

TBI Television Business International

The Interview
Jeffrey Katzenberg
Page 10

Wild Money
Distributors speak out
Page 26

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Contents April/May 2019



10. The TBI Interview: Jeffrey Katzenberg

The Disney alum discusses plans for Quibi, his premium short-form platform that is 20 years in the making

16. Why content execs are winning in Hollywood

Regime changes are rife out of LA but execs getting top jobs have content, rather than digital, backgrounds. What gives?

20. Live long and prosper: Inside All Access

How CBS's market-leading SVOD is navigating a new frontier of fierce rights ownership and premium content

26. Wild Money

As the distribution landscape weathers tectonic shifts, top execs discuss deal-making and deal-breaking

34. Sports streamers: a long road ahead

New platforms such as DAZN and Eleven Sports are aggressively seeking out rights. How is the market measuring their success?

38. Windowing battle brews for the BBC

Execs at BBC Studios Showcase discuss the pros and cons of the BBC's plans to extend the iPlayer window

42. Vive la France

The French TV market is being propelled by record-breaking levels of exports as a result of global-facing drama. How can it preserve its cultural cachet while adapting to a new world?

Plus: 6 Editor's Note • 48 INTV Report • 156 Last Word



TBI Scripted

52. In The Spotlight: Jed Mercurio

The *Line Of Duty* and *Bodyguard* creator on SVODs and mega-deals

54. Two Worlds Collide

TBI's first edition of One-to-One sees *Les Misérables* producer Chris Carey and Sky Vision MD Jane Millichip discussing SVODs and dream projects

58. Dubbing boom

Networks and SVODs are doubling up on dubbing investment as localisation becomes increasingly important

62. Elevating Omens

The creative team behind *Good Omens* on adapting the unadaptable

65. Script-to-Screen: *Harassment*

Globo's SVOD refresh has been spearheaded by a mini-series inspired by women who spoke out against sexual assault

68. Bella Germania

The floodgates have opened for premium German drama and the competition is heating up

Plus: 72 Scripted Hot Picks • 80 Writer's Room

Contents April/May 2019



82

TBI Formats

82. Costume drama

Fox's *The Masked Singer* has put costume-led formats back in the spotlight. TBI investigates the logistics of pulling them off

88. Banijay Right's *Catch*

This new format from Germany's Brainpool TV serves up a game of 'tag' unlike you've ever seen before

90. The giants among formats

K7 Media's 'Tracking The Giants' report uses historical and current data to pinpoint the underlying trends in TV format sales worldwide

93. Keshet's *2025*

In the "near future" of Keshet's new format, everything has a price – even goodwill. TBI reports from the Israeli set

Plus: 96 Casting • 100 Formats Hot Picks • 106 Viewpoint



108

TBI Factual

108. Old money, new players face off for unscripted

Despite a plethora of digital entrants, sustainable business models in the unscripted world are still lacking

112. Close Up: CNN's Amy Entelis

The CNN Worldwide exec breaks down how to build a world-class documentary like *Three Identical Strangers* and *RBG*

114. Knocking down Netflix

What drove the record-breaking deal for a feature doc on US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Plus: 116 Factual Hot Picks; 124 Viewpoint



128

TBI Kids

128. Diversity in kids' TV

Diversity in kids' television has a long way to go before it becomes mainstream. TBI speaks to the players rallying for representation

132. In-depth: *The World's Worst Children*

David Walliams' beloved books get their first TV remake in this new co-production

134. The big deals

A snapshot of the biggest sales and greenlights in kids' TV

Plus: 136 Kids Hot Picks • 146 Viewpoint

NEW CONTENT FOR MIPTV

COMEDY:

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for BBC One



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/ FORMATS:

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Editor's note Manori Ravindran

A new chapter for TBI

You may have noticed that things look a little different at TBI Magazine. We are thrilled to usher in this year's MIPTV with an extensive redesign of the publication – both in print and online. Our fresh new look – spearheaded by our talented, indefatigable art director Matthew Humberstone – better reflects our in-depth reporting and ambition to be your source for informed insight on all things screen.

In the pages of this bumper issue, you'll notice some new features we've launched to mark the occasion. With major shifts underway in distribution, we gathered top execs to reflect on how they're doing business differently in a lively roundtable discussion. Meanwhile, in One-to-One, two industry titans interview one another about the latest trends in global-facing drama.

Elsewhere, we catch up with the inimitable Jeffrey Katzenberg as he readies the launch of groundbreaking short-form platform Quibi; the team behind US streaming service CBS All Access, home of *Stark Trek: Discovery*; and the formidable Jed Mercurio, creator of BBC One and Netflix drama *Bodyguard*.

You'll also find our usual deep dives into the pressing topics affecting our industry: the skyrocketing investment in dubbing thanks to global SVODs; a need for improved aftercare practices for young participants in entertainment formats; the logistics of pulling off costume-led formats such as *The Masked Singer*; and why kids programming needs more diversity.

Also included are authored pieces from *Leaving Neverland* director Dan Reed; Facebook's Patrick Walker; and Stellify Media's Kieran Doherty, who gives us an exclusive sneak peek into his Netflix gameshow *Flinch*.

Moving forward, look to TBI for a curated offering that spans production, broadcasting, streaming and distribution. In addition to breaking stories and covering daily news, we go deep on the issues that really matter as the industry continues to evolve. If you don't already, sign up to our newsletter and catch us across social media.

For now, we're taking a minute to celebrate with a glass of rosé.

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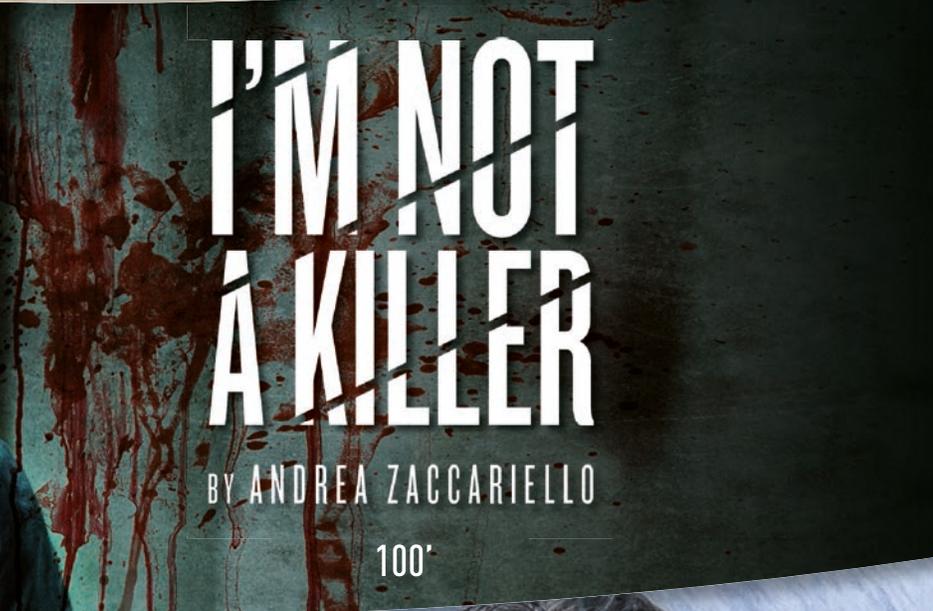
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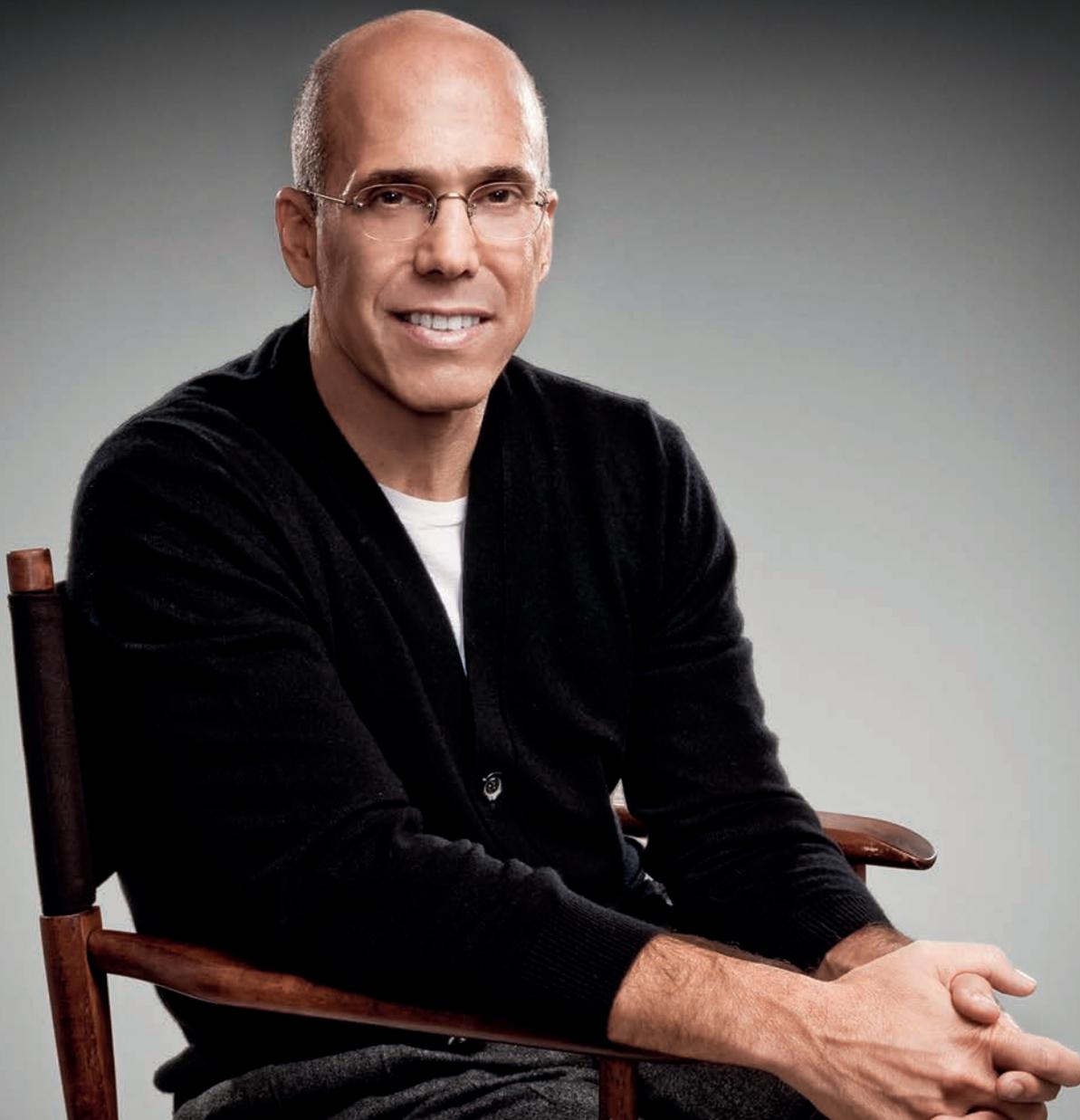
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Katzenberg's 20-year journey to short-form domination

Jeffrey Katzenberg is the superstar Disney alum who has built a 30-year reputation for the quality of his work as a film executive, producer and media proprietor – and now he's taking on short-form. He speaks to Kaltrina Bylykbashi about why his work on premium platform Quibi may be his most enduring yet



Quibi was introduced to the world in 2018 as Katzenberg's premium short-form platform, which convinced 10 major entertainment studios, including Disney, Warner and NBC, to invest \$1bn in initial funding, but according to exec the platform has been 20 years in the works.

While Katzenberg led the team at DreamWorks Animation in 1999, a studio he co-founded and eventually sold to Comcast for \$3.6bn in 2016, he started a company called Pop.com with business partners Steven Spielberg and Ron Howard. The premise behind the venture may sound familiar: they planned to make short-form content under 10 minutes long, at high quality and to monetise it on the Internet.

"It was an idea that was a good two decades ahead of its time," admits Katzenberg. The venture failed before launch, but the exec says it was a good education and experiment on how he could build a short-form platform that would broadcast a mix of animated and live-action short films online. The trio even managed to produce a selection of shorts, a couple of which were directed by Howard himself, which were never made available to consumers.

Fast-forward to 2012 and Katzenberg had his second life-changing encounter with short-form when he met Brian Robins, who had just started a now well-known youth-skewing YouTube channel named AwesomenessTV. Robins created long-form stories that could be told in multiple chapters, according to Katzenberg, and it wasn't long before DreamWorks acquired it.

"We continued to build that company out and it was enjoying some pretty great success and had some great investments from Hearst and Verizon as strategic partners. In a very short period of time, the value of AwesomenessTV, which we bought for \$33m, skyrocketed to \$650m and I think that was an eye-opener for us and everybody else," he says.

This was the period in which the exec says he really began thinking about building a premium service focused on what today is considered short-form content. By 2016, Katzenberg sold DreamWorks and started WndrCo – a holding company to incubate and buy controlling stakes and whole companies. Here, Katzenberg says Quibi, which stands for "quick bites", was born.

After two decades of development, Katzenberg says Quibi, which will formally launch in April 2020, has the potential to transform what short-form means for people today.

"I think in five years we would have had three evolutionary turns of film narrative: the first being

movies; second being television and third being Quibi," says Katzenberg.

Quibi wants to do for short-form what HBO did for broadcast.

The platform encroaches on two supersized industries: social media platforms and entertainment-focused TV networks and SVODs.

It will look to make high-end series which tell hours-long stories across what Katzenberg refers to as "chapters" or "act breaks" that are 7-10-minutes long.

Katzenberg's analogy to reflect how Quibi could potentially disrupt these markets is that of HBO's entry into the TV market in the 1990s.

"Where broadcast TV was in the 1990s is where social media platforms are today," says Katzenberg. "In the 1990s, TV was at the pinnacle of success and HBO comes along and says 'we're not TV, we're HBO.'"

What this disclaimer meant was that the cable network rid itself of commercials, changed the form and format of TV episodes, which had previously been constricted to 30-minute and 60-minute slots, and amped up violence, foul language, nudity and sex.

It also gave a level of creative freedom to talent who were starting to feel constrained by broadcast television, giving them more room and freedom to work.

Most importantly, without a reliance on ads, it meant HBO could spend money that ad-supported TV couldn't compete with.

"Twenty years ago they ordered 10 episodes of *Band of Brothers* for \$125m – that's \$12.5m per episode, two decades ago.

"All of those things are what Quibi will do with what is the current short-form world," Katzenberg says. "We're going to do something quite different and create a whole new set of opportunities for creators to make a different type of content, with much greater resources."

"Most content being produced in that world today is in fact short-form and a good part of what Quibi is doing is we're actually making long-form in bite sizes. That's a very different type of storytelling than what exists today."

Katzenberg goes on to say that he deeply respects the "very rich, very ambitious eco-system" of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat, but that their video business can be limited due to their dependence on advertising.

"The result of that is that working on YouTube, as well as working on Facebook Watch, Instagram and Snapchat, the most you could spend on content

"People say, 'If you're making content for \$100,000 per minute, and that's what Netflix, Hulu and Apple are all doing, aren't you competing with them?' And the answer is not at all!"

and get a return on investment on is about \$2,000 per minute.”

With broadcast, cable and streaming TV, companies are looking at a \$100,000 per minute return.

“The difference between \$2,000 and \$100,000 is night and day – it allows you the ability to make a completely different and unique type of content,” he says.

Quibi’s use case

While some are quick to make a comparison between Quibi and its social media and streaming cousins, Katzenberg says that, in reality, the platform exists “in a white space”.

“The use case for Quibi is highly differentiated from what other people are doing today for traditional TV,” he says. “People say, ‘If you’re making content for \$100,000 per minute, and that’s what Netflix, Hulu and Apple are all doing, aren’t you competing with them?’ And the answer is not at all.”

Katzenberg says Quibi focuses on what a millennial professional audience, aged 25-35, do between 7am and 7pm.

“We know they’re doing three things every day: they’re communicating and collaborating, they’re on social media and they’re watching almost 70 minutes of short-form video a day.”

Katzenberg also says that millennials’ watch time per day has gone up from 40 minutes 18 months ago and six minutes nearly six years ago.

Meanwhile, HBO, Amazon, Hulu and Netflix have all acknowledged that less than 10% of their audience is using smartphones to watch their content, and a very small percentage is doing so during the day, says the exec.

“We’re interested in what you’re doing on a bus, on the train, standing in line at a Starbucks or sitting in a doctor’s office. There’s all these in-between moments which we’re now filling in.”

Furthermore, Katzenberg says he is unconcerned by the list of streaming platforms arriving into the market this year from Disney, WarnerMedia and Apple, and asking consumers to depart from hard-earned dollars. “We’re competing with ourselves on the outset,” he says.

Populating for launch

This March, during the SXSW conference in Austin, Texas, Quibi revealed its first slate of programming, which will include a reality series from Jennifer Lopez’s Nuyorican Productions, a music competition

“I recognised that for this to work we needed to be the best of Silicon Valley and the best of Hollywood. One without the other could not possibly succeed”

Katzenberg on Quibi CEO Meg Whitman



by Scooter Braun and Frat Boy Genius – a factual title following the story of Snapchat creator Evan Spiegel.

In addition, the platform will feature short-form news programming, global news at noon from the BBC and a Best of Late Night programmes feature.

Katzenberg says that Quibi will feature more than 100 pieces of news content and series content every Monday.

“We have every professional media company in the industry as a supporter, investor and content supplier to us. So, we literally have every studio and several major independents as partners in Quibi, giving us access to the best talent, the best showrunners and the best IP,” Katzenberg tells TBI.

“Right now, in the best sense, we’re inundated by all kinds of talent from every other walk of life. A tsunami of content is pitched to us. In the last week, 125 projects have been pitched to us.”

The best of Hollywood and Silicon Valley

Quibi will not be successful unless it becomes the best of both Hollywood and Silicon Valley. While Katzenberg’s entertainment prowess has lurching the platform forward, he says, “I know what I know, and more importantly, I know what I don’t know”.

To ensure that the service had the best chance at succeeding as a subscription-based tech platform, he brought in former Disney colleague and ex-Hewlett Packard (HP) CEO Meg Whitman to lead on product development and create a user interface that would engage new users.

“It’s all of the things she has had so much knowledge and experience in. I felt confident that I could pull together the content side of it, but that’s like having a car without an engine,” says Katzenberg.

Whitman also served as CEO at eBay from 1998 to 2008, receiving a range of accolades for her work, including being named as one of the 50 faces that shaped the decade by the *Financial Times* in 2009.

The duo have worked together for over 30 years, overlapping at various companies, but especially as DreamWorks and HP struck a strategic partnership in 2007.

“When she stepped down [from HP] is when I had built out the first plan for Quibi and I flew up to Northern California and called her up. She said, ‘Well I want to take a couple months off and spend some time with the family,’ and I replied, ‘No, no, what are you doing tomorrow night?’” Katzenberg convinced Whitman to join as CEO on the spot. “To say I was stunned was an understatement,” he says. **TBI**



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Why content execs are winning in Hollywood

Hollywood is facing some of the most drastic executive restructuring it has ever encountered, with regime changes at Disney and NBCUniversal setting the scene for the industry's next SVOD-focused chapter. Manori Ravindran reports on why content, and not digital, execs are getting the top jobs

As Hollywood digs itself out of a seismic 18-month period that has upended the US media landscape, a game of executive musical chairs is spurring “crazy changes” in which content titans are coming out on top.

The regime changes underway in the US are unmatched, with long-standing leadership shifting virtually overnight as businesses shake out on the back of Disney's now completed \$71bn deal for Fox and telco AT&T's \$80bn purchase of WarnerMedia.

HBO, home of *Game Of Thrones* and the crown jewel of WarnerMedia, has seen a stunning mass exodus of execs including 27-year veteran Richard Plepler, who famously locked horns with new AT&T leadership; while both NBC Entertainment and Fox have seen top brass such as Bob Greenblatt and Dana Walden depart – the former to run WarnerMedia and

the latter to serve as chairman of ABC Entertainment and Disney Television Studios.

While it was once believed that Disney and WarnerMedia would poach digital-savvy execs from the likes of Netflix and Amazon, these businesses – all of which are now significantly advanced in plotting their own streaming plays – have in fact populated top leadership by cherry-picking the brightest talent from content-focused, traditional media companies.

“At the end of the day, it will all be about the content on services such as Disney+ and WarnerMedia's SVOD,” Matthew Velkes, COO of *Homecoming* and *True Detective* producer and indie studio Anonymous Content, tells TBI.

“People will argue about what's more important, content or distribution, but ultimately, you want people to watch your shows, so it's not overly surprising that you're relying on execs who have traditionally provided the creative support to do that.”

One high-level exec from a major US studio tells TBI: “Those appointments are, to me, an acknowledgement that there is something in a career where someone has worked with creators and content as opposed to coming from a more Silicon Valley-oriented mindset or background.”

Game of Thrones (above),
Homecoming (opposite)
and *Sharp Objects*
(overleaf)

Indeed, it's telling that even Netflix's most high-profile hire in the last year has been, effectively, a traditional content exec.

Former ABC Entertainment president Channing Dungey, who oversaw heavy-hitting Shonda Rhimes titles such as *Scandal* and *How To Get Away With Murder* for the network, joined the global SVOD late last year to serve as VP of original series under Cindy Holland.

Similarly, Greenblatt started his career at Fox, developing shows such as *Melrose Place* and *The X-Files* before stepping into producing, becoming EP on critically acclaimed drama *Six Feet Under*. He then served as president of Showtime from 2003 to 2010 before taking the reins at NBC Entertainment in 2011.

At WarnerMedia, Greenblatt will oversee the business's forthcoming OTT proposition as well as HBO, TNT, TBS, Cartoon Network and other channels.

"Bob's like a unicorn," says Sue Naegle, chief content officer for Annapurna Pictures, the studio behind feature films *Vice*, *If Beale Street Could Talk* and forthcoming BBC America thriller *Fever*.

"He's produced, worked at studios and networks, he's really good with creators and he's a Broadway producer. In a lot of ways, he's an artist. He'll be fine."

Naegle, who is charged with bolstering Annapurna's TV efforts, adds that having a digital or linear background matters less than understanding the types of programming that streaming or premium services

need in order to grow. "And, traditionally, those have not been broadcast shows at all," she says.

Naegle points out that it boils down to storytelling: "A half-hour at Netflix is 30 minutes, while a half-hour at CBS is 21 minutes. You're losing a third. It's really a matter of understanding what audiences are looking for from a streaming platform and that's not the same thing they're looking for from a broadcast platform.

"However, if you have a broadcast background but you understand the difference, you'll do really well."

What's in store for HBO?

While all eyes will be on Greenblatt to see how he steers WarnerMedia's three-tiered streamer, his direction of HBO will also be closely scrutinised, particularly with Plepler, long-time bastion of the channel's premium brand, now out of the picture.

Naegle, the one-time president of HBO Entertainment who helped usher in projects such as *Game Of Thrones* and *Girls*, remains close with her ex-colleagues at the business, which she left in 2013, and says she "roots for them every day".

However, one of the enduring challenges for the channel, she says, is that "there's always been just one night to program – Sunday night".

With new parent company AT&T keen to expand the volume of HBO's content offerings, Naegle says "the ability to do more than one night is exciting".

"Whereas Amazon, Netflix or Hulu can have shows that people don't watch and they can just cancel them, that was never the case at HBO. It's very obvious when a show doesn't work creatively, and you really need to try and avoid it"

Sue Naegle,
Annapurna Pictures





“Hollywood has been, in essence, bought out by tech companies”

Peter Micelli, eOne



But the former agent is quick to warn that there is “no margin of error in place at HBO”.

“Whereas Amazon, Netflix or Hulu can have shows that people don’t watch and they can just cancel them, that was never the case at HBO. It’s very obvious when a show isn’t reviewed favourably, isn’t endorsed by audiences or doesn’t work creatively, and you really need to try and avoid it,” she explains.

“I’m excited for them to have more space. I trust them because they’re so good that they know the rate at which they can expand and still keep that quality.”

Similarly, another high-ranking studio exec adds that not diluting the HBO brand will be key. “If they’re going to be forced to make 50 shows, that could happen. It’s hard to make 10 great shows, let alone 50 great shows.”

Keeping pace with Apple and AVOD

Anonymous Content COO Matthew Velkes reveals that despite having three shows in production for Apple TV+, the business was in the dark throughout the entire process around where, exactly, the shows would be distributed.

When asked how it felt to deliver programming in such circumstances, the exec says “it’s a lot, to be honest, not knowing how they’d get distributed, and the fact that we’ve committed a lot of time and effort to these shows. I’m sure the talent was as anxious as we were.

“But knowing the ubiquity of Apple devices all over the world, we felt pretty confident that a large part of the global population will be able to see it.”

Meanwhile, eOne’s Micelli is more enthusiastic than some about NBCUniversal’s AVOD plans, noting that he “believes deeply” in free, ad-supported content.

“I don’t see a world in which it doesn’t have a place. I think there are too many subscriptions right now for AVOD not to have a chance. Younger people coming up appreciate free.”

He adds that addressable advertising will be a major gamechanger. “This tech will help us target the kinds of commercials you see in your programming, with things you’ll actually want to see and things you need. There are too many brands that have too deep a pocket to keep them out. AVOD has a huge future.”

Peter Micelli, chief strategy officer for film and television at *Sharp Objects* and *Designated Survivor* studio Entertainment One (eOne), says he spoke with Plepler last month following his departure from the channel.

“He was lovely and he had an incredible run at HBO,” he says. “It was the right time for him to part ways. For him, it [was no longer] the position he had for all those years. It was time for him to try something new.”

New leaders must play ball with tech

Micelli served as an agent and co-head of TV at Creative Artists Agency (CAA) prior to joining eOne, representing such creatives as Damon Lindelof, Jon Favreau and Jenji Kohan.

He warns that the “best leaders of all these media companies going forward will have a strong desire to work tech and innovation into all their future plans”.

At eOne, a new platforms and strategic partnerships division has been created specifically to engage with new buyers.

“We have a team of people who, on a daily basis, discuss who the new buyers are, the interesting tech reaching masses, and how we can help them get into an original content strategy. Because tech is always going to change distribution – it’s an unstoppable force.”

He highlights that execs such as Greenblatt will need to harness tech and understand its intersections with content in a significant way going forward.

“Hollywood has been, in essence, bought out by tech companies. Comcast is a big broadband company and they own Universal, while AT&T is a telco that now owns Warner Bros. And then you have Apple, Amazon, Facebook and YouTube, which are all having a massive impact in entertainment,” he says.

The exec reasons that Netflix and Disney-Fox are the last remaining “pure-play entertainment businesses”. While the former is a tech company, “at its core, it is actually purer than most of the studios because all it cares about is making great stuff and having you pay for that great stuff.”

Ultimately, tech has “disrupted the entertainment space holistically,” says Micelli, noting that platforms such as WarnerMedia’s new SVOD, Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV+ ultimately inform wider business strategies that reach well beyond the audiovisual sector.

“While before it was ‘make great shows and movies and monetise them’, for the first time in the history of entertainment, there are all these other businesses benefiting from the content. **TBI**



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Live long and prosper: Inside All Access

CBS was the first US broadcaster to launch a streaming play, but how is it navigating the new frontier of fierce rights ownership and premium content? Manori Ravindran gets an all-access pass into CBS's new normal



CBs All Access is leaving “no stone unturned” when it comes to securing creative talent and building a premium offering that can compete with the likes of Netflix – a rival that also happens to be the international home for its biggest series.

The five-year-old platform was the first streaming offering to come out of a US broadcaster, and was years ahead of the likes of NBCUniversal and WarnerMedia, which are only now on the cusp of fully fledged OTT efforts.

Initially structured as a catch-up service for back-catalogue content such as *I Love Lucy* and the original *Star Trek*, the platform has quickly evolved into a home for high-end originals from creators such as *Get Out* director Jordan Peele and horror maestro Stephen King.

CBS's fourth-quarter earnings in February revealed that All Access and the app from sister cable network Showtime had collectively reached 8m direct-to-consumer subscribers – two years ahead of schedule. The businesses now have a combined target of reaching 25m US subscribers by 2022.

“Two and a half years ago, we put our first originals on the service and we found that that really exploded the subscribership,” Julie McNamara, EVP of original content for All Access, tells TBI.

The platform had early success with *The Good Fight*, a spin-off of CBS's blockbuster legal drama *The Good Wife*, and *Star Trek: Discovery*, a prequel that marked the first series reboot of the franchise since 2005's *Star Trek: Enterprise*.

It's now popular knowledge that *Star Trek: Discovery*, which is nearing the end of its second series, is an All Access show out of the US, but when it was first announced in November 2015, it was a tremendously risky move for CBS, which could have easily kept it on the main network rather than use it to elevate All Access – still an unknown proposition in a landscape largely devoid of comparable efforts.

At the time, then-CBS boss Les Moonves – who departed in 2018 amidst a high-profile sexual misconduct scandal – told US outlet *Variety* that putting the show on All Access and not CBS or Showtime was a “big call” but, ultimately, there was no other way “to launch [the platform] to the upper level”.

Star Trek: Discovery also presented an interesting licensing experiment for All Access, which made the early decision of selling it into Netflix for international, with the global SVOD launching it across 100-plus territories – a deal that reportedly paid for a bulk of the show's series one budget.

While CBS can't be drawn on the terms surrounding

the Netflix deal, David Stapf, president of CBS Television Studios, tells TBI that the platform has “quite a few years” left on the contract. As for whether it will re-up when the deal comes to a close, it's a decision that “will be made then by both parties”.

Deborah Barak, president of business operations for CBS Entertainment, CBS Television Studios and CBS News, adds: “There's obviously been a lot of interest in the shows [All Access] has been doing, and we need to figure out the right deal for each show.

“Plus, All Access obviously has some presence in the international marketplace as well, so there are some questions.”

Indeed, All Access was launched outside the US last year, premiering in Canada in April and debuting in Australia in December as 10 All Access on the back of CBS's 2017 acquisition of Network 10.

More international markets are to follow, says McNamara, noting that the team is striking “international output deals for projects that are not in those two territories right now.

“In terms of expanding [the platform], it will be a territory-by-territory decision,” she says.

The CBS case is particularly interesting given the extent to which licensing conversations have hit the mainstream on the back of headline-grabbing deals such as WarnerMedia and Netflix's pact for *Friends*.

That agreement saw the former AT&T-owned business, which had been bullish about keeping content for its forthcoming streaming service, re-upping its deal for the sitcom with the global SVOD to a tune of \$100m.

Barak adds that, ultimately, it's not a “one-size-fits-all” business for CBS, either, when it comes to putting its content on other platforms.

“We will look at the products and see what the best homes are. We still believe in licensing as well, and think both are opportunities.”

Beyond Star Trek

Star Trek has been so successful for All Access that a number of spin-offs are in the works, including a returning series on Captain Jean-Luc Picard with actor Patrick Stewart attached, as well as the Toronto-shot *Section 31*, starring *Crazy Rich Asians* actor Michelle Yeoh – set to debut on the service in a couple of years.

McNamara is aware, however, of the danger of being too closely associated with just one franchise or genre.

“We know we need to put some things out there that are original originals that really just break out – things that are a little bit more of a swing and experiment,” she says.

“Two and a half years ago, we put our first originals on the service and we found that that really exploded the subscribership”

Julie McNamara, All Access



Opposite: *Star Trek: Discovery* is licensed internationally to Netflix

The Good Fight is a high-profile spin-off of *The Good Wife*



“We have to be creatively ambitious about that. Some will hit the zeitgeist and really speak to people, and others won’t. We need to really approach it both ways, and not just in terms of being too fascistic about ‘we can only do this show or that show.’”

The exec describes the platform’s programming ambitions as being focused on “popular, big tentpole but premium” shows.

Recently, All Access premiered a reboot of classic CBS series *The Twilight Zone* fronted by Peele, and is also in the works on horror *The Stand*, based on King’s apocalyptic 1978 novel, which will be re-imagined as a

10-part event series.

“There is no stone unturned in terms of getting top creative talent that really feels like something you would find on a premium streaming platform,” explains McNamara.

Meanwhile, the platform is also testing out more female-forward, character-driven dramas – such as *Desperate Housewives* creator Marc Cherry’s latest offering *Why Women Kill* – “to see how our subscriber base reacts to it and whether it draws new people in,” explains the exec.

There is potential, as well, for some All Access shows to end up on the main network, although Stapf points out that that will be a “show-by-show decision”.

“Because I sit on both sides, being with the studio but also affiliated with All Access, I know that if we do it show by show, you can determine whether a certain show is a good marketing opportunity for something like All Access and whether it will help drive subscribers.”

McNamara adds that there are “lots of ways” to preview shows in front of the paywall that may or may not involve the broadcast networks.

“We look at all of that as options that continue to drive people to us,” she says.

Barak highlights that All Access recognises the “depth of audience” that is available on the broadcast network – roughly 10m.

“It’s clear that that is an opportunity to [market All Access] in promotional spots,” she explains.

“We had a spot in the Super Bowl with Jordan Peele for *Twilight Zone* so that kind of thing is a great use of the synergy between the businesses,” says McNamara. **TBI**

Going boldly into pilots

CBS All Access will expand from its straight-to-series model later this year, with plans in place to begin piloting content for the first time across new genres, TBI can reveal.

McNamara says the business is “looking at unscripted and looking at building out comedy to a greater extent” – a move that will build on the success of sole comedy offering *No Activity*, a US adaptation of the hit Australian original from Fairfax Media-owned SVOD Stan.

“We are looking at all of it and trying to build it out in the best possible way to attract the most people. We are entertaining those projects and have some things in development in all those areas.”

The exec says expanding into new genres, such as entertainment and comedy, means it will explore pilots for the first time.

“We’ve been a straight-to-series model until this point but it’s likely that we will be trying some things out within these areas.”

Last year, CBS All Access gave several straight-to-series orders, including greenlights for *Why Women Kill*, *Strange Angel*, *Tell Me A Story*, *Interrogation* and *One Dollar*, although the latter series was cancelled in December.

The business is also interested in exploring more documentaries, says the exec.

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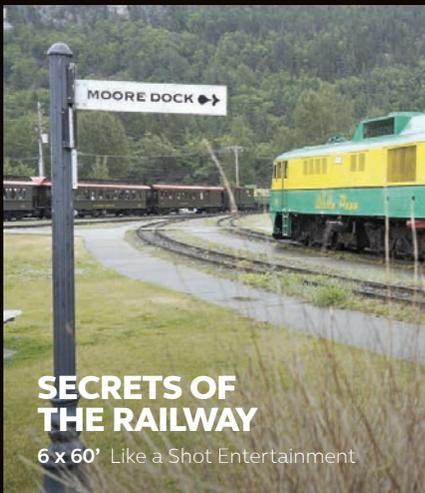
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Tim Mutimer
CEO, Banijay Rights



Greg Phillips
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Wild Money: The new rules of play in distribution

Distributors are under greater pressure than ever, needing to be nimble, innovative and cash-rich – all at the same time. TBI gathered distributors of shows such as *Bodyguard* and *Leaving Neverland* to discuss all things content: what's cutting through, what they're walking away from and why they're stepping in where commissioners are falling short

How are you working with new players such as Disney+ and WarnerMedia, and navigating their need for exclusivity?

Tim Mutimer (Banijay): It's about managing the rights you've got and looking very carefully at the holdbacks you're giving people because SVOD and AVOD are increasingly becoming more important. Like any other client, we have contact with them as both a distributor and as part of a group of producers. You find out where the opportunities are. The important thing is to make sure you've got the rights available for when the opportunities arise.

Mark Lawrence (ESI): The studios also need that variety. Our content is quite valuable for them and I'm sure they'll be knocking on everyone's doors to see what's available out there. A diet of pure Americana is not going to go well

Greg Phillips (Kew): I take a ridiculously optimistic view. It's wonderful that they'll use their own product for those areas and it's fantastic they will have to acquire from elsewhere, whether that's from us or others. Most importantly, other outlets are going to want to buy things because content won't be available to them necessarily, so it's great. The more customers, the more opportunity we have if we have the right thing.

Julie Meldal-Johnsen (ITVS GE): A lot of that American programming won't be available to clients who are used to buying it and have slots built for American crime drama, so maybe a nice UK crime drama can take its place.

Richard Halliwell (DRG): One of the conversations we're having, however, might go a bit too far, which is that the new players are now really focusing on local originals to compete. Where before we would have found ready markets for things, now the streamers are making it themselves rather than picking from distributors. It's not necessarily a negative thing, but it's certainly a factor.

JMJ (ITVS GE): It seems obvious that if [you're WarnerMedia and you] do a global service, you want *Game Of Thrones* on it, but the HBO output deal is the most valuable distribution deal out there that I've ever seen in terms of the money it makes from all the territories. Its accountants are going to be taking a hard look at those deals and deciding whether it's worth walking away from.

GP (Kew): You have to be realistic. They're going to do the best they can for their own services and utilise their own materials as best they can. They won't worry too much about anyone else. However, there will be those items that come along that aren't necessarily beyond their reach, but beyond their desire – that's the opportunity for us.



RH (DRG): But all rights deals aren't necessarily a bad thing. All rights, for the right price, is a great thing. As long as they're prepared to pay – which they often aren't – but if you can extract the value, it's great.

Netflix can be both flexible and intensely rigid, depending on the content in question. How has that relationship evolved?

TM (Banijay): It depends on how much they want what you've got. They will be very flexible if they really want it but can't have it everywhere. But, clearly, they're moving to a global play, with content that will work very well locally in some markets but then they'll want it for the rest of the world, so if they're investing in something that's got the chance of being a hit everywhere, they want the chance to control it themselves. Netflix is a lot less flexible than it used to be.

Harriet Armston-Clarke (TVF): In some territories,

“The HBO output deal is the most valuable distribution deal out there that I've ever seen. Its accountants are going to be taking a hard look at those deals and deciding whether it's worth walking away from”

Julie Meldal-Johnsen



it's a lot more specific. It might not be something they're particularly interested in for global but if it works in Thailand, that's great. The reason you hear they're both rigid and flexible is because global is everything, but simultaneously, getting those territory and language-specific properties is increasingly important as they grow in emerging markets.

Lilla Hurst (Drive): It's really early days and they're all working it out. I had a conversation with Amazon the other day where in the US, they just raised the bar dramatically. We thought it was high already, but now it's super high. They're talking about doing only three properties a year that are ideas you would never see on any other platform.

The person I was speaking to was saying, 'I don't even know if I'll be in a job because this is such a massive task. Can I even achieve that?' And then, meanwhile, we've got Amazon UK that's now really starting to engage with people.

We've been told that their remit will be quite different from the US. The nature of these SVODs is that they will adapt if it's not working. They're not the huge ships like the BBC and ITV – they can be more nimble.



How important is marketability of programming?

RH (DRG): For us, that thinking about marketing came from the experience with OTT commissioning club Atrium TV, and considering how to give our OTT partners a piece of content that will allow them to compete with Netflix. It's thinking about what their poster looks like and how to give them something they can't get elsewhere, be it talent they can hang a marketing campaign around, or behind-the-scenes material they can run digital campaigns with. From a sales perspective, that's now top of our pitch: not only is this a great show, but I'm going to help you understand how we think you should market it and drive subscriptions. And that's a new skill set for us.

TM (Banijay): In non-scripted, with formats such as *Survivor*, we try and collect best practice social media from around the world. We look at what each of our licensees are doing with social media and we share that so that other licensees can get an idea. With the format *All Against 1*, we own the app, so if we license that in another territory we can provide the app that people can play along with at home. All those kinds of things drive audiences to the content.

IMJ (ITVS GE): Both of those things are exactly right, but the trouble is that we're all doing it. The US studios have been doing that for decades, and we're all doing that now – you have to. But getting your head above the parapet is even harder.

“It's not our job anymore to wait for producers to go and get their UK commission. We have to go and help that commission”
Richard Halliwell



LH (Drive): There is a joy in being in non-scripted and working in traditional docs. Take *Leaving Neverland* or the Princess Diana doc we did on the anniversary of her death: because they are true stories most of us can relate to, they immediately feed a journalistic desire. It's much easier to break through because it's really happening, and journalists want to write about it.

GP (Kew): Non-scripted programming is now about making that event. Since you can't read any truth in newspapers, people are looking for this kind of signature doc because they want to discover the real story.

How have your windowing strategies changed with more players entering the market and domestic channels building out catch-up offerings?

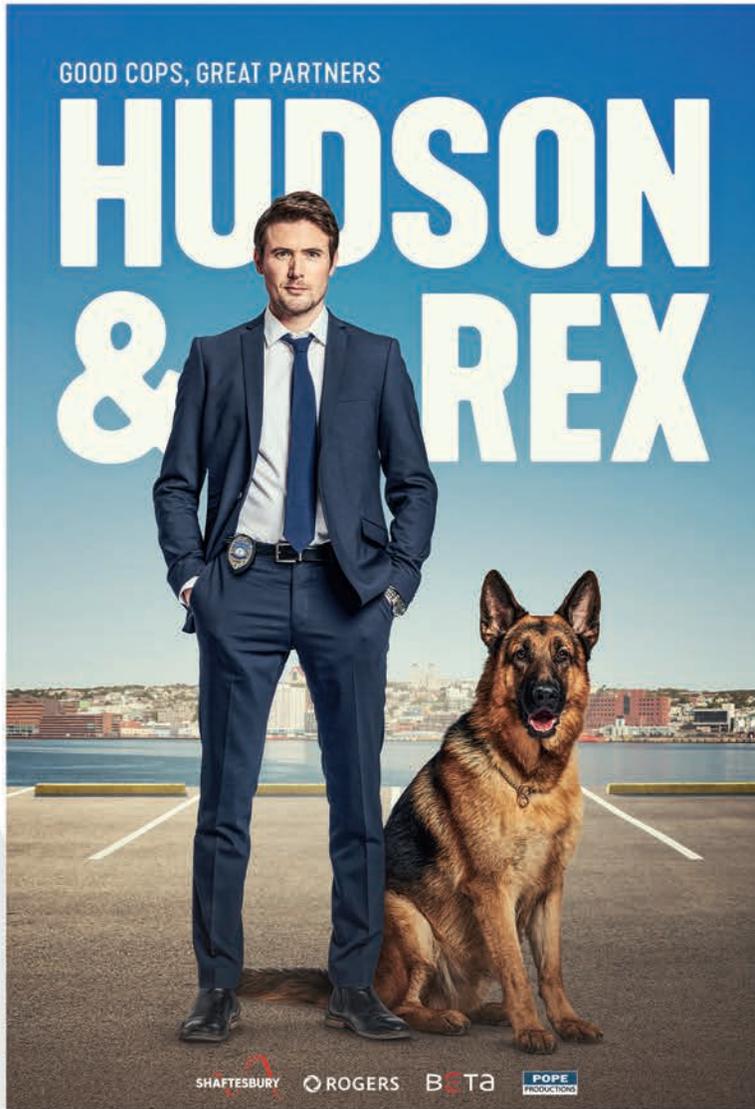
IMJ (ITVS GE): The 12-month iPlayer window is the BBC wanting as many people to watch their shows as they can. However, if you're talking about a drama costing £2m an hour, everyone has to be flexible and figure it out because if you don't raise the money to fund the show, then you're arguing about a window for nothing, because it doesn't exist. The whole concept of windowing is fascinating because it used to be this big thing when I started, with digital, pay and free window, but then that seemed to dissipate. It hasn't been a hot topic for a while but suddenly it's coming back again as these holdbacks expire. It doesn't seem to me like there is a cookie-cutter approach and one right way of doing things.

LH (Drive): We did a piece of research in the past few weeks where we were offered a series for distribution with a fairly hefty deficit with a 12-month window on Netflix, and it effectively wanted us to put up the money against all other rights after that holdback, and we spoke to a broad range of our loyal buyers – not about the project itself but that windowing scenario – and it was interesting to see the variety of responses. It was not a one-size-fits-all response and there were several of them saying, 'We're not sure – it depends what it is'. It really is so fluid at the moment.

RH (DRG): It comes down to that – it depends what it is, who wants it, how badly they want it and what value are they prepared to attach to it. It's about valuation, not necessarily windowing.

IMJ (ITVS GE): We have been amazed by the appetite for post-Netflix windows for *Bodyguard*. It's been really

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interesting. It went out on BBC One and it's on Netflix for 18 months, however, the second window for free-to-air buyers in Europe post-Netflix has been very healthy. But it's *Bodyguard*, so is it the rule or the exception? I'm not going to base my future investment in other shows on that example.

Is distributor-led "commissioning" something of a misnomer? What are the practical realities?

HAC (TVF): Maybe the word 'commissioning' is a bit lofty. If we're going to write a cheque for \$500,000 or \$1m, we need to know we will get that back in sales. Anyone who says that that isn't the case might be fibbing a little bit.

GP (Kew): Sometimes, it's more multiple pre-sales as opposed to commissioning, with your heart slightly in your mouth.

LH (Drive): Paul [Heaney of TCB Media Rights] coined the phrase. And in fairness, TCB has genuinely been writing cheques for the full budget. They may be pre-empting that slightly by having a few phone calls with some friendly buyers, saying 'I'm about to write a big fat cheque, you better buy this'

GP (Kew): I don't want to burst your bubble but it's Kew Media that [owns TCB] and it's not a big fat cheque

LH (Drive): But we have to remember that they're playing in a certain budget level. They are low-cost returnable series and maxing out a certain amount per hour is quite reasonable and a lesser risk. And they have someone in-house who is sat across commissioning, too. The way we've done it is we've moved from being a

"The word 'commissioning' is a bit lofty. If we're going to write a cheque for \$500,000 or \$1m, we need to know we will get that back in sales. Anyone who says [otherwise] might be fibbing"

Harriet Armston-Clarke



business that raises pre-sale and co-production funding for indies into distribution. We can now isolate certain ideas and think, hang on a minute, there's something in this. We had one show called *Super Scary Plane Landings* that sold and sold and sold. Sadly, the prodco shut down, but we could see there was mileage in it so we went to Arrow Media and asked them to develop a series of this ilk. We said we'll raise the money, and told them to put together the treatment, and that we need the budget to max out at a certain amount per hour, and then we'll co-own that property. We're doing that a lot more because it's really worked for us. But we have to be realistic that it only works in a certain area of non-scripted programming which is generally longer-running, returnable and lower cost per hour. It would be very difficult to follow that model for \$400,000-plus an hour.

JMJ (ITVS GE): We're doing it as well, because we have to. There is this gap where you used to get a type of show but for some reason, the UK commissioners aren't commissioning as much of it anymore. We know our clients around the world really like it, and we know what they'll pay for it, so you have to try and make it happen because it's not happening naturally.

RH (DRG): For us, it was a reaction to producer frustration. We have a number of first-look development deals, and you meet with producers who have a slate full of brilliant shows. It's not our job anymore to wait for them to go and get their UK commission. We have to go and help that commission. We can't wait for UK commissioners to pick up the shows they should be picking up by right. We have a deal now where we've gone from commissioning directly and writing those cheques ourselves to a co-production deal with Norway's TV3. It's not a traditional first commissioner we would have worked with, but if we can get it on air in Norway, at least the show will get made, we'll make it in English, and then we'll import it back.

LH (Drive): And it brings that editorial discipline. That is the other crucial thing. To this day, every buyer you meet will say 'So who is it made for?'

RH (DRG): We have learned that the hard way. In the early days, we commissioned some shows that didn't have that editorial rigour and, frankly, weren't good enough.

TM (Banijay): We've done a couple of models, and recently, we put some money into promos. We're working with Touchdown Films, getting them to shoot a promo in an area we think is of interest, and then we use that to test interest in the marketplace. When



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we're satisfied there's enough interest in that idea, we'll commission the series.

HAC (TVF): We brought someone in-house to help develop things, so we are co-developing with our channel partners around the world. And we're very open for business in all the different ways we can make content happen.

Recently, we saw ZDF Enterprises buying Off the Fence, and CJ ENM buying Echo Rights. How is distributor consolidation changing the business?

TM (Banijay): There is certainly a trend for consolidation, but in terms of our business, I'm less interested in other distributors unless they have a pipeline coming through. It's more about producers, prodcos or both combined.

LH (Drive): We've seen consolidation with the established distributors who all set up 20-30 years ago but there is a next wave. Drive is one of them and there's a bunch of us out there. For smaller players like us, it's great, because not everyone wants to work with a behemoth.

TM (Banijay): But there are certain economies of scale, and it becomes more expensive to be in the distribution game. Once you have an infrastructure

"The boutique distributors will do well because a lot of producers like small. They don't want to be part of a massive beast. It's the businesses in the middle that are the problem"

Mark Lawrence



that works, you can take more content, but to get that infrastructure you need a certain level, so I think certain distributors are going to struggle. You need a certain scale to be able to compete.

ML (ESI): Economies of scale are what's driving the bigger ones because money is tight. But the boutique distributors will also do well because a lot of producers like small. They don't want to be part of a massive beast. It's the bits in the middle that's the problem, and those are the bits that have to consolidate.

LH (Drive): If you think about the boutiques, there's one common theme: none of them are in scripted. We were in scripted as a consultancy business and as soon as we launched distribution, we couldn't compete.

JMJ (ITVS GE): Unless you're non-English-language. Echo Rights was a boutique and it did a great job finding a market that was affordable and making something out of it. But it's very hard for English-language content.

How is the third-party acquisitions market changing?

JMJ (ITVS GE): It's really important for us to get variety, and that's very different depending on scripted or unscripted. The third-party scripted titles are few and far between. They are still there, and there are some great ones if you can afford them, and on the non-scripted, there's new players all the time.

LH (Drive): There's still big cheques to be written even in the non-scripted space for acquisitions and the expectations can be huge. There are certain properties we'd look at at this point and we have to bow out.

JMJ (ITVS GE): We bow out frequently.

HAC (TVF): It's reached a real level of inflation. We have to bow out, too. But there is no way there is ROI on those projects, so that is one effect of what's going on, because there is wild money being paid for a one-off and in its entire life of distribution, it won't see that money back.

JMJ (ITVS GE): But it's interesting how things circle back. Something is off the market because someone has paid twice as much what you were willing to pay and then three months later, it's back

Speaking of wild money, how did Kew get involved in *Leaving Neverland*?

GP (Kew): We were very fortunate. Channel 4 had commissioned it and Dan Reed and Amos Pictures sold it to HBO and it was free and clear, and they could make the deal they wanted for it. They were more concerned about getting good distribution. With our profile in feature-length docs and having Alex Gibney and Nick Broomfield on board, they felt we were one of the doors to knock on.

LH (Drive): There are wild amounts of money being chucked around, but actually, there are a number of astute producers out there who are interested in the right relationship and right marketing and distribution. And I would say the most successful shows in our catalogue are shows we didn't pay a cent for. We just have a great relationship with that production company and they like the way we work.

HAC (TVF): Same with us.

JMJ (ITVS GE): I do agree, but there is a worrying trend in the UK market of the broadcasters no longer fully

“There are wild amounts of money being chucked around, but actually, there are a number of astute producers out there who are interested in the right relationship and the right marketing”

Lilla Hurst



financing production. It seems to have become a thing quite quickly.

HAC (TVF): Do you think we're creating that? It's quite worrying.

RH (DRG): I think we're feeding it. I'm not sure it's avoidable. Broadcasters know that one of us will step up with 30% or 40% of a budget.

JMJ (ITVS GE): I think broadcasters are still paying the same but it's just that the costs have gone up in most cases.

LH (Drive): BBC investments have gone down in specialist factual quite considerably.

RH (DRG): Certainly in the entertainment space, I don't remember a conversation I've had recently where the expectation wasn't that I would pay for the set or the host or make some massive contribution.

GP (Kew): People have to have the courage to say no. If you don't have that, it's a slippery slope. Some things are beyond common sense. It's your decision.

TM (Banijay): But someone always says yes. **TBI**



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Sports streamers: a long road ahead

As new sports streaming services such as DAZN and Eleven Sports aggressively seek out rights and push traditional players to innovate, how is the market responding and measuring success? Ross Biddiscombe investigates

It is a time of immense disruption in the sports streaming market. Almost every day there is either more content being made available by rights holders, online services are rolling out in more countries, or broadcast deals are showing increasing signs of splitting across multiple delivery platforms.

Most analysts agree it's a time of experimentation for sports apps and online streaming of live sporting events. All the activity among pioneers in the market such as DAZN and Eleven Sports and established broadcasters ranging from CBS and ESPN in the US to Sky in Europe means players are still discovering what works and what doesn't. Meanwhile, many sports league, event and tournament owners are starting to look at how to develop their own streaming services to cut out the middle man.

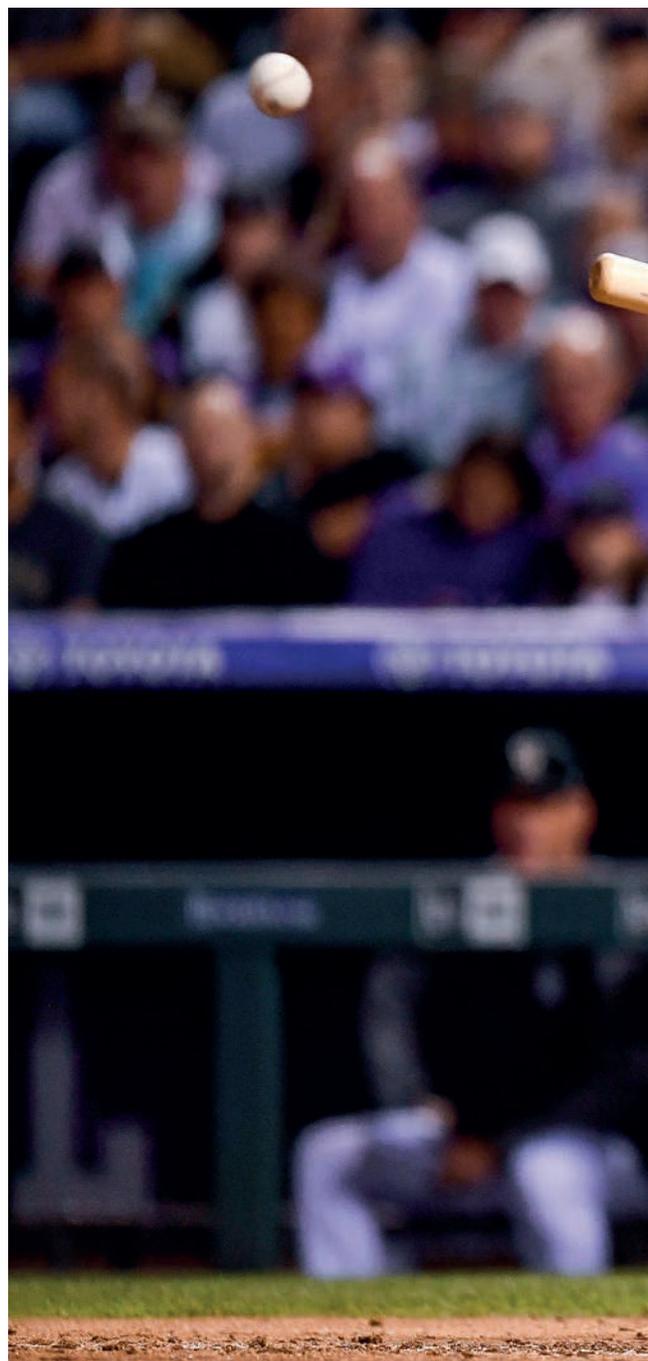
But there has been no real breakthrough moment in sports streaming, according to Julian Aquilina, research analyst at Enders Analysis, because the economics at the top end of the market are so difficult.

"There are still lots of challenges and domestic broadcasting rights for popular sports like football remain very expensive, especially for new players in this arena, so there is still a lot of learning going on," he says.

Despite successes such as ESPN+ recently breaking the 2m subscription mark, sports TV analysts such as Stephen Nuttall agree there is a long road ahead.

"ESPN+ has every right to shout about their numbers," says Nuttall, "but from the public numbers available and those rumoured, it seems no one is crushing it in terms of subscribers. While 50,000, 500,000 or even 1m may be good news for many services, no one is close to 10m, which would be around 10% of Netflix numbers."

However, the smart players in the market are making progress. DAZN has been among the most impressive, setting up shop in nine countries in less than three years and with properties including not only top level football – Champions League, English Premier League (EPL) and Serie A – but also more than a dozen other sports from boxing to volleyball.



DAZN has set the pattern by being opportunistic and using data to hunt for out-of-market rights in countries where there are enough “superfans” willing to buy a subscription for their beloved sport. So, for example, taking live EPL football to Japan or darts to the US makes good business sense.

“New players like DAZN are finding available rights, usually in non-domestic territories, where the costs are manageable and the fans are extremely hungry for that particular sport,” says Ampere

Analysis executive director Richard Broughton.

“The data can confirm if these are low-risk bets or not, and whether there are enough subscribers willing to pay for it.”

DAZN’s strategy is to serve all sports fans in their markets both with major rights and those with a local relevance and audience. A key criteria is that traditional broadcasters are not providing these sports, usually because of a lack of space on their linear channels.

Matthew Drew, EVP of rights at DAZN, says:

MLB has developed a strong OTT platform





Fox is partnering with Twitter to share FIFA content

“Our evolving data analysis capability allows us to understand markets better, in terms of where fans are and what they want to watch.

“It’s the great advantage of a multi-sport OTT provider that we have deep and accurate data on what people are watching, as well as when, how and in what combinations. That helps us to constantly improve our offering as our subscriber base and rights portfolio both grow and develop.”

But although this formula for streaming deals is emerging, the need to experiment is still a necessary strategy – and one that includes partnerships with traditional broadcasters.

DAZN sees an advantage in making its service available on Sky’s European pay-TV platforms in Germany and Italy, a tactic that raises its profile and increases its audience numbers. Of course, Sky takes a small percentage of any of the subscription money it helps to create for DAZN, but the trade-off works for both parties.

Elsewhere, Eleven Sports has distribution partners in Portugal – with local telco Nowo – and Poland, where Polsat agreed to buy a 51% share in Eleven Sports Poland for €38m (\$43m) last May.

“These pay-TV deals are a main revenue stream for Eleven,” says Broughton. “The streaming services aren’t doing these kinds of partnership deals in more mature markets, but where there are three or four sports pay-TV providers, then this can work.”

The traditional sports TV broadcasters – either ad-funded or subscription-based – in the mature

markets may have all their major event rights tied up amid a need to draw linear audiences, but they are also making their own push into streaming.

CBS boasted that its OTT audience for this year’s Super Bowl was 2.2m, a figure that combined audiences on CBSSports.com, the CBS Sports app, CBS All Access and other partner platforms – and a 31% rise over 2018.

In contrast, the Super Bowl’s regular TV viewing figures were the lowest in a decade, down to 98m from a peak of 114m in 2015.

Meanwhile, US broadcaster Fox is partnering with Twitter to share video content of this summer’s FIFA Women’s World Cup. Fox will post every goal of the tournament on its Twitter feed and a daily live show will be streamed exclusively on the social media platform featuring match previews, recaps, highlights, guest appearances and a review of some of the best tweets about the action.

The deal is similar to how Fox and Twitter worked together during the 2018 FIFA World Cup last year.

“The US can be a very profitable market for streaming,” says Ampere Analysis analyst Alexios Dimitropoulos. “Just to get 1% of the whole audience is enough for niche sports without big TV rights deals.”

Perhaps the most interesting moves being made in the streaming space are those of rights holders themselves.

Although sports leagues such as the NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball (MLB) in the US have all developed strong OTT offerings, the news from Europe that UEFA will be siphoning off some football content this summer to its own online platform for the first time has raised eyebrows.

With Champions League rights not available until 2021, the initial UEFA streaming content may only be youth or women’s matches, but UEFA secretary general Theodore Theodoridis says that including some flagship competitions is a future possibility.

“We have to be ready for the future,” he says, “and, as of 2021, where our current rights expire, together with the clubs, we will see the possibility of having some premium live matches in certain territories.”

For industry observers, UEFA’s plans are telling because top-quality football is subscription catnip in so many markets.

“UEFA is following a US-led trail here, but other sports leagues will definitely look hard at what they do because football has the biggest territorial spread of fans,” says Nuttall. “If it’s well-executed, then it will make things very interesting.”

Elsewhere in football, Italy’s Serie A has been the most aggressive of the three major European leagues in

the streaming market. DAZN has live and on-demand Serie A rights in Italy itself, and is streaming select matches on YouTube and Facebook as part of a ‘free-to-air’ strategy in Brazil before the platform officially launches there in April.

Spain’s La Liga is streamed abroad and has just agreed for all matches from the second tier, Segunda Division, to be available live and for free on YouTube with English commentary in more than 155 countries from this season.

The EPL is also streamed outside of the UK and there has been media speculation that the richest European football league, which pocketed £5.1bn (\$6.7bn) in its last rights auction from domestic pay-TV broadcasters, is considering its options to launch its own streaming service.

Yet, streaming services are not stopping at simply finding a fresh international market for their newly acquired sports rights. These subscribers need to be retained with online viewing innovation.

This year, while DAZN has announced a four-screen multi-view offering and ESPN+ has added a personalised content feature, it is NBA games that have led the technical breakthroughs.

“Offering technical viewing improvements will help keep subscriptions, and they are relatively cheap to

produce,” says Dimitropoulos. “Plus, superfans love to personalise their experience. The NBA puts fun emojis on screen after a score and even a flaming number ‘3’ after a three-pointer. The next step for streaming services will be augmented reality during live games.”

However, there are still some potholes in the road ahead for streaming services and rights holders looking for online deals.

“Big football leagues and tournaments are concerned by the dip in cricket and baseball viewing audiences, which has led to lower participation levels,” says Dimitropoulos. “They don’t want their sport to end up like that. But it’s a fine balance because they also want to push up their rights fees in the short term.”

Other analysts point to subscription fatigue, even for super fans, and then there is the question of bandwidth, - a problem that some streaming services have already suffered.

“The streaming services will claim that any reliability issues are a short-term challenge and all part of the learning process,” says Aquilina.

“Online, there is an element of first-mover advantage, but while superfans may be pleased to get access to this content at a lower price, the quality of these services will have to improve in order to keep customers renewing,” he concluded. **TBI**

“It’s the great advantage of a multi-sport OTT provider that we have deep and accurate data on what people are watching – as well as when, how and in what combinations – that helps us to improve our offering as our subscriber base and rights portfolio grow and develop.”

Matthew Drew, DAZN



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Windowing battle brews for the BBC

Senior producers and BBC Studios execs have spoken out about the public broadcaster's plans to extend the 30-day iPlayer window into a full year, as BBC Two lags six months behind Amazon's premiere date for big-budget co-production *Good Omens*. Manori Ravindran reports from BBC Studios Showcase



The future of the BBC's catch-up service – where hit show *Bodyguard* racked up around 10.8m views across five months – has been in the spotlight in recent months with the corporation launching a public consultation on plans to “reinvent” the service, including making content available for at least 12 months after it premieres, as well as extending the availability of box-sets. A result is expected this summer.

While some execs have encouraged a window expansion, labelling the current monthly window as “anachronistic”, producers such as Alex Jones, joint-MD of *Hooten & The Lady* and *Sanditon* producer Red Planet Pictures, says the window extension “needs further discussion”.

“Rights have value – that’s how we run our business,” says Jones, who sits on the council of UK trade body Pact, which has urged caution around the BBC’s plans.

The trade group stated in January that the corporation needs to provide a thorough strategic analysis of the expansion, and that if it is to buy the rights to offer shows for longer, it needs to reimburse any unrealised commercial deals.

Jones adds: “Especially as an independent producer, there aren’t many of us around who are wholly independent, so I’m always protective of our rights and revenue streams.”

Phil Clarke, former Channel 4 comedy commissioner and co-founder of *Dead Pixels* producer Various Artists, suggests that the windowing debate – which reaches beyond the UK – speaks to a wider “cultural issue” around British programming ending up on SVOD platforms such as Netflix and Amazon following short domestic windows.

“This is about keeping British broadcasting and programme-making quintessentially British. It is a reflection of the culture in this country,” he tells TBI.

“What does the [SVOD boom] mean for television, culturally, long term? You just can’t take it for granted, even though it’s exciting for producers in the short term.”

With the consultation now ended as of 15 February, TBI understands that further negotiations between the broadcaster and production community are taking place to get more clarity around what a 12-month window will entail commercially.

The expansion, however, largely has the support of BBC Studios execs. While director of content Ralph Lee says the iPlayer is a “key strategic player” that needs to grow as part of the evolving UK landscape, outgoing scripted portfolio director Liam Keelan remains that he “completely understands” the public broadcaster’s rationale.

“It’s really important that if the BBC is investing in homegrown drama and writing talent on and off-screen, that they want attribution back for the BBC.

“The 30-day window feels a little bit anachronistic. It needs to be longer, and there needs to be more solid attribution back to the BBC for having grown that output. And then it’s incumbent upon us [at BBC Studios Distribution] to make that deal work.”

McMafia and *Les Misérables* are two recent

Les Misérables is available on iPlayer for 12 months

“We have to be circumspect about what’s the right work to do with the right client – whether it’s Netflix or others.”

Ralph Lee
BBC Studios



Good Omens premieres on BBC Two six months after Amazon



examples of shows where BBC Studios Distribution has been able to achieve longer windows domestically, while still selling into other territories across the period.

“It does affect overall financing obviously, but it’s achievable,” says Keelan, adding that it ultimately falls on the corporation to “pay a good license fee” for the show.

A more recent complication, however, comes in the form of BritBox – the BBC and ITV’s joint SVOD service, which is being rolled out in the UK following success Stateside over the last two years.

Questions remain around what content will find its way onto iPlayer – and for how long – as opposed to BritBox, where users will need to pay to watch that

content, though a subscription price has not yet been released. The US service costs roughly \$70 annually (\$6.99 per month).

Good Omens – a sign of the times?

At the other end of the spectrum is the example of Amazon/BBC Two co-production *Good Omens*, which is produced by the comedy arm of BBC Studios alongside Narrativa and The Blank Corporation, in association with BBC Studios Distribution.

Amazon will launch the David Tennant and Michael Sheen-fronted drama in 200 territories, including the UK, on 31 May, with a UK release on the BBC following “a minimum” of six months later, according to outgoing BBC Studios head of comedy Chris Sussman.

“Amazon is putting in the lion’s share of the money so they get [that right],” Sussman tells TBI, adding that the team is “not concerned”.

“When the show launches on Amazon, they’re going to let everyone know about it and put a lot of money into telling people about it.”

Director Douglas Mackinnon, whose credits include *Line of Duty* and *Knightfall*, added that the release strategy is in keeping with increasingly global-facing British exports.

“It used to be that the BBC made something, it was shown on the BBC and then it might get sold on to a few other countries. But this is frontier television, and it’s to do with the BBC engaging with the world.

“I don’t think people will feel shortchanged when they see it on the BBC. In a way, it’s kind of a bonus: the BBC license fee payer is going to get a huge show for a very small amount of money.” **TBI**

The Netflix question

BBC director general Tony Hall has been one of the most outspoken media figures when it comes to the SVOD threat; however, the public broadcaster faces something of a conundrum going forward, with BBC Studios now serving as a commercial subsidiary able to produce content for outside broadcasters and platforms – including Netflix.

While the prodco has scored commissions from Channel 4, Discovery, PBS, UKTV and Channel 5, it has yet to rack up the SVOD commissions – a potential sign that it is trading carefully around digital partners.

However, Lee tells TBI that the business is now in discussions with the global SVOD around projects.

“We have to be circumspect about what’s the right work to do with the right client – whether it’s Netflix or others,” he says.

“Our principal relationship is still with the BBC public service and we’re very mindful of the way we approach that as a creative challenge. But if you look at the breadth of what we’re able to make, some of it will fall beyond the scope of BBC channels.”



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Vive la France

Driven by a high volume of content – 4,873 hours in all – produced in 2017, the French TV market is moving fast: trying to preserve its cultural cachet and regulatory requirements while adapting to new challenges introduced by international and OTT players. Pascale Paoli-Lebailly reports

From an international point of view, the growing number of French programmes finding their way onto global channels and digital platforms is a reflection of the dynamism of the French TV industry.

The French touch is hailed across animated programmes *Molang* (Millimages) and *Simon* (GO-N), documentaries *After Hitler* (Zed) and *The Origami Code* (Lucky You), and now even with drama. Local broadcasters and producers are behind international-facing titles including spy series *Le Bureau* (Federation Entertainment), Nordic noir thriller *Midnight Sun* (Lagardère Studios), political drama *Baron Noir* (Kwai Productions), procedural *Candice Renoir* (Newen)

Fantasy TV series *Apnea* has been sold to Amazon France

and industry-focused comedy *Call My Agent* (France Télévisions).

Though France still imports more entertainment formats than it exports via original IP, the record-breaking 2017 export figures released in September by TVFI – the association of French TV programme exporters – confirmed the creative impact France has had on the international market.

The €325m (\$368m) in total export revenues from sales, presales and co-productions achieved in 2017 – the second-best performance in the past 20 years – came not only from sales in Europe but also from a notable 16% increase in acquisitions in the US and Canada.



Indeed, the timing is perfect to celebrate French diversity on the international content scene – all of which is inextricably linked to the strong TV and OTT revolution that is underway.

Are Canal+ Séries and Salto too late?

When Canal+ Group launched its OTT service Canal+ Séries in March with a monthly price of €6.99 (\$8), CEO Maxime Saada was cautious to stress that the initiative was not intended to compete with the likes of Netflix and US platforms, but was rather an answer to piracy that deprives the group of around 500,000 subscribers.

Unlike Netflix, which has passed 5m subscribers in France thanks in part to a vast content library, Canal+ Séries is betting on quality over quantity.

The service has launched with 150 TV series – of which 80-90% are exclusive – and 5,000 episodes. The lineup mixes Canal+ originals such as *Spiral*, *Hippocrate*, *Versailles* and the Romain Duris-starring *Vernon Subutex*, which will open the Cannes Series festival, with exclusive international co-productions and series including *Gomorrah*, *Killing Eve* and *The Affair*.

The service also adds cult series such as *24*, *Twin Peaks* and *Dexter* after striking deals with Showtime, FX and Warner Bros., as well as productions from new local outfit Studiocanal Original, with its French-language adaptation of BBC Three's *Fleabag*, *Mouche*, which is co-produced with Banijay.

“The real answer to Netflix is Canal+ and OTT service myCanal, which registers 13m unique visitors each month, up 30% over the year. Our strength comes from our mainstream [shows] and singular model,” says Saada.

Elsewhere, when TF1 CEO Gilles Pélisson says to financial analysts that “TF1 doesn't fear Netflix”, it's largely because its production and distribution subsidiary Newen – which has stakes in Dutch prodco Tuvalu as well as Danish outfit Nimbus and Flemish prodco De Mensen – has many opportunities to produce for Netflix.

“Those platforms need content and we even recently pitched to Apple,” says Pélisson, highlighting that it is also working with others.

“Netflix is an opportunity model,” adds the TF1 boss, whose group's multi-channel strategy revolves around DTT channels such as female-skewing TMC – not only its main commercial network. In the 2019-2020 period, TF1's content spend will be raised to €990m (\$1.1bn).

At the same time, while commercial broadcaster M6 refocuses its strategy on TV channels and content – pushing towards next summer's acquisition of Lagardère Active's TV assets, including kids channels Gulli, Canal J and Tiji – public-service broadcaster France Télévisions is looking to “revamp its model” and rethink its own editorial offerings.

Under president Delphine Ernotte-Cunci the business is looking to transform its linear channel approach into a digital-first strategy.

“Our objective is to rethink our editorial offerings on all devices,” the business recently told staff in a company-wide memo. Catch-up service France.tv is to become the main entry point for the group's video offerings and digital programmes, alongside the franceinfo news service.

On the back of next year's online migration of kids channels and channels France 4 and France Ô, France Télévisions will also launch a free on-demand kids offering.

In parallel, the network's editorial policies are to be revamped, opened up to millennial-targeting originals and to new formats across fiction, docs and entertainment. This year, France Télévisions is pouring €420m (\$475m) into originals and its digital budget amounts to €117m (\$132m).

The group, which is looking for more exclusive

“Because of the competition, we must remain watchful, imaginative, offensive and creative, also getting involved in marketing to make a buzz and help content emerge”

Emmanuelle Bouilhaguet, Lagardère Studios Distribution



content, has already launched youth-skewing platform francetv slash, eyeing the 18-30s.

Skam France (GTV Production, AT-Production), the French adaptation of Nordic series *Skam*, is one of its hit shows, amassing 1.5m views across the first six episodes of series three.

On the digital front, the broadcaster is also developing Salto, a joint VOD and SVOD service with M6 and TF1, set to debut at the end of the year as part of Ernotte-Cunci's ambition to build a "French content champion".

Drama disruption

"Taking into account the profusion of TV and SVOD players, owning our offerings now seems vital," Takis Candilis, general director of broadcast and programming at France Télévisions, said recently.

"We do not want viewers to turn to Netflix to watch something that has been majority co-financed by France Télévisions," he said.

After critically hailed series *Call My Agent* (Mediawan) was sold to the US platform for a second window, Ernotte-Cunci made a deal with the producers to get longer exclusive multi-platform rights and also pulled full-length episodes from YouTube.

Now, if France Télévisions can't be a majority investor in a project, the group turns to public Euro partners.

The so-called Alliance set up with Rai and ZDF in

"We do not want viewers to turn to Netflix to watch something that has been majority co-financed by France Télévisions"

Takis Candilis, France Télévisions



Movistar+'s *Gigantes*

mid-2018 – and also open to Spanish and Northern European broadcasters – has already launched six international co-productions. They include *Leonardo* from showrunner Frank Spotnitz (8 x 52 minutes, Lux Vide, Beta Films France TV Studio), *Mirage* (6 x 52 minutes, Lincoln TV, Cineflix, Wild Bunch Germany), and *Eternal City* (6 x 52 minutes, Aurora TV, Fearless Mind, Banijay Studios France).

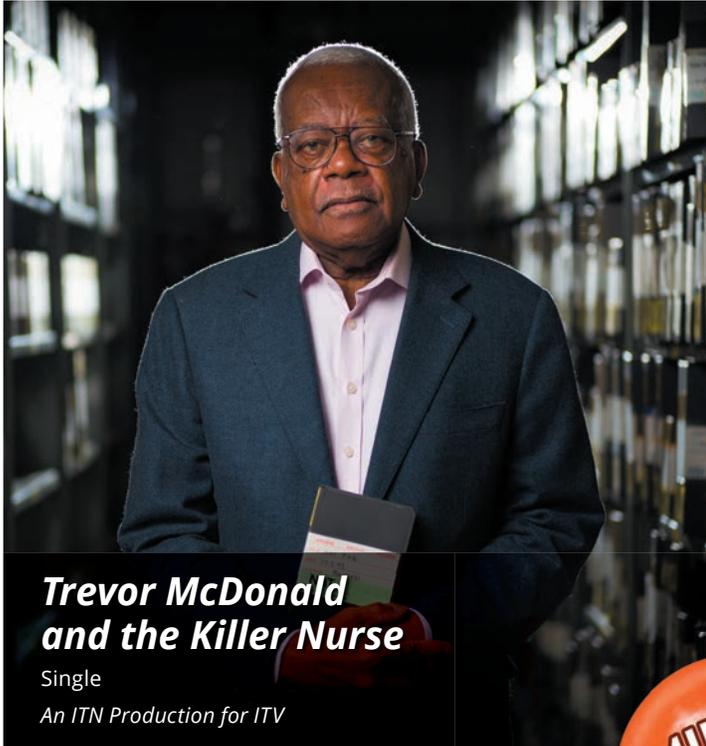
Drama is also a key asset for TF1. The broadcaster is investing €150m (\$170m) into local production, and has launched soap *Demain Nous Appartient* (Telsète, Newen) rivalling France 3 and France 2. It will also offer 15 new French titles over this season, including a remake by Endemol Shine France of UK series *The Fall*; Mediawan's *Les Bracelets Rouges*, an adaptation of Spanish format *Polseres Vermelles*; and Beaubourg Stories' police series *Balthazar*. TF1 has also acquired the rights to BBC's *The War Of The Worlds*, though it is just one of the few international series it has acquired.

Similarly, last September, M6 also revealed it would not schedule as many US series, in order to concentrate on local production.

Ultimately, the tough competition for drama, numerous commissions from broadcasters and platforms and the need to consolidate libraries and rights all have an impact on the French independent production sector, which, at the same time, has also been shaken up by Mediawan's rapid growth in France and across Europe.



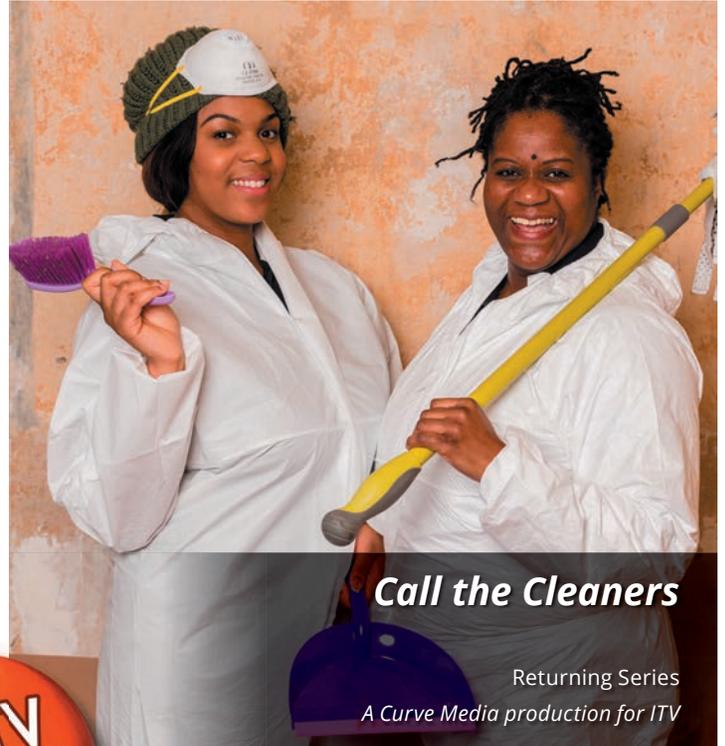
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Trevor McDonald and the Killer Nurse

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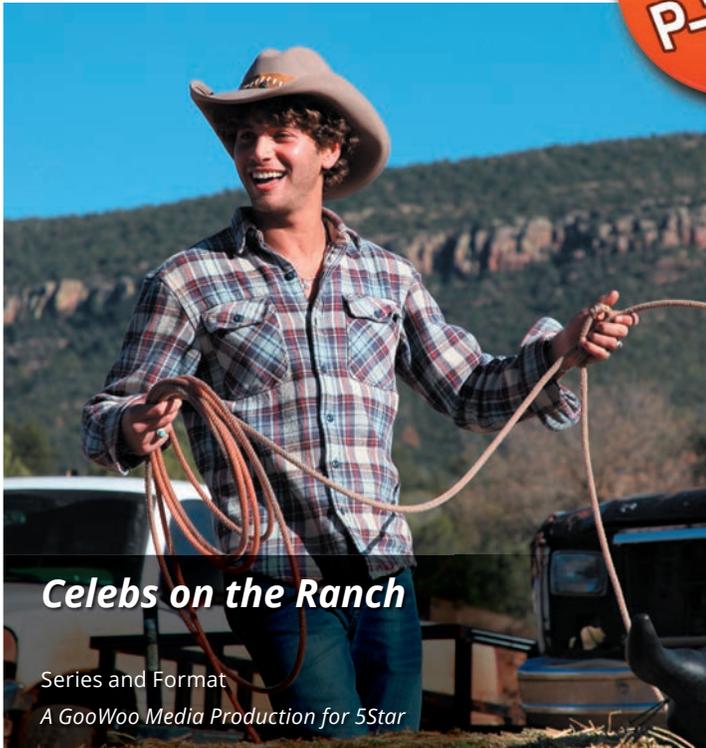
An ITN Production for ITV



Call the Cleaners

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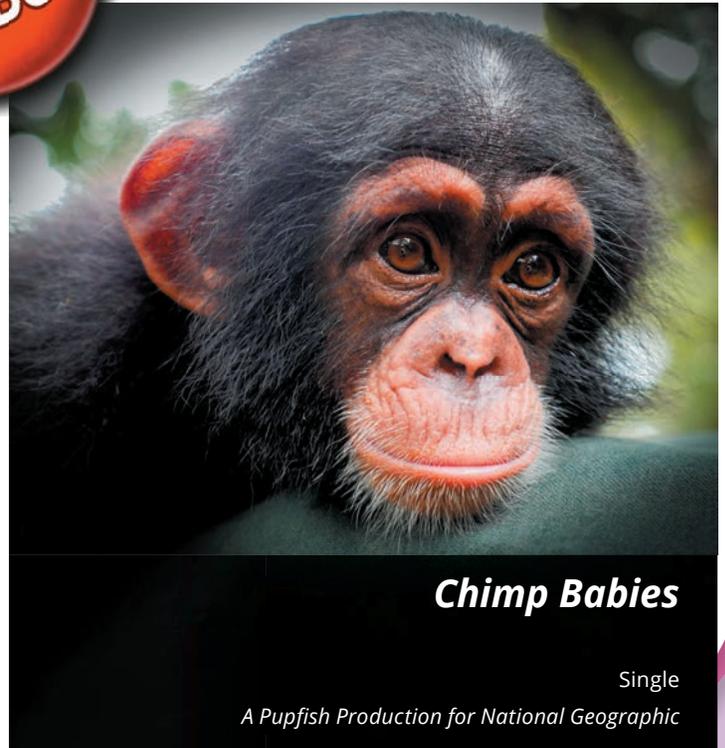
A Curve Media production for ITV



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The group, run by Pierre-Antoine Capton, Xavier Niel and Matthieu Pigasse, already owns companies such as AB, Storia Television and Makever, and is now the first drama producers in France with more than 67 hours produced over the 2017-2018 season.

Newen comes in second position with 66 hours, while third place (45 hours) is held by Lagardère Studios, currently on sale.

Mediawan is among the groups eyeing an acquisition. After having taken a majority stake in Italy's Palomar Production, the group is also close to buying Septembre Production, which produces *La Mante* for TF1.

Meanwhile, with a €1bn (\$1.1bn) turnover, Stéphane Courbit's Banijay - which has renewed sale talks with Endemol Shine Group - is still looking to become a world champion.

After merging in 2016 with Zodiak Media, the group now produces more than 2,000 hours of programming in France, expanding further into drama after acquiring Terence Films. Banijay's MIPTV slate includes police drama series *The Red Shadows* (Banijay Studios, 6 x 60 minutes), which aired on C8 in March.

"Drama is not our core business. What we're looking to do is strengthen territory by territory to get into pole position," explained Banijay France CEO François de Brugada at MIPCOM.

The exec will again hit the stage in Cannes alongside Banijay bosses Courbit and Marco Bassetti.

Distribution shifts to co-development

Though animation and documentary remain key sales assets, drama accounts for more and more of France's TV exports.

In 2017, of the €205m (\$232m) in French TV sales in 2017 (up 8.5% in one year), drama represented €63.7m (\$72m), up 27.8% over the previous year.

"The distribution business has changed, and to secure a catalogue we often invest earlier and earlier into a programme and even at script stage, which is quite new for fiction," says Emmanuelle Bouilhaguet, managing director at Lagardère Studios Distribution.

"The distributor takes part in the value chain, taking more risk, and is even involved in co-development. Because of the competition, we must remain watchful, imaginative, offensive and creative, also getting involved in marketing to make a buzz and help content emerge".

At MIPTV, Lagardère Studios Distribution is bringing France 2 classical music thriller *Philharmonia* (6 x 52 minutes, Merlin Productions), which has already sold into several territories and to Fox Russia and two series commissioned by Arte: Laetitia Casta-starring fantasy series *Apnea* (6 x 52 minutes, Image



APC's *French Loving - French Bashing* explores how France is seen around the world

& Compagnie), whose second window has been sold to Amazon France, as well as migrant story *Eden*, a 6 x 45-minute Euro co-production with Atlantique Productions, Lupa Films, Port-au-Prince Pictures and ARD.

As one strong drama is no longer enough, distributors have become more selective, either with originality or casting.

The MIPDrama Buyers' Summit will offer an exclusive first look at comedy drama and fantasy series *The Middleman* (4 x 52 minutes, Les Films du Poisson Arte), which keeps in the vein of Arte's European-focused productions.

"There is no place for mid-quality series - content must have good stories, be original and unique," says Jean-Michel Ciszewski, head of international sales and co-productions at Federation Entertainment.

Being dynamic and breaking through with both French and international TV series is also what Emmanuelle Guilbart and Laurent Boissel are looking for in order to accelerate the growth of About Premium Content.

They have raised the number of co-productions, either by commissioning projects themselves or by investing at a very early stage. They have also boosted their catalogue of English-language dramas.

"APC first started as a distributor and built itself on Euro-local series such as Movistar+'s *Gigantes*, KPN's *Fenix* and S4C and the BBC's *Keeping Faith*," says Guilbart.

"We've now entered a development and production phase, with the aim of developing a very competitive market of English-speaking dramas."

APC - whose new shareholders, Alliance Entreprendre, a subsidiary of Natixis, gives additional financial means - currently has 10 projects, around two-thirds of which are English-language.

At MIPTV it will launch Canadian procedural *The Murders* (8 x 45 minutes, Muse Entertainment) and series two of *Gigantes*. APC, which set up prodco Zéphyr Animation last year, is also active in animation as well as docs, which account for 15% of its revenues. Its two-hour doc *French Loving-French Bashing* (O2B, Canal+), about how France is seen around the world, will premiere at MIPDoc.

As the French government looks to roll out an audiovisual reform next June, with the aim of modernising the broadcast, production and distribution regulations, the French market is at a crossroads.

"France has numerous TV gems, as shown by annual export figures, but this is also a peculiar moment for the industry," said government deputy Aurore Bergé. **TBI**

"There is no place for mid-quality series - content must have good stories, be original and unique"

Jean-Michel Ciszewski, Federation Entertainment



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Updating the strategy

Keshet's sixth annual INTV conference in Jerusalem saw global SVODs and broadcasters convene for some crystal ball-gazing around the future of content and delivery in what is a pivotal year for the industry. Netflix and Amazon provided greater insight than they are wont to do around commissioning structures and plans for growth, while Channel 4 lifted the lid on a highly rating feature docs strategy. Manori Ravindran reports



NETFLIX

Humans, not machines, are greenlighting our shows

Netflix exec Cindy Holland says it is “humans” and not machines making commissioning decisions and that the SVOD is judicious about evaluating viewership following a programme launch.

The 17-year Netflix exec, who serves as VP of original content, says that while the business “doesn’t have to think” about ratings to the extent of networks, it “absolutely” checks the performance of a show the day after a worldwide launch.

Asked by interviewer Avi Nir, CEO of Keshet Media Group, whether it is “man or machine” making decisions at Netflix, Holland quips that, today, it is “more likely to be a woman”.

“Humans are making the decisions about what we choose to invest in, but we’re aided by the info we have,” she says, noting that the business’s notorious algorithms, or ‘projection model’, simply help to “set parameters” around greenlights.

“It would be foolish not to use it. It helps us really spot areas of opportunity and helps us when we’re looking to make a decision about a specific title. It also helps us size up what that audience size might be, and what we might want to invest.

“Like any other endeavour, it helps us determine if it’s a great idea, whether it could return and if we believe in the creative team to execute the idea.”

Holland says that, much like broadcasters, a 28-day window following a premiere helps the business determine the level of success on the platform.

The exec oversees English-language content for the service, and will now work alongside Bela Bajaria, who was recently handed oversight of non-English language originals following Erik Barmack’s departure.

Commissioning power

Holland points out that the best way to “support” the volume of content emerging from Netflix is to avoid “bottleneck decision-making at the top”, suggesting that commissioning power may be more decentralised in the future, rather than originating solely out of Los Angeles.

It would mark a key strategy shift, particularly for when execs such as former Sky drama boss Anne Mensah, for example, gets situated out of Netflix UK next month.

“There are dozens of people who have greenlight and licensing power for all the different kinds of content we commission and have on our service,” she says.

“Access is quite important – talent, places and people you haven’t seen before”

Georgia Brown,
Amazon



“What we try and do is build a culture of freedom and responsibility to delegate that responsibility as far down as we can.”

Holland says Netflix doesn’t look to “dictate notes or solutions” to creative teams.

She also distinguishes the service from “large tech companies” such as Facebook and Google, which she describes as “uncurated platforms”.

AMAZON

European teams assemble amid “heavy period of investment”

Amazon is staffing up across Europe with commissioning and business affairs teams in major markets while “bulking up” unscripted efforts as it looks for more reality and documentary fare out of the UK and Spain.

Georgia Brown, director of European originals at Amazon, says the business is going through a “heavy period of investment” as it staffs up offices out of the UK, Spain, France, Germany and Italy.

As revealed by TBI in January, former ITN Productions exec Dan Grabiner has boarded Amazon UK to head unscripted, joining officially in March; while *Fleabag* producer Lydia Hampson was recently appointed to manage scripted offerings for the streamer.

“We are emulating that structure and strategy everywhere,” explains Brown. “We have the same [model] in France, with a head of scripted and non-scripted, as well as in Germany, Italy and Spain, etc.”

By 1 April, all unscripted heads will be in place across Europe, and scripted creatives “will filter through” in the next six months.

Brown explains that the new commissioning recruits will be producers’ first point of contact on the ground, and those receiving pitches and ideas. “They will be the people working with you on your development and seeing that show through creatively.”

Meanwhile, Amazon is also getting its back office affairs in order, with production, legal, post-production, business affairs and finance all starting in London in the next four weeks. These back-end divisions will also roll out in other European markets as well.

In regards to programming, Brown reiterated Amazon’s position on localised content, noting that the business wants to be truly local, and is “not judged on whether [shows] travel around the world or not”.

Brown adds that Amazon is “really bulking up”

Netflix’s Cindy Holland in conversation with Avi Nir (left)

its unscripted ambitions out of Europe – a strategy demonstrated by the fact that unscripted teams have been first out of the gate in the region.

The challenge for the platform, however, is to produce serialised unscripted offerings, she says, adding that “we need people to continue watching the [shows]”.

“Inevitably, access is also quite important – talent, places and people you haven’t seen before,” she says, giving the example of Spain, where *Bake Off* producer Love Productions has been commissioned to make an 8 x 30-minute series on footballer Sergio Ramos.

The follow-doc of Ramos will be an experiment for the platform, which will keep a close eye on how audiences respond.

Unlike Netflix, which has heavily invested in high-profile formats such as *The Circle*, Amazon is clear that “a structured format doesn’t necessarily work for us”.

Instead, Brown says original development for unscripted content is, to date, more focused on documentary fare and access-driven content.

Scripted offerings

The former Fremantle exec also expanded on scripted fare coming out of the streamer, including a Mafia-themed project out of Italy.

Fremantle-owned Wildside is producing the Milan-set coming-of-age crime drama, which takes place in the 1980s and follows a young girl thrust into the world of the Mafia. The project marks Amazon’s first Italian original.

TBI understands that Fremantle-owned Euston Films was originally linked to the project, which was intended as a co-production between the UK scripted producer and Wildside, before the former dropped out. The drama originally had a UK storyline as well and was tentatively titled *The Mafia Princess*.

Brown hinted in Jerusalem that the streamer is still struggling with a title for the production and jokingly called for suggestions.

“In Italy, we’re pitched a lot of Mafia dramas, and we were very conscious that we had to go to a white space and use a twist that hadn’t been seen – the perspective of a young girl,” she says

Brown also spoke enthusiastically of Sister Pictures’ adaptation of Naomi Alderman’s novel *The Power*.

“[Alderman has] created a world that feels similar to our own with little twists. It evokes a reaction in the reader,” she says.

Amazon boarded the project in recent months and Brown – who first read the book when she was at Shine – says the platform is eyeing the drama as a potential returner.

“We are distilling flavours to make them sharper. It behoves us to do that more in this environment because audiences need to know [what our programming is]”

Alex Mahon, Channel 4



CHANNEL 4

Feature docs in primetime are paying off

Dan Reed’s *Leaving Neverland* doc about Michael Jackson is on track to become Channel 4’s biggest streamed or downloaded show, according to CEO Alex Mahon, who says the film has been a “huge commercial success” for the broadcaster.

Originally commissioned out of Channel 4, the film was intended to be only an hour before director Dan Reed of Amos Pictures managed to secure access with Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who claim they were sexually abused by the late singer when they were young children.

“It became clear there was enough material to do 4-5 hours, so we brought HBO in. It is a doc that has had global impact. We have seen [Jackson] coming off playlists; we had protests outside the building; and lawsuits have been threatened. But it’s exactly what Channel 4 exists to do.”

Mahon says it is “interesting” that a doc event series such as *Leaving Neverland* – which aired across two consecutive nights in March – rated so well, adding that the doc was 400% up on the 9-11pm slot average.

“It’s the kind of work we should be doing,” she says, also referring to Tim Wardle and Raw TV’s *Three Identical Strangers*, which was scheduled the week prior in a primetime slot and was a co-production with CNN Films.

“Audiences have seen *Making A Murderer* on Netflix, but they haven’t seen these shows on linear so much.”

Confirming that Channel 4 is in talks with the BBC and ITV around getting involved in Britbox UK, the long-anticipated joint SVOD venture for British content, Mahon also expounded on the importance of brand attribution in a saturated marketplace – particularly around Channel 4’s big-budget co-productions such as George Clooney-starrer *Catch-22* with Hulu and Sky Italia.

“What you need in your home [market] is for that brand attribution. We need to have that attribution so [audiences] know it’s a Channel 4 show and they keep coming back, whether it’s streamed or linear.”

Broadcasters must be “stronger in their flavours”, she says, adding that Channel 4 has to have a clear brand proposition to draw younger audiences in particular.

“We are distilling flavours to make them sharper. It behoves us to do that more in this environment because audiences need to know [what our programming is]. We have to be stronger in our flavours so they know what we stand for.” **TBI**

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Jed Mercurio: Nothing surprises me

The *Line Of Duty* and *Bodyguard* creator tells Manori Ravindran about his relationship with the SVODs and whether a Ryan Murphy-style talent mega-deal could be on the cards

At March's INTV conference, Netflix's VP of original series Cindy Holland was confronted with a slide of the global SVOD's programmes, on which the Richard Madden-fronted BBC One blockbuster *Bodyguard* was billed, prominently, as a Netflix Original between such dramas as *The Crown* and *Orange Is The New Black*.

The drama, in which Madden's stone-faced protection officer David Budd is charged with the care of home secretary Julia Montague, smashed records for the corporation, consolidating an audience of 15.9m across 28 days – the BBC's most-watched drama episode since records began in 2002.

Bodyguard (above) and *Line Of Duty* (right) are both created by Mercurio

If you ask creator and writer Jed Mercurio about his drama's attribution on the SVOD platform, he hesitates momentarily before coolly responding, "I don't think that's an accurate description."

"I think everyone knows the show is made for the BBC in the UK, and obviously the show is, in the rest of the world, experienced through Netflix. I think that's all that is."

But what about international audiences who might not know of the BBC's involvement in the show, in terms of editorial guidance? A savvy audience member, reckons Mercurio, knows how to Google.

"If people want to research a show, they can find out that in the UK, it was originally commissioned by

the BBC. I don't think anyone has sought to alter the fact that the BBC pre-dated Netflix's involvement."

Indeed, many were surprised when Netflix revealed a week ahead of the drama's finale in mid-September that it had picked up global rights from ITV Studios Global Entertainment, having boarded the project at an early script stage, leading many to remark at Netflix's eery ability to spot a hit a mile away.

Questioned about the exact point Netflix boarded the project – for example, were all the scripts in the bag when they joined up? – Mercurio indicates that "script stage" is something of a spectrum for him.

"I never finish the scripts so there are always things that need to be scripted as we're going forwards," he shrugs.

"There are shooting scripts, but then we do more drafts when shooting. Because I'm showrunning, if I'm seeing things that need to change or be developed, then the first thing to do is go back into the script and do amendments.

"There were still script changes all the way until the end of the shoot," he adds.

But he allows that he and ITV Studios-backed prodco World Productions had a "really great relationship with the broadcasters", meaning both the BBC and Netflix.

"There wasn't a huge amount of traditional note-giving. It was much more that they were just very supportive of what we were doing."

Mercurio appears to be, as they say, platform-agnostic. However, his name comes up relatively quickly in discussions around British creative talent that SVODs might target for their notorious "golden handcuff" talent pacts, akin to the mega-deals they have struck out of the US already with the likes of super-producer Ryan Murphy and *Grey's Anatomy* creator Shonda Rhimes.

"I don't have any specific loyalties to any networks. In my position, it's much more important to nurture the right relationships with specific execs"

Jed Mercurio



It would not be altogether surprising for Mercurio – who is also behind that other UK drama behemoth *Line Of Duty* – to be snapped up, considering Amazon's exclusive two-year deal with *Catastrophe* co-writer Sharon Horgan and her prodco Merman. Could he be tempted?

"It would depend on what the deal was and what creative position it would mean," he says pragmatically.

But would he be open to it? "I would be open to something that was creatively exciting," he allows.

"I don't have any specific loyalties to any specific networks. In my position, it's much more important to nurture the right relationships with specific execs."

Unlike some writers, Mercurio appears to keep the business machinations around his work – and those of the drama market, in general – at arm's length.

Asked whether ITV and the BBC's decision to roll out SVOD service BritBox, which has slowly been gaining US subscribers, came as anything of a surprise, Mercurio says plainly, "Nothing surprises me."

"It's an established fact that broadcasters in the UK have a [VOD] component to their relationship with viewers through BBC iPlayer and the ITV Hub, and it will be interesting to see what effect on viewership this new venture has," he adds.

"The intention is obviously to have more content available and that would potentially drive more subscribers, but let's see what happens in the market."

Mercurio – who writes both *Line Of Duty* and *Bodyguard* alone, in addition to showrunning duties – is more focused on the work at hand. The Kew Media Distribution-sold drama, *Line Of Duty* returned to BBC One for a fifth outing on 31 March, and a sixth series has been long confirmed.

"We're looking forward to a conversation with the BBC once series five has aired about how it's performed and whether it feels like there is an appetite from fans to have more, or whether there's a feeling that the show is coming towards its natural arc.

"That conversation will be very specific, which is whether series six will be the last, or whether the BBC would be prepared to commission a seventh series so we can approach series six knowing it's not the last."

As for other projects on the horizon, there are "a few things I'm talking about with US companies" but nothing definite, he says. There are no plans, as well, to diversify in terms of genre. Mercurio won't be penning a youth-targeted comedy drama à la *Sex Education* for a streaming giant anytime soon.

"I really enjoy writing thrillers, and that's what I would concentrate on going forwards – certainly in the near future," he smirks. **TBI**





One-to-One: Two Worlds Collide

For TBI's first edition of 'One-to-One', a regular feature in which two high-profile execs interview one another to discuss the hot topics in TV today, *Les Misérables* producer Chris Carey talks to Sky Vision MD Jane Millichip about co-production, SVODs and dream projects

The two British entertainment powerhouses have worked on some of the most high-profile scripted TV projects in recent years, giving them much to talk about when it comes to market trends. Meeting for the first time at TBI's studio in London, however, talk first turned to their illustrious careers and how they built them.

Carey is executive producer at Lookout Point and a TV veteran whose recent producing credits include BBC One's *Apple Tree Yard* and *Les Misérables* – the event series which drew 4.5m viewers on its opening night. He started his career in the factual business, eventually going on to build his drama shingle Welded Tandem Picture, through which he produced Sky hit

This Is Jmsy. In the last few years, the exec says he has been focusing on “making increasingly bigger, high-end dramas”.

Meanwhile, Millichip is the driving force behind Sky's international production and distribution arm, which has handled supersized scripted titles such as *Britannia*, *Riviera* and *Blood*. She is set to receive MIPTV 2019's *Médailles d'Honneur*, an award saved for senior executives, who through their leadership, have made a significant contribution to the international TV community.

Here's a closer look at what the duo discussed, including market changes, meaningful projects and getting eyes on screens.

Millichip (left) and Carey (right) at TBI's studio in Soho, London

A marriage between commercial and creativity

For projects to come to life, commercial and creative objectives are increasingly tied closer together, according to the execs.

CC: What I've witnessed in the past five years in particular, but in acceleration, is the converging between creative and commercial, which seems to be extremely important going forward.

JM: Yes it is. The experience at Sky has been interesting because before Sky Vision was created six years ago, it didn't have a distribution arm. Now we work hand-in-glove with the commissioning team, and it's so much better for it.

We work really closely with Cameron [Roach, Sky's head of drama] and his team and he really wants to know what we need to sell a show.

Now, I know our place in the mix because if a show's been commissioned for Sky Atlantic or Sky One, it needs to look and feel a certain way and that's not for me to dictate, but there are allowances you can make even when you're commissioning for a very specific channel for the onwards international exploitation of that show.

We've learnt to co-produce better

As commercial and creative teams continue to merge, the execs agree that co-production has evolved into a better, more cohesive model.

JM: We're not making Euro-puddings anymore, where the shopkeeper is Italian and the teacher is Brazilian and the third man from the left is Polish, just to get a Polish subsidy.

A good co-production doesn't dilute the editorial, it enhances it.

CC: We're all much more focused on global content now, but I feel quite strongly that we need to temper that and put British culture and stories at the heart of projects.

We don't need a Finnish person where they don't have to be. The French can make *Call My Agent* and it sells everywhere.

JM: Years ago we had a comical view of co-production, which was 'my show, your money'. I remember working with channel teams and commissioning teams, which was really difficult because there was intransigence that the editorial remained in the UK but it needed someone else's money.

The trick is to know what the roles are before you start, rather than working before you go. So, if you're going to have rows, have them beforehand.

Margins are sacrosanct

The execs discuss how streaming platforms, which are increasing in number with the entry of Disney, AT&T and Apple, are changing the distribution and rights models.

JM: With SVODs, they've dramatically changed our view of rights because, generally, it's one deal and [the show's] out in the world. So, at Sky Vision, even though we're a rights management business, I've encouraged producers we work with to look for a mixed economy, so some work-for-hire and some retained.

CC: Because how can you build value in a company when you're just doing-

JM: Work-for-hire? You just have to make sure you have proper margins

CC: Absolutely

JM: Because the margins become absolutely sacrosanct in that situation

CC: Absolutely, because people always talk about high premiums, but they're not always high, are they?

JM: No, no, and I've seen some Netflix deals that are really difficult for the producer because they've got neither the rights nor the margin. Sometimes, they've got a deficit with unsalable rights where Netflix encourages a so-called co-pro deal, but actually the rights that Netflix gives you to trade don't hold value.

There is a finite budget for broadcasters

Streaming platforms have inflated the price of drama, and the execs believe it's having an impact on broadcasters.

JM: SVODS have brought us great ambition and fabulous shows, but when you're funded differently it

"I've seen some Netflix deals that are really difficult for the producer because they've got neither the rights nor the margin"

Jane Millichip



“I’m not pretending we’re saving the world, but my least favourite phrase is ‘it’s only telly’, because it’s only said when it’s meant to make you feel better when things are tough”

Chris Carey



creates a great challenge for traditional telly.

CC: Yes. One of the challenges commercially is how you keep a pace of what shows actually cost to make when you’re planning things. I remember doing deals for *Les Mis* – when we did the numbers they looked appalling at the time.”

JM: When you’re funded differently, it creates a real challenge for traditional telly. There is a ceiling of spend on finite budgets for broadcasters. Whereas if you look at the participants in the marketplace that don’t derive their income from entertainment like Amazon and Apple - they’re a delivery company and hardware company using entertainment to promote other business.

Netflix is in our camp as an entertainment business, but they’re still in growth phase and there’s still a lot of debt in that business. It’s still not making money. It’s spending more than it receives in subscriber revenue, so that inflation budget can be quite harmful to the linear world, which can’t possibly work on a deficit strategy.

CC: But that’s part of their strategy.

JM: Yes, but there will be a point where they have to start making some money, presumably, or sell it to someone who doesn’t care enough.

CC: I was quite proud of what we managed to do with *Les Mis* – it’s a BBC show. It’s fantastic, whether it’s the BBC or you guys, that businesses are taking a risk, and long may it continue.

We just decided with *Les Mis* that in 18 months [the numbers] won’t look bad at all, and it will look like a good deal.

Event series are important for linear

Both execs have projects that have been or will be major TV events, which they think is important for the future of broadcast TV.

JM: I’m really pleased that there’s a bit of a revival of event series like *Les Mis* – it’s really important for the terrestrial world. If the linear world still has an advantage over SVOD, it’s being in the moment.

CC: It’s amazing how much appetite there is for the communal experience. We all loved talking about *Bodyguard* or *Doctor Foster* the next day.

JM: You can time-shift it, but people want to talk about it and if it’s only on for a couple of weeks, you tend to watch it.

CC: Yeah. It’s led to a convergence of film stars heading to TV as well, but they’re not going to commit to a seven-year option. They’re going to say, ‘Yes, I’ll do that specific piece.’

JM: We’ve got *Catherine The Great* coming out this year, which is a four-parter from New Pictures and



Original Pictures for Sky Atlantic and HBO – and it’s like, ‘How do we get to work with Helen Mirren?’. Well get a great script, a great character and make it limited. She’s not going to commit to *The Walking Dead* anytime soon.

Shows need to nourish culture

Among future dream projects, Carey says he would like to make something that impresses his children, while Millichip is keen on more innovative titles such Sky’s *I Am* – a Me & You production that features improvised scenes. Both execs agree, however, that TV has to be meaningful.

CC: There was a time in my factual career when every title had the world ‘celebrity’ in it, and I didn’t think it was particularly nourishing for culture. I only really want to do things that have some benefit.

JM: If we look at the statistics on how much time a day the average human is watching TV content, you think, ‘It better be bloody good.’

CC: I’m not pretending we’re saving the world, but my least favourite phrase is ‘it’s only telly’, because it’s only said when it’s meant to make you feel better when things are tough.

One of the things I loved about *Les Misérables* is that it’s got something to say. It’s got something to say about life and what it means to be human. **TBI**

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The big business of dubbing

Quality dubbing will be the key to the continued growth of international drama consumption, and SVODs and networks alike are doubling up in investment in the business to get ahead of the curve. Kaltrina Bylykbashi reports

In the past two years, the dubbing business has exploded, outpacing subtitling for the first time as a result of the growing global investment in localised content.

Some of the biggest studios in the business are seeing an astronomical rise in revenue as consumers increasingly look to titles such as Netflix's *Dark*, *The Rain* and *La Casa De Papel (Money Heist)* for entertainment.

Leading localisation platform Zoo Digital, which is attempting to transform the industry with a cloud-based solution, saw revenues jump by 73% to \$28.6m in July 2018 compared to the year prior – only stalling later in the year to staff up to meet client demand. Zoo pointed to a shift in requests for dubbing over subtitling for the revenue jump.

Elsewhere, global localisation studio BTI Studios told TBI that dubbing made up a mere 3% of its revenue in 2010 and has since jumped to 61%, with subtitling making less than 40% in revenue.

These are two of the many studios TBI has spoken to that have reported big business in dubbing as a result of the recent boom in international drama.

Needless to say, international titles are going through a growth period. Netflix, which spent \$12bn on content in 2018, is pledging to increase investment in European content by a third in 2019 alone.

This March, during a rare Q&A session with press, the streamer noted that the growth in localised content and dubbing would be key to taking on upcoming competitors such as Apple and Disney.

Currently, Netflix plans to roll out dubbed versions of its content in 27 languages. "We're taking this new initiative very seriously," said Debra Chinn, Netflix's international dubbing director.

Quality counts

Netflix chief product officer Greg Peters puts the increased viewership of international titles down to better dubbing entirely.

Nearly 90% of new primetime shows originating in the EU over the past three years have been released in two or fewer European countries, he says. But

with seven European dub languages and 15 subtitle languages available in Netflix's toolkit, it "explodes the potential viewership of European shows across the whole continent."

Europeans have had a long-standing tradition of dubbing, making consumers more open to it. However, Peters says the real prize will be reaching US audiences, where dubbing is being accepted into the mainstream for the first time.

"Unfortunately there was a big hurdle there. When we surveyed people in the US versus those in Europe, a very high percentage of US viewers said they would never watch a film or TV series that was not in their native language.

"We had an instinct that the reality could be different if we did it well. And we found that when we presented US subscribers with international titles with both subtitles and great dubbing, we saw much higher viewing than was indicated in the survey.

"And most US members watched in dubs and were more likely to finish international shows when they are dubbed in English," he says.

Quality, therefore, is going to be key to making Netflix's international strategy successful.

At this year's Berlin International Film Festival, Kelly Luegenbiehl, VP of international originals in Europe, said: "We're trying to get better with the dubbing process and it's something our team is working really hard on. Each time they iterate a new title, they try and figure out things they could do to improve it."

Netflix's Post Partner Program (NP3), which certifies post-production partners that want to work with the company, highlights the company's investment in this business, growing from 19 to 80 partners since 2017.

One NP3 partner told TBI that to qualify in the program it had to adhere to specific technical criteria in terms of security, quality and operations.

"Many other publishers have such a list as well, but it's not out there in the public sphere," they said.

No room for mistakes

Localised programming today is often premium drama by default, meaning that dubbing has had to become



BTI Studios' revenue growth

more elevated, faster and far-reaching.

In addition, the localisation process still divides opinion among consumers, many finding poor dubbing both frustrating and distracting.

“There’s no room for mistakes today, because clients don’t have time for mistakes,” says My Kitchen EVP Deeny Kaplan. “They’re very rigid; they’re strict. You have multiple levels of quality checks, for everything going from sound checks to music and mixing. All of it is scrutinised.”

The key to a successful dub lies in using native speakers, correct casting and proper adaptation, according to Kaplan. She says the dubbing of French drama *Call My Agent* is one example of a successful localisation process.

“It’s great and you really get it because it’s done right. And when a title’s done right they gain an international audience,” she says.

Deeper local ties also elevate the standard of dubbing, which is why players such as Netflix have been accelerating their ties with international studios.

Nexus TV – an NP3 partner – says that in Italy, for example, there has been a long-established culture of dubbing.

“Dubbing is an extremely well-established market in Italy because we’ve been dubbing since the 1930s,” says Mattia Fioravanti, a spokesperson for Nexus TV. “There was a decision made during the fascist era not to subtitle anything that passed through Italy. I would say that 99% of movies and TV shows in Italy are



Growth in Netflix's Post Partner Program (NP3)

Below: Netflix German drama *Dark*





BTI Studios' revenue sources



now dubbed.”

“A very skilled school of dubbing talent and actors has grown up in the territory during this time, so for us, the general public would never complain about the authenticity of dubbing or how movies and TV shows can lose value via the localisation process.”

A shifting business model

The quest for quality has changed the shape of the industry over the past few years entirely, according to Kaplan, whose key clients include NBC.

Both networks and SVODs are looking to centralise dubbing work, according to the exec, which means that one company is now expected to have multiple sites globally. My Kitchen currently has 12 sites in 12 languages.

La Casa De Papel (below) and *The Rain* (top)



“The beauty is that we create a template with time codes and character themes and narrative information, so that when it does need to be adapted into another language, we have those assets that allow us to easily create a consistency,” says Kaplan.

NP3 partner BTI also attributes its recent revenue success to owning and operating international studios.

“If you think about dubbing, it’s really hard to do without native language speakers, and if you’re listening to dub in your language and it’s not done well, it loses its creative impact,” says Chris Carey, BTI’s Americas MD.

“For us, the creative quality is the most important thing and the way to do that is to have a studio in every country. Not just the physical studio, but also a network of actors, editors and creative directors who know how to record the language voices, edit them, get them properly in sync and mixed, so that the dubbed language comes off as believable and natural.”

The strategy has paid off. Since 2008, BTI has acquired 10 studios, nearly tripling its revenue from €42m (\$48m) to €105m (\$119m). It has grown from owning three offices at launch in 1995 to 25 in 2019, and will continue to look for new areas of expansion.

Zoo, another NP3 partner, has taken this principle one step further by launching a cloud-based dubbing platform in 2018. Project managers, translators and freelancers of all kinds can now collaborate on the platform, at any time, without the need for a bricks-and-mortar studio, which further breaks down barriers to tapping into talent all around the world.

Zoo has also begun to offer the platform to traditional dubbing studios, meaning that the efficiency and turnaround of dubbing projects could be vastly improved over the next few months. **TBI**



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Elevating Omens



The creative team behind BBC Studios and Amazon Studios' *Good Omens* tells how they adapted the unadaptable, bringing Terry Pratchett's final wish to life

Ten years ago, it would have been inconceivable to adapt Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's 1990 fantasy novel *Good Omens* for the screen.

Written "as a bit of fun" between the two friends who "weren't famous at the time", the book finds angel Aziraphale and demon Crowley trying to prevent the End Times. An adaptation of the book – which has always been notoriously challenging to actualise with countless TV writers turning down the job over the years – was Pratchett's last request before his death in 2015.

Honouring his wishes, Gaiman – whose oeuvre includes the likes of *American Gods* and *Coraline* – began work on the script a week after the funeral, embarking on a two-year process that "trumped everything else".

Although a price-tag for the big-budget adaptation has yet to emerge, the David Tennant and Michael

Sheen-fronted *Good Omens* – the first co-production between BBC Studios and Amazon Studios – is a technicolor feast for the eyes, elevated by state-of-the-art tech that creates an immersive and otherworldly experience for audiences.

"Years ago, you wouldn't have seen TV platforms willing to take a risk like that, putting this much money in," explains BBC Studios' comedy head Chris Sussman.

"It would have been a film, but this is a hard story to do as a film. And there wouldn't have been the technology to do it. It's a timely course of events to have made it now."

While much has been said about the release strategy for the show, which sees Amazon debut the six-part series on 31 May with BBC Two following at least six months later, Sussman says the producer couldn't have asked for a better creative partner.

"There are some new paths to forge, but Amazon

have been an incredible partner. They're very good at backing creatives and they let you make the show you want," he tells TBI.

"The fact that Neil has been involved so heavily in everything, showrunning right from the start, has given them huge faith in this."

Amazon's backing has also enabled the show to be one of the most premium efforts to come out of scripted at the BBC in the last decade. Executive producer Rob Wilkins reckons the production's special effects have even surpassed films such as Peter Jackson's *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, which is also being adapted for TV by Amazon.

"If you look at *Lord Of The Rings* on the big screen now, you can see where certain things are stitched together. You won't see that with *Good Omens*," he says of the trilogy.

"We're now at that point with CGI where it is entirely believable. It's the first time in history where TV budgets are at that level."

Indeed, what is evident across the footage, seen by TBI, is that CGI and storytelling is integrated in a fresh new way.

"In TV, it used to be a few years ago that the CGI shot would be the spaceship and then you cut inside to the hard set," says director Douglas Mackinnon. "Whereas now, we have a [CGI] spaceship that lands in a field and flies off again. It's just part of the story."



Wilkins adds: "It doesn't take over the story or jar you – you don't step out of the narrative, even for 10 seconds, as the CGI is played to you. It's completely immersive and it's so much more beautiful and precise."

"The book is the glue"

The creative team is upfront about the fact that, although the show is indisputably loyal to Gaiman and Pratchett's source material, liberties have been taken to elevate the narrative.

"We've taken departures because [the TV show is] a different thing," explains Mackinnon, highlighting Jon Hamm's archangel Gabriel character.

"That character isn't in the book but we needed him to be around for storytelling reasons. Very often an adaptation suffers because a book is written with the voice of the reader in mind, whereas we have to expand that onto the screen."

Elsewhere, while Shakespeare is mentioned once in the novel, the English writer gets an entire sequence shot out of London's Globe Theatre in the show.

In addition, Gaiman has written a half-hour explanation of Crowley's backstory at the beginning of the third episode that is completely original. "But the fans of the book will see that as a treat rather than a bad diversion," assures Mackinnon. **TBI**



Mackinnon, Tennant, Sheen and Gaiman (left to right)

Gaiman's Midas touch

Lead stars Michael Sheen, who plays angel Aziraphale, and David Tennant, a demon named Crowley, tell TBI that with Neil Gaiman on board, the TV adaptation was able to be comfortably creative with scenes that enhanced the source material.

"There's a fairly major section at the beginning of episode three, which in a series of 10 or so scenes we see the development of the relationship between Aziraphale and Crowley from the Garden of Eden, all the way through the history of the world, up to the present day," says Sheen.

"It's a major addition from the book and it was the scene we enjoyed the most."

Tennant adds: "It's very much in the spirit of the book, but that's the good thing about having Neil involved. This world is so unique and it's such an unusual voice that if anyone else was to do it, it would somehow be normalised."

"Anyone else adapting this script would just naturally have made it more sensible, but because we've got Neil there it maintains all the exuberance of the originals, even in those new sections."

However, with Amazon on board and a global audience in mind, the stars admit that there were some taste tests administered.

"There's one joke in it that became a little temperature-taker," says Sheen.

"There's a bit where Jon Hamm's character makes a little joke about Jeffrey Archer's books, and we were like 'no one's going to get this outside of the UK', but when we were at Comic-Con in San Diego they showed that clip and there was a huge laugh."

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Script to Screen: Harassment

Globo's SVOD refresh has been spearheaded by *Harassment*, a mini-series inspired by a group of women who spoke out against sexual abuse committed by Brazilian fertility expert Roger Abdelmassih

Having received more than 60 accusations of sexual abuse by patients in 2009, Roger Abdelmassih was sentenced to 278 years in prison by the Criminal Court of São Paulo, resulting in a media storm.

"I realised something that merited far more coverage in the case than it got: that Abdelmassih's accusers were more than mere victims – they were also extremely active protagonists who were crucial to the outcome of the investigation," says *Harassment* writer Maria Camargo.

"These women's roles suggested that their story could and should be retold. Beyond its dramatic potential, it was, above all else, a symbolic and very powerful story."

The high-impact limited series is developed for Globoplay, Globo's streaming platform, which has been repositioned to host an increasing amount of

international productions that move away from the telenovela format.

"Taking into consideration the pertinence of the drama's theme, the direction and cast, we understood that this project was powerful enough to mark this moment for Globoplay," says Silvio de Abreu, head of drama and comedy at Globo.

Act 1 – The story: Breaking a cycle of violence

Camargo says the core focus of the show is to highlight the violence many women face every day, and how they can break the cycle by joining forces.

"Women are abused to this very day. Male chauvinism endures, but now we're also seeing a very powerful reaction in opposition to that. The plot of *Harassment* reflects this changing world," she says.

Globoplay's *Harassment*



“When I first started outlining the series, there was already a very fascinating movement picking up steam, particularly on the internet. #MeToo hadn’t erupted yet, and when it did that only confirmed to us the topic had broken through, and it was extremely timely.”

Camargo’s drama idea emerged from the book *The Clinic: The Farce and Crimes of Roger Abdelmassih*, by Brazilian journalist Vicente Vilardaga, which focused on the symbolic significance of his crimes and conviction over the man himself.

“We live in a time of change, where female voices, in very broad terms, are gaining ground. It’s just the beginning, but we are definitely seeing a change,” she says.

“This story only takes place because the protagonists are women, with desires, vulnerabilities and, above all else, an essentially feminine strength.”

The series was filmed in São Paulo’s urban locations, where the original story unfolded.

“Aside from the degree of realism imparted by shooting in actual locations, this approach allowed us to explore, in a visually richer and more interesting way, the paradox between the metropolis and the victims’ loneliness; between the vastness of the city and the women’s confinement inside an anguish that’s almost always silent by nature,” says Camargo. “We wanted truth on the screen, and I believe we managed to achieve that.”

Act 2 – The objective: A shift from the telenovela

Harassment arrives at Globo as it looks to vary its portfolio to meet audience demand.

Over the past two years, Globo Studios, the broadcaster’s production arm, has been increasing the volume of drama it carries and varying its genres.

“Telenovelas have a great connection with Brazilian culture, and we export ours to more than 175 countries,” says De Abreu. “In the past few years, series have become more popular all over the world, so without leaving telenovela production aside, we have invested simultaneously in short formats.”

In particular, De Abreu says Globo has been looking for “human” and “emotional” dramas focused on personal conflicts, such as *Harassment*.

To do so it has launched Writer’s Home, a hub where a continuous pipeline of content is developed. In 2018, Globo developed 70 projects now ready for production. Around 75% of its titles are scripted.

At NATPE, Globo told TBI that it currently has 500 actors, 180 directors and 250 writers working there on a permanent basis.

Harassment is one of the many new shows Globo is investing in with a focus on personal conflict



“We make huge investments in talent, innovation and creativity, and we do believe in the power of this industry to contribute to transforming our society,” says De Abreu. “Audiences seek emotion, regardless of the language or country.”

Act 3 – The reach: International potential

In an attempt to grow the series’ international scope, Globo hired well-known Brazilian actors including International Emmy Award nominee Adriana Esteves (*Above Justice*) and International Emmy Award-winning star Antonio Calloni (*The Illusionist*) who plays Roger Sadala, a fictional doctor based on Abdelmassih.

Others include Jéssica Ellen (*Justiça*), Paolla Oliviera (*Assedio*), Elisa Volpato (*Mulher De Fases*) and Mariana Lima (*Assedio*).

In February, *Harassment* was selected for the Drama Series Days Market Screenings at this year’s Berlin International Film Festival. It was the only Brazilian title at the event and joined productions from Sweden, Spain, Israel and Argentina.

The show has since been licensed to Chile’s Mega Group and will premiere on Globo’s free-to-air channel in Brazil later this year.

“It touches on universal themes; campaigns against sexual harassment, these women’s strength and the main character’s sexism are all pertinent topics in all cultures. I believe that a good story has no limits and it engages audiences on all platforms,” says De Abreu.

Harassment was developed over the space of two years by Camargo, De Abreu, Monica Albuquerque and Edna Palatnik, after the project was greenlit in 2016. Amora Mautner is directing. **TBI**



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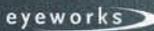
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Bella Germania: A “new game” for drama

The floodgates have opened for premium German drama after a comparatively slow start in the high-end TV market, and now producers and distributors are thinking about getting ahead of the competition. Kaltrina Bylykbashi reports

Premium German drama made for an international audience has seen a steady but sharp rise in the past two years, as the territory moves past its conservative broadcast and writing model.

While supersized titles such as Amazon’s *Deutschland 83* (2015), Netflix’s *Dark* (2017) and Sky’s *Babylon Berlin* (2017) have done much to propel the genre forward for the territory, they arrived relatively late when compared to European

counterparts in the UK and Spain.

“Germany is just at the beginning of the cycle of the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of television,” according to Joerg Winger, co-creator of German super-hit *Deutschland 83*. He says that until now German broadcasters have been conservative and focused on homegrown procedurals.

“There was no real need to be innovative,” adds Winger. “In the US, it was crucial to be innovative because they have fierce competition as leaders in the

market. Similarly, for small countries like Denmark and Israel it's important to be innovative to sell programming internationally. Germany is somewhere in the middle – the market was always successful enough.”

Oliver Berben, head of international series development at Constantin Television – the producer of German hits *Perfume* and *The Typist* – says that German broadcasters formally had strict financial structures. “Most of the television broadcasters wanted work-for-hire, which is essentially where they pay you, tell you what to do and then you do it.”

Now there's a much more creative process, Berben says. Writing teams have changed. Previously, writers worked primarily in solitary and often produced and directed works as well, but this new form of storytelling has meant that they have to work in collaboration with a team. “A lot of writers are coming out of schools that are very much used to working together in writers' rooms and not being focused only on their own work and vision of a story.”

Now, Winger says: “With the arrival of the streamers, there's more competition, there's more appetite for different genres and serialised storytelling and we're catching up.”

“I have another series called *Hackerville* that was commissioned by HBO Europe. That was the first time we got a commission that wasn't with an anchor broadcaster, so it's possible now. That's the new game.”

In 2019 alone, we have seen the premiere of Beta Film's *Bauhaus – A New Era*, Netflix's *How To Sell Drugs Online (Fast)*, German language original *M-A City Hunts a Murderer*, Bavaria Fiction's *Brecht* and Sky Germany's *8 Days*.

At this year's Berlin International Film Festival, *Brecht* secured presales with buyers across Scandinavia and Southern Europe, while *Bella Germania* sold to Italy's RAI and *Big Bones* was the winner of the Berlinale Copro Series competition.

That's without mentioning upcoming titles such as Constantin Television's eight-parter for Amazon *We Children Of Bahnhof Zoo*, billed to be one of the most expensive dramas to emerge from the territory.

A co-production boom

Germany has quickly caught up with its European counterparts due to its widely-respected creative industry both in front of and behind the camera. It particularly has a strong reputation for hosting state-of-the-art production facilities.

As a result, Tandem Productions partner Jonas Bauer says that its drama has always sold “moderately well” around the world. “But the kind of shows that

were sold 20 years ago didn't make it into the most competitive television markets, with the highest quality standards, mainly in the UK and the US,” he explains.

In the last few years, however, this level of quality has changed according to the exec, and it's mainly down to co-production.

Moritz von Kruedener, MD of German-speaking markets at Beta Film, explains: “It's easier than it was before to finance big-budget series in Germany. What we were all used to is fully-financed series from public channels, and today it's pretty much all kinds of models. Take *1983* or *Babylon Berlin*, they're both financed with different partners.”

“This is probably one of the main reasons why it's easier to get money into these things, and why they have more creative input into each series.

“With *Babylon Berlin* we had to combine Sky's interests with ARD's public television interest, which

Brecht (opposite),
Deutschland 86 (below)
and *Bauhaus – A New Era* (bottom) are recent premium offerings





Das Boot (top) and *Perfume* – two high-profile German dramas

was a big challenge, and then we had Beta Film as an important partner with our interest for the international market, and I think this is for the good of the show.”

The majority of titles listed in this piece would have been a result of co-production. Take *Bauhaus*, a co-production between ZDF/ARTE, Constantin Television and Nadcon Film; or *Freud*, a partnership between ORF and Netflix; or recent hit *Das Boot*, a Sky-Bavaria tie-up. The list goes on.

Creativity has boomed as a result, as writers in the territory take on new styles and genres.

Execs tell TBI that for years German drama tended to focus on reliable themes such as historical pieces or crime procedurals and has now opened up to a range of topics and styles.

Winger says that even though *Deutschland* is based on closely followed history, it was the combining of a spy genre with a coming-of-age story that really elevated the series.

“We’re not making things up in terms of history, we’re true to the historical backdrop of events, but of course we have elevated it in terms of genre and taken the perspective of a young innocent spy. Its mixed tonality has done well for us,” he says.

Meanwhile, Tim Halkin, MD of Tandem Productions, the prodco behind upcoming post-war thriller *Shadow Play*, co-produced by Bron Studios (*The Bridge*), says the city of Berlin, with its flourishing cultural scene, has been a huge draw for international audiences in recent times.

“There’s a big fascination with Berlin,” he says. “A lot of successful programmes that are based in Berlin have caught people’s attention worldwide.”

Across genres, the city remains a stalwart in many internationally successful titles, including the *Deutschland* series, *Babylon Berlin*, *Berlin Station*, *Dogs of Berlin*, as well as upcoming titles such as *Bauhaus* and *Bahnhof Zoo*.

With great demand comes great competition

Von Kruedener says that just a couple of years ago, if you looked at TV programmes on broadcast in the territory, it was always the same 50 people involved across directors, cast and writers. The new development has forced broadcasters to change.

What this means is that while big-budget German dramas have created demand from international audiences, many local broadcasters are looking to keep up with the pace as well.

This has upped the competition for German creators, producers and distributors. Winger says: “The competition is heating up, with more and more series produced. If you get a greenlight now, it’s hard to staff it.”

While writers are being trained differently in Germany today through schools and industry practice, it’s still a relatively new development, causing a talent drought.

“The challenge is keeping the quality up because there’s a limited pool of talent and an unlimited appetite for new series from incumbents and streamers,” continues Winger. “You can’t train all writers to write a certain kind of show that literally didn’t exist five years ago. It’s a question of craft and experience.”

Furthermore, while the co-production boom has led to more opportunities in the territory, the financial model has become much more complicated for some. As Berben points out, “For a company like Constantin, it’s good because it’s made for it. If there’s a smaller company, however, you have to deal with multiple partners, which can be hard.” **TBI**

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Scripted Hot Picks

TBI Scripted talks to the creators, producers and distributors behind the best global-facing drama ready to hit the Croisette at MIPTV and the Cannes Series festival

World on Fire

World On Fire is the Helen Hunt-starring WWII drama following the intertwining fates of ordinary people in

Britain, Poland, France, Germany and the US.

“It’s one of the most epic and powerful dramas we’ve had in a while,” says Ruth Berry, MD at ITVS GE. Set amid the creeping horror of the outbreak of the war, the drama follows an ensemble cast of characters as they traverse the ever-shifting lines between loyalty, brutality, love and loss.

“It’s more of a humanitarian story, rather than one focused on battle and politics,” says Berry. “We start off the season with tanks rolling into Warsaw in Poland, and follow a Polish family, German family, British family and so on, and it really is about ordinary people and how it impacted their life.”

The story is told in multiple languages and led by an international cast including Zofia Wichlacz (*Romanoffs*), Tomasz Kot (*Gods*) and Bruno Alexander (*Eden*) as well as Academy Award-winning Hunt and Emmy and BAFTA winner Sean Bean.

“The first series’ storyline plays out across Poland, Germany, Paris and Manchester,

so you can imagine the lengths that the production team has gone to tell each storyline in a way that feels authentic,” Berry says.

“There were multiple international crews involved at the various locations around Europe and because of that, several broadcasters have been following the show’s journey very closely.”

Several international partners have already shown interest in the drama, according to Berry.

The 7 x 60-minute series is written by *Marvelous* scribe Peter Bowker and produced by ITV-owned Mammoth Screen for BBC One.

It is developed by Mammoth’s creative director Rebecca Keane and executive produced by Bowker, Damien Timmer and Helen Ziegler for Mammoth Screen and Lucy Richer for BBC. The series producer is Chris Clough.

“I’m excited to distribute a show that is important for the world and for younger generations, helping to shape the way they think and their understanding of history,” says Berry. **TBI**



World on Fire

Distributor: ITV Studios Global Entertainment (ITVS GE)

Producer: Mammoth Screen

Broadcaster: BBC One (UK)

Logline: A multi-territory drama telling the story of WWII through the lives of ordinary people

Top
Pick



Wisting

Norway's latest drama is a trans-Atlantic detective thriller starring Carrie-Anne Moss (*The Matrix*) and Sven Nordin (*Lilyhammer*) as they attempt to catch a serial killer from the US.

The 10 x 45-minute series follows homicide detective Wisting (Nordin) as he encounters one of the most challenging cases of his life. A wanted American serial killer is on the loose in Norway, as his daughter – an intrepid journalist – is chasing headlines, leading her straight to him.

Meanwhile, Moss's character, an FBI agent who has spent her career chasing the killer, is brought into the investigation, leading to a clash of cultures and personalities between the investigative duo.

"*Wisting* takes the best facets of Scandinavian television – brilliant characterisation, cinematic visuals, and gripping narratives – and blends it with the onscreen richness and premium talent of a US series," says Chris Stewart, commercial director for scripted at Banijay.

The series, which was adapted from the novels of Jørn Lier Horst, a former senior investigation officer, is intentionally ambitious. Stewart says it follows the footsteps of acclaimed series *Lilyhammer*, *Occupied*

and *Valkyrien*.

"It is shot on a cinematic scale which obviously brings with it a significant budget. Drama at this level is expensive and the budget of *Wisting* is comparable to that of any premium series produced in the UK and Europe," he says.

Wisting, a Cinenord and Good Company Films production, commissioned by MTG for Viaplay, TV3 and ARD, combines both English and Norwegian language, which Stewart hopes will give the series a certain level of accessibility.

"We hope this will be of particular impact in the US where premium players are opening their doors to more and more non-US produced content," he says.

Having discovered the series at this January's Goteborg TV Festival, Banijay will bring the title to the international market for this first time at MIPTV. **TBI**

Wisting

Distributor: Banijay Rights

Producer: Cinenord and Good Company Films

Broadcaster: MTG for Viaplay, TV3 (Sweden), ARD (Germany)

Logline: An ambitious Norwegian detective thriller starring Carrie-Anne Moss



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Baghdad Central

Baghdad Central is a six-part crime thriller for the UK's Channel 4, written by *The Last Kingdom* scribe Stephen Butchard and based on the novel by Elliot Colla.

The series takes a glance at Baghdad in 2003. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein has just fallen and Muhsin al-Khafaji, an Iraqi and former policeman, is battling to keep himself and his ailing daughter safe in a city occupied by US forces.

When Khafaji is arrested and tortured by US forces in a case of mistaken identity, he meets British ex-police officer Frank Citrone who offers him safety for his daughter in return for his skills as a police officer in the Green Zone – the main international presence in the city.

Baghdad Central

Distributor: Fremantle

Producer: Euston Films

Broadcaster: Channel 4 (UK)

Logline: A crime thriller looking at Baghdad through the eyes of an Iraqi cop after the fall of Saddam Hussein

“It’s a period of history we’re all familiar with, but seen through a surprising perspective,” says Kate Harwood, MD at Euston Films and executive producer of *Baghdad Central*.

“Drama is always good when it has a bit of hindsight and context. We’re still living with the consequences of the Iraq War, and we’re still very much in a post-9/11 world.”

The thriller will include an international cast of UK, US and Middle Eastern actors including Waleed Zuaiter, Clara Khoury, Leem Lubany and Corey Stoll.

It is produced by Euston Films, part of Fremantle, and executive producers include Butchard, Alice Troughton as well as Harwood. Jonathan Curling will produce.

“I came across the novel and immediately thought of Stephen, who I’d worked with previously on *House of Saddam*. I knew he had an interest in the period and he said, ‘you had me at Green Zone,’” says Harwood.

Baghdad Central was commissioned for Channel 4 by Beth Willis, head of drama, with commissioning editor Manpreet Dosanjh and commissioning executive Jonny Richards. **TBI**





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The Murders



The *Murders* is Muse Entertainment's latest procedural drama focusing on homicide detective Kate Jameson, played by *Gotham*'s Jessica Lucas, and detective Mike Huntley, as they navigate the case of a mysterious killer who uses music for destructive ends.

"The lead character, a young woman who needs to fight guilt and prove herself in a difficult environment, is a strong modern female figure," says Emmanuelle Guilbart, joint CEO and co-founder at APC.

"She is constantly debating her choices and trying to conciliate her desire to succeed with her ethics. It's these kinds of personal contradictions viewers often relate to."

Lucas is joined on set with high-profile cast members including *Riverdale*'s Lochlyn Munroe (Huntley), *Orphan Black*'s Dylan Bruce, *Jessica Jones*' Terry Chen, *Ghost Wars*' Luvia Petersen and *Arrow*'s Venus Terzo.

She will also serve as executive producer, alongside Jesse Prupas and Michael Prupas of Muse Entertainment, Shawn Williamson of Brightlight Pictures and Jamie Goehring of Lighthouse Pictures.

Damon Vignale (*Motive*) is creator, showrunner and

exec producer.

Muse Entertainment has produced the 8 x 60-minute crime drama in association with Citytv, a division of Canada's Rogers Media. The series premieres on Citytv this spring.

It turns out crime procedurals with a modern twist are just what broadcasters want. NBCUniversal International Networks has already pre-bought the rights to the series for a number of key European and African channels, proving that the genre remains evergreen in the international market.

"There's currently a lot of serialised edgy shows, but *The Murders* stands out as a straight solid procedural, starring a diverse cast that reflects today's society," says Guilbart. "We are excited to introduce the show to international buyers at MIPTV." **TBI**

The Murders

Distributor: APC Studios

Producer: Muse Entertainment

Broadcaster: NBCUniversal International Networks (Europe, Africa), Citytv (Canada)

Logline: A female-led procedural starring *Gotham*'s Jessica Lucas

Muna



Armoza Formats' *Muna*, a drama about an Arab-Israeli photographer battling with her identity, is among a slate of programmes at MIPTV that mark a "key focus" on scripted for the Israeli producer-distributor, which will come to market with more scripted than non-scripted titles for the first time

Sharon Levi, head of sales at Armoza Formats, tells TBI that as international dramas continue to generate demand, the distributor, which has worked in the drama space for a number of years, will start placing a greater emphasis on its scripted offerings.

"This MIPTV, we are coming with a key focus on scripted, launching more scripted shows than non-scripted titles, which is a first for Armoza and one that we are very excited about," says Levi.

"Our sales division has also been more focused on working with clients who are looking for unique scripted content, either for adaptation or as a finished series, and we will be attending more markets that are dedicated to scripted, such as Series Mania and Content London."

While Armoza has tended to emphasise punchy formats such as *I Can Do That* and *Sex Tape* to the market, the distributor says it is now looking for scripted titles with "a unique voice".

At MIPTV, Armoza's leading drama *Muna* will be presented to international buyers for the first time, having already made its debut on Israel's Kan network.

The story was written by Palestinian-Israeli musician Mira Awad, who was inspired by her own controversial and challenging journey as Israel's representative at the Eurovision Song Contest in 2009.

Awad tells TBI that she felt pressure as a Palestinian to drop out of the contest as it took place during a three-week war between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza. "Each side wanted me to align myself with them," she said.

Awad's photographer character of Muna in the drama is similarly put in a position where she is forced to choose a side.

"Eventually, she chooses her own camp – a place of her own values without listening to anyone's opinion," says Awad.

"Usually people outside of Israel have a strong black-and-white view of the area, deciding strongly who is right and who is wrong. This story is about the Palestinian minority within the state of Israel, where the map is much more complex.

"I'm hoping people get a glimpse of life in Israel and a magnified view of Palestinians living in Israel, and I would love for these audiences to take a look at a story that has not been told yet."

The title is a key example of the types of authentic series Armoza is looking for, according to Levi, providing a glimpse of how people are affected in the backdrop of political and physical tension. **TBI**

Muna

Distributor: Armoza Formats

Producer: Armoza Formats

Broadcaster: Kan (Israel)

Logline: An Arab-Israeli photographer battles with her identity



Writer's Room Sarah Scheller

Comedy is personal

“When we first spoke about our vision for the show, we were adamant that the comedy should always come from truth.”

I have been fortunate enough to write two series of *The Letdown*, a very personal, narrative comedy about modern-day parenting. I have co-written every episode with my work partner, Alison Bell, from early blue-skying, to methodically breaking down stories to physically writing the dialogue. We do it all together. We also work in a program called Writer's Duet, which allows us to literally finish each other's sentences. Which we do, often.

This shorthand we've developed over our four years of working together, has proved an efficient way to work while also allowing our scripts to have a singular voice. It's also why we've decided against bringing other writers into our room – tonal consistency is so important for comedy. Or maybe that decision is more about our tendency for micro-management. And I don't like to share.

In the early days, when we first spoke about our vision for the show, we were adamant that the comedy should always come from truth. This, we thought, would be how we could freshen up the usual parenthood tropes, and we knew we could write with authority and validity if the stories actually happened in real life.

We never wanted to shy away from the darker moments of new motherhood, such as the loss of identity many new mothers face, while always finding the comedy, like lying to a stranger about not breastfeeding, just so you can drink your double-shot coffee without shame or judgement, only, of course, to be caught out. This commitment to comedic truths meant that almost every storyline had to have happened to one of us, or at least to family or friends.

Nothing was sacred and early brainstorming sessions are often us fleshing out our favourite stories and moments from the past year of parenthood. You're on high alert as a writer, always

on the lookout for interesting characters and ideas, and it's surprising at how adept you become at mentally filing stories away. This is particularly valuable for me between series. I don't work well under pressure and like to write down ideas whenever I can. I have a document called 'Nuggets' that I add to regularly – like right now, watching one of my kids parade around naked, avoiding a bath. It's all gold.

As I have been LA-based for a number of years, we have been lucky enough to write out of Charlie's, a unique, creative hub that is part of Australians in Film, located within the historic Raleigh Studios in Hollywood. With the support of Creative NSW, which has funded our desks for both series, we've had our own nurturing space and, most importantly, our own coffee machine, which has really helped with the creative flow.

I'm not sure how typical our writing process is, but we've convinced ourselves it's okay to talk and laugh all day – it's a comedy after all. Our process feels free and uninhibited; we try not to hinder ourselves with structure and guidelines. Boring. Our aim is always to simply tell the story in the most interesting way.

Having said that, we really love detail and a theme. It's not uncommon for us to spend all day coming up with episode titles or searching for tenuous thematic links that realistically no audience member would ever comprehend.

Still, it keeps the process fresh and interesting, which is increasingly important when you're looking at 13-plus episodes of television. Writing subsequent series has been joyous, as I felt the second series was a lot smoother and easier than the first, and maybe the third could be easier still.

Still, key elements remain the same – laughter, tears, endless gossiping and bottomless cups of coffee and soup. **TBI**

Sarah Scheller is the co-creator of ABC Australia and Netflix's motherhood-focused comedy drama *The Letdown*

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Costume drama

The runaway success of *The Masked Singer* is putting costume-led formats back in the spotlight and sparking interest in other quirky, visual shows. Manori Ravindran investigates the logistics of pulling off a masked feat

A year ago, if anyone had suggested that a bunch of singing, dancing celebrities would inform the industry's most innovative entertainment format in years, they may have been told there was a better chance of a one-eyed monster winning a primetime competition on Fox.

As it happens, all of these things happened in the same breakout show. Fox's *The Masked Singer* was the runaway hit no one saw coming, premiering on 2 January with 9.4m and maintaining strong ratings across its 10-week run to conclude with a whopping 11.5m.

The success of the noisy guessing game – in which celebrities sing in full-body costumes and masks, with top contenders reaching series' end while keeping their identities hidden – is putting costume-led formats back in vogue, and sparking broadcaster interest in older but similarly visual shows such as Banijay Rights' *Wild Things* and All3Media International's *Sexy Beasts*.

The story of how Plestis, founder of Endemol Shine North America-backed prodco Smart Dog Media, happened upon the original Korean format *King of Mask Singer* is quickly becoming formats lore.

In October 2017, the former NBC reality chief was in a Thai restaurant with his family when he saw the MBC Korea format on television. By November, Plestis had secured US format rights with the help of Paradigm agent Steve Wohl.

"It's not a typical performance show where you're saying someone is a good or bad performer," explains Plestis. "It's a guessing game."

"The engagement is truly unique because everyone wants to play along in guessing who is underneath the mask and having those debates online. No one knows 100% but everyone can guess."

Indeed, the success of *The Masked Singer* – which is heading to Germany's ProSieben and Australia's

Network 10 on the back of Fox's smash success – is, as one distributor puts it, "putting crazy costumes back in the public eye".

"Broadcasters are seeing that interest from the audience in finding out who is behind the masks and staying till the end."

Lion Television's 2014 dating format *Sexy Beasts*, which originally aired on BBC Three, had a similar premise, with colourful, eye-catching prosthetics used to transform three suitors looking to woo a single dater, who must settle on a final match prior to discovering their identity at the very end.

While the show was short-lived on BBC Three, it sold into the US (A&E), China (Tencent), Korea (KBS) and Lithuania (TV3), among others.

"Having a mask and not showing faces beforehand means the audience is playing the game as well and has to stick around – that moment is so key," explains Nick Smith, SVP of format production at All3Media International.

While the show is currently eyeing a third series on Vietnam's VTV3, two new territories are freshly interested, including one that has also picked up the MBC Korea and Fox-distributed *Masked Singer*.

Similarly, Banijay Rights has also seen spiked interest in costumed game show *Wild Things*, which was originally produced by IWC Media, Mad Monk and Motion Content Group for Sky One between 2015 and 2017.

German broadcaster RTL II picked up the format earlier this year, with plans to shoot in May and fill a primetime slot on the channel later this year.

The format finds partners working together for a cash prize that lies within a forest. To win, contestants need to overcome a range of obstacle courses and challenges – all while one of them is dressed as a woodland creature that can't see anything from within a costume, relying entirely upon their partner to guide



Rapper T-Pain's monster won *The Masked Singer*



them through various challenges.

“The slapstick nature of its comedy is designed to appeal to a family audience, and in a world where households are watching multiple screens at a time, it’s a show that families can watch together,” explains Nicky Murphy, deputy head of production for IWC.

Certainly, *Masked Singer*’s Plestis notes that costumes are something of a missed opportunity in some markets. Outside of children’s shows such as long-running *Sesame Street* and its “gigantic puppets”, you don’t see many costumes on US broadcast television, he says.

“It opens up this art outside the digital landscape we’re enmeshed in with its avatars and everything else. *Masked Singer* is a little old school when you think about it, but you still need to have new-school principles involved in the design and making sure it’s durable,” he explains.

Masked logistics

Indeed, the integration of costumes is complex. “It’s not simply having a costume

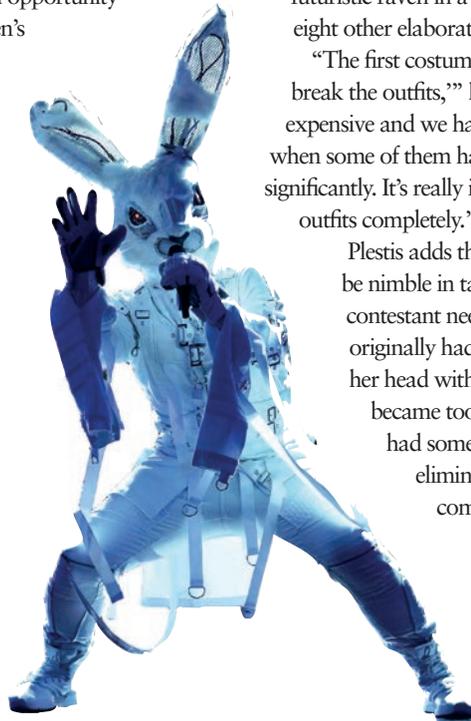
as you see at Disneyland. We need to make sure that person can sing, move, dance and ultimately survive in it,” says Plestis, who highlights that wearability is as crucial as the “visual impression” of each outfit.

A roll call of series one costumes includes the aforementioned one-eyed monster; a bedazzled peacock; straight-jacket-wearing rabbit; and futuristic raven in a cage-like headdress, among eight other elaborate entries.

“The first costuming [precaution] is ‘don’t break the outfits,’” he says. “They’re very expensive and we had a couple of instances when some of them had to be repaired significantly. It’s really important to protect those outfits completely.”

Plestis adds that producers also need to be nimble in tailoring costumes to suit contestant needs: “Ricki Lake’s Raven originally had a gigantic cage around her head with a little nest on top. It became too heavy for her and she had some back problems, so we eliminated that for the rest of the competition.”

While each costume ranged in price, some of the more expensive outfits, such as Donny Osmond’s Peacock,



All3Media International is seeing renewed interest in *Sexy Beasts*



“went into the thousands” to make.

Similarly, the mask for Rumer Willis’s Lion was inlaid with real gold to achieve “durability and a sparkly effect”. Meanwhile, Antonio Brown’s Hippo may not have been as elaborate, but was one of the most time-consuming costumes to produce.

“It’s going to be an evolving process in series two around how to make the costumes even lighter and ensure the audio level is really good for the singer because they are singing live underneath the costume.”

The showrunner notes that the programme went through several masks to ensure audio wasn’t distorted or muffled.

“For the Monster, you have a gigantic cylinder and the Peacock has a big filter in front. There isn’t one easy solution for each.”

This was also the case for Sky One’s *Wild Things*, which endured “frequent” repairs to its woodland creature costumes, with audio and communication serving as the primary logistical feat, according to IWC’s Murphy.

“Each costume had to have holes in the nostrils to fit a pencil camera for the final game, and communications devices inside the headpieces to enable the *Wild Things* to communicate with their partners.

“The costumes were also very hot, so we had to minimise the time contestants had the ‘head pieces’ on and buy ‘Cooling Ultra Sports Vests’ to ensure they didn’t overheat.”

As Murphy can attest, there’s “a lot more” to costume-led programmes than one might assume.

Keeping costs in check

If *Wild Things* were to return in the UK, the exec says there is scope now for celebrity involvement – particularly on the back of *The Masked Singer*’s success – as well as a kids version.

For Fox’s part, the *Masked Singer* team will keep the format fresh with different costumes and celebrities. While the budget isn’t necessarily bigger, Plestis promises “creativity with the dollars we have”.

“Since costume height was always the one indicator of who celebrities were, we will play with size. It could be a much taller costume than the person who’s inside of it to give the illusion of height,” he says.

“You don’t want to skimp on the outfits – those are the key for success and what makes everyone excited.”

However, All3Media International’s Smith points out that costume-led formats don’t need to break the bank and can be far more cost-effective than people think.

For example, when masks were produced for BBC Three’s *Sexy Beasts*, molds of the original masks were made in order to duplicate the designs – the most



expensive part of the process – in other territories.

“Initially, countries were just using recreations of our masks, but then China came in and had good-quality masks made at a cheap price, and we were able to supply other countries from China as well.

“That’s really the only thing that makes the show somewhat expensive, and now that we have a way of doing that cheaply, it’s a cost-effective show to make,” says Smith.

In addition, because the format is so visual, it makes launching the show a lot easier.

“To have that kind of bold ‘have you seen these crazy costumes and masks?’ angle really helps in promotion,” says Smith, noting that in Germany, entertainment channel SIXX rolled out a splashy marketing campaign for its adaptation.

“They had billboards with beasts in them that would speak to people as they went past. It looks so different and it stands out – you remember it.” **TBI**



Wild Things costumes needed frequent repairs

Semi-finalist Donny Osmond was revealed as the Peacock



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Good Catch



Banijay Rights' latest format serves up a game of 'tag' unlike you've ever seen before. Manori Ravindran overcame a few hurdles on the Cologne set to catch up with Brainpool TV's new physical format

Banijay's biggest bet at MIPTV turns the simple game of 'tag' on its head with a high-intensity format that is as universal as they come, albeit with some fancy parkour-fueled hijinks.

Produced by Lucky Pics and Banijay-backed Brainpool TV, *Catch* was originally commissioned by German commercial channel SAT.1, which is airing the format in a three-hour block this spring following a December pilot.

Fronted by affable Canadian-Italian presenter and comedian Luke Mockridge – Germany's equivalent of Jack Whitehall – the show finds four celebrity-led teams of top athletes and course specialists competing across eight rounds in challenges that take the game of 'catch' to new levels.

"It has a really simple idea behind it, which is to make a show out of a children's game," Marcus Wolter, CEO of Banijay Germany, tells TBI.

"From the first moment, you know what the game is all about. Everyone has played it and knows what it feels like the second before you tag someone."



Obstacle course 'Under Construction' is not for the faint-hearted

Banijay Group has developed around 30 different games in order to scale the format to the needs of different markets. Games such as 'Under Construction' cost more, while challenges such as 'The Circle', a baton race around a makeshift arena, are less expensive.

Looks are, however, deceptive with two-tier obstacle course 'Under Construction'.

The construction-themed game finds participants hoisting themselves over hurdles; shuffling down balance beams; being launched into heavyweight punching bags that need to be maneuvered just so in order not to be mowed to the ground; and eventually jumping six feet into a pool of foam padding. All this while a competitor follows in hot pursuit.

Elsewhere, another obstacle course consists of six black freestanding platforms of varying heights. The course is tailor-made for parkour experts, who elegantly leap from one to another, sometimes careening around sharp corners, and other times dangling from a platform hands outstretched to collar an opponent.

The format plays out in Brainpool TV's massive studio in Cologne – once a cable factory that was used to construct the first submarine cables that laid on the Atlantic Ocean floor, connecting Europe to North America. With four studios available, there is plenty of space – and tech – for the likes of *Catch*. One of the most impressive features of the German show is the state-of-the-art spider-cam that zips through the air from all corners.

Used to film sporting events such as football games, the spider-cam can move both vertically and horizontally to capture the action, thanks to cables connected to a gyro-stabilised camera-carrier.

According to Lucas Green, head of content for Banijay Group, borrowing modern filming techniques that have been pioneered in professional sports has served to elevate physical formats into success stories.

“The spider-cam really allows you to get up close and follow the action,” he explains.

“If this show was produced 10 years ago, you wouldn't be able to get into the heart of the drama as you can now.”

In Germany, there is increasingly a robust audience for punchy physical formats, particularly on the back of RTL's *Big Bounce Battle* and *Ninja Warrior Germany*.

However, Tobi Pollmüller, creative producer with Lucky Pics, explains that, “What's good with *Catch* is that, for the first time, we have a show that focuses primarily on running, which is not a huge part of *Ninja Warrior* or *Big Bounce*. It's very unique and we notice that the audience is fascinated by it.”

Overseas potential

While the show plays out in a three-hour block in Germany, where audiences are used to such scheduling, there is scope for shorter versions of *Catch* that take advantage of its range of available gameplay.

“You can play this with faster games, smaller teams and fewer games,” explains Marcus Wolter, CEO of Banijay Germany.

“It could air as a one-hour, two-hour or three-hour event version. You can choose how many games to put into one show.”

Green adds that the show is easy to sell to producers and broadcasters because of its simplicity and scalability. “You don't need to spend a long time explaining how this works, so it's a great family show.”

Moreover, there is a pricepoint for the format that makes it affordable for even a small territory in the Nordics. “It's not hugely expensive because it's really about a game of chase, and you can pick and choose what games to make it affordable.”



“The more we have those games that people can replicate with their families in their backyard or park, the less they need expensive gym memberships or to buy lots of equipment, because you can play chase anywhere.”

Lucas Green,
Banijay Group

However, the format's *pièce de résistance*, ‘Under Construction’ would likely figure in most international versions of the show.

“It is a more expensive game because there are more pitfalls and drops, and more padding and safety is required because you're running up and down. That sort of game would be in every [show] so you're getting better value for money.”

However, the simple games – such as the obstacle course with big blocks – are equally a major selling factor, says Green.

“The more we have those games that people can replicate with their families in their backyard or park, the less they need expensive gym memberships or to buy lots of equipment because you can play chase anywhere.

“That's very easy to transfer between different territories,” says Green, adding that another game called ‘Blind Catch’ finds a blindfolded player being guided around an empty arena by a teammate stood at a distance in a bid to help them catch a blindfolded opponent.

Banijay is currently exploring the potential for a German and Scandinavian hub “to allow even greater economies of scale while still retaining the profile of the show”.

Another option is, of course, to construct localised courses. Brainpool TV's Pollmüller notes that some of the games can be shipped, adding that “they are constructed in order to facilitate shipping via tracks”.

Meanwhile, though German *Catch* is not shot live, there is also room for that functionality within the format.

“It's all about how you combine the games if you want to do it live,” says Wolter. “If you want a gameshow with more editing, then you choose the non-live version, but if you want to do an international champions league of *Catch* with different countries – then you can combine that live capability.” **TBI**



The giants among formats

K7 Media's new report 'Tracking The Giants' uses historical and current data to pinpoint the underlying trends in TV format sales worldwide. K7 communications manager David Ciaramella details the most popular format themes and why a breakthrough format can now – actually – come from anywhere

International consultancy K7 Media's second annual 'Tracking the Giants' report was created in order to better follow and understand the trends driving the formats market in disruptive times, allowing us to identify, at a glance, the formats that have endured, those in decline and the new shows that may be evergreen sellers for the next decade.

A crucial new category for 2019 has been 'New Beginnings', introduced to help keep pace with the rapid rise – and sometimes equally rapid fall – of debuting formats.

These are shows that launched in the last three years, have sold to at least five territories and have at least half of those versions still on air. Particularly notable in this bracket is the Endemol Shine Group (ESG) format *All Together Now*. This fresh spin on the singing contest genre from the UK boasts 100 judges who sing along with contestants they approve of. The more people join in, the better the contestant does.

It's a simple but incredibly effective twist on a popular genre, and despite launching less than 18 months ago, in January 2018, it has already been acquired by eight major international territories. Out

Israel

The world's second most prolific producer of formats between 2009-2019

(L-R) *The Four*, *Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds* and *All Together Now*

of all the shows tracked, this is the greatest number of sales in the shortest amount of time, and thus earned *All Together Now* the inaugural title of our 'New Beginnings Champion'.

More intriguing trends begin to emerge when organising the best-selling formats by genre.

For example, the strong performance of ob-docs such as *The Secret Life Of 4 Year Olds* and *Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds* do not rely on a rigid format bible but rather, the format for both shows derives from the filming technique and technology.

Indeed, the age element is very much a factor in many of the shows making up our 'New Beginnings' cohort.

Others include Talpa's *The Voice Senior* and *Little Big Shots: Forever Young* from Warner Bros. International TV Production, both of which adapt hit formats with an eye for older generations.

With global populations in many territories facing a demographic shift towards the elderly, the social reasoning behind this development is easy to spot. When we apply keyword weighting to our data set, it's notable that the three most popular words used to describe top formats in the last three years are 'dating',



‘physical’ and ‘generations’.

A less combative approach is also driving changes in the reality competition space, where formats that warmly celebrate talent rather than punitive judging are trending upwards.

Strong sales for Armoza’s *The Four* and *Lip Sync Battle* from Viacom International Media Networks show that audiences are responding to programmes that ditch the often cruel putdowns of formats past in favour of communal fun.

The geography behind the sales

However, knowing what is selling is only half the battle. We’re also interested in where formats are selling, and here the data reveals some dramatic changes.

Which countries are the power players when it comes to creating formats, and how has that changed over time? Which countries are gaining confidence in global sales, and which countries are beginning to exercise more buying power?

Our long-term study of sales trends shows, unequivocally, that the traditional answers to these questions no longer apply as we reach the roaring 2020s.

Up to the 1990s, international format sales were dominated by the US, which had 62% of the market. This was the peak of network and cable TV reign and the commercially-driven US broadcast ecosystem was well positioned to take full advantage, particularly in the quiz show genre with evergreen hits like *Family Feud* and *The Price is Right* and CBS mainstay *The Wheel of Fortune*.

Together with the UK (23% market share) and Japan (15%), this trifecta of territories accounted for virtually all sales of top TV formats.

During the 1990s, the dramatic rise in reality TV caused the balance to shift. The UK took the top spot during this period – and has held on to it ever since – while smaller territories such as the Netherlands began



All Together Now

8 international sales in 18 months

to punch above their weight, scoring global success with shows such as *Big Brother* (ESG) and *Long Lost Family* (Lineup Industries).

As media has fragmented at a staggering pace in the 2010s, with digital distribution and streaming opening up new platforms and market pathways, the US has slipped further down the list, supplanted by a newly emboldened Israeli production sector and a resurgent Japan.

Indeed, it is Israel that has arguably performed the best in the last 10 years, coming from nowhere to be the world’s second-most prolific producer of TV formats.

Rather than several large territories supplying the most popular formats, we now have a much broader and more evenly spread landscape of smaller provisioners. While the occasional breakout smash format such as *The Wall* (ESG) may skew the data in the short term, these outliers don’t change the ongoing trend towards a more diverse array of format-originating countries.

As for the future? All eyes are on recent Korean hit *Masked Singer* (MBC Korea), which hasn’t made it on to our list this year, but with six international versions including a just-launched US edition and reported bidding wars in numerous territories, it looks certain to make a splash in our 2019/2020 report.

Few would have thought 10 years ago that major Western networks would be fighting over the rights to a Korean talent show, but this is the reality of the format market in 2019.

While this may be a shock to the system for territories that are used to comfortable domination, it suggests an immediate future where compelling ideas can make an impact, regardless of their origin.

While disruption always comes with a sense of peril, the prospect of a wider global format exchange is undeniably exciting, and it will be interesting to see what changes are evident in next year’s ‘Tracking the Giants’ report. **TBI**

“Rather than several large territories supplying the most popular formats, we now have a much broader and more evenly spread landscape of smaller provisioners.”

David Ciaramella,
K7





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Inside 2025

In the “near future” of Keshet’s innovative new format *2025*, everything has a price – even goodwill. Manori Ravindran reports from the set in Israel

The lovechild of *Monopoly* and *Westworld* would look a little something like Keshet’s *2025* – an expansive, 24/7 social strategy game with six “humanoid” hosts, 150 cameras across a specially built 2,400 square-meter city outside Tel Aviv, and a price-tag on quite literally everything.

Although Endemol Shine Group fired a legal shot at Keshet in March with a six-page cease-and-desist letter, claiming that *2025* ripped off elements of long-running format *Big Brother* – a power play Keshet International’s MD of networks Revital Basel swats away as a “tactical play” made for commercial reasons – it is clear upon visiting the set that there are significant departures between the two shows.

The format, whose budget is believed to be around 20-25% more than *Big Brother*’s, was recently stripped across the week on Keshet 12 over 10 weeks and is believed to have cost tens of millions of shekels to produce, not to mention two years of development and four months of production set-up.

It finds 12 contestants from all walks of life entering the city to play a complex game of strategy. Everyone is given the same amount of money upon entering, but everything they do thereafter will cost them, with a special bracelet tracking their movements and transactions.

For example, they can pay either 3,000 Israeli shekels (\$830) a week to stay in the city’s fancy hotel or sleep on a park bench for free. They can eat cheaply out of vending machines or pay 250 shekels (\$70) to eat at the restaurant. Similarly, catching up with friends and family back home, doing laundry and wearing a different outfit every day will set them back. It’s worth mentioning, too, that all locations across the city are sponsored – from the vending machines to the Ikea-branded hotel and clothing stores.

Generosity gets you ahead in the game, with contestants treating one another to experiences such as hotel stays in order to strengthen alliances – even paying to keep friends in the game. In addition, viewers at home can vote for their favourite players and award

The wealthiest contestant wins the game





A state-of-the-art studio captures all angles



“There’s a unique opportunity for [a company such as] Zara, Ikea, Samsung or Apple to be the exclusive thing people watch eight hours a week in primetime for three to four months.”

Kelly Wright,
Keshet International

money, and contestants can also be taxed. In this way, money comes and goes rapidly.

At the time of TBI’s set visit, the top player had roughly 25,000 shekels (\$6,900), while the bottom of the leaderboard posted around 15,500 shekels (\$4,300). Each week, the player with the least amount of money is booted out, and replaced by someone new.

Amidst all of this, the contestants freely engage with six surprisingly expressive and interesting humanoid – picture the bust of a mannequin with an oval CGI face – all of whom are operated by real actors behind the scenes using state-of-the-art facial recognition technology.

Meanwhile, fixed-rig cameras are in place across all rooms – even bathrooms – while cameras roam behind the scenes via an extensive dolly system. If it reminds you of *The Truman Show*, it should.

The show, which has been outperforming Reshet’s *Celebrity Big Brother*, rates highly among adult men and upscale audiences. While the initial batch of contestants features largely civilians and one well-known TV personality, an all-celebrity version of the show is also being planned.

Sales potential

Ambitious formats such as *2025* are notoriously difficult to get right, and in a landscape that saw Talpa’s dystopian society-building format *Utopia* struggle to get off the ground, all eyes will be on Keshet

International to see where – and how – the show travels outside of Israel with the mainstream networks being targeted by the distributor.

The question, ultimately, is whether the format can rate as well as, or even surpass, the more established *Big Brother* format, which is still the closest comparison despite its differences.

While the format may seem astronomical in price, Keshet International’s SVP of distribution and new business Kelly Wright says sponsorship opportunities via product integration rather than outright product placement play a major part in lowering costs around the show.

“It’s not just sponsorship – it’s ownership,” says Wright. “When you’re building a game for a city like this, you’re selling ownership of a piece of the landscape. You don’t have that in other shows.

“Here, there’s a unique opportunity for [a company such as] Zara, Ikea, Samsung or Apple to be the exclusive thing people watch eight hours a week in primetime for three to four months.”

The format also lends itself naturally – and necessarily – to hubs. While the Israeli set will be one such hub, with room in the year for two international adaptations to shoot between series, plans are also underway for a number of Eastern European hubs in cost-effective markets such as Lithuania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

Wright reckons that the format plugs the gap in the unscripted market for “near future”-themed programming.

“We know that if our viewers are not watching us, they’re choosing to watch something else on Netflix. Most of the time, that will be a premium drama, and many of them are set in the near future. So why hasn’t that world been explored yet on unscripted free-to-air television?” she says.

Interestingly, there is also capacity to tie in other formats that may be on air.

Because Keshet 12 has aired the All3Media International-distributed *Cash Cab* across six series, it made sense to create a 12-minute challenge within 2025 that borrowed from that format, with players answering rapid-fire general knowledge questions from inside a car driving around on set.

“It’s promotional for both sides because we’re launching a new season of *Cash Cab* as well. It’s an example of a cross-promotional strategy,” says Wright.

Broadcasters will also be drawn to the ability to cast a wide range of contestants from different social backgrounds. The tagline, after all, is “everyone starts as equals”.

Where they end up, of course, is a different matter. **TBI**

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Aftercare, or afterthought?

With TV's biggest entertainment format facing backlash over its aftercare practices, do casting directors and producers need to re-examine duty of care for youth-targeting formats? Manori Ravindran investigates



Shipwrecked (above), *Love Island* (right)

In a competitive entertainment landscape that finds channels jostling for the coveted 16-34 demographic, youth-skewing formats are among the toughest to cast – and, as evidenced by recent headlines - the most crucial to get right.

While social media can lift a show from obscurity, one need only cast a cursory glance at Twitter during any episode of ITV2's *Love Island* to get a sense of how insidious the platform can be, despite representing just a fraction of the viewing public. If reality TV contestants needed a thick skin in years past, today they need a core of steel.

Fittingly, there is now a heightened duty of care for casting directors and producers shepherding young casts through not only the limelight of broadcast, but also the inevitable period afterwards, when cameras have dispersed and public appearances and TV gigs have dried up, but a contestant's life is forever changed. Ultimately, if TV professionals once envisioned a natural end to a cast relationship post-finale, they are having to quickly “revise” such protocols, as ITV

creative director and *Love Island* co-creator Richard Cowles tells TBI.

Love Island backlash

The UK's biggest entertainment format has come under extreme scrutiny in recent weeks following the suicide of 2017 contestant Mike Thalassitis, who was found dead in a London park last month. The 26-year-old's death came just nine months after the passing of 32-year-old Sophie Gradon, a 2016 contestant who was found dead last summer – her death making headlines in June while the show was pulling in its biggest audiences ever for ITV2.

The two events have prompted widespread criticism of the format, with former contestants lashing out against producers for a lack of consistent aftercare upon leaving the show.

Jonny Mitchell, a 2017 castmate, told Sky News that he received a psychological interview only “within 10 minutes” of exiting the infamous villa, when he

“had no idea about public perception”.

“It’s completely irrelevant. They should ask me six months down the line, or even a week. I think the entire way it’s structured needs to change,” he said, calling on producers to provide better aftercare.

The incident also saw the UK’s health secretary Matt Hancock weighing in on duty of care, telling delegates at a health summit that “it is a duty on any organisation putting people in the position of making them famous overnight, that they should also look after them afterwards”.

However, if you ask ITV’s Cowles about the precautionary measures in place around mental health, he will say that duty of care is taken “incredibly seriously”.

“It’s a priority for us,” he tells TBI in an interview which took place days before Thalassitis’s death.

“We have a whole medical process that includes psychological support and evaluation before, during and after coming on the show, and we’re very open and honest with the Islanders, both before and after the show, about how their lives might change.”

Many cast members who have regular jobs exit the villa to a new normal, with lucrative opportunities as models, presenters and influencers all on offer. Not everyone, however, can turn such breaks into a full-blown career.

Cowles says contestants are warned about the scrutiny placed on the cast and how to manage expectations. “We warn them of the pros and cons,” he says, adding that measures are taken to ensure castmates enter *Love Island* with “their eyes open”.

However, the exec admits there does come a time when his team needs to move on once a contestant has left the show.

“We always sit down and try and help them get management and representation because, at some point, you have to hand the baton on to other people

because they’re not part of the show [anymore] – but that doesn’t mean we ignore them.”

Crucially, Cowles notes that the team is “constantly reviewing those processes with each series because they become more extreme as the series becomes more popular”.

ITV will again review care procedures this year to “make sure all our processes are correct,” says Cowles.

Indeed, days after Thalassitis’s death, the channel vowed to extend “support processes”, offering therapy to all Islanders as well as social media and financial management training for future casts.

“The key focus will be for us to no longer be reliant on the Islanders asking us for support but for us to proactively check in with them on a regular basis,” announced ITV in a statement.

The UK show last year received 120,000 applications – which are accepted on a rolling basis, until each series comes to an end – and has so far received 75,000 applications for the 2019 programme. A nine-person team has been meeting potential cast members since January, with an “aspirational” group of 40 set to be presented to Cowles, other key execs and the network later this month.

“*Love Island* is basically teasing up the summer that’s to come, and it’s the summer you wish you could take part in, so we want to populate the villa with people who make viewers feel like they also want to be in there, getting to know them,” says Cowles.

“Aftercare is not an afterthought”

Because *Love Island* is filmed and broadcast within days, with the cast stripped of smartphones and prohibited from contact with the outside world, they are largely oblivious to real-time reactions online.

This wasn’t the case, however, for E4’s *Shipwrecked* reboot, which took a group of young castaways to

“At some point, you have to hand the baton on to other people because they’re not part of the show anymore”

Richard Cowles, ITV





Channel 4's *Naked Attraction*

the South Pacific's Cook Islands for two months last summer, with the finished show stripped across two weeks in February.

Executive producer Neale Simpson explains that “the whole show was in the can, so the cast knows what’s happening and they can see the journey they’re going on.”

While the show does a battery of psychological testing and provides 24/7 counselling during the show, what it has ramped up from previous series of the programme, which last aired in 2012, is an acute awareness of social media.

“We have made sure we are communicating with contestants daily, especially when we know there are big stories coming up, just so we can talk through things with them,” says Simpson, citing a WhatsApp Group with the cast.

“Twitter is a very hostile, dysfunctional place where we put a disproportionate sense of value on the full audience’s reaction to a show,” he explains, noting that of the show’s average consolidated audience of 800,000, less than 0.2% was engaging on Twitter.

“But that’s not what our cast see, so we felt a duty of care to make them understand that Twitter is a toxic place.”

Emma Shearer, head of casting for the Banijay Rights-distributed format, notes that “aftercare is not an afterthought” but rather a “constant part of the casting process”.

“We’re in a fortunate position of power and whenever anyone enters into a programme, we have to be prepared to support them.”

Studio Lambert, producers of Channel 4 dating show *Naked Attraction*, similarly bears a great responsibility with its contestants, who appear on the show fully nude – a task that takes on a different weight when around 85% of the show’s applicants are aged 18-35.

Mike Cotton, deputy creative director at Studio

Lambert, explains that the casting process is “lengthy” and includes several background, social media and psychological checks and interviews, many of which are filmed.

“I pride myself on the fact that everyone who takes part in the show comes out having a positive experience.”

Cotton highlights that appropriate safeguards are in place ahead of filming, with contestants provided an “out” until the very end.

“We tell them they may be 20 years old now but in 20 years’ time, a screengrab of the episode can crop up, and are they fully aware of that. They then talk to a psychologist who makes sure they are [mentally] robust and have considered all options,” he says.

“In studio, we also have reserve contestants that they know about, so they can change their minds at any point. Because we do all these things, we haven’t had any issues further down the line.”

Real talk

Unlike some youth-targeting reality shows, MTV’s elimination-free *The Real World* features the same group of seven housemates throughout a series, and has consistently covered a range of topics, never shying away from broaching the personal and political.

One of the longest-running unscripted shows in the history of reality television, the show last aired on MTV in 2016 but is being revived on Facebook Watch later this year, produced by Bunim/Murray in association with MTV Studios.

Megan Sleeper, SVP of casting, explains that instead of tiptoeing around mental health, the show embraces these struggles.

“Some young adults do suffer from depression and anxiety and a lot of the times that’s part of their story. Certainly, that does get discussed as part of the casting process,” says Sleeper.

However, she also highlights a robust “risk process” taken to ensure cast members are “in a healthy place” when they do join up, including a background check process and psychological evaluations.

Interestingly, social media is being incorporated into the Facebook Watch programme, with users of the platform getting to vote for the show’s final roommate via a polling function on the site.

“When we took a look at the season being made for Facebook, we wanted to engage the audience and give them the opportunity to let us know what speaks to them and who they want to see. It lets them get their voice heard,” says Sleeper.

The reboot’s Facebook page has more than 761,000 fans so far. **TBI**

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Formats Hot Picks The top international formats hitting the Croisette



Race Across The World

Distributor: All3Media International

Producer: Studio Lambert

Broadcaster: BBC Two (UK)

Logline: Pairs of travellers must race to the Far East without taking a single flight and without the use of smartphones

Race Across The World finds a group of contestants working in pairs to get themselves from London to Singapore without air travel or their phones.

With only the cash equivalent of an air fare to get to their destination to pay for overland travel, they must use whatever means necessary – from trains to pick-up trucks, ferries to tuk-tuks – to cross entire continents.

Nick Smith, SVP of format production for All3Media International, says the 6 x 60-minute format was inspired by society’s reliance on technology and how it impacts how we travel.

“We now travel over countries, rather than through them. The absence of technology – whether that be smartphones, or

even aeroplanes – gives our travellers the opportunity to authentically experience the country they are traveling through.”

The show – which had a strong launch on BBC Two in the UK, exceeding its slot average by 24% – will likely draw comparisons to that other around-the-world format *The Amazing Race*. However, Smith says the distributor will sell *Race Across The World* to all territories, even those that already air *The Amazing Race*.

“The format’s main offering is the freedom and authenticity it affords the contributors.

They can travel, work and sleep wherever they want, meaning they get to control their own experience – this is where it differs to other travel challenge shows,” he says.

The show can also be scaled, focusing on smaller or larger areas geographic areas. “It is versatile. Participants don’t even have to be from the same country it is filmed in. There are also opportunities in joint country commissions,” he says.

All3Media International is courting a number of buyers and is already fielding “numerous offers” for the show on the back of excellent ratings on BBC Two.



The Brigade: Return To The Hudson

Distributor: Kew Media Distribution

Producer: Media Headquarters

Broadcaster: Sky Kids (UK)

Logline: A group of strangers must work together to conquer cross-country wilderness for \$500,000

Produced by Kew Media Group-backed Media Headquarters, this “co-operative” competition series forces 10 strangers to travel more than 1,000km across a historic fur trade route and pool their skills and resources to claim a cash prize.

Looking to bring something different to the survival space, *The Brigade* is inspired by past legendary expeditions when individuals depended on each other to survive and succeed.

“This sparked the idea of a competition format where the goal is to stay together as a team against the odds, rather than be the last one standing,” says Jonathan Ford, EVP of sales for Kew Media Distribution.

Another distinct quality of the format is its lack of produced challenges. “The adventure is very real,” he says. “There are no produced challenges – there’s just 750

miles of dangerous and remote wilderness. It’s a true adventure from point A to point B with 28 days to make it to the other side.”

What’s significant, too, is the historical element of the trade route, which “in many ways, is reviving the lost art of waterway travel”, according to Ford, who notes that the historic angle grounds the format in a rich backstory.

“However, that angle is not paramount. At its heart, the format is about an extraordinary survival challenge facing a group of 10 strangers, and whether they can come together as a team to tackle a daring wilderness race in a limited amount of time.”

Ford is focusing on global finished tape sales before turning attention to format deals in Europe and English-speaking countries such as Australia and New Zealand, and eventually Asia.

The Secret Song

Distributor: Vivendi Entertainment

Producer: DMLS TV

Broadcaster: TF1 (France)

Logline: An unassuming celebrity is surprised by a famous friend or family member who serenades them with a favourite song

A pilot for shiny-floor format *The Secret Song* debuted on French commercial broadcaster TF1 in late December to become the best launch of a new unscripted show in France in 2018.

The format – which will return for two more episodes this fall – finds major celebrities, including singers, TV hosts, comedians and athletes, seated in a special chair in the middle of a stage to watch other artists, friends and family surprise them with a new take on a song close to their heart.

Matthieu Porte, EVP of international and development for Vivendi, says *The Secret Song* is catered specifically to celebrity participants, noting that “the goal is to surprise people like Taylor Swift and Elton John”.

“If you want the show to be emotional for the person sitting in the chair as well as the studio audience on site and viewer at

home, you need to have people sitting in the chair who are national treasures,” he says.

What’s particularly heart-warming about the format is when other singers also join in on the song being sung. “Quite often, these are even bigger celebrities, or family and friends you would never have expected to be singers,” adds Porte.

Vivendi is close to securing a commission with a Finnish broadcaster, and there is also broadcaster interest from Germany and Mexico as well. Meanwhile, the format has been optioned by Endemol in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Porte says the show can be produced as a one-off special or a series with self-contained episodes. For smaller channels, series orders that make full use of a custom-built studio may be more economically feasible. Target broadcasters in the US and UK include the likes of NBC and BBC One.



Mums Make Porn

Distributor: Passion Distribution

Producer: Firecracker Films

Broadcaster: Channel 4 (UK)

Logline: Mothers of teenagers are given the tools to write, direct and produce their very own porn film

Channel 4's bold 3 x 60-minute doc series tackles an important issue in a humorous and relatable way, confronting the realities of how porn is made, as well as the ease of access and its societal influence.

The programme's show-stopping premise challenges five mothers to work together and write, cast, direct and edit a film that is effectively "ethical porn".

The doc was in good hands with Firecracker Films – the producers of such shows as *The Sex Clinic* and *Single Mums Club* – which has a rich history of tackling difficult subjects with mischief, purpose and a sense of journalism, according to Nick Tanner, director of sales and co-productions for Passion.

"Can the mums create a

film that promotes a happier, healthier and more real portrayal of sex? It's this unique concept that allows the show to

address the issues head-on but also be engaging, entertaining and often funny. It's an eye-popping and eventful journey," explains Tanner.

Interestingly, the format is more scalable than one might assume. "Porn is a worldwide issue," says Tanner. "The show is a formatted social experiment captured in a documentary

style."

As such, he reckons that the format is "highly adaptable" for broadcasters outside the UK.

Passion has so far received interest from broadcasters and producers across Europe, Australasia and the US, though the exec admits that it may be "too confronting" for more conservative territories.



No Sleep No FOMO

Distributor: The Story Lab

Producer: Gleam Productions

Broadcaster: Viu (Asia)

Logline: Two celebrities have 60 hours in a new city to complete the ultimate bucket list, all on zero sleep

Few of us envision checking off the items on our bucket list in 60 hours but that's the task at hand for two celebrities in Story Lab's latest offering, who must manage to do as much on no sleep.

OTT service Viu is keen to build on young audience engagement through the show by allowing users and viewers to interact with the talent and help to navigate the direction of each episode through its Facebook partnership, which has been especially created for *No*

Sleep No FOMO.

"This format is full of colour, fun, excitement, drama and interactivity allowing all viewers and users to engage with the talent and content throughout the show. It connects cultures and transcends boundaries," explains Fotini Paraskakis, EVP of entertainment for the distributor.

The exec points out that the business collaborated with Viu on the format, marking a "natural next step" for the partners.

"Viu is one of the fastest



growing OTT platforms in the region and we were both keen to partner on a project that would further expand our reach creatively and commercially," she tells TBI.

Paraskakis expects the format to travel extensively "as its core concept really resonates with millennials and how they live their lives today".

The distributor has already received interest from the US, Europe and Latin America. In terms of platform, the exec says the format's flexibility in both content and duration allows it to work well on any platform, whether a traditional linear player or an OTT service like Viu.

"It's very buyer-friendly," she adds.

Secret Body

Distributor: Sony Pictures Television

Producer: Stellify Media

Broadcaster: BBC Scotland (UK)

Logline: A body positive transformation show that sees two contributors eating and living better – in secret

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? producer Stellify Media's latest offering is billed as the world's first undercover weight-loss show. Each self-contained, hour-long episode finds two contributors spending six months eating and living better, in secret, in order to prepare for a major life event.

Guided by expert weight-loss coaches, the participants hide their progress from friends and family through a specially designed "fat suit" that is moulded to their bodies and changes over the six months to conceal their transformation until the big reveal.

Kieran Doherty, co-MD of Stellify Media, describes the programme as a "body-positive transformation show" that has consciously opted not to focus on weight loss or scales.

"Rather, we focus on real-world goals, such as being able to play with your children, getting back into a hobby or increased energy and positivity. That's the metric we use to measure success, and weight

loss is a by-product of the process."

Each contributor receives three to four iterations of the skin-tight spandex suit, which has various bunches and pouches of fat that move around, explains Doherty, who adds that the suits are "reasonably comfortable" and, crucially, not prohibitively expensive.

The exec notes that the show starts just prior to the reveal and leaps back in time to the start of the process. "It keeps building up to the reveal," says Doherty.

"The fact that our weight loss is hidden means we don't have to use a linear edit like other transformation shows. We can show the end at the start without giving the game away."

The unique undercover element, alongside the body-positive nature of the experiment, has already resulted in early inquiries into the format, which will premiere as a pilot on BBC Scotland.



Drag Lab

Distributor: Hat Trick International

Producer: Summer Films

Broadcaster: Channel 4 (UK)

Logline: A British drag collective gives guests lacking in confidence a drag makeover



Summer Films' 6 x 60-minute series centers on one of the UK's most popular drag collectives, Manchester's The Family Gorgeous, which hosts a monthly workshop where they teach guests how to unleash their inner divas through drag.

"Drag is a joyous celebration," explains Sarah Tong, director of sales for Hat Trick International, discussing the recent appetite for drag-themed shows on the back of success for formats such as *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

"In a world where identity matters, what could be better than celebrating the biggest and most fabulous side of ourselves?"

In the series, The Family Gorgeous takes its 'drag lab' on tour across the UK via a flamboyant glitter bus, working within various communities and culminating in a show-stopping performance for

family, friends and locals.

Tong explains that the format – which is intended to air in a primetime slot – brings drag into the mainstream and "shouts that drag is for everybody, whether you're gay or straight, old or young, man or woman.

"Doing drag for the very first time takes courage and this series uses the power of drag as a kind of therapy, taking contributors from all walks of life on genuinely emotional journeys to build their confidence, do something hard and achieve something fabulous."

Hat Trick International is to sell both finished tape of the show as well as format rights. Because it is a human-interest doc as well as an entertainment format, Tong says the distributor will target a "range of networks and platforms all over the globe".



Mental Samurai

Distributor: Warner Bros. International Television Production
Producer: A. Smith & Co. Productions, Warner Horizon Unscripted & Alternative Television, Apploff Entertainment
Broadcaster: Fox (US)
Logline: Contestants answer trivia testing mental agility and intelligence while traveling at high speeds in a specially designed capsule

Host and executive producer Rob Lowe, who was in the UK for Warner Bros.’ first UK Screenings event in February, called the studio’s latest offering *Ninja Warrior* a format for the

mind for the mind. The show’s scene-stealing centerpiece is a German-manufactured mechanical arm that is used in everything from production lines to theme

parcs, which rotates and spins contestants as they try to answer various trivia questions across a “mental obstacle course” that feature four pillars of questions, covering general knowledge, memory, puzzle solving and sequencing.

“If you have a blind spot, this game will find it,” says Lowe, who notes that “failure is almost the best part” of the show. The actor gives the example of an astronaut contestant, who was out on the first question – a surprising feat given astronauts train in similar fast-moving capsules.

Indeed, the show’s set-up provides a unique opportunity for a range of contestants, and Lowe says casting is a key part of the format.

“We found fantastic people,” says Lowe of the US programme, which premiered in March. “They’re all really interesting and unbelievably smart. I talked to people that trained by riding rollercoasters while being quizzed

by their family.” Andrew Zein, SVP creative for format development and sales at WBTV, says there is hub potential for the show following a first international series commission. Two territories are in active discussions, while “plenty more” are interested. The exec also reassures that the arm, which is called ‘Ava’ out of the US, is not as expensive as it looks on screen, and can easily be replicated.

Zein also adds that the celebrity aspect of the show is flexible. If the format launches in primetime, an A-class star will surely draw an audience. “However, in other territories, *Mental Samurai* might well play in prime access or stripped” which will change the tone of the show.

“It’s a really fun and engaging programme,” says Zein. “The way it has been cut together is similar to *Ninja Warrior*, and provides for a fun, pacey commercial hour.”

Dating No Filter

Distributor: NBCUniversal International Formats
Producer: Lime Pictures, All3Media America
Broadcaster: E! (US)
Logline: Comedians provide play-by-play commentary on blind dates

US cable channel E!’s new entertainment format provides a hilarious, honest take on the state of modern dating, with three pairs of comedians providing up-to-the-second commentary on blind dates.

With dating back in vogue across the formats world with shows such as Netflix’s *Dating Around* and BBC Three’s *Eating With My Ex* building steady buzz, *Dating No Filter* comes at an opportune time.

However, Ana Langenberg, SVP of format sales and

production for NBCUniversal International Formats, says the show’s light-hearted nature differentiates it from similar offerings.

“Other shows have been more serious – with people actually looking for more committed relationships. *Dating No Filter* has a lightness and sense of humour I haven’t seen before. At its core, it has a warm heart, but it is still very frank and funny.”

Fittingly, the comedians on the show – some of them with

successful followings and top YouTube channels that draw major audiences of their own – hold nothing back and offer up opinions on every single awkward interaction and heart-warming moment that takes place between two strangers.

The 20 x 30-minute format premiered on E! in January, stripped across four nights of the week.

“We have had interest from multiple territories and I think it could work anywhere – dating is such a universal and modern aspect of most cultures, and so is comedy,” explains Langenberg.

“The show is not expensive to produce and it can be done in so many ways. It’s also very inclusive, so can show and represent people of different sexual orientations.”





HOME ALONE



DANCE SING



THE LOVED ONES

THE DESERT

قمر النفود





Viewpoint Kieran Doherty

Making a physical gameshow for Netflix

“Wayne Garvie called and asked if we had anything to pitch Netflix. He told us we’d have about 20 minutes to pitch our ideas. A couple of weeks later, we were commissioned. Straight to series. Ten episodes. Go. It was as quick and painless as that.”

Kieran Doherty is joint -MD of Sony-owned Stellify Media, producers of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*

It all started when Stellify joint-MD Matt Worthy had an idea for a gameshow where you are not allowed to move – and if you do move, something terrible happens to you.

That was enough of a hook for us to decide to make a taster tape for *Flinch*. Tom Popay [head of development, Stellify Media] pulled together an amazing team and filmed it in Matt’s barn, and because everyone in the sizzle is a friend of the company, it meant we could get away with doing the most unspeakable things to them. The craic was great. If I close my eyes, I can still hear their screams.

A few weeks later, Wayne Garvie, president of international production at Sony Pictures Television, called and asked if we had anything to pitch Netflix. He told us we’d have about 20 minutes to pitch our ideas. I think I was actually watching the tape when he called. We decided to only pitch *Flinch*.

A couple of weeks later, we were commissioned. Straight to series. Ten episodes. Go. It was as quick and painless as that.

Making a show for Netflix was unlike anything we’d ever experienced before. All the usual rules go out the window instantly. There is no time slot. There is no hard and fast episode duration. There is no pre or post-watershed. There isn’t even a transmission date. It’s at once liberating and slightly terrifying. Thankfully, our commissioner Nat Grouille had seen this panic in the eyes of a producer before and patiently explained the only thing that mattered was the content: make it like the sizzle was the mantra.

We’d be launching in multiple territories at once, so we had to make sure a non-English-speaking audience would enjoy it as much as an English-speaking audience. As Nat pointed out, we had a few

things going for us. The idea was easy to understand in any language— and so are screams. Ultimately, we just needed to make sure we didn’t overly complicate things.

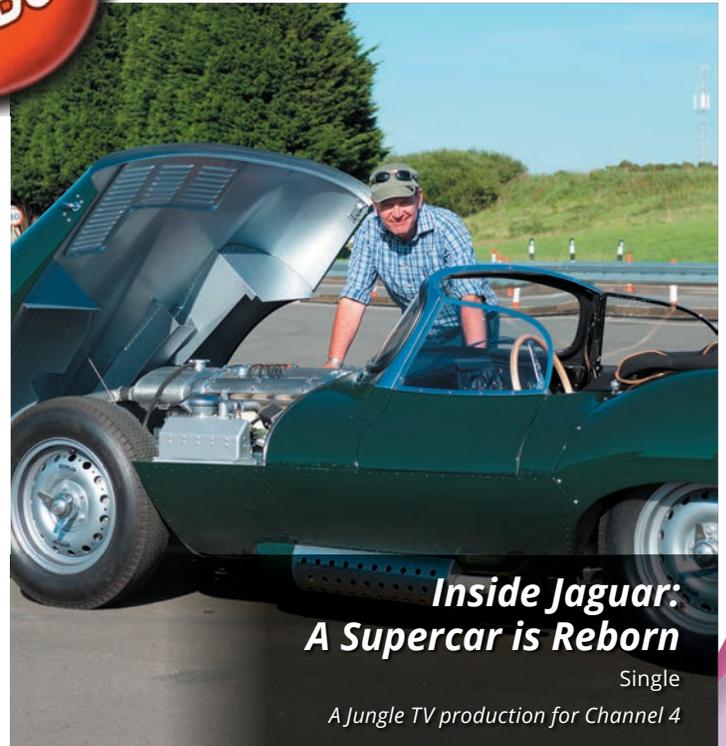
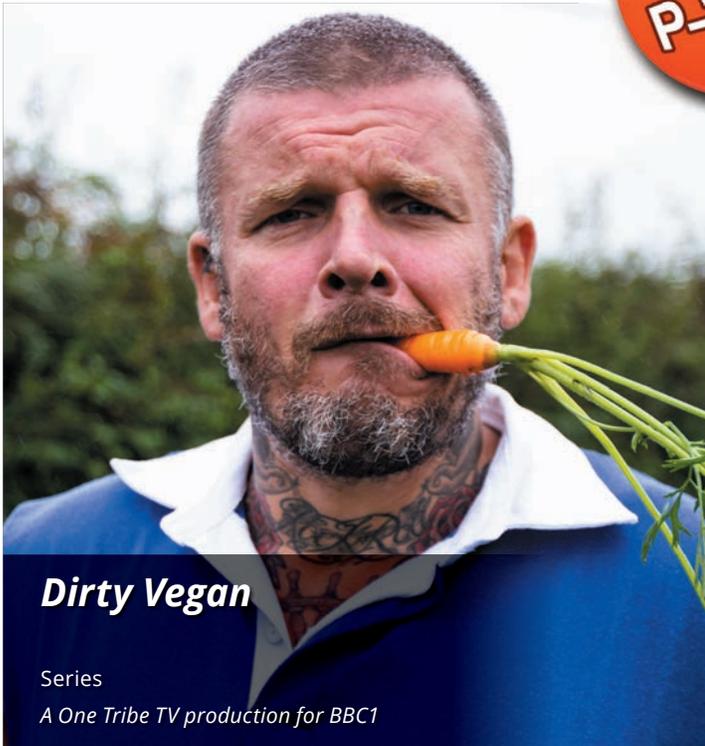
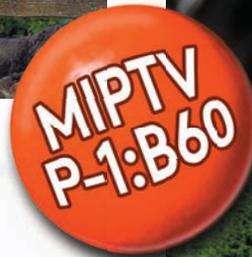
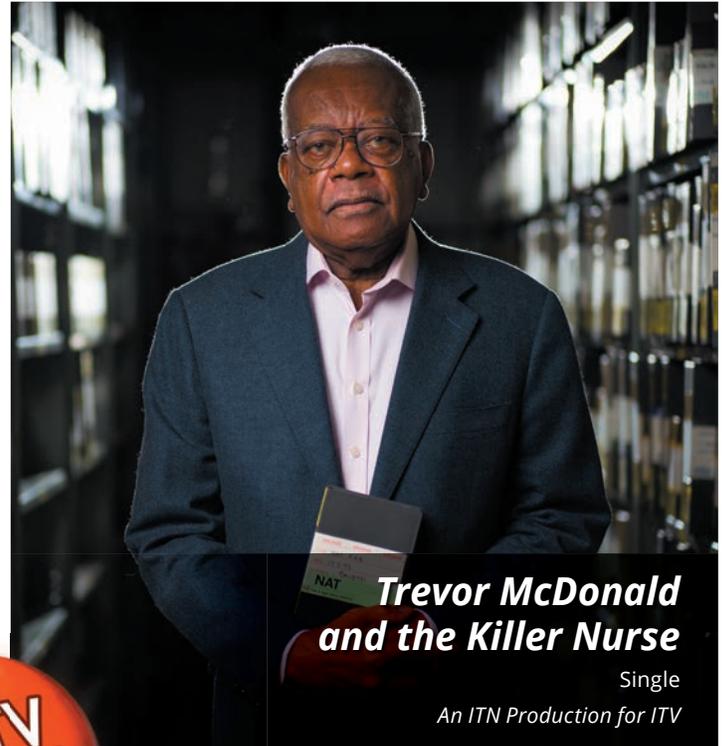
We set ourselves an unbreakable rule: the games should not require elaborate explanation. A wide shot should tell us everything we need to know. Our producer Paddy McKenna had a test to determine this - if he walked past your seat on an airplane and the show was playing on your iPad, would he understand what was going on from the tiniest of glimpses and with no sound? If the answer was no, the game wasn’t for us.

Once we’d settled on the games we hired a comic book artist called PJ Holden to storyboard them. We did this primarily as a way of visually pitching the games to Netflix, but these drawings also served as a great resource for the crew and our fearless games director Joe Campo, who used the drawings as a guide when it came to shooting.

We shot in an abandoned farm in the middle of the Northern Irish countryside during the summer, so as you can imagine, it was absolutely freezing. The production crew were indefatigable. Our three hosts – Llyod Griffiths, Desiree Burch and Seann Walsh – were fantastic. And our cast of contributors were brilliant sports, even when we were torturing them for our own amusement.

The edit was another new experience. When there is no hard duration to stick to, you really can make the best version of your show. Like I said before, this was liberating but also terrifying. Are we too long? Are we too short? I don’t think any two episodes are the same length. When Netflix says it’s all about the content and nothing else matters – they really mean it. **TBI**

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Old money, new players face off for unscripted

A wealth of shiny digital entrants may well suggest TV is currently a supplier's market, but sustainable business models in unscripted are still lacking, particularly as stalwarts such as Discovery and Nat Geo endure major upheaval. Manori Ravindran reports

“Old money” cable networks and broadcasters and cash-flush digital players converged earlier this year for what is becoming an annual face-off at the Realscreen Summit, with the former staging much public hand-wringing around the embattled US cable landscape while the latter conduct low-key meetings with international producers, with the likes of Jeffrey Katzenberg’s Quibi seducing indie producers with upwards of \$120,000 per-minute budgets for high-end content.

However, it was abundantly clear that a production community increasingly spoilt for choice between linear and digital partners is still grappling with shrinking economies as it struggles to recoup back-end revenue and rights.

New players, new models

The number of digital buyers who made the trip to New Orleans was notably greater than in previous years, and included the likes of Facebook unscripted boss Toby Faulkner and Snap unscripted head Seth Goolnik. Amazon Studios also sent an acquisitions exec and business affairs exec to the market for a limited period.

However, the one player that had prodcos buzzing was mobile streamer Quibi, who was represented on the ground by new acquisitions exec Kate Presutti.

Set to launch later this year with AVOD and SVOD tiers, the business is to spend an estimated \$497m on acquired content made at premium levels. While a “super-premium” scripted show could fetch \$125,000 per minute, an unscripted original could receive a budget of \$50,000 per minute.

Elsewhere, producers were also the targets of charm offensives by new AVOD – or ad-supported – entrants Tubi and Pluto TV, which has been newly acquired by Viacom.

Noting that AVOD is the future of linear TV, Tubi chief content officer Adam Lewinson claims that in two years, AVOD and SVOD partners will achieve parity in the market around viewership and highlighted the “strategic advantages for unscripted content living within an ad-supported environment.”

“Trial and error” time for producers

James Joyce, head of development for finance programming-focused prodcos and SVOD Real Vision, points out that producers are desperately trying to figure out “how to play in digital” when the OTT landscape still remains “uncharted”.

“People are doing a lot of trial and error right now

trying to figure it out, and over the next couple of years, OTT will become very well-defined,” he tells TBI.

“There are more platforms than ever and more channels to distribute to, so that gives producers a lot more choice to get their content out to market. It also puts us in the driver’s seat in negotiations, where we can be upfront about the fact that a series can be perfect for PBS but can also be sold into Netflix.”

However, Mathew Gonzalez of Colorado-based Plebian Pictures warns that while there is “a lot of money lying on the table, it is too widely dispersed.”

“Historically, when the market was dominated by linear players and those brands were thriving, you could be a producer working for a few networks because you had your niche and the budgets were strong. But now with all the online buyers, you’re splitting up the pie in so many ways that the money isn’t as good as it was in one place.”

John Ford, GM of US producers’ trade body NPACT, estimates that the value of a typical nonfiction programme during its cable or network run has declined 10-20% – a scenario that has led to some networks mandating around 10-30% reductions in budgets year-on-year; reducing or eliminating budget bumps when renewing series; and placing smaller series orders.

Sam Sniderman, EVP of global production for Blue Ant Media, notes that some of the Canadian business’ roster of prodcos have historically been “very reliant on the US cable industry, and that has hurt.”

“Things are still happening but they’re slower than they used to be. We are trying to shift the business to be able to sell to new players in the market. They buy some of the same shows but their approach is different and has required us to reorganise things a little bit.”

Selling into Netflix and Amazon, says Sniderman, requires a different development process as the platforms are more talent-focused and keen on star directors and EPs than cable networks.

Gonzalez, whose recent credits include Food Network’s *Food Truck Fan Fight* with celeb chef Eddie Jackson, adds that producers increasingly have to do the talent packaging that, traditionally, an agent would do, and spend longer developing these projects.

“The beauty of classic reality TV is that the content is relatively inexpensive, because you’re dealing with real people, so you can go out and make tape cheaply. But as we start to go and engage celebs because they will cut through, it’s costing a lot more money because big-name talent wants a slice of the project.

While the climate may lead some to wonder what ‘premium’ even means if so much content is now made at premium levels, Chris Bonney, CEO of

Nat Geo’s *Free Solo*
(opposite)

“There is plenty of great stuff being developed, conceived and explored in the market, but the concepts are more strongly thought through and tightly focused”

Chris Bonney
Cineflix Rights



Cineflix Rights, says distributors are not necessarily complaining.

“There is plenty of great stuff being developed, conceived and explored in the market, but the concepts are more strongly thought through and tightly focused. That’s been welcome. The demands and trendsetting of the SVOD players has helped to shape the quality.”

However, Bonney notes that the challenges are “even greater” to secure the right business model for financing.

“Because linear broadcasters have slightly tighter purse strings and less per-hour budgets available, it is putting pressure on producers. But for distributors, it is creating opportunity and we are playing a more pivotal role in the financing process at an earlier stage.”

Nat Geo and Discovery’s new normal

Another factor affecting the US unscripted market is the “identity shift” taking place at companies such as Discovery, which marked its Realscreen debut as a merged entity with Scripps; as well as Nat Geo, which forms part of the Disney+ SVOD platform now that the Disney-Fox merger has closed.

“Scripps was a strictly lifestyle brand, and now Discovery is wondering how to add its DNA to those



The Day We Walked On The Moon (right), *Red Table Talk* (below)



brands,” explains Plebian’s Gonzalez.

“You have a tremendous churn around where executives end up, and there’s been a lot of shifting. Anytime you have that kind of mix, it’s going to be challenging.”

TBI understands that some channels within Scripps portfolio are now being restructured to focus more on second-run content, with new programming out of the Cooking Channel, for example, coming to a standstill, and commissioning instead coming out of the Food Network – one of Scripps’ more established brands.

Indeed, Nancy Daniels, chief brand officer for Discovery and Factual, jokingly admitted that the flagship brand is “stealing” top shows on smaller channels, with programming such as Travel Channel’s *Expedition Unknown* now getting a second window on the main Discovery channel.

While the added exposure is beneficial, it could mean there is potentially less opportunity to incubate talent on smaller channels and grow a brand, as ratings pressure will be much higher on Discovery.

Also, producers could be left at a disadvantage if programmes continue to be ordered out of the smaller commissioning budgets of Scripps’ networks, only to end up on the main channel.

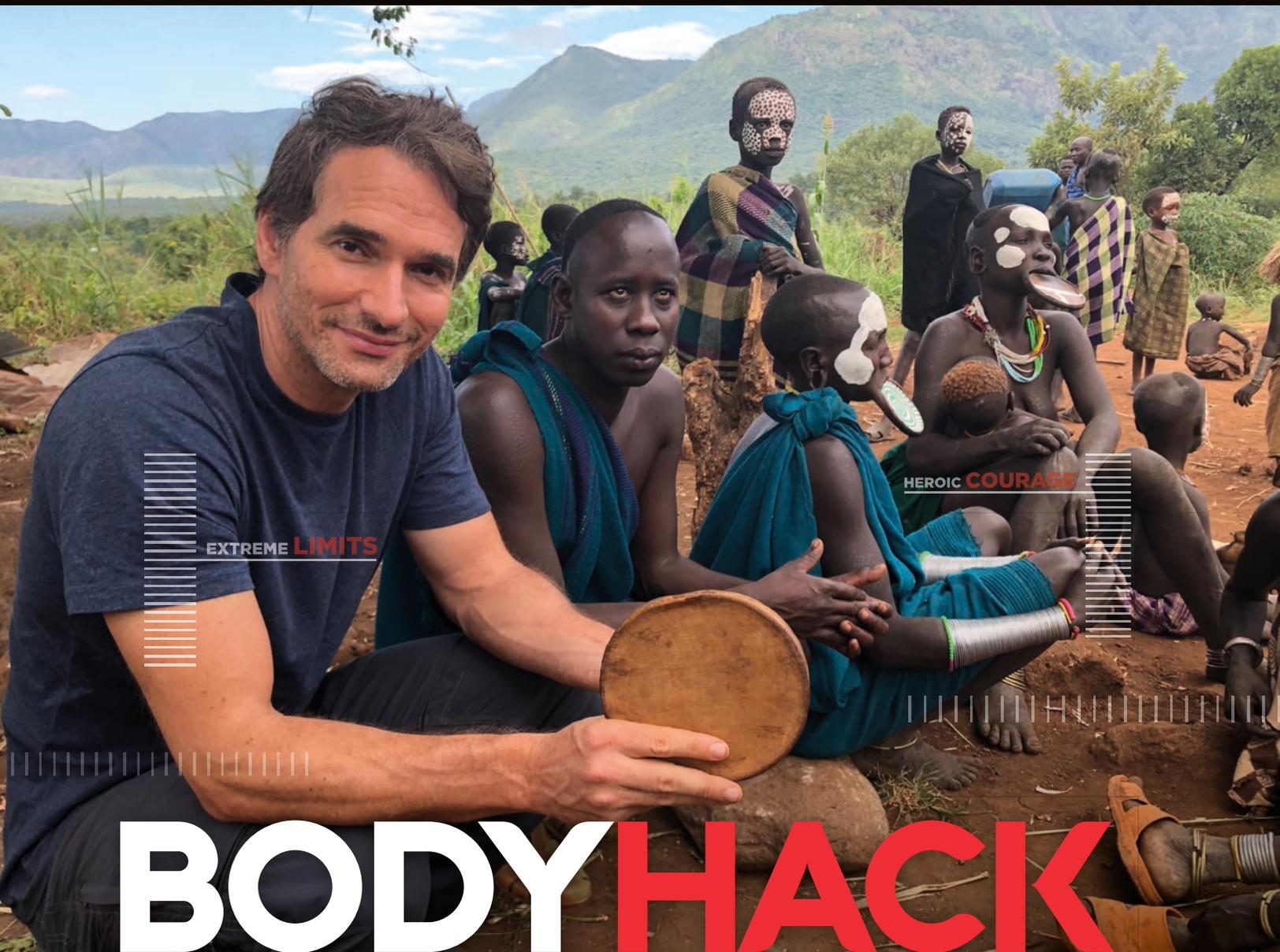
However, restructuring has not necessarily been a bad thing. Cineflix Rights’ Bonney notes that there is a “much more decentralised structure in the acquisitions side of both Nat Geo and Discovery”.

“They are involving the regions much more than they previously would, even if it’s an acquisition made across a whole international territory or globally where available.

“Previously, we might not have sold directly to Nat Geo in Eastern Europe, but we’re now doing that quite regularly. Perhaps that’s opened up some individual opportunities we didn’t have before, because that region might have a particular need that couldn’t be filled because of a centralised strategy.”

TBI understands that Nat Geo has said to producers – many of whom are now pitching the business with family-friendly Disney+ in mind – to wait for more details around how the Disney-Fox merger and their positioning on Disney+ will affect commissioning dollars.

Nat Geo EVP of global unscripted Geoff Daniels tells TBI: “The focus for Disney+ is more in the family-friendly space, but that’s not to be confused with kids or necessarily content for co-viewing. The idea is that we are going to offer something from the Nat Geo perspective that everyone in the family can be passionate about. It’s going to be safe and entertaining.” **TBI**



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Breaking down a world-class documentary

CNN Worldwide's Amy Entelis breaks down how to build a world-class doc like *Three Identical Strangers* and the Oscar-nominated feature *RBG*.

Since launching an originals strategy in 2012, CNN has built a formula for its series and films that has repeatedly produced award-winning non-scripted programming.

This formula, according to Amy Entelis, executive VP for talent and content development at CNN Worldwide, is based on building context for audiences as they encounter increasingly complex political and social moments in history.

This year, CNN surpassed itself by getting both *Three Identical Strangers* and Ruth Bader Ginsburg feature doc *RBG* onto the Oscars shortlist, with *RBG* going on to be an Oscar nominee and the favourite to win before being narrowly beaten by Nat Geo's *Free Solo*.

Here are the elements that made a success, according to Entelis:

Follow the cult of personality

RBG follows the life and career of the second female US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg who has not only built a legacy fighting for gender equality, but also a mass pop culture following that has spawned merchandising from coffee mugs to toy figurines.

It's these types of strong personalities that have driven documentary success over the past few years, according to Entelis.

"I think that docs that highlight inspirational people – people who have changed the world – have been especially successful in the last year," she says. "People are looking for that kind of encouragement."

This focus on individual experiences has been in place



“Docs that highlight inspirational people – people who have changed the world – have been especially successful in the last year”

since CNN's first forays into long-form programming. Entelis says the “special personalities” that front CNN series are one of the key reasons for its success in the programming arena over the past few years.

Individuals leading the pack include stand-up comedian W. Kamau Bell and his *United Shades Of America* series and Lisa Ling with the docuseries *This Is Life With Lisa Ling*, but the focus on big personalities really began with Anthony Bourdain and *Parts Unknown* – CNN's most successful title to date.

“We rely on our hosts to give us a point of view and take on whatever story they are engaged in,” she says. “So our hosts of original series have a little more license to follow their passions, give us a point of view and tell it to us in a special voice.”

CNN tragically lost Bourdain as a key host in June 2018 after the travel documentarian and celebrity chef died by suicide. Entelis says CNN will not look for a direct replacement for the series, but will try and capture its essence across other programming.

“We think it was more or less lightning in a bottle and it would be very hard to go out and try to recreate it,” says Entelis.

“We are just going to keep on looking for and creating beautiful programming that can capture the essence of what *Parts Unknown* meant to our viewers, without looking to make a carbon copy of it.”

Focus on commissions over acquisitions

CNN has an acquisitions and commissioning model for feature documentaries. While the former led to breakthrough films such as the critically acclaimed

SeaWorld doc *Blackfish*, Entelis says the channel has increasingly leaned on commissioning over the past few years.

“The acquisitions model is a little bit riskier because you have to wait for things to show up and bid against a lot of other people who might have deeper pockets,” she says.

“We can’t rely on filling our slate with acquisitions, so we’re relying much more on people bringing us films before they’ve started them, and then we partner with the filmmaker from the beginning or midway.”

RBG arrived at CNN as an idea from co-directors Betsy West and Julie Cohen.

“They walked in the door and said, ‘Would you be interested in *RBG* if we get access to her?’ We immediately said yes,” explains Entelis.

“That’s a great example of a film that starts with a conversation and ends up, three years later, as an amazing film that we’re all incredibly proud of.”

CNN’s commissioning model also allows the channel to land projects at an earlier stage and help develop and elevate ideas with creators.

“We like getting in earlier and earlier with the filmmaker. That way, we can control its destiny and predict which films are ready for CNN, instead of being at the whim of the marketplace as you are with acquisitions,” explains Cohen, noting that each film is financed differently.

At times CNN underwrites entire films, while it actively finds partners for others.

Film festivals are key

While much has been made about Netflix eschewing theatrical releases in recent times, CNN has built a successful window model by attending film festivals and emphasising theatrical releases.



Three Identical Strangers
(above) and *RBG* (below)



The channel’s window strategy for films sees it submit projects to multiple film festivals and eventually launch in theatres. Only at the end of that cycle will the film air on CNN itself.

“This has been our successful strategy for six years and it’s working for us. Many people ask us why we go last, which is kind of counter intuitive. But we feel like the festival and theatrical roll out really increases the visibility of a film and brings a lot of attention to it,” she says.

“By the time it gets to CNN, we feel that many more people have heard of the film and want to see it. And we know that not many people go to see it in theatres, but we feel like there’s still a sizeable audience that remains to see that film on CNN.”

Know your audience

Entelis tells TBI that to stay ahead in a fiercely competitive documentary arena that has increasingly gained the attention of major streamers, knowing your audience is the key to success.

“It’s really about knowing what’s going to work on the CNN platform, who our viewer is, and what our viewer is interested in. If we stay true to that filter, we end up picking good shows,” she says.

“A lot of the shows we’re doing might not work on other platforms, so it’s a balance about knowing what works on your particular platform. In that way, you stay competitive.”

The demographic for CNN’s news audience is 60 years old, but Entelis says that original series and films have brought in new audiences that skew younger than its core audience.

“We’re bringing in a young audience and the key is to make sure that we make programming that the regular CNN viewer would also find appealing and appropriate for what CNN means to them,” explains Entelis. **TBI**

Knocking down Netflix

What drove the record-breaking deal for a feature doc on US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez?



Netflix knocked down the house in February, dishing out \$10m for a high-profile film on newly appointed US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, more commonly known as AOC, and revealing a growing drive towards youth-targeting feature docs.

The sale for Rachel Lear’s *Knock Down The House* out of Sundance is the most lucrative doc sale to come out of a festival, doubling Netflix’s own \$5m deal for Bryan Fogel’s Russian doping scandal doc *Icarus* out of the 2017 fest.

The streaming giant aggressively outbid rivals Amazon and Hulu and swooped for worldwide distribution rights, confirming that the premium doc boom – particularly for younger-skewing fare – is far from over.

Netflix’s hot pursuit of the film – which follows four US working-class women, including 29-year-old Ocasio-Cortez, running for Congress – comes on the heels of critical success for its doc *Fyre Festival*, which debuted in January and has already borne a reality show for scene-stealing event producer Andy King, who took “taking one for the team” to the next level.

Fyre Festival – which famously lured social media influencers who paid thousands of dollars for an event that was doomed from the outset – was also the subject of Hulu original *Fyre Fraud*, which dropped days before Netflix’s film.

Adam Hawkins, EVP of US television for Raw TV, producer of the Oscar-shortlisted CNN and Channel 4-backed feature doc *Three Identical Strangers*, says the two films are likely “the most significant documentaries of the last year”, based purely on the youth

demographic they have been able to capture.

“They have changed the landscape almost overnight. They have been hugely successful, they haven’t detracted from each other and they have reached a much younger demographic,” he says.

“As networks and programme-makers, we can cater to that audience. That’s what will stop the doc boom ending – to make things that are smart but which also skew fairly young.

“There has been a tradition of making docs that were wilfully niche or that felt like they weren’t for everyone. And if we can tell those stories in entertaining ways that engage younger people, then we’re in a good way.”

It’s fitting, then, that Netflix would pay millions more for a film featuring the wildly popular Ocasio-Cortez than it did for dramas such as *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil And Vile*, which it bought for \$9m.

“Everyone is documenting. Gen-Z is constantly with their smartphones. I imagine the *Fyre Festival* doc is the first of many to come with access to these worlds that [older demographics] have no visibility of outside of Instagram,” said Rachel Brill, head of unscripted programming for US cable channel Epix.

Richard Klein, head of docs for Plimsoll Productions, adds that the “thirst” for long-form docs is partly borne of a glut of “very, very short-form stuff that is, after a while, relatively uncomplicated, uncomplex and not particularly insightful”.

“[Youth] are often looking for a bigger picture. There is a hunger for that, because I’m not sure young people are getting it when they’re watching *Love Island* or a reality show.” **TBI**



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Almost Fashionable – A Film About Travis

Distributor: Limonero Films

Producer: Gezellig Pictures in association with Final Cut

Logline: A music critic is invited by one of his least favourite bands to cover their tour in Mexico

What most people may not know about Scottish pop band Travis is that they have a thick skin. How else could any group invite one of their worst critics to join them on tour?

Travis frontman Fran Healy – who wrote many of the band’s hit songs, such as *Why Does It*

Always Rain On Me? and *Sing* – also directed the film.

The Los Angeles-based musician got the doc bug after making a film for the band’s last album and, looking to take a different angle on the rock doc, invited music journalist and Travis sceptic Wyndham Wallace to join them on a tour of Mexico.

“I knew Wyndham didn’t like the band and I thought that was a cool lens to look through, rather than have someone who could be fawning over us,” he says.

What ensues is a film that is as much about music

criticism as it is about the band, involving interviews with several not-so-favourable critics, who speak candidly about the group.

“There are some journalists in the doc who seem to be about music,” explains Healy. “There are others who are about music but also a bit about pizzazz and danger. If you’re not Jim Morrison or Amy Winehouse falling out of the local pub, they think it’s boring.

“Sitting for months on end listening to people talking about you – that took its toll,” laughs Healy. “I had to stop for three

weeks. I couldn’t take it. It got me sad.”

The resulting film, however, is a delightful snapshot of the iconic band drawing from around 90 hours of footage tour and archive of the group from its Britpop years.

The doc, which won the Audience Award at the 2018 Edinburgh International Film Festival, secured distribution recently through fledgling firm Limonero Films, after Healy met “maverick” distributor Pamela Martinez-Martinez at Amsterdam’s IDFA festival. TBI understands the film is close to a UK broadcast sale.

100 Vaginas

Distributor: TVF International

Producer: Burning Bright Productions

Broadcaster: Channel 4 (UK)

Logline: Women tell frank and powerful stories about the most intimate part of their bodies

Burning Bright's critically acclaimed documentary smashes taboos around women's bodies with frank interviews that yield powerful stories about periods, pubic hair, rape and female genital mutilation, birth, porn and the secrets of the clitoris.

"No subject matter was off-limits," says Will Stapley, head of acquisitions for London-based specialist factual distributor TVF International.

"The producers wanted to try and reflect the truth of women's experiences – either directly through their individual stories or thematically."

Intended to be a film that every woman can relate to in some way, *100 Vaginas* covers universal experiences – some through images that have never before been seen factually on TV.

It sets out to portray a piece of

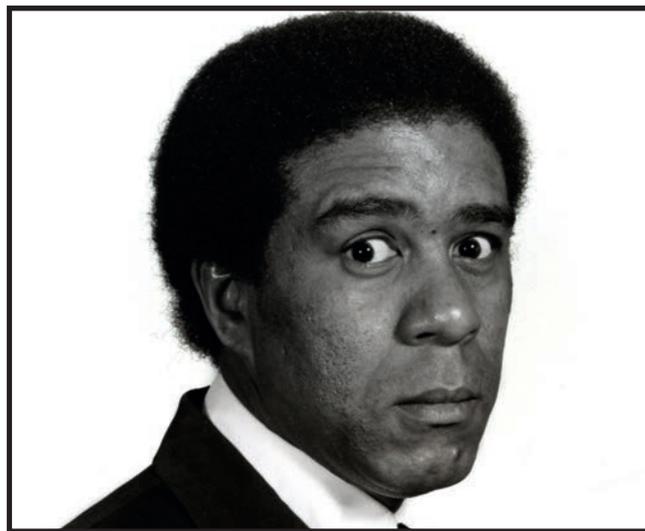
human anatomy that is generally misunderstood, simply because you rarely see accurate visual representations of the vagina.

"It's a groundbreaking doc both visually and editorially, and in the current climate, where there is greater focus on gender and sexual equality and the #MeToo movement, it has come at exactly the right time," says Stapley.

The producers' daring paid off for Channel 4, which drew a consolidated average audience of 1.4m (9.1%), making it the broadcaster's biggest documentary in a 10pm slot since March 2018.

Stapley says initial response to the film domestically has been "fantastic" and has translated to "huge interest" overseas.

"Some countries and broadcasters will be less inclined to accommodate due to stricter censorship laws, which certain VOD players don't have to abide by, but the point of the film is to take people out of their comfort zones, cross borders, break down prejudices and be a film that everyone can take something away from," he says.



I Am Richard Pryor

Distributor: Fremantle

Producer: Network Entertainment

Broadcaster: Paramount Network (US)

Logline: Inside the private life of the late American comic genius

Fresh from its SXSW premiere last month, Jesse James Miller's 90-minute film on Richard Pryor delves into the psyche of the late American genius, detailing his background as the child of a sex worker and pimp and subsequent rise to comic stardom.

Part of Fremantle's acclaimed *I Am...* doc strand, the film features interviews and a rich collection of archival footage and photography, using Pryor's own voice as narrator.

Fremantle's SVP of non-scripted content Angela Neillis says the film includes archive footage from Pryor's stints on *The Ed Sullivan Show* as well as his own programme, in addition to interviews with several famous comedians and filmmakers.

"It's a really interesting archive-interview combination that tells a fascinating story," she says, adding that Pryor's story details a struggle against the odds.

"It's a contemporary, relevant story because it's one of identity and race, particularly when you think about the Black Lives Matter movement," she explains.

"Pryor was very involved in politics because he presented a popular face to the wide mainstream audience, but he had a lot to say about politics and race at the same time."

Fremantle has had initial interest in the film from a number of broadcasters on the back of sales success for *I Am Paul Walker*, on the late *Fast And The Furious* actor.

"Comedy is always more of a niche interest, but with Pryor's Hollywood credentials, it goes beyond the niche," says Neillis.

The distributor is now investing heavily in premium factual and is pursuing "all the classic factual genres head on", looking to bolster its slate with natural history, history and music, including US cable channel Epix's highly anticipated series *Punk*.



The House of Extraordinary People

Distributor: TCB Media Rights

Producer: Hey Sonny Films

Broadcaster: Channel 5 (UK)

Logline: Nine amazing people from all over the world live together for 10 days to challenge the prejudices they encounter daily

Hey Sonny's 3 x 60-minute doc series unites nine characters with physical differences ranging from such rare conditions as polycystic ovary syndrome, which causes one female housemate to grow a full beard, to a mother of three with a disorder that results in non-cancerous growths all over her body, to a man who has undergone extensive cosmetic surgery to resemble his pet parrots.

"Each one of them is genuinely extraordinary, and everyone brings something different to the table," explains Nicola Davey, acquisitions and co-productions exec for TCB, noting that the show is "warm and uplifting" in tone.

"There is laughter, tears,

confrontation and sheer joy. Hey Sonny made the series hoping that viewers will go on a journey with the housemates, and really understand what is at the heart of them and see beyond their

physical differences."

The show also covers serious personal struggles and challenges the public's perceptions of otherness, adds Davey.

"For the first time, the show gives these housemates a platform to talk about their experiences and hopefully creates understanding."

The distributor has so far received interest in both the

finished tape of the programme, as well as format rights.

"We have received interest from the US, Australia and the Netherlands, so our sights are set on closing deals in those territories, but the sales team is also expecting to lock deals across many other European territories," says Davey, noting that there is scope for the show to return to C5 in the future with different housemates.



The Weekly

Distributor: Red Arrow International

Producer: The New York Times, Left/Right

Broadcaster: FX, Hulu (US)

Logline: The first narrative news TV series from The Gray Lady

The New York Times is looking to build on the success of its popular podcast *The Daily* with a 30-part doc series that goes beyond the headlines and into those reporting its stories.

Set to first premiere in June on cable channel FX and immediately thereafter on SVOD platform Hulu, each episode is experienced through *Times* reporters around the world and their subjects.

Alex Fraser, SVP of acquisitions for Red Arrow Studios International, says

current affairs stories in today's headlines will be a "minority" but that all stories will be about topical events.

"This is in-depth coverage that potentially gets access to stories that were previously impossible."

Details around specific episodes are under wraps, but Fraser has seen two stories thus far.

While one is an international story involving US citizens in a "very unusual and unfamiliar land", another is a New York

City story looking at a specific working group. Both are deeply compelling, according to the exec.

"The fact that the current US president sees [*The New York Times*] as enemy number one is something that helps all of us because it has elevated the paper," says Fraser.

"It's why we were happy to be involved in the show, because we knew their brand is so strong now."

The exec assures that the series will differ from Liz Garbus's 2018 doc series for Showtime, *The Fourth Estate*, which examined the publication's first year of reporting the Trump presidency.

"This is not a series about

The New York Times, but rather a show fronted by its journalists who are telling the stories they've been reporting on. There are no scenes of editorial meetings."



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TUESDAY'S CHILD 

Beyond Innovation

Distributor: A Tall Order

Producer: Globalive Media

Broadcaster: Bloomberg Television

Logline: Uncovering the world's new and emerging technologies that change the way we live and do business

Hosted by venture capitalist Anthony Lacavera and tech journalist Michael Bancroft, this 26 x 30-minute series looks to demystify the emerging tech, cutting-edge research and groundbreaking businesses that are transforming the way we live and do business.

The show features David Hanson of Hanson Robotics, the company that made the AI-powered robot Sophia; Karan Wadhwa of Snoop Dogg's cannabis investment firm Casa Verde Capital; and NBA star Jeremy Lin, who has backed a smartphone app that uses AI and computer vision to help basketball players train.

"People are naturally captivated as these changes begin to touch every part of their lives, from their businesses to their health and daily routines. We all want to know what's coming next and there's never been a more exciting time to get an in-depth preview," says Bancroft, who also executive produces the show.

He tells TBI that the hosts' backgrounds have allowed them to access an "extensive network" of investors and tap into the business and finance communities.

"These strengths, coupled with an experienced research team, keeps us in sync with a wide range of innovators whose potential impact on the world makes them fascinating guests."

The presenter says his background also "provides a unique lens through which we approach coverage, balancing the insider's perspective on the business side with the objectivity of experienced journalism".

Noting that the team has scored early sales from the in-flight industry, Bancroft adds that the show is a "great fit" for both OTT and broadcast partners seeking premium factual science and tech programming that can be served in either half-hour episodes or bite-sized segments.

Tata – Escobar's Widow

Distributor: Drive

Producer: Telegramme Media

Broadcaster: Club Illico (French-Canada), Discovery (LatAm, Iberia, Italy, Spanish-speaking US)

Logline: Pablo Escobar's wife breaks her silence about life with the world's most famous drug trafficker



The world of Pablo Escobar is well-known to global audiences via Netflix's hit drama *Narcos*, but those closest to him, such as his wife Victoria Eugenia Henao (or Tata), are rarely in the limelight. In this 2 x 60-minute documentary, Henao tells her story with never before seen archive footage.

"I was immediately drawn to the show because we are very aware of the macho environment of Escobar and the cartel, but we don't often see the female stories behind these worlds," Lilla Hurst, co-founder of distributor Drive, tells TBI.

Drive helped shape the treatment and pitched it into international broadcasters, targeting the LatAm and Spanish-speaking territories in particular.

The film presents "very personal" home movie footage of Tata when she was a teenager, as well as the early days of her relationship with Escobar.

"There is a lot of discussion around how implicated she might be around the criminal activity of Escobar and that will be discussed in the doc itself," says Hurst, adding that producers have also secured access to the ex-wives of other cartels.

"You can see how a woman who became part of a cartel by way of marriage at such a young age would then find it incredibly hard to extract herself from that situation. It's a very interesting story, morally, into whether [Tata] was implicit or oblivious."

Drive is pitching the film into OTT services as well as traditional broadcasters, says Hurst, noting that the distributor's recent experience selling anniversary docs on Princess Diana demonstrated that free-to-air channels can also "come up with the goods" when it comes to the right product.



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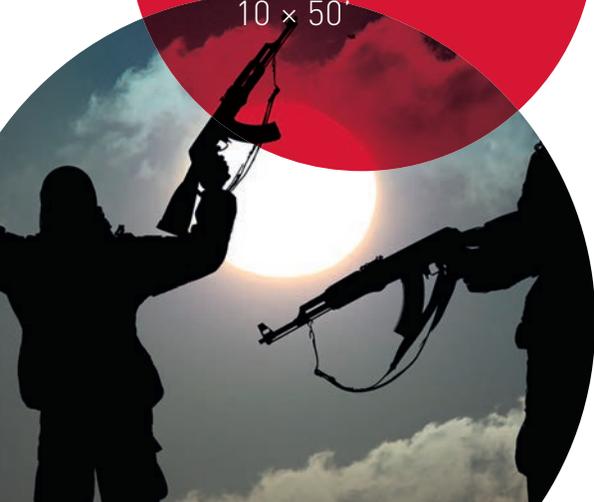
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The Green Book: Guide to Freedom

Distributor: Off The Fence

Producer: Impossible Factual

Broadcaster: Smithsonian Channel

Logline: A deep dive into the real-life inspiration behind Oscar-winning feature film *Green Book*

In the 1930s, a black postal worker from Harlem in New York City named Victor Green published *The Negro Motorist Green Book* – a manual that would become part-travel guide and part-survival guide for African-Americans looking to navigate safe passage and also serve as a catalyst for new businesses.

The book is also the touchpoint for the feature film *Green Book*, which stars Viggo Mortensen and Mahershala Ali and won the Best Picture



Oscar in February – a boon for Impossible Factual’s documentary, for which a preview was quickly shipped to Off The Fence’s buyers on the back of awards glory.

Loren Syer-Willoughby, head of acquisitions for the ZDFE-

owned factual distributor, tells TBI that the business, which has represented content from US cable channel Smithsonian exclusively since 2008, knew about the project well in advance.

“Smithsonian are extremely knowledgeable about upcoming

events that could spark interest among their viewers and international audiences,” she says.

“Producing *The Green Book: Guide to Freedom* with Impossible Factual ahead of the release of the now Oscar-winning film was strategically brilliant.”

The exec foresees the film travelling to most of the major territories around the world, particularly given the increased level of attention around the subject matter.

The sales team is targeting major European territories such as Italy, Germany, France, Scandinavia and Spain, where offers have already begun rolling in.

Syer-Willoughby notes that parts of Asia, Africa and Australia will also be looking at the film.

If We Built It Today

Distributor: Sky Vision

Producer: Arcadia Content

Broadcaster: Knowledge Network (Canada)

Logline: Factual series exploring the engineering, design, politics and danger of the world’s greatest architectural achievements and what they would look like today

If Noah’s Ark was built today, what would it look like? How would we go about it, and how much would it cost? These are the questions Arcadia’s innovative new series looks to answer.

Pre-sold to Discovery Science out of the US, the 8 x 60-minute series explores the Pyramids, The Great Wall of China, Venice canals and the Roman Colosseum, to name a few landmarks.

“One of the reasons we were interested in working with Arcadia is because it takes modern engineering

and puts a historical twist on it, and vice-versa,” explains Barnaby Shingleton, director of entertainment and factual at Sky Vision.

An episode centered on the Roman Colosseum discusses how the structure was initially built for a newly installed emperor who wanted to cement his relationship with the people.

“Today if you built it, there would be different motivations, mainly around money,” explains Shingleton, adding that the episode then looks at the building materials of today, how much time it would take and,

most importantly, the cost.

The show is rich in visuals, says the exec, who highlights the graphics used to illustrate how the Colosseum might look like in modern times. Drone footage is also used to go to the locations of buildings themselves, in addition to a number of expert interviews with architects, stonemasons and engineers.

“There isn’t a presenter so it’s very adaptable for different territories with a different voiceover,” says Shingleton. “That’s one of the things that will make it very appealing to the international market.”

The show is expected to sell widely into Europe, Asia and Australia, into either individual channels or a pan-regional broadcaster. **TBI**



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Viewpoint Dan Reed

Uncovering the story in *Leaving Neverland*

“I had no prior interest in Michael Jackson and still have only a general grasp of his oeuvre. I researched him in order to verify James and Wade’s accounts, but this was never a film ‘about’ Jackson.”

Leaving *Neverland* took nearly three years to make, from the moment I first read the names “Wade Robson” and “James Safechuck” – the two men at the heart of the documentary – to the four-hour epic that is now broadcasting in almost every territory in the world except China, where I’m told a deal is in the works.

It has roiled the press and social media on a scale we never expected, particularly on Twitter. Much of the activity on the platform is repetitive, bulk noise from the Michael Jackson truthers, the Jackson family and their lawyers.

But amongst the threats and insults are a good few sober, thoughtful messages from psychotherapists, child sexual abuse survivors and ordinary people reflecting on the true theme of the documentary: the careful, patient grooming of children and families by a trusted figure who, years or decades later, is seen to have been a sexual predator.

That’s what this has always been about for me: opening people’s eyes to the true face of child sexual abuse, giving people a way to talk about this most misunderstood of all taboos.

I’m not a chronicler of celebrity or music stars. My home territories are terrorism, war and crime – subjects I’ve explored relentlessly over the past 20 years. I had no prior interest in Jackson and still have only a general grasp of his oeuvre. I researched him in order to verify James and Wade’s accounts, but this was never a film “about” Jackson. It focused on the two boys this grown man involved in his life.

So how did the core purpose of the film – and the radical storytelling decisions involved in focusing on just two families – take shape over those three years?

The truth is that documentary making is fraught with risk, but the biggest risk of all is not being able to see what’s right in front of you and, literally not understanding what your story is about. Falling into that trap is a lot easier than you’d think.

I’m often asked about how I approach the producing and directing decisions that go into shaping a documentary. That question always triggers a mild panic in my head. The answers I hear myself giving are annoyingly vague and something like, “It’s an organic process, informed by experience and opportunity...”

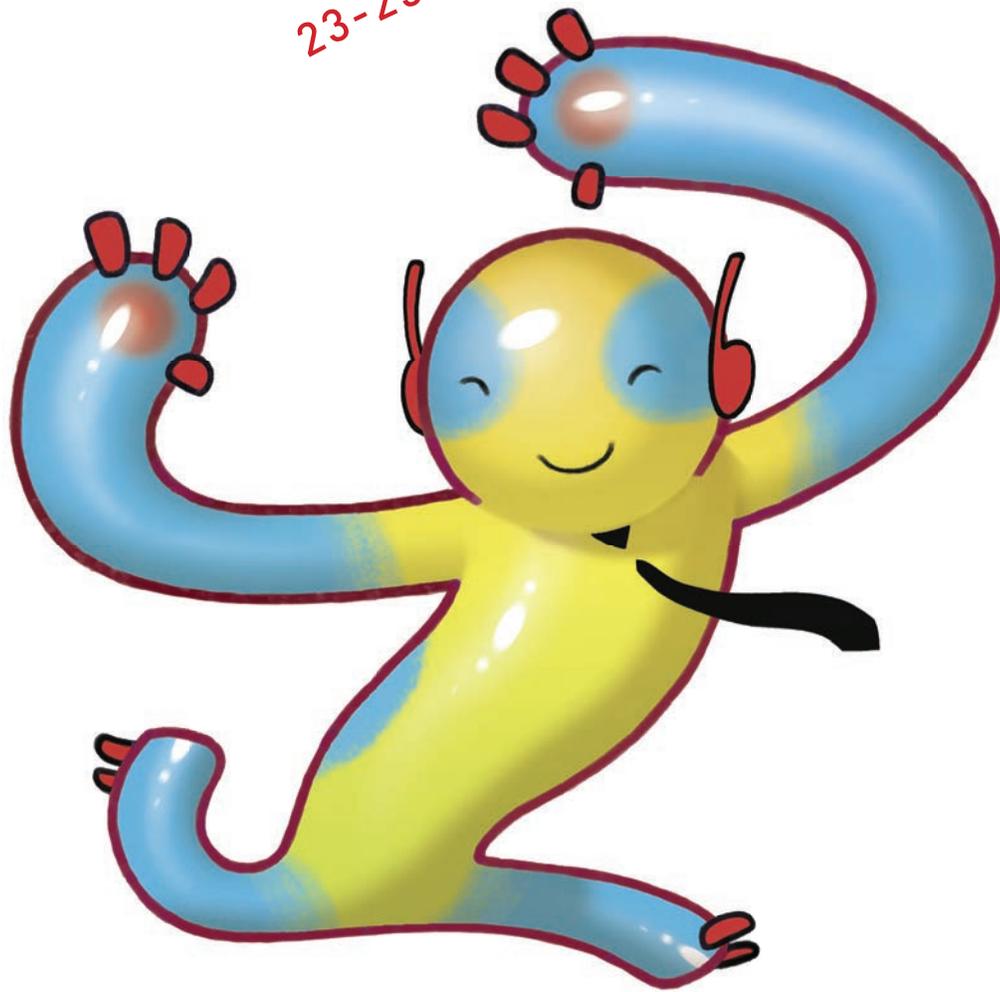
The truth is that in documentary – and this was certainly the case with *Leaving Neverland* – the director sometimes doesn’t know what the film is about until quite late in the edit. The longer you can wait before locking down your storytelling strategy, the greater chance you have that it will be the right one. And so my editor Jules Cornell and I found ourselves drawn into the complex, fractured and tragic world of the Safechucks and Robsons, two families who experienced the same journey into the same fairytale-turned-nightmare.

What we began to realise is that the story of these families’ 20-year encounter with a manipulative sexual predator was told with such brutal honesty and in such unflinching, comprehensive detail that it would hold its own as a ground breaking reference-work on grooming child sexual abuse no matter whether the predator was a priest, a teacher, a family member or... Jackson. And that’s what I’m most proud of: the fact that the predator in this case was one of the most famous figures of the 20th century means that the lessons of *Leaving Neverland* will reach a far wider audience than I could have ever hoped for a four-hour epic on child sexual abuse with nine interviews in it. **TBI**

Dan Reed is the director of Channel 4/HBO documentary *Leaving Neverland*

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Diversity in TV must start early

While representation in kids' TV has increased in recent years, it's still got a long way to go before it becomes mainstream. Ann-Marie Corvin reports



From *Sesame Street* to *Dora*, there's a perception that kids TV leads the way when it comes to positively championing themes of inclusion and diversity, but statistics suggest otherwise.

The ongoing Children's Television Project (CTV) at Tufts University, which has been monitoring US children's TV content for diversity for the last seven years, has found that black characters account for 5.6% of a total sample of over 1,500 characters, despite representing around 13% of the population in 2018.

Meanwhile, in the UK, regulator Ofcom's Children and Parent's Media Use and Attitude Report (November 2017) found that a third of British 8-11 year olds still didn't think there were enough programmes which showed children that looked like them.

This matters because young audiences will

simply pay less attention if they don't see themselves reflected in the content, according to Anne Brogan, joint managing director of kids prodco Kindle Entertainment.

"If your creative comes from a limited pool of experience you can't capture the wider experience of kids, and if you can't do this, they will disconnect," she warns.

The former ITV kids' controller adds that the challenge for content makers is to find the people to tell the stories and to make them entertaining so that they have universal appeal.

For its CBBC/CBeebies hit, *Jamillah And Aladdin* – which brought together three central characters from a diverse background – Kindle chose to draft in less experienced writers from diverse backgrounds.

"It isn't easy if you have a team of rookie writers as you have to put a huge amount of support into that team to generate the scripts," Brogan adds.

Commercially, however, it was worth it, with the 52 x 11-minute show – distributed by Spain’s Imira Entertainment – picked up by Spanish pubcaster TVE; Al Jazeera for the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Sweden and Norway via networks Sveriges Television and NRK.

“Broadcasters loved that combination of the classic storytelling and the very modern ethnically diverse characters; the response we had from parents was delightful. Their children were seeing what was familiar to them on screen for the first time,” she recalls.

Julie Bristow, president and CEO of Toronto-based content-creation company Bristow Global Media (BGM) reports similar feedback after the first series of last year’s 13 x 22-minute live action series *It’s My Party!* for TVO.

Aimed at 6-9 year olds, the series takes young viewers on a tour of the world’s greatest parties, from Diwali and Kwanzaa to Hanukkah and Oshogatsu.

Currently in production on the second series, which the firm is taking to MIPTV, Bristow reports that the response from viewers has been overwhelming.

“It’s often the first time the kids have seen their culture represented on TV. Parents hear their kids shout ‘They are telling our story’, and that’s what we have to do, we have to put everybody on camera,” she says.

There are plenty of other examples of commercially successful kids content punching through that reflects and explores different cultures and experiences.

Cottonwood Media’s preschool animated hit, *Ollie & Moon*, the second series of which is heading to MIPTV, introduces small kids to different cultures – with two cats – who travel around the world appreciating the differences and similarities in everyone.

The show’s ‘vive la différence’ message has now sold to over 150 countries, airing in most English-speaking countries as well as every major market in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

According to Cottonwood co-founder Cécile Lauritano, when the company was developing its ultra premium live-action ballet co-pro *Find Me In Paris*, they were keen to reflect LBGT+ experiences as a normal part of teen life, with a storyline featuring an openly gay character who falls in love with a friend, treated as any other romantic plot.

While this may not seem groundbreaking, given the amount of YA fiction written to reflect gay experiences, until recently there’s been a nervousness among execs around LGBT characters, which makes the success of dramas such as ABC Australia’s *First Day* (see case study), all the more remarkable.

“As a producer I was very proud to bring this storyline to the screen,” says Lauritano, because 10, 11 and 12 year-old kids need to understand that there

must be stories from every origin and every orientation and that this has to be normal in 2019.”

The texture these stories and the diverse and international cast brings to this English-speaking tween show is arguably one of the reasons for its success: The 26 x 26-minute show only launched at MIPCOM 2017 and Cottonwood is already bringing season three to MIPTV.

While gender and ethnicity appear to be high on the agenda in kids TV, shows featuring disabled children appear less visible, but this is also changing.

French animation outfit Xilam launched its first pre-school property *Paprika* two years ago, featuring two twins, one of whom is a wheelchair user.

BGM is also developing the animated series *Ricky Rockets*, which Bristow says was brought to the company with the theme tune written by a famous Canadian musician, whose wheelchair-using nephew plays in a rock band.

For Ed Galton, CCO and managing director at CAKE – which distributes and exec produced series one and two of CBeebies animated hit *Pablo* – you can never have too many shows that positively champion inclusivity, but, he stresses, “they need to be told with entertainment and storytelling at their heart”.

Produced by Paper Owl Films, *Pablo* details the adventures of a boy with autism, using stories inspired, written and voiced by talent with autism. Now on key channels and platforms throughout the world, *Pablo* has inspired marketing and PR campaigns in local markets, according to Galton.

Its impact on autism awareness is such that 50 new short ‘behind the stories’ films have been made interviewing the writers who reveal their inspiration behind the storylines. They will feature on social

“You need to treat diversity authentically, and not just as a box-ticking exercise.”

Nina Hahn,
Nickelodeon



It’s My Party, distributed by
Bristow Global Media



“10, 11 and 12-year-old kids need to understand that there must be stories from every origin and every orientation and that this is normal in 2019.”

Cécile Lauritano,
Cottonwood Media



media during World Autism Awareness Month throughout April.

The big US kids networks are also stepping up their game to reach what Nickelodeon has referred to as “the most diverse generation ever”.

One notable improvement has been the growing number of female showrunners in animation – a contingent underrepresented in the past.

These include Rebecca Sugar, creator of Cartoon Network’s *Steven Universe*, which has been praised for its positive depictions of LGBT+ characters.

Other showrunners, many who have made their name on Nickelodeon properties, include Christine Ricci (*Dora The Explorer*, *Nella The Princess Knight*, *Blaze And The Monster Machines*), Farnaz Esnashari-Charmatz (*Shimmer & Shine*) and Niki Lopez, creator and producer of upcoming Latina pirate adventure, *Santiago Of The Seas*.

Elsewhere, top-rated animated series, *The Loud House*, created by Chris Savino and now in its fourth series, has been praised for its diverse range of characters, including interracial gay parents.

The Nick show has inspired equally diverse spin-off series, *The Casagrandes*, set to premiere on the network this October. Focusing on a Latino family

who have a child with Down Syndrome (voiced by an actor with Down syndrome) the award-winning Hispanic-American cartoonist Lalo Alcaraz *Coco* served as an early cultural consultant on the show.

According Nina Hahn, senior VP of international development, Nickelodeon, encouraging showrunners to bring their key experiences to the table – and/or working with consultants to ensure these experiences are authentic – is key.

“You need to treat diversity authentically, and not just as a box ticking exercise.

“You also need a very strong creator at the centre who has a story to tell. Chris came from a big family and depicted the life he saw. For us it was a no brainer – we didn’t even think about it as ‘the diverse show’,” she says.

But what about breakthrough international shows coming from other continents? Ubongo, a pan-African content company primarily focused on creating learning resources for young children, has ambitions to create characters as ubiquitous as *Dora The Explorer*.

Since launching in 2015, the multiplatform company now has four YouTube channels and two key children’s properties – *Ubongo Kids* and *Akili And Me*.

It also produced multiple learning resources that teach 3-6 year olds (many of whom do not get a primary education but may have access to a mobile phone) early literacy, numbers, social and emotional skills and English as a second language.

This content is now starting to generate interest beyond the 31 African countries and 11m households that it currently broadcasts and streams in.

According to Ubongo’s Iman Lipumba and Doreen Kessy, initial interest came from parents all around the world who were interested in teaching their kids about diversity and inclusivity. Ubongo’s content is now available on streaming services in China, Spain, the UK and is broadcast in the US via The African Channel.

Content-wise, Lipumba says the focus will always retain a local flavour for children who are growing up with *Dora* but are underserved in terms of characters that look like them, eat what they eat and live as they live. “It’s hugely important that we create our own stuff because if the content is not localised our children can’t relate to it,” she says.

“We are bombarded with hair and beauty products that help us conform to images of people that don’t look like us. But what message does this send out? It has got people swimming across the ocean to get to Europe – because someone told them that this is the best way to be. The narrative has become ‘whatever is foreign is better’. This has to change.” **TBI**

CASE STUDY *First Day* ABC/Screen Australia/Epic Films

Produced by Epic Films and commissioned through an ABC and Screen Australia joint initiative, *First Day* tells the story of Hannah, a transgender child experiencing her first day at secondary school.

The 18-minute film was inspired by a transgender child the writer Julie Kalceff is close to. “When she first started transitioning, her mother desperately wanted to support her but wasn’t sure of the best way to do that.

“I thought how wonderful it would be for both of them to see a children’s TV episode about a girl who struggled with some aspects of being transgender, but who was basically dealing with the same issues as most girls her age,” she says.

Kalceff and producer Kirsty Stark felt it was important to cast a transgender child in the role – to shatter the myth that being transgender is a choice or that it’s about ‘dressing up’. Subsequently its star, Evie Macdonald, became the transgender actor in the lead role for any Australian TV drama.

The film has since gained traction on the international market, having won the inaugural Diversify TV Excellence award for Kids Programming at MIPCOM last October and the Prix Jeunesse International Gender Equity Prize last May – voted on by 550 children’s experts from 65 countries. As a result of such “overwhelmingly positive” response, *First Day* is currently being developed into a full TV series.





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The World's Worst Children

David Walliams' King Bert Productions has tied up with production-distribution powerhouse 9 Story Media Group to bring his book series *The World's Worst Children* to life as a 2D animated sketch show

The *World's Worst Children* (TWWC) focuses on a collection of badly behaved, "foul-smelling and grubby" fictional kids, each with their own quirks.

Across three books, children have been introduced to characters such as Dribbling Drew – a boy whose drool gets him into terrible trouble – to Sofia Sofa – a TV superfan so stuck to the sofa she's turning into one – and now they will be heading to the small screen.

Written by Walliams, the co-creator of British comedy sketch show *Little Britain*, the books have sold more than 24m copies globally and been translated into 53 languages.

"David's books almost have an organic transition into a TV property," says Grainne McNamara, King Bert's producer who joined from Disney EMEA in 2018.

"You have these deliciously anarchic and naughty characters that are at the forefront and kids respond to that."

The sketch comedy will be one of many children's novels to be brought to TV by King Bert. Walliams' *Ratburger* made it on UK-based pay-TV operator Sky in 2017, and *The Midnight Gang*, along with *Grandpa's Great Escape*, made an appearance on BBC One.

"We do the live-action adaptations of David's books for one-off specials and we have some in development as features as well, but TWWC is one we knew we could turn into a series," says McNamara.

This March, King Bert - the developer and script producer of the comedy - brought in 9 Story as a co-



Copyright 2016@TonyKross

Bertha the Blubberer from *The World's Worst Children*

producer, distributor and branding partner. The prodco behind kids' hits such as *Doc McStuffins* and *Octonauts* will handle visual assets and global sales.

"It was a no-brainer," says Alix Wiseman, senior VP of business development for 9 Story. "There has been great appetite in the studio to work on a show like this."

Playing dress-up

With three book editions, and at least 10 separate characters per book, King Bert is in the process of refining which characters can lead the animated series.

From Brian Wong (Who Was Never Wrong), to Grubby Gertrude, Miss Petula Perpetual-Motion, and many more, the producer is in the process of choosing eight characters that can establish an emotional connection with its viewers.

“For World Book Day in the UK a lot of kids dress up as these characters; Stacey Superstar, for example, really speaks to many girls and they dress up as her a lot. The same for Nigel Nit-Boy for the boys. Brian Wong and Raj are also very popular,” says McNamara.

“You can’t have that many kids in a sketch show, so we’re really focused on developing eight characters. Stacey Superstar is one of those and Nigel Nit-Boy, as well as Fussy Frankie. We’ve been playing around with a lot of them.”

The selected eight will be returnable characters the show stays with throughout the series. Meanwhile, remaining characters will make cameos and appear in the series at selected points.

“There’s so much to mine in terms of characters in *TWWC*, we really felt that there was so much comedy that could come out of them,”

Wiseman adds.

In-demand

Animated sketch shows have seen somewhat of a growth period in the adult space, with shows such as Adult Swim’s *Robot Chicken* finding popularity among viewers. In the kids’ space, however, there is a demand for more of it.

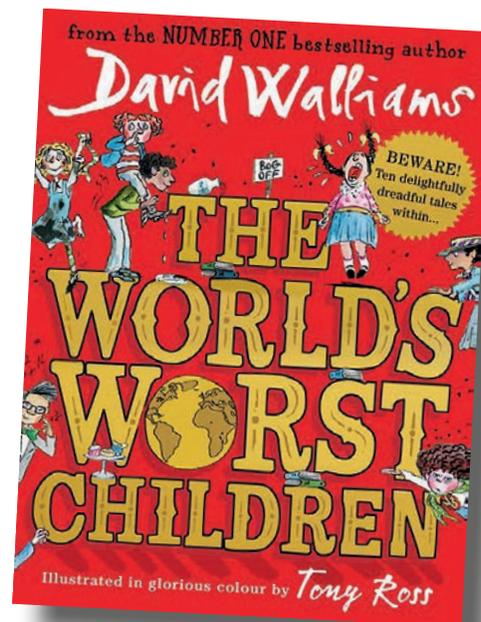
“They had a very funny script so there was instant excitement when we were brought on board,” says Wiseman. “There isn’t enough of this brand of humour around and I think there’s great appetite for it.”

While *TWWC* will be officially targeted at 7-9 year olds, Wiseman also believes its humour could stretch to older crowds, developing a type of “cult” following.

McNamara says: “In a world where there’s almost too much kids content, you want something fresh and different, so the format of *TWWC* really lends itself to that. It’s genuinely funny.”

King Bert is well placed to fill the gaps in this space, with its extensive portfolio of sketch comedy which includes titles such as *Sick Note*, *Urban Myth: The*

David Walliams: British actor, writer and TV personality



Trial Of Joan Collins and *Walliams & Friend* - its persona built around Walliams and his unique form of comedy.

“He’s across it; he sees what we’re doing and sometimes gives his opinion on it and he’s very excited about having 9 Story on board,” says McNamara.

A global glance

9 Story has global ambitions for *TWWC*, and with its distribution prowess, which takes titles such as *Barney*, *Clifford the Big Red Dog* and *Let’s Go Luna!* to territories around the world, it wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Everything we produce, make or acquire has to have very strong global potential,” says Wiseman. “We think it’s going to tick a lot of boxes for international buyers and it’s going to have a natural audience, a captive audience, that’s already waiting for this kind of content.”

The key will be the content that 9 Story hopes to build to critical mass, which can support consumer products, games and other commercial iterations further down the line.

“Our 9 Story brands team have a lot of ideas around products, strategy and how they would approach the market. I think it will appeal to different age groups and different parts of the market,” Wiseman says.

“The first objective is about making the series right, so it leads on to further series and then leads to consumer products.” **TBI**

“You have these deliciously anarchic and naughty characters that are at the forefront and kids respond to that”

Grainne McNamara,
King Bert

The big deals



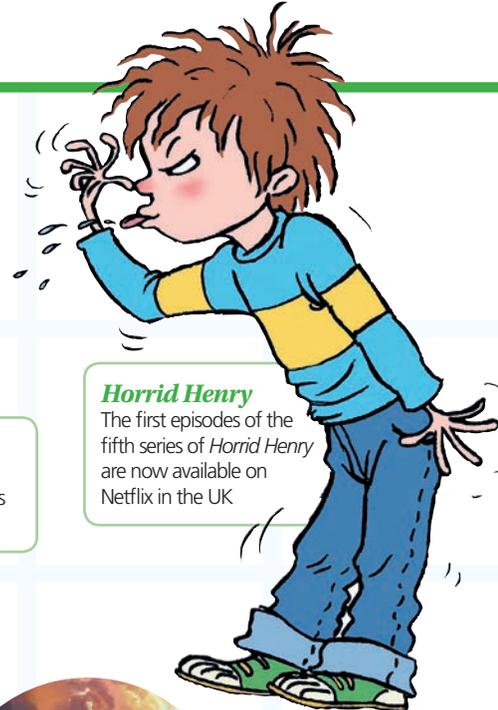
Kid-E-Cats
APC Kids has started rolling out the global gaming plan for *Kid-E-Cats* as of this March



Woody Woodpecker
Universal Pictures Int'l and Universal 1440 Entertainment are set to create all-new episodes of the title for the first time in 16 years



Pablo
CAKE sold *Pablo* across Asia including on China's Mango TV and Tencent



Horrid Henry
The first episodes of the fifth series of *Horrid Henry* are now available on Netflix in the UK



Doc McStuffins
Netflix has signed a multiyear deal with Chris Nee, the creator of *Doc McStuffins*



Tumble Leaf
Amazon picked up its first Children's BAFTA Award, winning the international global pre-school category, for *Tumble Leaf*



Lucy Lost
Xilam is adapting WWII mystery novel *Listen To The Moon* into an epic animation titled *Lucy Lost*

ONLINE



Motel 51
9 Story Media Group and Peacock Alley Entertainment have struck a deal to develop and co-produce the live-action series



The Irish Fairy Door
WildBrain is set to produce original content on the popular toy brand, including animation and live-action videos

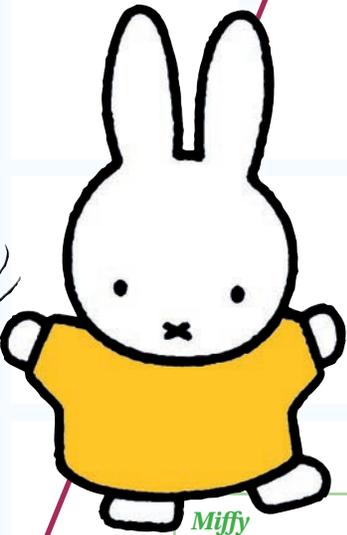


Roald Dahl/Netflix
Netflix has struck a major deal with the estate of well-loved British children's author Roald Dahl and will remake classics such as *Matilda* and *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*

LIVE-ACTION

A snapshot of the sales and greenlights shaking up children's TV

ANIMATION



Miffy

WildBrain has been appointed to manage and grow the YouTube presence of the popular kids' brand



Peppa Pig

EOne will celebrate the Year of the Pig with all new episodes and features throughout 2019



The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Channel 4 has commissioned Judith Kerr's much-loved children's classic for Christmas 2019



Dragon Girl

CAKE has tied with Feryly on the animated action adventure series



Crackerjack

The BBC is reviving the cult classic, which ran from 1955-1984



Star Wars: Resistance

Disney XD has ordered a second series of the high-flying animated series

LINEAR



Project Z

ITV Studios label Boom has been commissioned by CITV to produce the part-structured reality, part-gameshow format

Kids Hot Picks

The top children's titles heading to MIPTV

Top
Pick



Moka's Fabulous Adventures

Distributor: Xilam Animation

Producer: Xilam Animation

Broadcaster: Gulli (France), Super RTL (Germany), K2, DeA Kids (Italy)

Logline: A naïve and reckless little crocodile goes on an adventure

Moka is the highly-anticipated comedy from Xilam Animation, following a young crocodile as he learns to navigate his life as the son of royalty.

The 2D animated series follows Moka, the only son of the King of the Savannah, as he decides to explore his vast kingdom

accompanied by Cherry, a strong, brave rhinoceros from the Royal Guard who goes along to assure his protection.

The duo do not get along at first: Moka's insatiable curiosity and impulsive behaviour often get him into trouble. But, throughout the pair's adventures, audiences see the two grow and evolve together.

"The story is currently of huge importance as it's about being kind to each other," says Marc du Pontavice CEO at Xilam Animation.

"It's about putting prejudice aside and trying to understand one another's habits or ambitions. It's about kindness and how

displaying empathy can be rewarding. Kids are very sensitive to these issues, and value heroes who can champion such an attitude."

Moka has been highly-anticipated since its first presentation at Cartoon Forum in 2017, where it became one of the event's most attended and well-received pitches. While the 78 x 7-minute series is set to be fully delivered in spring 2020, it has already picked up a string of presales.

Gulli is on board as the show's French partner, while free-to-air broadcaster Super RTL has pre-bought the series, along with Discovery Italy kids' channel K2

and DeA Kids. "We have global ambitions for the series because it works as a tale that any kid, regardless of nationality, can relate to. *Moka* explores the universal balance between two needs that defines childhood: the need for exploration and the need for protection," adds du Pontavice.

The series was developed in-house at Xilam and hails from director and storyboard artist Andrés Fernandez, who has worked on top kids' series such as *Zig & Sharko* and *Oggy and the Cockroaches*.

"We asked him for a comedy duo series that was in the vein of a buddy movie, but with more heart and emotion," he says.



Belle and Sebastian

52x11'

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FYI

Distributor: Magnify Media
Producer: Fresh Start TV
Broadcaster: Sky Kids (UK)
Logline: A news format made by kids, for kids

FYI is the news format by Fresh Start TV that sees young presenters and reporters help children make sense of global topics as they grow up.

As well as explaining some of the biggest events to appear in the news, *FYI* also gives kids the chance to quiz world leaders and also quiz their own knowledge of the media.

The format initially aired on Sky Kids in the UK, and will be shopped to the international market by Magnify Media.

“It feels really important, and something that’s really sculpted for its audience,” says Magnify’s Andrea Jackson.

“There’s two ways of doing this; we can make it in each

territory with a new cast, or broadcasters can take the international completed version with a multicultural cast of presenters who speak in English – for certain territories, that’s interesting because it presents a language-learning opportunity as well.”

Segments in *FYI* include ‘I Don’t Get It’ – a one-minute item that explains the background to issue news, and interviews with influential people.

There’s also a segment called ‘Fact or Fiction?’ where *FYI* shows two different news stories and helps kids decide whether they’re legitimate or not.

“What we’re consciously teaching the kids to do and talk about is to be able to determine what is real or what is a fake news story, because that’s something we all come up against every time we go on the internet or on social media,” adds Jackson.

Rainbow Butterfly Unicorn Kitty

Distributor: Jetpack Distribution
Producer: Funrise
Broadcaster: Nickelodeon (US)
Logline: A spirited mash-up kitty acquires magical powers

Rainbow Butterfly Unicorn Kitty is the newest Nick show focusing on Felicity – a part-rainbow, part-butterfly, part-unicorn kitty with superpowers.

The 2D animated mash-up show follows Felicity and best friend Miguel, as they take on every challenge that arrives in the magical land of Mythlandia.

Felicity can shoot glow sticks from her paws, lasers from her horn, stretch and snap in rainbow mode, and clap thunderously with her butterfly wings. Most of all, she embraces the things that are unique and special to her and her friends.

The show debuted on Nickelodeon in the US in January and will roll out to more than 170 Nick channels worldwide later this year.

Jetpack Distribution will bring the title to MIPTV and distribute it in tandem with Nick and shop

the series across select territories, SVODs and AVODs.

“She’s just super cute,” says Dominic Gardiner, CEO at Jetpack Distribution. “But from a more commercial business perspective it is becoming more of a franchise. We have a lot of stuff in our portfolio that’s very story driven and not overtly commercial and we wanted something with that potential as well.”

The 52 x 11-minute series, aimed at 6-11 year olds, uses photo real textures, hand-drawn elements and a bright colour palette to create the fantasy world.

“One thing creator [Rich Magallanes] said is he wanted to create a show that when you say the title, as a kid you would get it right, but parents would always get it wrong. Kids love that kind of thing because it makes them laugh.”



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Infinity Train

Distributor: Turner

Producer: Cartoon Network

Broadcaster: Cartoon Network (US)

Logline: A young girl finds herself on a train full of infinite worlds

Infinity Train is an upcoming animated series based on a popular original short that emerged from Cartoon Network Studios' global artist program.

The mystery adventure follows a young girl named Tulip and her two-in-one robot companion, who finds herself on a train full of infinite worlds and tries to find her way home.

Tulip ends up in a world full of corgis named Corginia, where the corgis are stalked by an evil creature named The Steward. Atticus, king of Corginia, believes Tulip can defeat it.

"One of the focuses of the show is how we respond to change," according to the network. "Tulip's journey is filled with constant changes and unknowns, but she's hopeful she can solve the mystery with

her intellect."

Infinity Train's pilot was first released on Cartoon Network's

VOD player and YouTube channel in 2016, and has since gained 4.3m views as of March 2019.

A petition to greenlight the show was made shortly after the pilot was released garnering more than 57,000 signatures before the greenlight

announcement. It will make its debut on the channel within the year.

The series hails from *Regular Show* scribe Owen Dennis, who joined Cartoon Network after a storyboard test. It is directed by Nick Cross and Randy Myers are also involved.



Oda Upside Down

Distributor: Studiocanal

Producer: SAM Productions

Broadcaster: DR Ramasjang (Denmark)

Logline: Oda helps kids reconquer their right to fantasy and imagination

Oda is a good fairy and magical inventor that takes pre-schoolers into a fantasy world where they are able to tackle challenging figures in this Studiocanal live-action series.

The fairy confronts powerful villains, such as strict kindergarten teacher Balder, by turning her universe upside down with the help of resourceful children.

Up against Oda's generous mischief, Balder's excessive power struggle combined with

his lack of magical ability creates humour and fun for children aged three and over.

"It's increasingly becoming a universal goal to educate children through playing and strengthening their skills through games," says Beatriz Campos, head of international sales for TV series, at Studiocanal.

"*Oda Upside Down* covers universal themes that will resonate with children all around the world."

Studiocanal will take the 10 x

10-minute series to MIPTV with two separate offerings. One will see it sell the title as a finished tape with local voices, and the other as a format fit for local adaptation.

Oda is produced by SAM Productions, part of Studiocanal. Campos says picking up the

title was a "no brainer" as it fits well alongside other popular Studiocanal titles in its portfolio, such as *Esther's Notebooks* and the *Paddington* TV series.

The series was created by Ida Mule Scott and Iben Albinus Sabroe. It is directed by Oliver Ussing.



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The Viral Factory

Distributor: Viacom

Producer: Nickelodeon (Netherlands)

Broadcaster: Nickelodeon

Logline: Celebrity YouTubers help their fans make viral videos

The Viral Factory is an interactive gameshow format from Nickelodeon which ties up celebrity YouTubers and fans to create viral social media-led videos.

Every week a new contestant posts videos to a relevant YouTube channel and viewers can vote for their favourite clip. The winners get to take home a camera kit to do their own YouTube videos at home.

The 7 x 22-minute format first aired in the Netherlands and Belgium as *De Viral Fabriek* in March 2018.

“It’s the first time we’re taking it to market. It’s done so well in the Netherlands and we loved it so much we thought we’d shop it internationally,” says Laura Burrell, head of formats for Viacom

International Studios.

Viacom takes the title to MIPTV after its acquisition of YouTube and online video conference VidCon in 2018.

“Vlogging is so popular right now, but this is the first competition in this new world of making content – I can’t think of another show that’s aimed at young people that want to become a YouTuber. That’s its unique selling point,” says Burrell.

She continues: “The show lends itself as a format because it will work better with locally cast kids and contestants and local influencers and YouTubers. It’s a traditional kind of competitive structure with a series winner, so it’s adaptable for the international audience.”



Olobob Top

Distributor: CAKE

Producer: Beakus

Broadcaster: CBeebies (UK), ABC Kids (Australia)

Logline: Tib, Lalloo and Bobble use shapes and colours to create new friends



Olobob Top is the latest animation property from CAKE; a colourful, fun series created by producer Steve Smith and his family.

The 39 x 11-minute series follows the adventures of Tib, Lalloo and Bobble, who live in a magical tree in the Olobob Forest.

Each story sees the trio head to Olobob Top, where they combine shapes, patterns and colours to create new characters and friends.

The series is created by Smith and his partner Leigh Hodgkinson, whose children voice two of the characters. Hodgkinson is also the illustrator of the toon.

“It’s truly a family property,” says Ed Galton, CCO and managing director at CAKE. “Each story encourages creativity, friendship and teamwork and focuses on creative play and having fun. There is no limit to a child’s imagination.”

The animation also includes

the vocal talents of British TV star Stephen Mangan (*Green Wing, Episodes, I’m Alan Partridge*), who provides voices for over 50 characters in the Olobob universe, and a musical score by Emmy Award-nominee composer David Schweitzer (*Charlie And Lola*).

“*Olobob Top* has all of the elements, from character development and storytelling to visual design, for it to be an internationally embraced show,” Galton says.

The Olobob crew also have extended reach in the form of picture books, a HTML 5 game, YouTube channel and social media pages.

A ‘Create A Olobob Character’ competition is placed on the *Olobob* website where the winner will ultimately have their creation brought to life and voiced by Mangan.

Twenty-six episodes are set to appear on CBeebies in spring 2019. The animation will also be made available in a 78 x 5-minute format for MIPTV.

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The Kissing Hand

Distributor: Henson
Producer: The Jim Henson Company in partnership with Rehab Entertainment and 2 Friends Entertainment
Logline: A well-loved children's book brought to life by puppets

The Jim Henson Company is set to bring *The Kissing Hand* to the international market, a puppet animation based on Audrey Penn's beloved picture book series.

Penn created the tales after witnessing a ritual in which a real-life mother racoon placed its nose on a baby racoon's paw to transfer her scent. The scribe was told that the purpose of the ritual was to ease separation anxiety when the baby embarked on travels alone.

The idea has sparked a series in which fictional raccoon Chester is soothed by a kiss on the hand by his mother, teaching children how to cope with daily anxieties and refer to home comforts when needed.

Chester learns how to navigate going to school, make new friends and deal with the daily anxieties of a pre-schooler.

"Every child at some point has to go out into the world and have their own adventures," says Halle Stanford, president of television at Jim Henson. "It will resonate with all children and families."

The core objective of the title is to teach children self-love and self-regulation as they go out into the world.

"One of the things we need to do is get kids emotionally ready for school," says Stanford. "We talk about a lot of the things kids need to get from school in terms of literacy or STEM learning, but the number one predictor of success is being emotionally ready for challenges."

Jim Henson, the company behind long-running series such as *The Muppets*, believes that the use of puppets helps create emotional connections in particular. It hopes to get the



show on air by 2020.

Penn's book series, which was first published in 1993, has had enduring success, which Jim Henson hopes to recreate in a TV series. "I went over to

a book store this weekend and underneath the 'hottest picture book' section was *The Kissing Hand*, and my heart swelled because that's how much of a classic this book is," she says.

Moon and Me

Distributor: 9 Story Distribution International
Producer: Sutikki, Founding Bird
Broadcaster: BBC (UK), Universal Kids (US)
Logline: Well-loved toys come to life when nobody is watching



Moon and Me is the latest preschool title by *Teletubbies* creator Andy Davenport; a tale of two characters from completely different worlds.

When Pepi Nana invite Moon Baby to visit their toy house, he awakens the other toys and takes them on a magical journey to Storyland, where they learn about friendship, playing together and being kind.

"An Andy Davenport series is a pretty rare even and we fell in love with the concept straight away," says Alix Wiseman, senior VP of business development and acquisitions at 9 Story Distribution International.

"The show breaks new

ground in its technical, visual and conceptual ambition, combining puppetry and stop motion to create an incredibly unique visual signature."

Davenport is the creator, writer, character designer, set designer and music composer of the property.

The series combines a handcrafted feel and soothing pace to provide a counterpoint to the prominence of technology in kids' lives. It focuses on universal themes such as friendship, generosity, empathy and kindness.

"We really believe in this series and expect it to appeal to a diverse and global audience," says Wiseman. **TBI**

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Viewpoint David Michel

Authenticity in entertainment

“Undoubtedly, we have come a long way. Are we in a great place yet? Not entirely.”

When I first started my career in the entertainment industry back in the early noughties, ‘authenticity’ was nothing more than a buzzword.

Content specifically geared towards kids was primarily in the animated space, which was more fantastical in its execution and more forgiving in nature when it came to political correctness. Live-action offerings for the younger demographic was limited in both numbers and scope, and there was a clear lack of diversity and gender representation for kids, except in shows such as *Degrassi*, which tackled teen issues head on.

Most of the popular mainstream live-action teen programming such as *Beverly Hills 90210*, and *Clueless*, provided great entertainment but only touched on teen issues in a milder way and usually in the glossy setting of a California environment.

Fast forward to present day and the pendulum has swung towards authenticity and truthfulness when it comes to the representation of kids, where representation of race, gender and social issues are becoming more common in entertainment. The advent of social media has allowed kids to have a voice and express their opinions, with the likes of YouTube creating a great platform - without any filtering from producers or TV executives - for commonality with others and highlighting a broad range of issues that otherwise would have been kept under the radar.

As bystanders we have been able to witness this movement and encapsulate authenticity in both characters and storytelling, while implementing a shift towards realism and credibility. The fact that kids became empowered to create content represented their ‘authentic’ selves allowed us as producers to use this as guidelines in our own storytelling.

As producers of the live-action series *Find Me in Paris* for example, we made a conscious effort to craft characters from diverse backgrounds, social

origins and gender orientations, to ensure that these stories were expressed from an organic point of view, as opposed to feeling forced or fabricated.

Jeff Chase, a character played by actor Castle Rock is an openly gay hip-hop dancer who struggles with the art of ballet. His issues are the same as many of his peers, he is a teen experiencing angst. Authenticity and reliability have always been at the forefront when writing for our characters as it’s important that our target audience be represented in our series.

Although this sentiment is becoming increasingly prevalent in kids’ series, shows such as *Sesame Street* have been pioneers in championing inclusion and diversity for decades. Whether it’s creating a character with autism or introducing Kami, a five-year-old HIV-positive girl Muppet orphaned by AIDS, there isn’t a topic or character type that the producers haven’t shied away from which is both refreshing and inspirational.

Undoubtedly, we have come along way. Are we in a great place yet? Not entirely. The preschool world is probably best in class for showing authentic and varied characters. Take *Doc McStuffins* for example, which was the first animated series on Disney Jr. to feature a black female lead.

However, archetype characters are still prevalent in many kids’ shows as of late. The white sporty athlete and the blonde cheerleader are still “go to” characters in some series, as is the racially diverse character with a heavy accent; although this trend seems to be bucking as audiences become savvier and content creators become more aware and socially responsible.

So, although we have made exceptional progress as an industry, we still need to fine-tune the characters we are creating, ensuring that race, gender, and sexual orientation are fairly represented to reflect and connect with our broad and beautifully diverse viewing audience. **TBI**

David Michel is president of Cottonwood Media and MD of Federation Kids and Family



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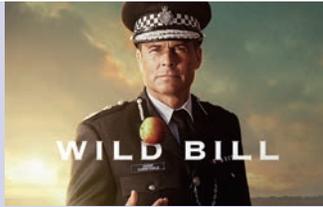
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Wild Bill Episodes 6x60' **Genre** Drama
Synopsis Acclaimed actor Rob Lowe stars as a high-flying US police chief who shakes up the UK's Lincolnshire Police Force- and his own life in the process.



World on Fire Episodes 7x60' **Genre** Drama
Synopsis From multi-award-winning writer Peter Bowker, this heart-stopping, multi-stranded drama tells the story of World War Two through the lives of ordinary people from all sides of this global conflict.



Gold Digger Episodes 6x60' **Genre** Drama
Synopsis Starring Primetime Emmy winner Julia Ormond, *Gold Digger* is a contemporary, character-driven relationship thriller filled with unexpected twists and turns.

HOT PROPERTIES Q&A

How did you manage to integrate a US protagonist into what sounds like a regional story in *Wild Bill*?

The collision of our toned, tanned American lead with the badlands of Boston, Lincolnshire is the unique selling point of the show! Bill arrives in Boston with his first class degree in criminology, his three year run as America's Top Metropolitan Police Chief and no desire to make friends. But Bill soon discovers that the people of Boston are just as smart-mouthed, cynical and difficult to impress as he is. And the man who's spent his life keeping the messiness of human intimacy at arm's length is reluctantly propelled into frontline policing and forced to reconsider his relationship with those closest to him. *Eleanor Moran, Exec Producer on Wild Bill and Head of Television at 42*

What is the tone of *Gold Digger* and what aspects of this particular relationship thriller will appeal to audiences?

The story of sixty-year-old Julia falling in love with thirty-something Benjamin and the impact of this on Julia's troubled family – is a contemporary character-driven drama full

of twists and turns to keep audiences guessing from start to finish. Featuring an all-star cast led by Primetime Emmy winner Julia Ormond in her British television debut in a lead role, and Ben Barnes as her young lover, *Gold Digger* explores social attitudes to age, love and sex, as devastating secrets from the past threaten to tear the lovers, and their families, apart. *Sally Haynes and Laura Mackie, Executive Producers, Mainstreet*

How does *World on Fire* elevate the period drama genre around this particular historical period?

World on Fire tells the story of World War 2 through the eyes of ordinary people on all sides of the conflict. Peter Bowker has drawn on his own personal connections to war as well as spending years pouring over accounts that he has found on record such as diary entries of men and women who served. *World on Fire* immortalises those everyday people for us and offers a compelling and authentic account of what war was like, on all sides. The sheer scale and execution of the idea is more film-like than TV, and that along with its stellar casting make it totally unmissable. *Ruth Berry, MD, ITVS GE*



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Planet Child Episodes 3x60' **Genre** Factual
Synopsis The journey of child development up to the age of seven. Featuring hundreds of children from around the world, this series reveals how where we live and the way we are raised makes us the people we become.



Operation Live Episodes Series 2: 3x60', Series 1: 3x60' **Genre** Factual
Synopsis This is surgery as you've never seen it before. Each night we'll broadcast live, as a life-changing surgery unfolds before our eyes.



63 Up Episodes 3x60' **Genre** Factual
Synopsis Groundbreaking television. Every seven years, director Michael Apted revisits a group to see how they have progressed through life since he first met them in 1964 as 7-year olds.

HOT PROPERTIES Q&A

How did you secure access to the young participants in *Planet Child* and what journey do we see them go on?

There was an extensive casting process for the series as we needed a loveable range of children from a variety of backgrounds so we could explore how and where you grow up influences the person you become. We also featured amazing examples of childhood from across the globe - from deserts to mega cities - whose experience inspired some groundbreaking experiments to test out the limits of what British kids are capable of, as well as revealing how we learn right from wrong and what it means to be a child in the 21st Century. *Magnus Temple, CEO of The Garden Productions*

How does *63 Up* further the 'Up' strand of films, aside from the fact that participants are now seven years older?

The latest episode in the world's longest running documentary series follows 14 people through their lives, catching up with them on film every 7 years. Featuring

more of the original line-up than ever before, we discover what has happened to the group and what life has thrown at them in their sixties. Various heartbreaking, moving and uplifting, this series continues to present an incredible living social history of modern Britain. *Claire Lewis, Producer, 63UP*

How might *Operation Live* be adapted across various territories? What are the particular challenges of securing access?

Operation Live is a format that can travel. We think the purity of our approach - always giving primacy to the surgery - is one that has universal appeal. We believe that the experience that we've gained in working closely with hospitals and surgeons in the UK is invaluable in providing reassurance to other institutions worldwide. The key to overcoming the challenges in bringing the project to air is establishing a strong relationship with the hospital staff, and establishing clear protocols for what happens in any given eventuality. *Magnus Temple, CEO of The Garden Productions*



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Ms Fisher's MODern Murder Mysteries Episodes 4x120' or 8x60'
Genre Drama **Synopsis** Ms Fisher is every bit the embodiment of style, glamour and adventure in this all new crime drama set to the colourful backdrop of 1964.



Race Across the World Episodes 60'
Genre Format **Synopsis** Four pairs race from point A to B without flying. With limited funds and no phones, it's the ultimate globe-trotting expedition. Who will make it?



The Last Igloo Episodes 1x90'
Genre Factual **Synopsis** Documenting the ingenious craft of igloo-building before it's too late, The Last Igloo is an extraordinary and poetic sensory immersion in a landscape of ice and snow.

Q&A WITH GRAHAM SPENCER, SVP, EMEA SOUTH

Describe Your Drama Slate for this year's MIPTV

The all3media international slate for 2019 is one of big, varied, impactful drama series. Two Brothers' 6-part thriller *Baptiste* is currently broadcasting on BBC1, whilst *Cheat* for ITV consolidated extremely well with, in excess of 7 million for the first episode.

We are bringing a four-part domestic thriller from The Forge for BBC1: *Dark Money* written by Levi David Addai and from the team that produced *National Treasure* and *Kiri*. It sees a guilt-ridden father decide to accept 'hush money' after his son suffers sexual abuse in Hollywood.

We also have our first major contemporary dystopian thriller series. *The Feed*, by Channing Powell (*The Walking Dead*) has been selected for Canneseries in competition and for a global premiere at MIPTV. *Ms. Fisher's MODern Murder Mysteries* has just launched to excellent ratings on Network Seven in Australia. We also have the half-hour narrative drama, *Diary of an Uber Driver* for ABC Australia from Revolver.

What is unique about *Race Across the World*?

Unveiled at all3media international's Format Upfronts in February and broadcasting on Sunday nights on BBC Two, *Race Across The World* is a real-life competition in which five teams of two people race from London to Singapore without using aeroplanes. This is a very noisy format with great characters which has launched to a fantastic 1.5 million viewers and a 7.6% share – 25% higher than the channel slot average.

Tell us more about *The Last Igloo*

Presently filming from Swan Films, we have a beautiful documentary which reveals a world fast melting away. Visually stunning, it shows the ingenious craft of igloo-building, in a landscape of ice and snow. *The Last Igloo* tells the story of one day in the life of an Inuit hunter in arctic Greenland, and the igloo that he builds on the frozen tundra. Shot to reveal every detail of the hunter's day and the igloo's construction, this film is an absorbing and meditative celebration of an art form at one with its environment and a poignant reminder of what may soon disappear. *The Last Igloo* will be available this summer.



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Warren Episodes 6x30'
Genre Comedy drama **Synopsis** Warren (Martin Clunes) is a pedantic driving instructor who finds himself in his mid-fifties with a job he hates and a family he never asked for



Drag Lab Episodes 6x60'
Genre Factual Entertainment **Synopsis** An outrageous and emotional series about the UK's most fabulous drag collective, The Family Gorgeous, who believe we all need to find our inner drag.



Australia with Julia Bradbury Episodes 8x30'
Genre Travel **Synopsis** By prop plane, helicopter, camel, boat, 4x4 and on foot, Julia Bradbury (Countryfile) is on an epic journey to discover modern Australia and its people.

Q&A WITH SARAH TONG, DIRECTOR OF SALES

How does the sitcom *Warren* punch through in its primetime slot? Warren (Martin Clunes), just wants an easy life. He's happy with a clean house, a neat garden, and a nice cup of tea. But thanks to his naturally difficult personality, Warren is constantly finding himself in sticky situations. Not blessed with patience, empathy, or any kind of paternal instinct whatsoever. Cantankerous, blunt and grumpy, he just about tolerates a couple of his pupils while the rest he simply can't stand. In the tradition of *I'm Alan Partridge*, *One Foot in the Grave* and *The Royle Family*, Warren is a broad mainstream sitcom that mixes the naturalistic mundanity of life with big, farcical plotlines.

How do you account for the global appetite around drag-themed programming at the moment?

Drag is a joyous celebration. In a world where identity matters, what could be better than celebrating the biggest, boldest most fabulous sides of ourselves.

What characteristics of *Drag Lab* lend themselves to international adaptations?

This series brings drag to the mainstream. It shouts that drag is for everybody, whether you are gay or straight, old or young, man or woman. Doing drag for the very first time takes courage and this series uses the power of drag as a kind of therapy, taking contributors from all walks of life on genuinely emotional journeys to build their confidence, do something hard, and achieve something fabulous.

How does the local landscape elevate *Australia with Julia Bradbury*, and what will appeal to buyers?

Whilst exploring behind the scenes of some of Australia's most show stopping destinations, Julia is also on the hunt for the unexpected aspects of modern Australia. This series showcases a side of Australia not seen before, such as working with mums who are crocodile egg hunters and enlisting in a boat race thousands of miles away from water. Its an epic journey through a variety of spectacular landscapes, replete with wildlife encounters and Australian life as it's lived in all its guises right across the continent.

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Clink Episodes 1x60' **Genre** Drama Series **Synopsis** A drama set in the fictional BPS Bridewell Women's Prison, focusing on the emotional heart of a community of women forced to confront their own realities.



The Dead Lands Episodes 8x60' **Genre** Drama Series **Synopsis** Set in pre-European Polynesia, The Dead Lands takes audiences into an exciting action-adventure based narrative, where martial arts, honour and betrayal rule the land.



Griff Off The Rails: Down Under Episodes 6x60' (6x30' also available) **Genre** Non-Fiction Series **Synopsis** British comedian and travel enthusiast Griff Rhys Jones is boarding the trains of Australia to present a very modern look at the land down under.

Q&A WITH JONATHAN FORD, EVP OF SALES

What sets *Clink* apart in its genre

Heavy on truth and honesty and avoiding stereotypes, *Clink* is unafraid to tackle today's issues – successfully dramatising the real stories many are still too fearful to talk about openly.

With a social and moral conscience this drama has heart and humour and gives a voice to the forgotten and misunderstood community held in prison today. In *Clink* our inmates tell it how it really is – and you'll want to listen.

How does the rail journey element of *Griff Off The Rails* lift the travelogue format?

The railways made modern Australia and here Griff Rhys Jones presents a contemporary view of this vast continent, criss-crossing from the west to the east coast, north to south, from surf beaches to dusty outback.

As he covers thousands of miles his engaging personality shines through as

he reveals unique characters and communities – enthusiastically encouraging everyone he meets to show just what today's Australia means to them.

What is the tone of *The Dead Lands* and how is it distinct?

The award-winning, globally successful film *The Dead Lands* was an influential New Zealand story that took Māori martial art to audiences worldwide, and our creative team and incredible actors have developed a unique film into a spiritual and unearthly thriller series.

Warrior Waka Nuku Rau journeys through broken, terrifying lands as he seeks a way to find honour, and repair a world ravaged by the supernatural. It's a frightening, atmospheric world where spiritual and paranormal are real. Aided by Mehe, a young woman determined to make sure he succeeds, Waka's got a message: Tell the dead I'm coming.



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The Crow Episodes 10x50' **Genre** Drama, crime, mystery, thriller **Synopsis** Anna, a brilliant yet complex detective realizes that a murder happened on her watch. She has to find the killer in this gripping investigative drama.



Brass Suns Episodes 6x48' **Genre** War, drama **Synopsis** Unique war series about young army musicians, who have no combat skills, but must protect innocent civilians of a Central Asian village from guerillas.



Cover-Up Band Episodes 16x50' **Genre** Crime, history, drama **Synopsis** To dismantle the crime syndicate that smuggles antique icons abroad, a brave Soviet police officer sets up an undercover music band.

Q&A WITH TIMUR WEINSTEIN, GENERAL PRODUCER

The crime genre has had a boom in recent times. How do your titles stand out?

NTV series tell original stories, local on one side but universal at the same time as they appeal to international audiences keeping them engaged and interested. All our dramas have exceptional production quality: as the leader in criminal drama/thriller production in Russia, we select the best screenwriters, directors, and stars for our projects. Major global distributors recognize high quality and original storytelling of our productions and projects such as *Beyond Death*, *The Crow*, *Schubert*, *Shepherd*, and *Five Minutes of Silence* already attracted their attention.

How did *Cover-Up Band* land at NTV?

This unique project originated from our collaboration with one of the top Russian screenwriters, Denis Karyshev. Earlier he created an amazing period spy thriller called *Devil Hunt*, which you can find in our catalogue. Denis then came up with

the idea of mixing crime, comedy, and musical genres together. The result was light, high-paced, and charming series with one-of-a-kind vibe. The audience will definitely enjoy the authentic ambience of the 70s' USSR, when long hair, flared jeans, and rock-n-roll ruled everywhere.

Have sales of Russian dramas grown over the past few years?

Russian content is gaining in popularity in Asia, Eastern Europe, MENA, and CIS. NTV is the biggest crime genre producer in the country, and people from all over the world watch our action series, thrillers, and procedurals. High quality content that's based on original stories but have a universal appeal will always find its audience. International sales of NTV series have been rising year after year. Three top global streamers picked up NTV projects lately – Netflix released a beautiful large-scale period drama *The Road to Calvary*, Amazon Prime chose a war series *Uppercut for Hitler*, and Bilibili licensed a modern super-hero thriller *Schubert*.

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Behind Closed Doors: Through the Eyes of a Child Episodes 1x60' **Genre** Human interest **Synopsis** BAFTA award winning Director Anna Hall goes into uncharted territory, finding and talking with children who have witnessed domestic abuse.



The Secret Lives of Slim People Episodes 4x30' **Genre** Lifestyle **Synopsis** This fascinating documentary series closely examines and unlocks behaviours and eating patterns of people who appear to be naturally slim.



Call The Cleaners Episodes 12x30' **Genre** Lifestyle **Synopsis** This rating winning series follows specialist cleaners as they tackle extreme domestic dirt and grime. Featuring incredible transformations, uplifting stories and help for those most in need.

Q&A WITH AMY KEMP, HEAD OF SALES

Describe your slate for MIPTV this year?

Orange Smarty is excited to be launching over 25 new titles across the factual space with an eclectic mix of singles and series as well as a selection of award winning content. The slate itself appeals to a multi-platform market and offers noisy and high profile titles that easily break through the EPGs, together with new Formats which continue to showcase some of the best ratings winning programming.

As well as maximising sales on finished content, we will also be looking to generate co-production and pre-sale interest in some of our early stage projects.

What genres and shows are performing well for you at the moment?

True Crime continues to be a sought after genre and access is key – *Catching a Killer* has sold extensively and the series highlights the complexities and detail required in a major crime investigation from start to finish with unprecedented 360 degree access.

For female-skewing channels, returning Lifestyle series remain popular and the highly successful *A Place in the Sun* continues to generate ongoing and new sales.

Natural History is always popular as long as the quality remains high. *Russia From Above* is an incredible natural history series with a budget of over €3 million and has secured sales to multiple territories.

What is unique about Behind Closed Doors: Through the Eyes of a Child?

The documentary was shot over the course of three years and gained unprecedented access to children who have all witnessed or experienced domestic violence, an issue which sadly affects children worldwide.

It was a natural fit for the catalogue as there remains a strong thirst for quality hard-hitting Human Interest stories which is echoed by the success we have had with similar programmes which also cover tough subject matters in a sensitive manner.



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World's Most Incredible Hotels Episodes 13x60' **Genre** Lifestyle **Synopsis** From ice hotels to luxury tree houses, to exclusive retreats and safari boutiques, this series unveils the world's most unbelievable places to stay.



Giant Lobster Hunters Episodes 10x60' **Genre** Reality & Entertainment **Synopsis** The series documents the high drama and dangers at sea as crews go in search of big cash hauls during summer: the prime lobster season.



Shake My Beauty Episodes 8x60' **Genre** Reality and Entertainment **Synopsis** We follow the inspirational journeys of eight courageous women as they face their fears and reveal their conditions for the very first time.

Q&A WITH JIMMY HUMPHREY, HEAD OF ACQUISITIONS

What makes Shake My Beauty a series that buyers should consider?

We're really happy with how this human interest series has shaped up – Barcroft Studios have done it again. *Shake My Beauty* is empowering and aspirational, and will make you cry and smile in equal measure. The series embraces individuality and harnesses an existing online following from the show's stars to bring their uplifting stories to a wider audience. We're confident that buyers, particularly those with slightly more female-skewing platforms, will see the potential for this series to attract younger viewers.

What has Giant Lobster Hunters brought to your portfolio?

We're continually asked for more in the ever-present tough jobs space, and the men that crew the Southern Ocean fishing boats hunting giant lobsters will make us all grateful for our cushy office jobs. The series is packed with drama and colourful characters, and is the story of survival, risk and strategy at sea. The show

has already made waves in its native Australia and we're expecting a really positive response at the market.

Describe this year's MIPTV slate

What's increasingly important for us is to have a rich mix of different genres in the catalogue. This market we're bringing a smorgasbord of shows for our buyers' tastes. Not only are we launching two very exciting new factual entertainment formats (Channel 5's *The House of Extraordinary People* and Channel 4's *Banged Up*) and prime time noisy factual (*Shocking Emergency Calls*), but also a smattering of ob-doc series (*Plane Reclaimers*, *Bangers and Cash*, *Train Truckers*), a healthy dollop of lifestyle (*World's Most Incredible Hotels*, *Destination China*), and of course those TCB staples of history & engineering (*The Crusaders*, *Secrets of the Railways*, *Underground Worlds*). Oh, and we've got more dogs, crime and police shows for good measure.

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Last Word Patrick Walker

Less about ‘You’ and more about ‘Us’

“We’ve invested in social series that thrive on interaction, such as scripted teen drama *Skam* or talk-show format *Red Table Talk*, which saw 800,000 interactions in the form of likes, comments, reactions and shares in just the first 72 hours of the last episode landing on Watch.”

You may remember in 2006 when ‘You’ was named Person of the Year by *Time* magazine for “seizing the reigns of global media and beating the pros at their own game”. This was a milestone within the media industry, recognising the millions of people who contribute to user-generated content around the world – through online video or otherwise.

But this was a singular ‘You’ – hailed as an ‘individual’ going online to “watch. And work. Like crazy. Making Facebook profiles and Second Life avatars”.

Fast-forward 13 years. Through the surge of viral one-off hits from individual uploaders such as Numa Numa Guy or Charlie Bit My Finger, and the creativity of short-form video hits from digital-first brands such as Vice and BuzzFeed, what’s been born is a more strategic, TV-minded approach to online video, with an entire community of people at its core.

At Facebook, we were invigorated by this social video concept – where viewing has become less about ‘You’ and more of a participatory experience.

We launched Facebook Watch internationally last year as a dedicated platform for content, allowing us to test and learn what our users want to get out of online video around the world. What we’ve seen is that our viewers are lively when content is centered around conversation – we’ve seen audiences on our platform come together to watch video through tools such as Watch Party, and even become stars themselves in gamified or ‘Live-with’ formats, bringing users even closer to their favourite creators.

We’ve invested in social series that thrive on this concept of interaction, such as scripted teen drama *Skam* or talk-show format *Red Table Talk* starring Jada Pinkett Smith, which saw 800,000 interactions in the form of likes, comments, reactions and shares in just the first 72 hours of the last episode landing on Watch.

Likewise, our ecosystem partners are learning from their own social practices on the platform and experimenting with formats in the same vein.

Take Italian digital publisher Freeda, which produces inspiring original content for their Facebook video page, including a series entitled *Freeda For The Record*, focused on interviews with iconic women on topical issues, and sparking meaningful conversation among the network’s 1.6m followers.

What’s interesting is that this new social rule doesn’t just apply to new formats. Old fan-favourites are finding new lifespans on social media, and are being re-invented online to draw in new communities and nostalgic conversation. We’ll soon launch our version of MTV’s *The Real World* on Watch in Mexico, Thailand and the US, this time empowering the Facebook community to vote via poll on one of the cast members. We’re also putting classic library content from three previous series of MTV’s *The Real World* on Facebook Watch, and users will have a chance to vote on which nostalgia series will be available.

And our partners are now empowered to do exactly the same – leveraging their own back-catalogue of content on Facebook Watch for brand-new distribution, while monetising through our Ad Breaks programme. Take Little Dot, who are uploading classic episodes of *Ramsay’s Kitchen Nightmares*, reaching millions of new viewers, or Endemol’s *Mr. Bean*, whose video page has more than 82m followers and sees some of the highest watched episodes in the UK.

While traditional TV commissioning strategies remain a key part of video distribution, across the industry there’s now huge potential across digital mediums to be the gatekeeper of your own content, and rally new, talkative fan-bases online.

If 2006 was the power of ‘You’ in the media and entertainment industry, then 2019 is all about ‘Us’ – working closely together to define a new vision for social video. **TBI**

Patrick Walker is director of media partnerships for EMEA at Facebook



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