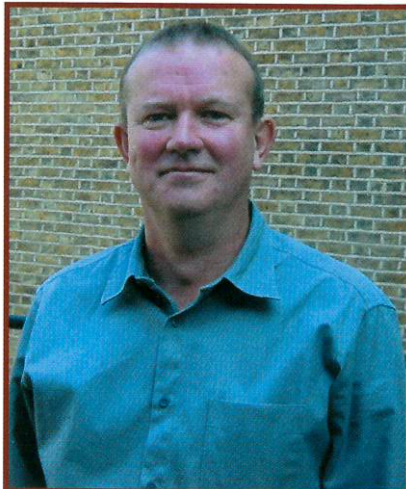
for the first time in 2001, with an audience share of 26.2%, BBC1 increased its lead in 2002 by a further 2.1%.

Dyke has also continued to push ahead with the launch of new digital channels, including BBC4, Cbeebies and CBBC. Youth service BBC3 will join them in 2003, and following the collapse of ITV Digital, the BBC teamed with Crown Castle to launch the new DTT platform Freeview.

Commercial arm BBC Worldwide, meanwhile, returned a record £106m (\$170m) to the corporation for 2001/2 and reported double digit growth in turnover for the third year running. On the international front, Worldwide grew programme sales by 15% to £172m and licensed more than 40,000 hours of BBC programming. It also expanded its global network of TV channels to more than 460m homes and extended its coproduction partnership with Discovery for a further 10 years. A new partnership with Alliance Atlantis saw the launch of BBC Canada and BBC Kids in Canada, while BBC America increased its distribution by 61% to 27m US homes.

However, the BBC's success has drawn growing criticism from rival broadcasters, independent producers and politicians, who claim the corporation is straying from its original public service remit and becoming too powerful. Independent producers have also accused the BBC of abusing its power, after it missed its 25% independent production quota for the first time in 2002, and last December the ITC called for the broadcaster to offer fairer terms to programme makers.

Silencing those critics will be Dyke's next challenge, as the BBC prepares for the renewal of its charter and licence fee in 2006. Negotiations with the government are expected to begin this year.



David Frank, Chief Executive, RDF

2002 saw UK indie RDF bagging a raft of industry awards, including a Bafta for *Faking It*, the Silver Rose at Montreux for *Perfect Match* and Broadcast magazine's Best Independent Production Company. And with the company managing to double its profits last year, while still turning out critically acclaimed factual and drama series, it's no wonder that its founder, David Frank, was recently tipped as a potential candidate for the Channel 5 chief executive job.

Faking It, which was finally granted the long run it deserved by Channel 4 in 2002, remained one of the company's top ratings performers, and other highlights included *The Cruise Ship* for ITV, *Scrapheap Challenge*, *Michael Jackson's Face*, *Century of The Self* and *Ella and the Mothers*. RDF International also continued to expand, with revenues up 25% to around £5m, and the company's US operation has boomed.

"We have made great inroads in the States," says Frank. "We're now perceived in the US as a local pro-

ducer but our edge is that we're British-owned and we're importing British formats." Set up in 2001 to produce *Junkyard Wars*, RDF's LA office is now in production on seven shows for US networks, including *Wife Swap* for ABC and *Faking It* for TLC. Frank predicts US revenues could account for 40% of its business in 2003.

"We've continued to grow both in terms of our turnover and our profitability," says Frank, who worked in investment banking and at the BBC before starting RDF in 1993. He expects turnover to reach £33m for 2002, up from around £24m in 2001, and pre-tax profits of £1-1.2m, up from £600,000. "We've managed to increase our profit margins," he explains. "It's a testament to the fact that we are holding on to more rights and we are exploiting our shows more effectively."

Frank's long-term aim is to take the company public in the next three years or so, and the more immediate goals are to maintain growth in excess of 10-15% and consolidate the company's position in the US. "I would like to see us winning more commissions for entertainment shows and drama," he adds. Channel 5's headhunters might have to start looking elsewhere.

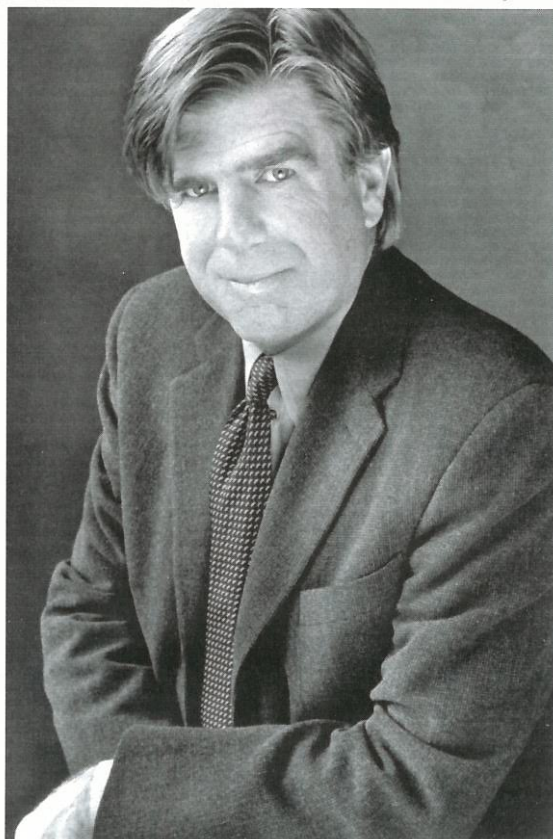
Tom Freston, Chairman and CEO, MTV Networks

While other media giants saw their fortunes tumble in 2002, Viacom emerged as the leader of the pack, thanks in no small part to the continuing strength of the MTV Networks behemoth, headed up by Tom Freston.

Overseeing a total of seven television networks, including MTV, VH1, CMT, Nickelodeon and The Suite (which alone consists of nine digital music and children's channels), as well as a host of internet properties, Freston has certainly come a long way from his days spent running a clothing business in New Delhi.

As one of the originating members of MTV, Freston oversaw the network's famous "I want my MTV" campaign. Since then, he has held a succession of positions within the MTV fold, culminating in his appointment as CEO in 1987. Today, many industry insiders are quick to mention Freston's name as most likely to segue into a number two position to Mel Karmazin, or even as a successor to the Viacom president and COO.

When compiling any 2002 list of highlights, let alone MTV's, one would be remiss to omit MTV's monster hit *The Osbournes*, which, good or bad, can be credited with igniting the current interest in celebrity reality programming. But it is the recovery in the network's domestic advertising business and the growth of MTV Networks International, which makes up the bulk of Viacom's international revenues, that have helped to make Viacom's balance sheet one of the healthiest in the business. Not only is MTV's international business now profitable in all geographic regions, with the exception of Asia, but it's also growing at somewhere between two and three times the rate of the US business.





Mark Itkin, EVP/Worldwide Head of Syndication, Cable and Non-Fiction Programming, William Morris Agency

Few imported formats make their way onto US screens these days without first crossing the desk of Mark Itkin. The veteran William Morris agent is arguably the most important gateway into the US for overseas format owners and his list of credits includes Endemol's *Big Brother* and *Fear Factor*, both into their third series now, the BBC's *Weakest Link* and *Dog Eat Dog*, and Mast Media's *Oblivious*, which

has just been picked up for a second series on TNN.

The formats business is nothing new to Itkin, who has represented Endemol since 1994 and in the late 1980s brought the UK formats *Trump Card* and *Sweethearts* to the US syndication market. "We were in this business way before this was fashionable," he notes. "We were out doing this in the 80s."

However, it was the success of *Millionaire* on ABC, another William Morris deal, that opened the flood gates and 2002 was a bumper year for

Itkin. For Endemol he has sold *Operación Triunfo* and the half-hour reality series *Anything for Love* to Fox, as well as *Here Come the Joneses*, a reality comedy show for the WB, *Judgement Day*, a pilot for MTV, and two syndicated pilots. Meanwhile, both *Millionaire* and *Weakest Link* are now in syndication, and a celebrity version of *The Mole*, now in its third season, is lined up for ABC.

An unashamed fan of reality TV, Itkin is keen to see producers pushing the genre forward. "To keep the non-fiction business healthy it is very important to keep pushing the envelope creatively," he says. In terms of new trends he picks out "comedy reality and reality competition" as areas to watch, as well as hybrid shows such as *Here Comes the Joneses*. "You're going to see lots more hybrids between scripted and non-fiction programming combined in a format."

Itkin also has high hopes for two new scripted formats from FremantleMedia: *Behind Bars*, which he recently sold to Fox, and the Simon Nye sitcom *Beast*, which has been picked up by NBC. "More recently they haven't translated as successfully but that may only be because of the property," he says. "I'm hoping *Beast* and *Behind Bars* translate here."

Robert Lawes, Chief Executive, Hit Entertainment

14 years and two mega acquisitions after its launch as Henson International Television, Hit Entertainment has morphed from a small third-party distributor of television rights into a full-blown, global brand company, forecasted to generate revenues of more than £175m this year.

Now Rob Lawes, who joined Hit in 1989 and became chief executive in June 2001, faces the challenge of integrating the company's latest purchases while continuing to grow the business. In 2002, turnover grew 131% to £121m, propelled in part by the acquisition of Lyrick Studios.

Lawes credits last year's £134m acquisition of Gullane as the catalyst for Hit's recent restructure into a "brand management business", with small business units in each territory responsible for a specific brand. "They have the whole holistic approach to our brands," says Lawes. While he admits the move has turned the organisation's structure on its head, he feels it will allow Hit to integrate new brands into its infrastructure going forward.

Lawes points to Hit's growing stable of properties as critical to the company's success in 2002: "Having a diverse portfolio, with no single property generating more than a third of Hit's revenues is key. The thing is to make sure we have a risk balance. Prior to the acquisition of *Thomas, Bob the Builder* was a significant part of our revenue streams."

Next up in 2003 is in-house production *Rubbidubbers*. Airing on the BBC in the UK and Nick Jr in the US, Lawes says Hit won't know until 2004



whether the property has the potential to become another global brand.

Hit's five year plan entails more consolidation, bringing one or two more recognised brands under its banner, and putting in place a management structure that can oversee all ancillary areas. As for further acquisitions? "I think our thoughts would probably be more amenable to acquisitions in late spring/early summer of next year, but we are not in the business of doing acquisitions for acquisitions sake, it really has to be something that we believe we can acquire at the right price, put it through our infrastructure and expertise, and bring added-value to it. And it has to have the potential to be global, otherwise that is not what we are about."

Kevin MacLellan, Senior VP, International, E! Networks

Just over one year into his new job at E! Networks and Kevin MacLellan has already notched up an impressive list of international successes, culminating at the end of 2002 with the launch of E! in the UK, a deal that has long eluded the US company.

"It was a long time coming," says MacLellan, who spent the summer of 2002 in negotiations with Sky. "That was a very long negotiation, so you can imagine how relieved and pleased we were the night we signed."

One major selling point was E!'s breakthrough reality series, *The Anna Nicole Show*, which has been a strong seller in the international market. "I think Anna tipped the scales," says MacLellan. "It was of great interest to not only Sky, but several of the terrestrials. We did get a bidding war going."

Launching the E! International Network was a key priority for MacLellan when he joined the company from Columbia TriStar in 2001. By April 2002, the channel was up and running in New Zealand, swiftly followed by launches in the Middle East, Netherlands and Indonesia. "It's better than planned, which in this type of year I have to commend my staff," says MacLellan. India and Australia are now top of the list of priorities for further expansion and E! is also looking to do deals for the channel in Spain, Italy, France, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

"We launched the channel in such a way that we are able to take advantage of economies of scale," says MacLellan, of the international roll-out strategy. "We put together a business plan where we could actually become solvent in a fairly short time period."

The nature of E!'s content – celebrity news and Hollywood gossip – means the channel doesn't have to localise to the extent that many others do. "To operate a 24-hour entertainment channel, it's very difficult to come up with say 30, 40% local programming, unless the particular country has a significant amount of entertainment product being made on a regular basis," says MacLellan. "The UK and India are the first two that we're looking at doing any great deal of localisation."



Dawn L. McCall, President of Discovery Networks International

Strategic restructuring and solid partnerships were both instrumental in Discovery's international division increasing profits 200% in 2002. And Dawn McCall projects a bullish 235% profit increase for 2003.

McCall has stayed true to Discovery's original international strategy of launching its brands into multiple regions to better balance the effects of economic highs and lows – today the company operates channels in over 155 countries and territories, reaching over 700m subscribers.

One strong territory has been Europe, where the UK remains Discovery's second largest market after the US. During 2002 the company took full control of its German channel, previously a joint-venture with Kirch's Premiere subsidiary, and McCall restructured Discovery's European businesses, doubling the number of customised feeds and hiring industry veteran Robin Paxton as managing director. "We really had to start looking at Europe on a very country-specific basis, not on a European basis. We separated out the UK from Europe because the UK market has its own interests and own needs," she says.

Another stand out territory was Asia, where a distribution alliance with Sony Entertainment Television in India and an advertising partnership with Encore International in China ranked among the successful joint-ventures Discovery International embarked upon last year. "I think this is the age of partnership," says McCall. "It would be pretty naïve of us or any other company to think they can do everything on their own."

While McCall predicts organic growth will be strong in the next year, she does not rule out acquiring a company or brand to accelerate growth if it makes sense. And following Discovery's pioneering forays into interactive TV, enhanced programming and VOD, further digital initiatives are high on McCall's roster of future goals: "We want to be [anywhere] there is a move toward a digital environment, and be ready for the customers of that platform."



John McMahon, Senior Executive VP and Managing Director, Sony Pictures Television International, Europe

The fact that John McMahon spent the best part of 2002 in negotiations with Germany's Kirch Group didn't hold back the growth of Sony's TV business in the rest of Europe last year. And now those months of toil look set to bear fruit, with Sony close to becoming a minority partner in the consortium that won the bidding for Kirch Media's two terrestrial broadcasters, Pro7 and Sat Eins.

"We're still in the running on the Kirch investment," says McMahon, whose efforts in Europe have already led to a recent promotion to senior executive VP status. "For Sony Pictures, this is a significant move and I think it's indicative of what we're willing to do to position ourselves for the future."

Already the most successful US producer of local programming in Europe, including shows such as *As If* and *Rockface* in the UK and the new teen half-hour dramedy, *Mein Leben und Ich* (*Me and My Life*), on RTL, McMahon's division is now looking to new opportunities on the channel front. Besides Sony's planned investments in Germany, 2002 also saw the launch of its AXN channel in Portugal, and further European launches are a priority for 2003.

"We have a much greater emphasis now on what we can do in terms of channel investments in Europe," says McMahon. "We spent a lot of time and resources in Asia and Latin America and stayed away from Europe for the most part. We now view this as a time to start looking at what we can do with our various channel brands throughout Europe. Mainly what can be done on the movie front, what can be done with the AXN brand and what can be done in terms of a Sony Entertainment Television, general entertainment channel."

Other priorities in 2003 include a greater sales push for Sony's local productions and spending more time with other divisions, such as Sony's consumer electronics and Playstation groups. "As technology is evolving and the businesses are evolving, what each of us are trying to achieve is coming closer and closer together," says McMahon. "It's really a goal for this year."



Susanne Schosser, Programme Director, Super RTL

Against the backdrop of a struggling German market, kids channel Super RTL has transcended the tough climate and managed to pull off a record year in 2002. Thanks to acquisitions like *Mr Bean*, *SpongeBob Square Pants*, and *Angela Anaconda*, as well as in-house efforts like *Toggo Television*, the channel is averaging a 20% audience share for its target demo of kids aged three to 13 and reported EBIT of €5.5m for 2002, its best ever results.

For Susanne Schosser, director of programming for Super RTL, 2002 was the year the broadcaster truly became a full-service channel for kids. "2002 was the first year where our cross media strategy really worked. We implemented the strategy about two or three years ago, but this really was a breakthrough year," says Schosser. In addition to television, Schosser says that licensing, the web, video, and publishing are all increasingly essential to Super RTL's success.

But market domination is not always a smooth road. Following the end of Germany's love affair with anime in 2001, Super RTL found itself with a schedule full of a suddenly much less popular genre. It is a lesson that Schosser has not forgotten: "We had hard times, but we have come back to first place. It really showed that in the long term it is better to go with quality properties and not go with trends that will come and go within a year."

Schosser's slate is now filled with a bit of everything (gameshows, animation, quiz shows and documentaries) for every age group, and the 14-49 demo is a focus for the next couple of years, as the channel's programme supply deal with the RTL Group ends at the end of 2003.

Establishing events around its programming, like when *Bob the Builder* helped to rebuild Kindergarten classes following floods in Germany, tops Schosser's list of achievements for 2002, and she says 2003 will hold more of the same: "Our goal is to stay market leader in every platform we are on, and stay that much ahead of the competition by staying with the things that already work and trying to build them on a bigger scale."



Michelle Sie Whitten, President and Chief Executive Officer, Encore International Inc

Having spent the past four years patiently building Encore International (EI)'s business in China, Michelle Sie Whitten has suddenly found her knowledge and influence in the country very much in demand, as Western media companies rush to enter the market. "Over the last four or five months we've signed more NDAs than I can shake a stick at and our resources right now are almost fully committed to due diligence," says Whitten. "It is heating up, there are a lot of opportunities out there. But you still have to be very cautious about whatever investments you make."

Founded in 1995 and owned by John Malone's Liberty Media, EI's businesses today include Jiayi, a daily branded foreign programme block with the national broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV), and Beijing MediaWave, an advertising joint-venture with CCTV. It also oversees the distribution of CCTV-4 in the US on the International Channel and Whitten is planning to launch a Chinese movie and drama channel in the States.

"We approached the market very cautiously and we approached the market looking at the reality of what it could bear," says Whitten. "You have all sorts of hurdles, like the fact that there are no billing systems, cable operators don't pay the programmers and I think one of the largest problems with the market is it's still run by a terrestrial broadcast mentality. The overwhelming amount of revenue is advertising revenue."

With the prospect of solid subscription revenues some way off, the advertising joint-venture was an important step to ensure a healthy business for Jiayi and other channel launches down the line. "We look at it as building the blocks that support the future channels that we would own outright or partner with," says Whitten.

Already EI has struck a deal with Discovery Networks Asia, to handle its domestic advertising in China, which has led to increased revenues for its programming block. And now Whitten is busy sifting through potential channel partners, both from China and the US.

Whitten has also extended EI's own programming block from five years to ten years, and moved to an all dramas and movies format, which resulted in ratings nearly doubling. "One of the key things we were able to do was to change the genre and the time of the programming. That was huge for our ratings and our revenue," she says.



Daniela Welteke, SVP, International Programmes and Coproductions, Head of Fox World

With the opening of a London office this January and the signing of a coproduction joint-venture with Hong Kong's Star TV last year, Daniela Welteke's fledgling format production division is beginning to emerge as a serious global player.

One of Fox's fastest growing operations, in just two years, LA-based Fox World has made *Temptation Island* a huge international success, with many countries now renewing the show. A second season is airing in the UK on Sky One and the show was a big hit in TF1's Saturday night schedule. A Spanish version is also due to debut on Telemundo and Fox is continuing to sell the finished version, as well as look for new countries to produce the format in. "I'm stunned myself," admits Welteke.

Now with offices in the UK, Australia and Asia, Fox World is looking to build on the success of *Temptation Island*, as well as bring international shows back to the US. "Our goal is to work with people who have an understanding of local production and local culture," says Welteke, who

predicts that the next big hit could well come from Asia. "I've always been a big believer that Asia has interesting talent and interesting ideas."

Besides *Temptation Island*, Fox World is also working on *Face Off*, a gameshow for France 2, and *Small Town X* with the BBC. And Welteke is hoping to do more scripted coproductions as well, once the market improves. "In the downturn people start focusing on a couple of signature shows which tend not to be coproductions, they tend to be truly local shows, and then the rest goes into lower cost programming," she explains.

In terms of new formats, Welteke is looking at two new shows coming up on Fox: *Joe Millionaire* and *Married by America*, both from Rocket Science. "I have a tremendously good relationship with FBC as well as with the other networks that fall under the Fox fold here, and always look at what comes through those networks and how it can be adapted for the international community," she says. But the aim is to see the flow of products going both ways: "My goal is to see the pay-off of those resources working, that import-export, exchange of ideas model."





Dick Wolf, Wolf Films

Coming up with one hit show for US broadcast TV is hard enough. But with NBC's *Law & Order*, Dick Wolf has managed to pull off the feat of creating three highly successful drama series that all regularly rank

among the top 15 primetime programmes in the US, making it one of the most successful franchises in the history of television.

"It's very simple," says the veteran producer of *Law & Order*'s enduring appeal. "It's a story-driven, not a character-driven show. It's a story every week that has a beginning, middle and an end, that the audience is satisfied with, that's why we've been able to do cast changes the way we have. It's a very self-contained world."

Now in its thirteenth season on NBC, *Law & Order* is the longest-running current drama series on air in the US, while the spin-offs – *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* – are also performing well on NBC. And Wolf is one of the few US producers who can still draw in primetime international audiences. Since January 2002, *Law & Order* has helped re-establish Five's Saturday night line-up in the UK, and the series also rates well on Australia's Network 10, Italy's Rai 2 and Canada's CTV, where it ranks number three among all primetime series.

2002 also saw Wolf move into reality TV with NBC's *Crime & Punishment*, renewed for its second season, and this year he adds a new version of the classic television series *Dragnet*, premiering on ABC in January, to his production roster. But Wolf's biggest goal is to see *Law & Order* beat *Gun Smoke* to become the longest running series in US television history. "That's the big goal," he says. "We've got to beat 20 years and we're half way through the thirteenth season. We're getting there and it's picked up through 2005."

Chris Wronski, President, Zone Vision

With the bulk of its channel operations in Eastern Europe and Latin America, London-based Zone Vision is well used to working in a tough economic climate, which might help explain why the company has managed to expand so successfully in the past year. "We were always growing in quite difficult environments," says Chris Wronski, who founded the company in 1990. "So the fact this year was more difficult overall, meant it was quite good for us. We're making money this year despite the fact that just about everybody else is losing money and closing channels."

Zone Vision's biggest success last year was the roll-out of Reality TV, which now reaches 17m homes in over 100 territories following its launch on Sky and NTL at the end of 2002. "The UK launch was a huge success," says Wronski. "We've been in the UK for 11 years but we've concentrated on other markets. Launching one of our channels here was very important."

The company has also taken its first steps into Asia, with a deal to launch Reality TV in India this February with Zee-Turner. The Indian deal paves the way for the roll-out of Zone Vision channels across Asia and will increase the channel's reach by 10m subscribers. "We are pursuing a number of other deals in the region," says Wronski.

For 2003, the priority is to further expand the distribution of Zone Vision's channels, which also include two European movie channels, soap channel Romantica, and a joint-venture movie channel with Showtime in Turkey. "It is a priority for us to launch Reality in new markets. We're hoping that it will

become one of the most popular global brands in multichannel television," says Wronski.

Commissioning original programming for Reality TV is also high on the agenda and Wronski is optimistic that a US deal is on the cards. "We are negotiating with a number of players and we are looking at setting up our own operation this January," he says. "We're also looking into a couple of new channel concepts and will be looking to acquire some smaller channels in individual markets to speed up the process of expansion."

