

# TBI Television Business International

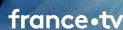
**The Interview**  
*The Crown's* Andy Harries on what's next for drama  
Page 10

**Virtual thinking**  
Online rights companies eye digital disruption  
Page 12



# THIN ICE

8x45'



**Banijay Rights**



# Banijay Rights presents...

## Bäckström



Crime drama series based on the books by Leif GW Persson following the rebellious murder detective Evert Bäckström.

## The Hunt For A Killer



Based on a true story, a team of police officers set out to solve a sadistic murder case that had remained unsolved for 16 years.

## Bang



In a brand new second season, a serial killer targets a group of men connected to a historic sexual assault.

## The Gulf



Set on New Zealand's Waiheke Island, Detective Jess Savage investigates cases while battling her own inner demons.







# MEET, GREET, DEAL, REPEAT



## PARANORMAL NIGHTSHIFT

13 x 60' Bristow Global Media



## BRITAIN'S LOST BATTLEFIELDS

6 x 60' Rumpus Media



## BANGERS AND CASH

2 Series: 20 x 60' Air TV



## EXTREME ICE MACHINES

10 x 60' Architect Films



## HITLER'S SUPERCARS

1 x 60' Wisser Films





**TRUMP IN TWEETS**

1 x 60' Wonderhood Studios



**FORBIDDEN HISTORY**

5 Series: 35 x 60'  
Like A Shot Entertainment



**MATERNITY 24/7**

6 x 60' Chalkboard TV



**AGE GAP LOVE: MILLIONAIRES**

2 x 60' Nine Lives Media/  
Motion Content Group



**MH370: THE COVER-UP**

2 x 60' Foxtel

+44 20 3970 5551  
sales@tcbmediarights.com  
www.tcbmediarights.com





# NEW CONTENT FOR 2020



**BLOODLANDS**

HTM Television  
for BBC One



**INSIDE  
MISSGUIDED**

Pulse Films  
for Channel 4



**KATE & KOJI**

Hat Trick Productions  
for ITV



**RICH HOLIDAY  
POOR HOLIDAY**

Emporium Productions &  
Hat Trick Productions for Channel 5



**FLACK  
Series 2**

Hat Trick Productions &  
CASM Films for UKTV & Pop TV



**MEGA SHIPPERS:  
LAND, AIR & SEA**

back2back Productions  
for Discovery Quest

**HAT TRICK INTERNATIONAL**

**NEW TITLES LAUNCHING ONLINE**

VISIT US: [www.hattrickinternational.com](http://www.hattrickinternational.com) | @hattrickint





# Contents TBI April/May 2020



## 10. Taking the long view

Andy Harries, CEO at Left Bank Pictures, talks to Richard Middleton about what's next for his company and the industry.

## 12. Reeling it in online

With the traditional events calendar thrown into disarray, Andy Fry finds out whether digital distribution platforms hold the answer.

## 18. Calling time on climate change

Helen Dugdale finds out what steps select producers and broadcasters are doing to cut their impact on the world's climate.

## 24. Attention grabbing

Nick Edwards reflects on how Italian drama has maintained its momentum as scripted competition has increased.

## 28. Script to screen: *A Suitable Boy*

Indian director Mira Nair discusses her adaptation of Vikram Seth's seminal novel.

## 32. Nordic thaw?

Nordic producers have been prolific over recent years, but is a deluge of scripted product from the region diluting the quality?



## 36. A seat at the table

Keshet Studios president Peter Traugott discusses how the Israeli company's Stateside studio is competing – and winning.

## 38. Scripted Hot Picks

Casting an eye on shows from across the world, including German crime series *Dark Woods* and French thriller *Shadowplay*.

## 48. Scaling new heights

Stephen Arnell ponders the attraction to remakes and what makes the difference between a welcome return or an ill-advised flop.

## 52. Why the world loves Korea's quirky IP

Jane Marlowe finds out just what it is about left-field Korean content that is currently cutting through all over the world.

## 56. Formats Hot Picks

TBI picks out a few formats that caught our eye recently, including *Small Town*, *Big Love*, *Sing Or Spin*, *Legacy List* and *1 Year Off*.

## 58. Copycatting true crime

Tim Dams considers whether the popularity of the true crime genre could be helping to create copycat criminals.

## 60. Factual Hot Picks

Our selection of upcoming factual series, including *Costa Rica: The Rise Of Nature* and *Tony Robinson's VE Day: Minute By Minute*.

## 62. Running the gauntlet

How are streamers' demands for children's content affecting the deals available for producers? Helen Dugdale finds out.

## 66. Casting a spell

TBI explores the enduring popularity of magical powers in kids' programming and how they continue to captivate youngsters.



**Plus:** 6 Editor's Note • 8 Well-being • 9 Diary • 46 Writer's Room: Dan Sefton • 72 Last Word: Bethan Corney





## Editor's note Richard Middleton

### Mission statement

**W**ell, it's been a hell of a few weeks, hasn't it? It's easy to make grandiose, sweeping statements about the impact of the global pandemic wreaking havoc around the world at present but perhaps in this case, they are – for once – permitted. Such a comparable state of global paralysis has never been seen before and our business, like almost every other sector, has been left reeling.

Production has been halted, development is uncertain, unions and trade bodies are demanding – pleading – with their respective governments for support. The events that have come to define the annual rhythms for those working in the content business, particularly the international side of it, have been cancelled and distributors are wondering what's going to happen to their pipeline of shows in three, six or 12-months time. The human cost of this pandemic is, of course, incalculable. On a business level, it is the uncertainty – applicable to most companies in most countries around the world – that is perhaps most troubling.

The TV industry is, however, responding. And no matter where you may be reading this, there will be house-bound viewers looking for entertainment, information, education and diversion – and the content business has always been the place to get those things.

In this edition, we hear from those across the content divide: from a multitude of online distribution services offering new ways to sell rights, to the benefits and opportunities provided by virtual meetings. But we also look to offer some light relief: check out how Mira Nair approached her adaptation of *A Suitable Boy*; why Korean formats are here to stay; what's next for the Italian and Nordic drama scene; and the ongoing interest in rebooting classic TV shows.

We also delve into the discussion around true crime – does it fuel criminal behaviour? – and take a much-needed segue into the prevalence of magic in kids TV. Because if ever we needed a little of that, it's now.

Television Business International (USPS 003-807) is published bi-monthly (Jan, Mar, Apr, Jun, Aug and Oct) by Informa Tech, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0TA. The 2006 US Institutional subscription price is \$255. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by Agent named Air Business, C/O Priority Airfreight NY Ltd, 147-29 182nd Street, Jamaica, NY11413. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to Television Business International, C/O Air Business Ltd / Priority Airfreight NY Ltd, 147-29 182nd Street, Jamaica, NY11413. Subscription records are maintained at Informa Tech, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0TA, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

### Contact us

**Editor** Richard Middleton  
richard.middleton@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 7184

**Deputy editor** Mark Layton  
mark.layton@informa.com

**Contributors** Stephen Arnell, Bethan Corney, Tim Dams, Helen Dugdale, Nick Edwards, Andy Fry, Jane Marlowe, Dan Sefton

**Sales manager** Michael Callan  
michael.callan@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 5295

**Art director** Matthew Humberstone  
matthew.humberstone@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 5336

**Marketing executive** Abigail Dede  
abigail.dede@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 6018

**Commercial director** Patricia Arescy  
patricia.arescy@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 5320

**Editorial director** Stuart Thomson  
stuart.thomson@informa.com  
**Direct line** +44 (0) 20 7017 5314



**Published by** Informa Tech, Blue Fin Building,  
110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TA  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7017 5000  
**e-mail:** tbi@informa.com **web:** www.tbivision.com  
**Printed in England** by Walstead Roche Ltd,  
St Austell, Cornwall PL26 8LX.

© 2020 Informa UK Ltd All rights reserved  
Reproduction without permission is prohibited





# WE GOT THIS

6 x 45'



Film i Väst



svt



viaplay



Banijay Rights





## Well-being Tracy Forsyth

### How to build mental resilience

**In this edition's Well-being column, former BBC Studios exec and corporate wellness coach Tracy Forsyth tackles mental resilience**

**T**o err is human, to forgive, divine,” wrote Alexander Pope in his Essay On Criticism. We’re human, we make mistakes and mess up but hopefully those around us forgive and forget and the whole thing blows over. Likewise, the hymn Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven details divine like qualities of being “slow to chide and swift to bless”. Slow to criticise, quick to find something good to say.

Both are good principles to live by. The problem is, we often find it impossible to forgive or ‘bless’ ourselves. Forgiveness, compassion and praise seem to be divine qualities we save for other people. If you’ve ever said stuff like: “I could kick myself”, “I’m so stupid”, “I should’ve been more X or Y” then you’ll know what I mean.

#BeKind is very much on the agenda and so it should be. But it also extends to being kind to yourself. I believe if you practice being kind, compassionate and forgiving to yourself, you will increase your mental resilience. If you don’t knock yourself down so hard, you won’t have as much difficulty getting up again. If you are slow to criticise yourself and instead look for the positives, it builds your self-esteem and confidence. Like nurturing a plant, instead of continually cutting it back, allow it to grow – even if you think it might get a bit unruly.

So, if the last person you are kind to is yourself, here are some things to consider.

**Cut yourself some slack.** You don’t have to be 100% perfect or the best at everything. No-one is. Celebrate being 80% perfect rather than berating yourself for the 20% that isn’t.

**Don’t suppress your feelings.** In the same way that what goes up tends to come down, feelings that we

suppress, deny or ignore, find a way of surfacing. Let them up and out.

**Honour yourself by listening to feelings and taking them seriously.** There is no right or wrong in them, they just ‘are’, so don’t ever say: “I shouldn’t be feeling or thinking like this”. Whatever the emotion – anger, jealousy, disappointment – acknowledge that no matter how uncomfortable, that’s how you currently are. Show yourself some compassion because it is horrible to feel like that.

**Give yourself time to process your thoughts.** Try to work out what lies underneath. Normally, there is a value or something you hold dear underlying them. Whatever it is, it will be a fundamental part of you. It’s what makes you, you. Don’t ignore this, respect it.

**Try reframing the situation you are in or looking at it from a different perspective.** In the same way an object can look very different from another angle so can your thoughts on an issue. If your current perspective is self-critical, then try looking at it from a ‘silver lining’ or ‘unexpected benefits’ or ‘what I’ve learned’ perspective. If you were to find something positive to say instead of chiding yourself, what would it be? Get in the habit of reframing positively to balance out the default negative position.

**Finally, remember that changing a situation is not always in your control – but the choice of how you react can be.** If you’ve listened compassionately to your feelings, processed your thoughts and looked at it from a positive perspective, then congratulate yourself for doing just that, dust yourself off and be proud that you have shown divine like qualities in forgiving and blessing yourself. **TBI**

Tracy is a creative mentor for the Channel 4 Indie Growth Fund, the producer of the WFTV mentoring scheme and a professional executive coach. Follow her at [walterwootze.com](http://walterwootze.com)



## About Town

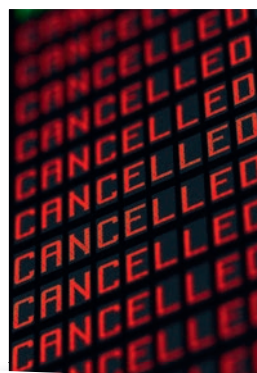
### Opening up online

**T**his period of the year normally consists of frenzied activity as distributors and producers gear up for key events across genres and at locations around the world.

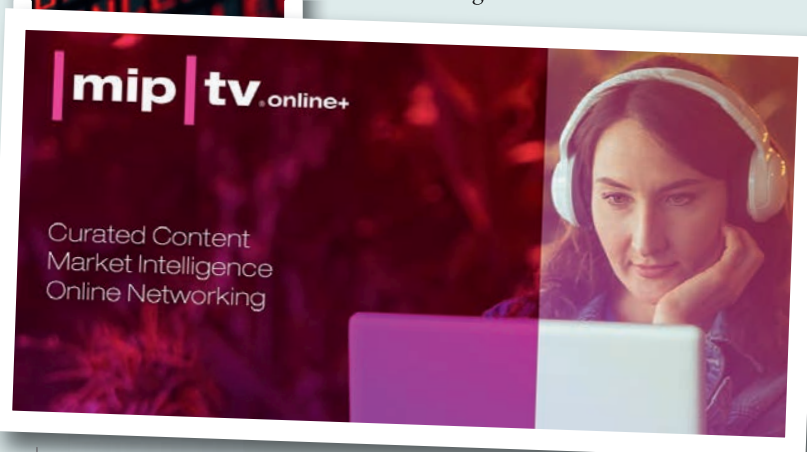
It has been slightly less frenetic this time around. From Hong Kong and Dubai, to Austin, Lille and Cannes, events were postponed or cancelled as the full extent of the dreaded C word impacted the TV business like nothing before it. Sure, we've had ash clouds and strikes and floods and more, but never a global pandemic that has wiped out pretty much everything on the person-to-person front.

From MIPTV to Series Mania, SXSW to Cabsat and Cartoons On The Bay, the industry has been rocked by Covid-19 and TBI's heartfelt sympathy goes out to all those who had put months of effort into their respective events only to see them unable to go ahead, in some cases just days before they were planned to launch.

It has left a void in many people's calendars – not to mention a slight problem for a page titled, 'About Town' – but the content business is nothing if not resilient.



Distributors have launched their own virtual meetings and MIPTV organiser Reed Midem has unveiled a virtual ONLINE+ version of its annual content market, offering access to exclusive programming and sessions. Strands including Market Intelligence, Fresh TV and the Factual and Kids Content Showcases will also move into the virtual world, with other events doing likewise (see Series Mania's Digital Forum below). Getting around town in the current climate might be tricky, but we can be sure of one thing: the events circuit will be back.

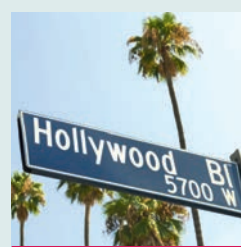


### Digitally minded

Organisers of Series Mania have moved quickly to reposition the annual drama festival as a virtual event, following the spread of Covid-19 in France. Series Mania Digital Forum promises streams of the 16 selected projects in the co-pro pitching sessions, along with selected events from the UGC Writers Campus Pitching sessions and more. The forum, accessed via seriesmaniadigital.com, will run online from 25 March to 7 April and also provides access to the 'Coming Next From' sessions as well as curated series from its buyers showcase. Get comfortable and enjoy.



### LA Screenings



**Disney, NBCUniversal, Sony, ViacomCBS and Warner Bros** moved early in scrapping this year's LA Screenings. The companies are exploring alternatives and have said they will each "be individually communicating alternative screening plans to clients soon."

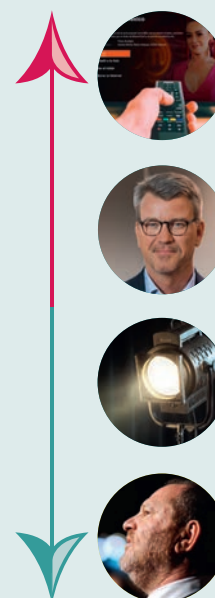
### Swings and Roundabouts

**440m** 'New Fox', headed up by Lachlan Murdoch, got into the AVOD flow with a \$440m deal to acquire streamer Tubi

**44** Anders Jensen's Nordic streamer Viaplay saw streamed minutes up 44% on the same week last year, following the outbreak of Coronavirus

**120,000** US trade body the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) estimated that Covid-19 shutdowns would result in the loss of 120,000 jobs

**23** Disgraced former TV and film producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual assault, following the end of his trial in New York City







## Taking the long view

Netflix drama *The Crown* arguably marked the start of the streaming revolution. With the show's fifth and seemingly final season now in the works, Richard Middleton talks to Andy Harries, CEO and co-founder at Left Bank Pictures, about what's next for his company and the industry

**A**ndy Harries has always tended to be ahead of the curve. He was a Brit pitching projects in the US almost a quarter of a century ago; was among the first to strike a deal with Netflix on *The Crown*; and is now awaiting the launch of short-form platform Quibi to test out his opinion that the TV world is simply “speeding up.”

So it might be a surprise that one of his soon-to-launch projects involves a TV format that's two decades old and sees him working with more ‘traditional’ commissioners in the form of US cabler AMC and ITV in the UK.

Yet *Quiz*, a three-part drama that tells the story of an audacious heist on the UK version of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*, also neatly reflects Harries' deep relationship with TV, despite the fact he is now so intrinsically linked with streaming.

“I got incredibly excited about the idea of *Quiz*,” he says. “I saw the play by James Graham in [the UK city of] Chichester and knew I wanted it as soon as I saw it — before I saw it to be honest.”

### ‘Next Martin Scorsese’

But Harries hasn't always been involved in drama. Comedy was his first love and following “some lost years in LA” during the late 1980s when he thought he'd be “the next Martin Scorsese,” he made his mark at the UK's Granada Television, working on shows such as ITV's *Cold Feet* and the BBC's *The Royle Family*.

Both shows are fundamentally English but offer premises that are universal, that oft-required combination in today's scripted world. Back in the 1990s, Harries looked Stateside, taking the shows to Hollywood to explore further opportunities. “I've always loved going to LA — I wouldn't want to live there but I've always enjoyed driving around in the sunshine,” he says.

Attempting to export *Cold Feet* and *The Royle Family* didn't go well — “we did several pilots for both shows, all of which were total disasters, but they taught me a lot,” he says. Part of the problem was being ignored by those on the US side, but Harries' trajectory continued



and he went on to head up ITV drama, working with Peter Morgan and Helen Mirren on *Prime Suspect*. Perhaps fittingly, it was the Oscar-nominated 2007 movie *The Queen* that acted as “a turning point,” proving that both he and Brits could mix it with those in the US.

“We were slow in this country to exploit what we do best, which is making TV,” he explains, “But we are among the best, that’s just a fact and the Americans respect that.” Left Bank Pictures, backed by BBC Worldwide (now BBC Studios) followed. It has gone on to produce dramas ranging from Morgan’s *The Special Relationship* for HBO to *Wallander* for the BBC and *Outlander* for Starz.

Such was its success, that within five years, Sony Pictures Television had taken a majority stake. Harries admits he was “a bit sad” to sell the company in 2012, but he’d seen the way the business was going.

“It was clear that the only way you could make an impact in the US was to have an American partner. It’s the same today, I don’t think you can really operate as a successful independent in LA, you’ve got to have a partner and representation. That’s the way Americans do business and you have to respect that.”

## Teachings from *The Crown*

Having a deep understanding of the US system means he is well placed for the industry’s latest evolutionary turn as US streamers go global en masse. He struck gold with *The Crown* for Netflix in 2014 – “let’s be straight, it was right place, right time and right idea” – but says the industry is now unrecognisable to what it was.

Providing both contrast and continuity is *White Lines*, a three-part Ibiza-set drama about clubbing that’s set to launch on Netflix this summer. Both shows are licence deals, but the intense competition and the immediacy of the current scripted environment is clear. “When a show goes up on Netflix these days, it is all about the first week or two. If you don’t hit it then, you are pretty dead. Television is becoming like the film business – it’s like the opening weekend.”

There are also similarities between *The Crown* and *White Lines*: Netflix snagged the former’s writer Morgan in October, and the streamer has also struck a deal with Álex Pina, the acclaimed Spanish scribe behind *White Lines* and *La Casa De Papel* before it.

“Amazon and Netflix are just like the American studios – like Universal, Paramount and Warners now. They are increasingly keen for people to work with them on the lot, to give out shows that they



Ibiza-set drama *White Lines* is set to launch on Netflix this summer

want made, that they will own, and you will work directly for them.”

Despite this, Harries is upbeat: to date, he says, he’s always been able to get the writer he wants, and anyway, “the recipients of big chunks of change” in return for studio or streamer deals, provide opportunities for younger writers.

## IP fever

Packaging projects, however, is key, “unless you have undeniable subject matter,” a sign of the huge competition in scripted at present. For Harries, the 500 shows coming out of the US is extraordinary. “I struggle to watch more than 20 or 30 a year, so there’s an awful lot of stuff not being watched. I suspect we have probably peaked but until the streamers settle down, we’ll have an accelerated fever over these ‘undeniable projects’.”

Harries points to the fight for IP on several recent podcasts as an example of this “fever” and suggests he expects consolidation on the streaming front. For others, such as the BBC, the future is unclear but his support for the UK pubcaster is unequivocal.

“It’s at the absolute heart of our creative industries,” Harries says, admitting that he cannot fathom why the current government seems intent on reducing its impact.

“Netflix and the others cater for global audiences brilliantly, their shows increasingly have a feel that they can be perfectly watchable in Hong Kong or Argentina or the UK,” he explains. “It means we should be vigilant. It’s the very British shows that might not instantly get a global audience, there’s the worry,” he argues, pointing to dramas such as the hugely successful *Peaky Blinders* as a series that a streamer would likely never have commissioned.

## Accelerated thinking

“Everything is speeding up,” he continues. “My prediction is everything will get shorter, the half hour will be the new hour. People’s attention spans are shorter, I can see why Quibi could work, not from a financial aspect, but why people would be interested.”

Harries also suggests he understands why *The Crown* is to end after the fifth season on Netflix rather than the sixth, as many had thought was the plan. Firstly, Morgan has been writing the show for almost eight years and “needs a break,” the Left Bank boss says, before admitting that the show might yet return – “perhaps [Morgan] doesn’t think it’s the end-end.”

But, he adds, “everything is shrinking. It wasn’t long ago American series were 13 if not 15 episodes, or more. For the last few years it was 10. Now eight is the new 10. If you go and pitch a ten-parter, they’ll say, ‘ooh, how about eight’. What used to be five is three.”

Viewers, he adds, are simply not coming to streamers for shows in their third or fourth seasons. “And that’s the big difference with broadcasters,” because long-running shows don’t pay when few potential subscribers will join up for a series entering its umpteenth run. They need fresh hit after hit, instead.

It seems the scripted evolutionary curve is taking Left Bank and the industry into a new era, in which expanded ambitions within a contracting timeframe will simply become the new norm. **TBI**



# Reeling it in online

With the traditional events calendar thrown into disarray as the impact of Coronavirus hits, do digital distribution platforms hold the answer? Andy Fry goes behind the scenes to find out who offers what and if they have long-term staying power

**D**igital technology has transformed the worlds of entertainment and commerce. So it's no surprise to see a slew of new platforms aiming to reinvent the world of content distribution. Over the past few years, the likes of TRX, Vuulr, RightsTrade, Imagen, ProgramBuyer, and Rawnet's ONE have all staked their claim for a share of this emerging market.

While each of the above offers distinct business models and functionality, viewed as a cohort they are seeking to deliver two primary benefits to buyers and sellers: firstly, a cheaper way to buy and sell content than attending physical markets; and secondly, a means to extract more value from content, by removing some of the real-world restraints to generating revenues.

Launched in 2017 by industry veterans David and Matthew Frank, TRX entered the fray with financial support from the likes of Channel 4 and Sky. Configured as a transactional marketplace, TRX charges sellers a subscription fee to put content on the platform. Buyers (who are highly prized and get to access all platforms for free) can browse what's available and check availability (for example, by platform, geography or time period). At this point, they can make an offer. If accepted, the two can complete their deal on the site if they want to.

Matthew Frank, CEO of TRX until late 2019, has always taken the view that platform is complementary to the kind of selling that takes place at real-world markets. Scenarios where the platform comes into its own, he says, include where the amount of revenue involved doesn't justify face-to-face deal-making. This could be the sale of a headline show to a low priority buyer who can't afford to travel to annual markets. Or it could be a buyer who wants to stock up with long tail or archive programming.

For the first two years, this proposition seemed to be building a lot of momentum. In late 2019, however, it was revealed that the Frank brothers would be stepping back from the running of the platform, creating uncertainty about TRX's ability to keep functioning without them.

## A quartet of challenges

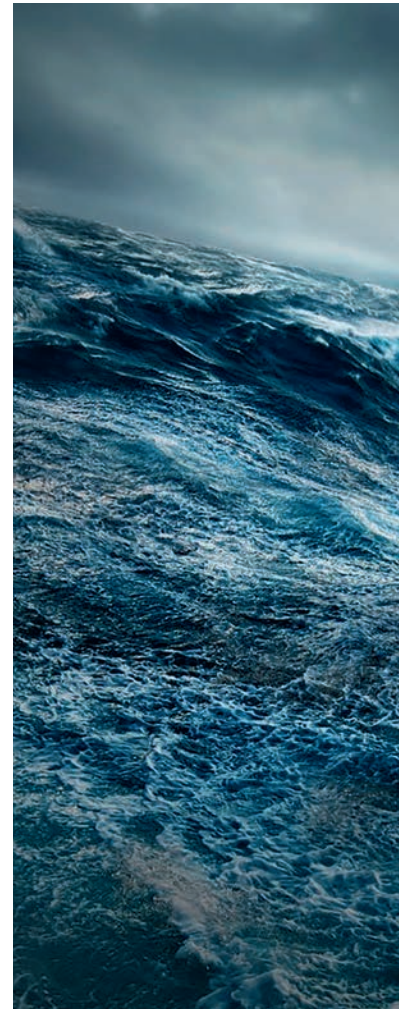
Frank was unavailable for comment regarding the future of the platform, but it seems likely that there have been four key challenges getting TRX to a point where revenues are rising faster than cash is being burned (some of which also apply to other players in this sector). One is TRX's use of a subscription model which, while valid, could disincentivise some distributors from joining the platform.

Another is the fear that TRX might disrupt existing business models – for example making it easy for buyers to cherry-pick shows rather than sign up to content packages. Thirdly, there is the complexity of content/rights integration. While Sky Vision and BBC Studios integrated their rights management systems with TRX, the fact remains that it is a challenging job to upload content in a way that accurately reflects all the relevant rights information.

Finally, there is the issue of buyer inertia. Just because buyers are registered doesn't necessarily mean that they feel comfortable switching from traditional ways of doing business.

Similar in ambition to TRX is Singapore-based Vuulr, a transactional platform that launched at the Asian TV Forum in 2018, promising to handle everything from “discovery to the deal”. CEO Ian McKee says the platform currently hosts 35,000 hours of content. “From a point where we had an empty site, we've attracted 6,500 separate titles,” he says.

McKee agrees with Frank that platforms like Vuulr are complementary to markets – though his assessment that 35-40% of value is lost to the friction of traditional transactions obviously implies some kind of fallout. Notwithstanding potential disruption, he says Vuulr is a “natural development given that buyers are looking everywhere for great content these days. Couple that with the fragmentation we have seen in buying and selling, and the ability to source content from a single destination makes sense.” In addition, he says Vuulr helps speed up transactions – with deal times dropping from months to weeks.



Lionsgate's *Wicked Tuna* is among the content available to buyers on the RightsTrade platform



## Unlocking value

McKee says a lot of the benefit lies in unlocking value that wouldn't be possible in the legacy model. "We've had Spanish animation sell to Mongolia and Bollywood LGBT content picked up in Taiwan," he says.

A key distinction from TRX is the strong Asian profile to Vuulr's content – with clients including Mediacorp, Astro, ABS-CBN, and Hooq. The long-term ambition, however, is to be global. To this end, Vuulr has signed up the likes of Banijay Rights, WarnerMedia, CNN, Viacom International Media Networks, and Super RTL. Also different to TRX is that there is no subscription for sellers (McKee doesn't want to create any barriers to match-making). "It's free to list as much as you want – from producers with a single title to large-scale distributors. The business model involves a 10% commission fee when deals are completed."

RightsTrade, an LA-based transactional platform, was launched in 2016 by rights specialist Jaime Otero. "Initially we focused on film, but now there is a 50/50

**"Buyers are  
looking everywhere  
for great content  
these days"**

Ian McKee,  
Vuulr



split with TV," he says. "We have 30,000 registered users and clients include Lionsgate, Legendary, Miramax, Gaumont, Sonar and RTVE." At launch, the platform was US-centric, says Otero, but efforts have been made to expand the footprint "so now we have content from Europe, India, Asia-Pacific and so on."

Like TRX, RightsTrade has a subscription model. Aside from the revenue this brings in, Otero says: "Subscriptions ensure we maintain a high quality threshold. The risk with a free model is that sellers won't necessarily take care to update their content – and that can lead to frustration among buyers when they are trying to source shows."

In common with all the platforms, RightsTrade generates a lot of data. "We use this to create an anonymised aggregated analysis of sales trends that is part of the seller subscription. So if buyers in one country are over-indexing on a certain genre, we can alert our clients to that."

RightsTrade Market Insights includes the fact that there is strong demand for horror in emerging markets



such as China, India, and Mexico. One of the more surprising discoveries RightsTrade has made, says Otero, is that 75% of sales are for content five years old or less. One possible explanation for this is quality. Another is that older content is likely to have less data on underlying rights (eg music).

With three transactional platforms, an obvious question is whether this is an easy business to set up. Otero says no, stressing that it is not easy to build critical mass. “There are challenges around securing the content and making the user experience function properly. But probably the biggest challenge is making sure titles have as much rights data and metadata as possible listed on the site. We’ve integrated a leading rights tracking platform called FilmTrack, which means any FilmTrack clients can quickly sync to our marketplace.”

Added value offerings are also key to maintaining a competitive edge, says Otero. “For example, we offer a kind of concierge service to buyers who are too busy to search for content. They tell us what they are looking for with as much specific detail as possible and then we manage navigation for them.” Echoing this point about added value services, Vuulr’s McKee says his platform has introduced a “bulk load service where we take on the job of adding the content for buyer”. TRX, meanwhile, has an option called TRX Campaigner, which allows sellers to target high priority buyers with specific shows.

## Match-makers

In addition to the above, there are also platforms that facilitate buyer/seller match-making – but short of transactions. One fast-growing example is ProgramBuyer, co-founded by Edwina Thring and Roz Parker, two alumni from National Geographic Television International. Supporting them are new head of sales, Nina Baretta, and a team of metadata, analytics, technical and security experts.

Parker explains that ProgramBuyer is “a non-transactional portal, aggregating distributor catalogues to give buyers the convenience of searching and screening content on a single site, using very detailed search parameters. When buyers find content in which they are interested, they go to the seller to negotiate and close the deal.”

Launched in Q1 2019, ProgramBuyer does not take any commission and charges sellers a listing fee. It is free for buyers. Parker says ProgramBuyer “is not trying to disrupt existing relationships or interfere with market attendance, but to create a digital resource that supports the industry 365 days a year. It supplements their existing activities and helps sellers reach buyers from new platforms.”

### “Subscriptions ensure we maintain a high quality threshold”

Jaime Otero,  
RightsTrade



ProgramBuyer currently has 800 registered buyers, 120 distributors and 75,000+ hours of content across genres. Sellers using the platform include A&E, Kanal D Turkey, Keshet Israel, Passion Distribution UK, Red Arrow Germany, Seven Australia, Lagardere France, CTC Russia and Ying Group Singapore.

Explaining why the platform is non-transactional, Parker says “overwhelming feedback indicated that the preference was for buyers and sellers to continue doing business face to face. It is supporting them and not trying to replace existing websites or relationships.”

Regarding data, he says: “We are gathering crucial data which is giving us an insight into buyer habits, geographic trends, most popular genres etc. This will be analysed and made available soon. Each seller also has instant access to the analytics on their own content.”

Another non-transactional service gaining traction is the ONE platform, created by UK-based digital agency Rawnet. ONE director David Rhodes says the platform grew out of work that the agency did for UK studio ITV – helping the company create a bespoke platform for showcasing its content. “From there, we created a white label version and then launched an aggregated platform, where buyers can search and view content from different companies – accessible both via an app and a website. On the ONE platform, buyers can view content, see details about shows and communicate with the seller.”

## Moving from mass

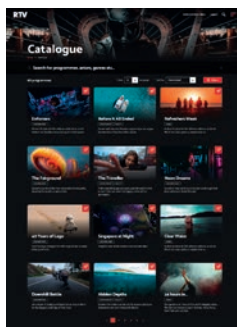
To date, ONE has mainly been targeting large distributors, but Rhodes says a new “lite” version is launching for producers and boutique distributors. A key USP, he adds, is that the various sellers on the ONE platform retain the distinctive character of their brands – rather than having content presented in a uniform or commoditised way. “Our work starts with bespoke products for clients, which means they then have a tailored presence on the platform. This explains why we have eight of the UK’s top distributors as well as the likes of A&E and AMC.”

The ultimate goal, says Rhodes, is for ONE to be a transactional platform, but the company is cautious about this step. “We’re talking about clients with vast catalogues and really complex rights scenarios.

“That side of things can get really messy – especially when you start digging back into archive programming and all the underlying rights (eg music and archive) attached to shows.

“Aside from the rights issue, it is also still challenging for transactional sites to generate decent revenues when many of the individual deals are low value.”

Another operator is Imagen, which describes its



Rawnet ONE allows buyers to view content and contact the programme seller

WORLDWIDE CHANNELS

# RAI CHANNELS ZELENS



[www.rai-com.com](http://www.rai-com.com)



## Know your platforms

**TRX** invites buyers to use its platform for free. Initially, it used a transaction fee on each deal, but that proved inflexible. So it moved to subscriptions and saw distributor numbers increase. Latest figures suggest the site has 1,500 registered buyers and 70,000 hours of content on the site. Among 110+ distributors clients are BBC Studios, All3Media, TCB, Lionsgate, StudioCanal, Televisa and BetaFilm

**Vuulr** is a transactional marketplace that is free for buyers. Distributors can list content for free, but pay 10% commission to Vuulr upon completion of a successful sale. In addition, the platform allows VOD platforms to make offers for content using a performance pricing model. This is based on factors including estimated viewer count, stream length, share of advertising or subscriber revenue

**RightsTrade** uses a subscription model, with distribution companies paying \$3,000 to \$100,000 per year, depending on the volume of content. Buyers can access for free, though the platform is exploring introducing a premium service for buyers. The platform says deals to date range anywhere from three figures to six figures.

**ProgramBuyer** is a non-transactional platform that offers new distributors a free trial period, with no commitment thereafter. After the trial, pricing then reverts to a monthly listing fee, per hour marketed on the site. Pricing is based upon the number of hours listed, decreasing with volume. Pricing can be as little as 20p per hour, per month. Sellers can sign up for a minimum of three months at a time.

**Rawnet ONE** has three levels of subscription; Lite, Pro and Enterprise. Lite starts at £1,000 (\$1,200) per month, Pro at £3,000 per month and Enterprise: at £5,000 per month. The more expensive tiers are more suitable for bigger distributors and include additional features (eg CRM integration, market support, bespoke app etc). The above costs are in addition to a set-up fee, which varies company to company.

**Imagen** uses a customisable platform to enable IP owners to offer fast, easy, secure and controlled access to content, with customers including the UK's Premier League, Women's Tennis Association, BP, Reuters, BBC and Endeavour's IMG. The British Film Institute (BFI) also uses the service for its archives, and the company is currently expanding its global operations in the US and Europe after raising a £6.5m (\$8.5m) funding round led by Downing Ventures.

mission as being “to nurture innovation and find new ways to revolutionise media management.” The company aims to enable the central management of media so that content can be used more quickly and more often, with the ambition to enable businesses to better address their markets with their content.

“The broad range of media management tools that the Imagen software offers means that our customers have one fully (customer) branded place to store, display (via controlled access), inform and distribute their valuable assets,” says Will Pitt, who heads up Imagen's sports division.

“The software is 100% created and owned by us, which means that there are no third-party dependencies,” he continues, adding that “the ability

to integrate with other systems and processes easily also sets us apart, as every customer has a unique set of workflows.”

Imagen is not only sports focused, but it gained a number of new customers last year from that sector, ranging from Major League Baseball to the International Tennis Federation and the Badminton World Federation. The aim is to “help these organisations unlock the value of their ever-growing video libraries,” explains Pitt.

The growing demand for online video content is seen as a major opportunity for Pitt, particularly when combined with tech. “New tools, particularly machine led or artificial intelligence (AI) tools, will increase in their sophistication making it quicker and easier than ever before to process, inform, find and use content, making that demand easier to meet. There will also be an increase in user-generated content (UGC) platforms and we will likely see many established brands incorporating UGC along with professionally generated output,” he adds.

There are also regional offers such as Mena.tv, an online content market for the Middle East and North Africa. CEO Nick Grande wants to “accelerate the billion-dollar MENA B2B market in premium TV content by helping buyers and sellers find each other, bridge language barriers and create trust and transparency,” he says.

More than 630 content buyers have so far registered, while Discovery and Viacom Comedy Central are amongst the 40 or so clients showcasing content. Mena.tv aims to grow the latter to 1,000 over five years.

## Budgetary requirements

As with real world markets, all these new platforms will live or die by their ability to attract buyers with budgets. And there still remains a central question around the speed at which large sales outfits will migrate content to transactional platforms.

If the end result is fewer sales executives, lower commissions, scaled back market presence and a presumption against package deals, then there are disincentives either at an organisational level or, just as importantly, on the frontline.

Vuulr's McKee acknowledges that he encounters reluctance among some sellers, but he expects a tipping point to be reached.

“The risk of not being on a platform like this is that buyers find alternative content that is just as good but cheaper. It echoes the travel sector – with hotels ultimately unable to resist platforms like Expedia.” And at a time when markets are facing almost unprecedented pressures and a financial squeeze, the potential proposition of these online alternatives have arguably never been greater. **TBI**

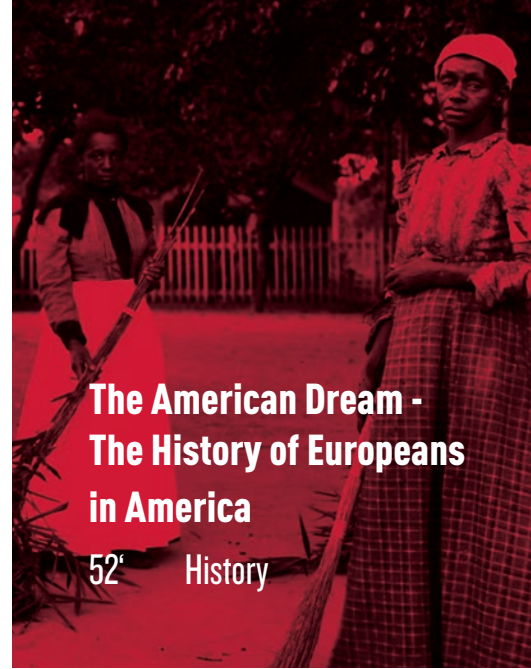
### “Our clients have a tailored presence on the platform”

David Rhodes,  
ONE





# MEET



**The American Dream -  
The History of Europeans  
in America**

52' History



**Into the Wild Greenland**

45' People . Places



# US



**AUTENTIC  
DISTRIBUTION**

[www.autentic-distribution.com](http://www.autentic-distribution.com)



**The Last Bell Stroke**

52' People . Places





## Calling time on climate change

Environmental impacts have become a key industry concern with select producers and broadcasters taking major steps to cut the impact of content creation and consumption on the world's climate. Helen Dugdale talks to some of those involved and reflects on what the rest of the industry needs to do to catch up

**E**uropean pay-TV operator Sky made headlines recently when it set out its decade-long strategy around climate change.

By 2030, the company has pledged to be net-zero carbon – an ambitious target that ties it to supporting the United Nations' Global Compact's Business Ambition of limiting global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels. But is Sky Zero a grand marketing gesture or an achievable goal?

"We're really happy with what we've achieved so far," explains Fiona Ball, Sky's group head of inspirational business and Sky Ocean Rescue, its

Long-running ZDF crime series *The Rosenheim Cops* received the Green Shooting Pass last year

campaign to drive environmental change. She adds that the business has been carbon neutral since 2006 and underlines the fact that Sky Zero "is across our whole value chain – our suppliers and the impact we have on our customer's homes when they use our products."

Aaron Matthews, head of industry sustainability at the UK's We Are Albert, which helps screen industries tackle their environmental impacts, applauds Sky's move to lay everything on the table and show the world what they have planned.

"Climate change is definitely on people's minds – 10 years ago, when We Are Albert was first introduced, many production companies looked at me horrified

when I mentioned the carbon calculator. Things are different now. The TV industry can be proud that it's done something over the last decade – while some industries haven't. Climate change is a real problem and the TV industry is steps ahead."

"Sky Zero is our target and commitment to reducing our carbon footprint in the next 10 years," continues Ball. "Then in 2030, we'll start looking at offsetting in natural carbon-zinc, things like planting trees and forests and mangroves to absorb the remaining carbon."

"We've set ourselves reduction targets using a science-based methodology. We're looking at how we can inspire our 11,000 suppliers and engage them to set and meet their own carbon zero pathway. We're also focusing on how we can encourage our customers to switch to a lower-carbon lifestyle," she adds.

Sky has inevitably raised a few eyebrows about whether its Zero plan is simply PR hype, but either way, it remains an example of action from one of Europe's biggest players. Guillaume Hellouin, president and CEO of TeamTO Animation, which has offices in France, the UK, US, Beijing and China, says smaller production companies need to know more about what they can do to make a difference.

"It's a very complex problem. There is a lot of fake news, so it is very difficult to navigate the issue, and many eco-friendly concepts are very counter-intuitive. There is not enough clear and verified information available," he believes.

## Global action

Greener Screen, based in Dubai, is working closely with We Are Albert to provide transparent and effective ways to cut down on emissions produced by the film and TV industry across the United Arab Emirates. Co-founder Bassam Alasad believes a lot more needs to be done globally. "Having an environmentally conscious business is not a corporate social responsibility initiative anymore, it's a must – tackling climate change needs committed businesses that can empower individuals and be part of a 360-degree change alongside government support."

Belinda Miller, insight director at Corporate Culture, a strategic communications consultancy that specialises in helping businesses implement sustainable change, recommends the industry should focus on collaboration to make the biggest impact. "Parts of the TV industry have a long heritage of protecting the environment both on and off-screen. Collaboration is driving change across the value chain through initiatives. Measuring impact is a first step on the journey, but only part of the story. Organisations need to identify and act decisively on material sustainability



TeamTO was the first company to receive UNESCO recognition for being the first animation studio to quantify the carbon footprint of a production, with its series *Plankton Invasion*

risks to meet increasing expectations," she says.

The subject is also increasingly seen on screen and as Jan S. Kaiser, managing director at Bavaria Fiction, points out, content makers have a social obligation to do everything they can. "Producers have to address relevant topics in the content they're producing – and the same responsibility applies when it comes to the production process itself," Kaiser says. "You can't talk about climate change and then ignore how the content is produced. That would be hypocritical."

Sumedha Saraogi, chief marketing officer for the Toonz Media Group production companies, agrees that the content business has a huge ability to change mindsets and behavioural patterns.

"The TV industry plays a significant role in this effort to become greener and we have very powerful communications channels that reach millions of viewers," says Saraogi.

"Not only do the players in the industry need to reduce their own footprint by opting for greener methodologies, the content industry also bears the responsibility of 'awareness creation' amongst the viewers and public at large. This could be through short films produced and shared via various platforms, social media messaging, engaging celebrities to voice their opinions and be role models."

Matthews feels programme makers need to focus on how they show climate change issues on screen. "At the moment it's down to [the BBC's] *Blue Planet* or National History programmes to highlight the problems and they are doing a great job of it. But it's them doing the heavy lifting – and climate issues shouldn't always be seen through the eyes of a polar bear on a capsized iceberg. If that's what we keep seeing, it's hard for people to really engage with it. The change we need is how it is discussed through every genre of programming. We need to be thinking about what we're showing on our screens and what we need to be doing in society."

**"Climate change is definitely on people's minds – 10 years ago, when We Are Albert was first introduced, many production companies looked at me horrified when I mentioned the carbon calculator. Things are different now"**

Aaron Matthews,  
We Are Albert





## What can be done?

For companies large and small which want to take their first step on the sustainable ladder, or to increase their green credentials, Matthews suggests they should reach out to We Are Albert or the equivalent organisation in their country. “Albert is here to work with everyone. We’re supported and funded by the industry which means that smaller businesses can initially access our services for free. We can promote green suppliers – whether that is electric generators or a catering company that has good credentials. People can plug in all the data into our carbon calculator and then work out the carbon footprint of each show. Productions can be eligible for a certificate if they pass, receiving 1, 2 or 3-star ratings.”

You don’t have to dig too deeply to find strong examples of how key production companies are already just cracking on and doing their bit.

TeamTO was the first company to receive recognition from UNESCO for being the first animation studio to quantify the carbon footprint of a production, with its series *Plankton Invasion*. They also partnered with a company that had developed a method to capture the heat generated from its rendering farm and convert it to energy to heat a swimming pool in Paris.

“Since 2008, we have produced 100% in-house in our two French studios, so we do not travel, and we communicate via video links whenever possible,” explains Hellouin. “There are lots of ways in which to make an impact, which we have

**“We need more industry-supported platforms globally and in each market to help producers become more aware and greener and more sustainable in their productions”**

Sumedha Saraogi,  
Toonz Media Group



Toonz Media’s space adventure *Sindbad And The 7 Galaxies* carries green messages whilst Bavaria Fiction’s *Storm Of Love* has switched to LED lighting technology, helping to reduce studio power consumption by 85%

done for years: free cooling in data centres; reducing energy consumption with dimmable LED lighting; optimising workstations; recycling waste; minimizing transportation requirements.”

With offices in India, Singapore, Europe, New Zealand and North America, Toonz Media has seen first-hand the positive effect it can have when companies focus on thinking greener with some careful planning, as Saraogi describes.

“The beauty of becoming greener is not only reducing our carbon footprint, but also realising that you can actually cut costs from production. The use of green tech and sustainable production techniques should be made mandatory, or at least as a start to provide incentives to use them at the very least.

“Every forum, trade magazine and market has to focus and recognise ‘going green’ as a necessity. Awareness creation is the key to sustainability. The UK is very much a pioneer in this. We need more industry-supported platforms globally and in each market to help producers become more aware and greener and more sustainable in their productions,” she adds.

As content creators, Toonz say they have a further responsibility to become greener with the messages their shows cover. One recent production that did just that was *Sindbad And The 7 Galaxies*, a space comedy-adventure, which centres on a teenage schoolboy and his trusty team who, after school, head into space to fight against the enemies of nature and save the galaxies from destruction.

The industry in Germany has also established its



green credentials, with companies in the sector joining forces to establish the Green Shooting Task Force, which includes Bavaria Fiction, TV stations, other production companies, film funds and associations, as well as the representatives of the Federal German Government for Culture and Media. Together, they are working to set a clear signal for more climate and environmental protection in film and TV production.

Bavaria Fiction is clearly proud of both its achievements and those of its home country. Robert Küppers, who is responsible for green production at Bavaria Fiction, said two of his shows – telenovela *Storm Of Love* for ARD and long-running ZDF crime series *The Rosenheim Cops* – had received the Green Shooting Pass from the Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein last year, which is awarded to productions that are demonstrably environmentally-friendly conscious.

Waste avoidance and separation on set, plus regional and seasonal catering with a vegan offering, using cosmetics free from animal testing, and numerous other initiatives contributed to the awards, he adds. The efforts cut CO2 emissions by almost 15% on production of the 19th season of *The Rosenheim Cops*. *Storm Of Love* also benefitted from decisions such as the gradual switch to LED technology in the studio, with around 500 lamps being replaced, meaning that future power consumption will drop by around 85%.

### Going green at Sky Studios Elstree

As Sky begins its journey to zero carbon, the company wants the rest of the industry to follow suit and put their own plans in place. “We’ve set the bar high. We’re seen as leaders in this and we strongly believe that every business needs to take action. We want to use our lead to help other people to act. There are lots of opportunities and innovations for businesses that address it early,” encourages Bell.

“The industry as a whole can grow in a sustainable way through innovative tech film and production studios. Our ambition is to make Sky Studios Elstree the most sustainable film and TV studio in the world.

“We’re exploring ways to achieve this and hope to have zero carbon emissions from any building and electric vehicles for all lot facilities, source 100% renewable electricity, including on-site power generation,” she adds.

Other global firms are ramping up their activities too. We Are Albert announced in January that it had teamed up with Fremantle to develop and launch a global carbon calculator, which will be available in

### How to reduce your carbon footprint

- Look at the way you travel – plan ahead and use trains
- Use local crews
- Hire local equipment instead of transporting all your own
- Introduce an opt-in policy for paper as opposed to automatically printing everything off and handing it out
- Save money on catering by offering vegan or vegetarian meals – which are predominantly cheaper
- Introduce electric generators – if it was good enough for the James Bond crew!
- Install a water fountain rather than single-use plastic bottled water
- More efficient lighting sourcing from environmentally-friendly energy providers, rechargeable as opposed to single-use batteries. UK-based production companies should talk to We Are Albert, which is working with Green Energy
- Reduce transport over large distances and hire electric cars for film sets and crew travelling, as opposed to more polluting diesel or petrol vehicles
- Repurpose materials, including costumes and sets, to give them a longer life
- Opt for more environmentally-friendly packaging and products in make-up/hair styling departments
- The technology used in production and post-production can also be greener by using cleaner energy or using the heat and energy created from powerful production servers to warm studio facilities

**“A third of our carbon footprint is in our supply chain and 11,000 suppliers are included in that. A lot of it depends on the policy environment of the businesses being able to act”**

Fiona Ball,  
Sky Ocean Rescue



the countries where the media company has a base.

“The idea is anyone around the world would be able to use the calculator with slightly different carbon factors, depending on the location in the world. Then we’ll be able to see how the film and TV industry is doing as a whole,” says Matthews, who adds that the facility will be ready for use from 2021.

“Our focus is also currently on the UK and getting things right here. There is still a long way to go and we don’t have all the industry on board yet – but on the whole, there are a lot of individuals in the sector who are trying to make a difference and not just talk, but do it.”

Sky’s Bell is confident that the majority of what is outlined in Sky Zero is achievable, but warns that policymakers also need to step forward.

“This isn’t something that one business can do on its own,” she says. “A third of our carbon footprint is in our supply chain and 11,000 suppliers are included in that. A lot of it depends on the policy environment of the businesses being able to act.

“Everyone, including government and policymakers, needs to do their part in making sure the legislative environment is right. If more larger businesses put their heads up, I’m sure others will follow. We have the opportunity to make all productions net zero – but also the ability to use our content to engage people around the solutions and show how to make a better future.” **TBI**



26 - 28 AUGUST 2020

# EDINBURGH TV FESTIVAL

Brought to you by  YouTube  Freeview

**EARLY BIRD PASSES FROM: £550**

**THE BEST WAY  
TO TAKE THE  
PULSE OF THE TV  
INDUSTRY & TO  
CONFIRM ONCE  
AGAIN THAT  
CONTENT IS KING.**



**PASSES NOW  
ON SALE**  
[THETVFESTIVAL.COM](http://THETVFESTIVAL.COM)

HEADLINE SPONSORS

MAJOR SPONSORS



# RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE IN TV

## CATEGORIES INCLUDE

Breakthrough Talent

Best Drama

Best Comedy Series

Best Documentary

Sponsored by Televisual Factual Festival

Best Entertainment Series

Sponsored by Pinewood TV Studios

Best Popular Factual Series

Best International Drama

Channel of the Year

Best Specialist Channel

Production Company of the Year

Small Indie of the Year

TV Moment of the Year

### **New Categories for 2020**

The Green Award

Best TV Actor

Best TV Presenter

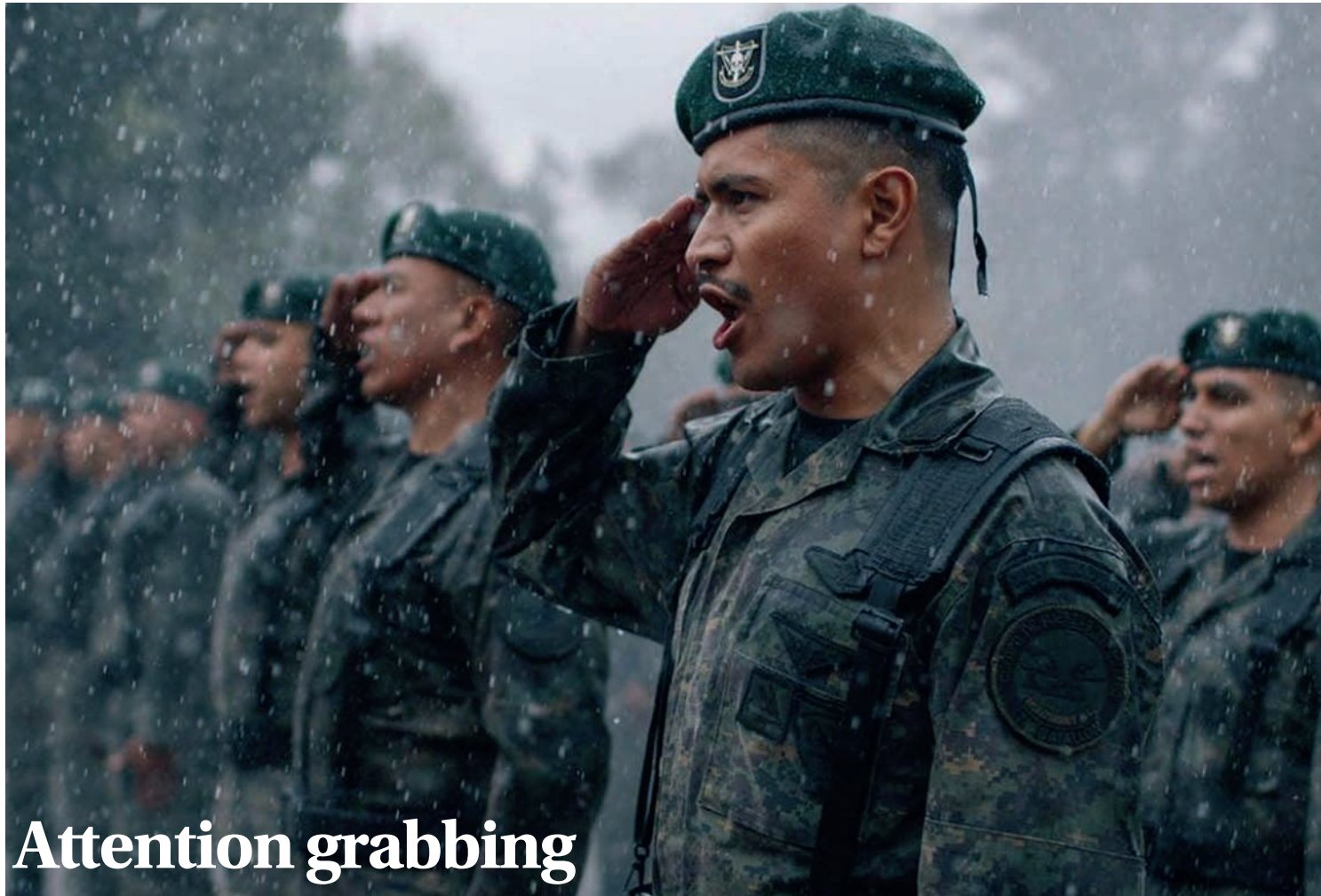
Best On-Demand Service

Global Success Award:  
Distributor of the Year

# ENTER NOW

[EDINBURGHTVAWARDS.COM](http://EDINBURGHTVAWARDS.COM)





## Attention grabbing

Nick Edwards reflects on how Italian drama has maintained its momentum as scripted competition has increased and explores what might happen next

**I**n the early days of Italian TV drama, public service broadcaster Rai and its commercial rival Mediaset were the only players in town. Like many incumbent TV channels in wealthy western economies, they did not need to innovate in order to retain their market share.

With no competition, Italian drama series' reached big enough audiences to keep executives and advertisers happy. The stories of good priests and policemen doing good deeds in beautiful sunny settings did not upset the status quo and sold Italy's myths back to the Italians.

Fast-forward to today and the Italian industry is completely unrecognisable.

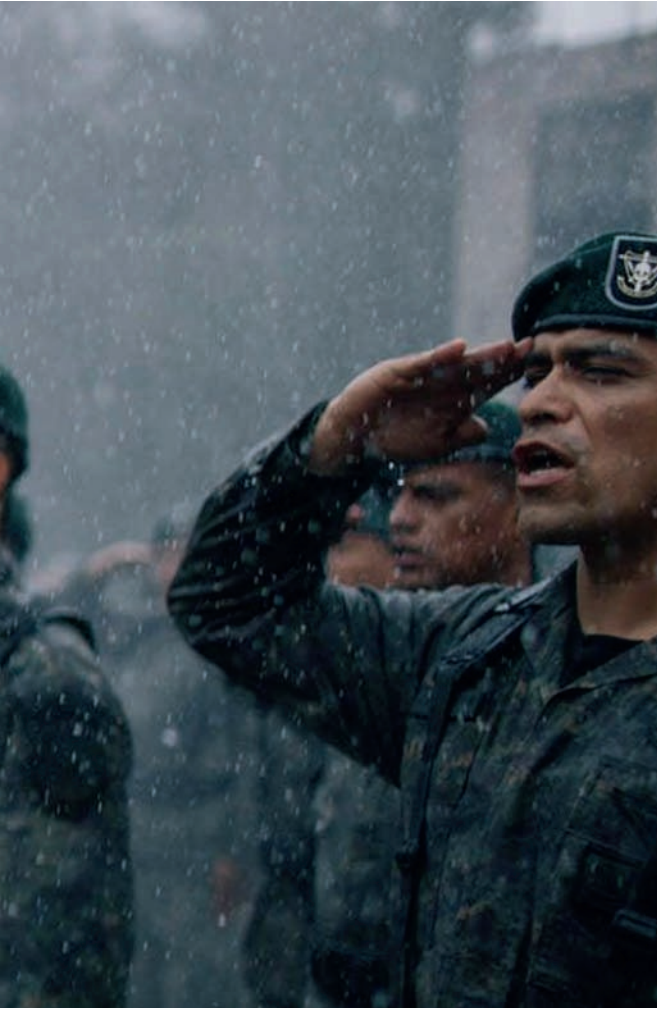
Streaming is now a firmly entrenched habit amongst the general public, Sky Italia has become a well-respected producer of high-end content, and Rai – while still the most prolific producer of TV drama in Italy – is a regular collaborator with HBO, creating productions that stand out on a global stage.

### A potted recent history

The revolution started more than a decade ago. Against a backdrop of classic free Italian TV dramas such as *Inspector Montalbano*, imported US shows including *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives* started to become popular. Over a beer, Nils Hartmann, director of original productions at Sky Italia, sat down with executives and it was decided the subscription service should “move into this style of cinematic original programming,” he says.

However, rather than trying to emulate the American aesthetic, he set out to explore Italy's TV and film heritage. “My motto was, ‘if it works for Mediaset and Rai it isn't right for Sky,’” recalls Hartmann. The first show off the block was 2008's *Quo Vadis, Baby?*, whose rock 'n roll soundtrack features a high-octane female detective to match.

Then came *Romanzo Criminale*, a remake of a film about a ruthless gang that ran Rome's criminal underworld during the 1970s. But the developments



*ZeroZeroZero* (left), adapted from Robert Saviano's book of the same name, and *My Brilliant Friend* (above), based on the novels of Elena Ferrante

within Italian TV first became apparent to the outside world in 2014 when the Napoli-set gangster saga *Gomorrah* hit Sky subscribers' screens, going on to sell into almost every country in the world.

The political 'Berlusconi'-era drama *1992* followed and in the footsteps of Scandinavia, with *The Killing* and *The Bridge*, and France, with *Engrenages* and *Les Revenants*, the world collectively woke up to the fact that top quality TV drama could be made outside of the US. However, whilst the buzz around French and Nordic productions has faded over the past 10 years, Italian TV drama has retained an ambition that pushes at the boundaries of storytelling on TV.

### Rai's evolutionary path

In 2013, Eleonora Andreatta was appointed head of drama at Rai. The remit, to a large extent, focused on reimagining what the pubcaster could offer to a new generation of viewers who were brought up on pay TV and US imports whilst still providing classic Italian fare

that would not alienate the core viewership.

During her time in the job, the competition from commercial terrestrial channels decreased but that decline was more than made up for by the dramatic rise of streamers. Netflix started to create original Italian-language content and hasn't stopped: recent productions include the supernatural *Curon* and an adaptation of teen romance *Three Steps Over Heaven*. Production has also started on *Luna Nera*, a series about witchcraft in the 17th Century.

"The best shows are now coming to Italian screens as soon as they are released in their country of origin," explains Andreatta. "This has made audience tastes change everyday and become more and more refined, which means we have to lift the quality of our own shows. Anyone making TV in Italy today has to be very innovative."

Italian TV drama tends not to conform to the multi-season, multi-episode model of many US scripted shows, nor the classic UK model of a one-off production or a run of a few episodes. Italian writers and directors have also managed to incorporate foreign influences whilst imbuing something quintessentially Italian into many of their shows. One example from recent years is Sky Italia's *Il Miracolo*, a co-production with the German/French channel Arte, hailed in some quarters of the foreign press as a masterpiece. Created by author Niccolò Ammaniti, the self-contained series from 2018 is about a statue of the Virgin Mary that weeps blood and explores the effect it has on various characters, and Italy itself.

**"My motto was, 'if it works for Mediaset and Rai it isn't right for Sky'"**

Nils Hartmann,  
Sky Italia



### The Papal effect

Another key moment for both the domestic industry and the wider drama world was when Sky Italia worked with HBO on *The Young Pope* (recently followed by *The New Pope*). Having seen how the pay TV operator let Paolo Sorrentino execute his vision





Sky Italia and HBO gave director Paolo Sorrentino a free hand with *The Young Pope* and *The New Pope*

without creative interference helped HBO trust Sky to collaborate on the hit 2019 miniseries, *Chernobyl*, from Sister Pictures.

Rai's adaptation of *My Brilliant Friend*, also a collaboration with HBO, took things a stage further.

In some ways more Italian than *The Young Pope*, the four-season show – series two of which debuted in February – did not feature swathes of huge Hollywood names. Instead, it used Italian talent – and it was HBO's first ever non-English language series. "In this friendship, you see a mirror to the whole of Italy's history from the Second World War onwards," says Andreatta, describing the appeal of Elena Ferrante's four novels, on which the drama was based.

Under the direction of Saverio Costanzo, "the cinematic, epic and hypnotic language of the show," as Eleonora describes it, broke new ground for Rai. It also won over the broadcaster's traditional and coveted younger audiences, as well as the global market.

Other more adventurous series have made their way on to flagship Rai 1, such as an adaptation of Umberto Eco's *The Name Of The Rose* that was sold to Sundance TV in the US and the UK's BBC Two, amongst many others. *The Maltese*, meanwhile, was an epic crime story set in the 1970s on the Sicilian coast that unravelled over 12 episodes and was highly acclaimed for its film noir style and tone.

Rai has also worked on gearing Rai 2 to a younger demographic, with edgier fare coming in the shape of the envelope-pushing crime show *The Hunter*, which sold around the world. The pubcaster even made the bold move of teaming up with Netflix on *Suburra: Blood On Rome*, which is soon to enter its third season.

### Brand growth

The result of this scripted proliferation – in both quantity and quality – is becoming increasingly self-

fulfilling for Italian drama as a 'brand'. The upcoming eight-part *Leonardo* was co-created by X-Files alumnus Frank Spotnitz, who was also showrunner on *Medici: Masters of Florence*. *Medici* was very successful on Rai1 and captured the interest of Italy's younger demographic, becoming the most tweeted about series of 2016.

Rai is also a part of the Alliance, the commissioning group that includes Germany's ZDF and France's France Télévisions. By combining their knowledge of local markets and pooling budgets, the public service broadcasters aim to increase their tenacity in the context of the ever-expanding reach of streaming services – another project in the works is *Around The World In 80 Days*, in which David Tennant will play Phileas Fogg.

For Italian writers and directors, Rai's purposeful drama strategy, coupled with the demands of streamers, is providing an opportunity. Brought up on US shows such as *The Wire* and *The Sopranos*, they had been frustrated by years of pent up ambition, having no one to turn to in order to get their most exciting ideas onto screen.

"We've always had to think out of the box," says Mario Gianani, co-founder of Fremantle-owned prodco Wildside, which was behind *The Young Pope* and *Il Miracolo*. The prolific company also co-produced *My Brilliant Friend* with Fandango.

But today, this generation of producers at firms such as Wildside, Fandango, Cattleya and Lux Vide are primed to exploit the new landscape, working with partners around the world. "We talk to producers from France and the UK, as much as Italian ones. We pitch to Hulu or Amazon before we pitch to local outlets," adds Gianani, talking at the MIA festival last year that was recently re-booted to reflect this burgeoning Italian TV scene.

Sky Italia is also working with new partners such as director Matteo Rovere on *Romulus*, the story of the founding of Rome. But, like the great film studios of yesteryear, Hartmann hopes the future will be what he describes as a "continuation" of the work they have already begun: *The New Pope* is a further collaboration with Sorrentino; *ZeroZeroZero* is an adaptation of Robert Saviano's book and is directed by Stefano Sollima, who also directed *Romanzo Criminale* and *Gomorra*. *Anna*, which started shooting in October, is based on a book by Niccolò Ammaniti, a dystopian vision that imagines a world where humans die at puberty, and is the follow up to *Il Miracolo*.

By turning to its history, culture and identity, coupled with the efforts of a generation of innovative producers and executives supporting their most talented auteurs, Italy is making a mark on the rest of the world despite the ever-increasing number of dramas available. **TBI**

### "Anyone making TV in Italy today has to be very innovative"

Eleanora Andreatta,  
Rai







CANNESERIES  
Competition  
Official Selection  
2020



FARES FARES

JOHAN RHEBORG

# PARTISAN

EDEN ON EVIL SOIL



viaplay

5X45'

federation  
entertainment



## Script to Screen: A Suitable Boy

Acclaimed Indian director Mira Nair tells Richard Middleton how she paired up with *War & Peace* scribe Andrew Davies on a lavish adaptation of Vikram Seth's seminal *A Suitable Boy* for the BBC



**M**ira Nair makes no bones about it: she has always loved Vikram Seth's 1993 novel *A Suitable Boy*, a book that runs to almost 1,400 pages and well in excess of half a million words. Underlining this is the fact she has read the novel multiple times.

As passion projects go, Nair's adaptation has few challengers and talking to the revered director, whose films include *Monsoon Wedding*, *Mississippi Masala*



and *Salaam Bombay!*, it seemed she was all but destined to work on the series even before it was made.

Set in 1951, the show tells the story of a spirited university student Lata (Tanya Maniktala) whose mother is determined to find her a husband – a suitable boy. Lata is torn between family duty and the excitement of romance, but the show is more than simply a coming of age story in northern India – instead it reflects not just the experiences of the show's lead character but of the country as a whole. *Les Misérables* scribe Andrew Davies wrote the six-parter, while BBC Studios-owned Lookout Point produces for BBC One in the UK.

### Act One – Biding her time

"I've carried a torch for *A Suitable Boy* since it was written in 1993," Nair says. "I'm a friend of [author] Vikram Seth and knew him while he was writing it and I've read it three times – it's quite a long thing to read three times."

Nair describes the book as "the great Tolstoy novel of India," a story not just about Indians but also about a time when the country was working out its own identity. "It's set three years after independence, the year my parents got married and it was always when I wanted to be born, because it was when India was learning to be what it was."

Despite immediate enthusiasm for the IP, Nair was unable to secure adaptation rights and she moved onto other projects. One of those, the 2001 feature *Monsoon Wedding*, was a "micro-cosmic version" of the novel, she says. "It is truly the child of *A Suitable Boy* because it was inspired by the book – I thought if he can do this with four families then maybe I could do it with one."

Fast-forward 15 years or so, and Nair heard that "there was someone in India looking for a production team." She phoned her agent and got him to call Lookout Point. "I said I really wanted to make it," the director explains. "They were very keen and we arranged meetings and that was that – it was pretty instant. I had a whole book of my own ideas for the show and signed on in January 2018."

### Act Two – Working with Davies

By this point, Davies – the similarly acclaimed writer who was behind Lookout Point's *War & Peace* and *Les Misérables* – had already written eight episodes of the screenplay. "I thought they were remarkably skilful," Nair says, and the duo started working together "to distil" the series into a six-part show rather than eight.

Nair's adaptation of *A Suitable Boy* will air on the BBC, with other deals currently under discussion





“I thought the pace would lend itself better to six hours and we have been working very closely ever since,” Nair explains. “I came with very strong ideas of shooting it entirely on location and with Indian actors of course. We didn’t want to really cast around the world because there wasn’t any need to, we have the talent in our country because it is so immense.”

Nair used many of her own creative team to produce the series, people “who I’ve been working with for the last 25 years,” she says, including her cinematographer, producer and the costume designers. For Damian Keogh, MD at Lookout Point, that was key.

“The BBC and ourselves were absolutely all about making this authentic and real – and the best way to do that is to shoot on location. Mira is the only person to do that really in that epic cinematic way, and she was also able to cast from the immense talent pool.”

But with commissioners often keen to include their own local talent on dramas to provide a way in for

The show’s team (LR): Vikram Seth, Ishaan Khatter, Mira Nair, Tabu, Tanya Maniktala and Andrew Davies



audiences, were there any concerns on such a focus?

“There was no pushback,” Keogh says. “It is a risk but it’s a creative risk worth taking because you end up with a show that is incredibly specific and authentic – and through all that, it also talks universally, something that the book does too.”

Nair adds: “I also explained there would be no point in casting outside of India, because I would be just undoing accents. It never became a condition because it didn’t come to that sort of arm wrestling, but there was no other way to go.”

### Act Three – Taking the pulse

Nair is famed for her ability to convey India’s pulsating rhythms on screen and there was a similar focus with *A Suitable Boy*. “I didn’t believe it should be a two-hour film, it’s like a six-hour film,” she says.

“It’s for TV but mostly I’m making my own cinema with a lot of help from my friends. The episodic structure is from the book, it hasn’t been imposed on our episodes. The book has that pace and rhythm, it was a case of sculpting it to create this one-hour episodic structure but it is not foreign to the book itself.”

Nair admits she is “pretty ruthless about pace” and it is something she has tried to instil into the show. “I try to keep it alive and pulsating and funny and very mischievous and I hope sexy. That is what the book has, I’m not stamping all over it, all that is there.”

The series is set in a tumultuous time in India’s formative years, but it explores the impact of this on the characters. “The Hindu-Muslim partition and that conflict had just happened, but we’re not talking about the partition – we’re talking about after it. There was still co-existence and great friendship and incredible shared pasts of people who happened to be Hindu and Muslim,” she says.

“That same divide is being further divided today but it is based on what happened in the 1950s and 60s. There is an uncanny timing both in terms of when he wrote it and now.”

But on a more “intimate level”, as Nair puts it, the show is about people. “It is actually the story of Vikram’s parents. Lata, his mother, and his father. This is the story of an intellectual girl who lives in a world of books and whose mother has to get her married and is looking for a suitable boy.

“And at the heart of this novel is a beautiful philosophical question, which the heroine asks: is it possible to be happy without making others unhappy? This was the foundation for the treatment of the story – and you have to see yourself in it, otherwise it is just a foreign museum. And that’s not my thing.” **TBI**



**M**  
FRENCH COMPETITION  
**SERIES MANIA**

VEERLE BAETENS

CHARLOTTE LE BON

# CHEYENNE & LOLA

CREATED BY VIRGINIE BRAC DIRECTED BY ESHREF REYBROUCK

8X52'

federation  
entertainment

© 2020 - LINCOLN TV - ORANGE STUDIO - PHOTO: FREDERIC VARGANOVIC

LINCOLN TV



SCOPE

Pictanovo

OCS



Fonds de l'innovation  
audiovisuelle



PROIREP  
ANGOA



# Nordic thaw?



Scandinavian producers have become prolific over recent years but is a deluge of scripted product from the region diluting the quality and damaging the 'Nordic drama' brand? Nick Edwards reports

**W**hen the Danish public service broadcaster DR made *The Killing* in 2007 and then collaborated with their Swedish counterpart SVT on *The Bridge* in 2011, everything changed in the world of high-end TV drama.

These shows proved drama series made outside of the US could match – and frequently surpass – the quality of their Stateside rivals. After shows such as *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad* finished their runs, Nordic productions became the next fix for binge-viewers all over the world, who then went on to seek out subtitled shows from France, Italy, Germany and beyond.

Denmark continued to have a huge impact on the world stage with shows such as *Borgen* and *Follow The Money*, as did Sweden with *Jordskott* and *Real Humans*. The dynamism spread around the Nordic region: in 2015, Iceland made *Trapped*, one of the most popular and acclaimed hits of that year.

Norway also became recognised as a creative hotbed with teen drama *Skam*, a show about teenage life in Oslo that was later remade by Facebook, and *Nobel*. The latter explored the personal struggles of a soldier returning from Afghanistan and was a worthy successor to Nordic shows such as *The Killing* and *Borgen* – but it got lost in Netflix's library of content and did not get the attention it deserved.

Pinewood Studios' Twelve Town made *Conspiracy Of Silence* for Viaplay

It was the start of a global trend, which is playing out in the Nordics like most other regions. Public service providers such as DR, SVT and Norway's NRK, as well as their commercial rivals, have to compete with Netflix and Amazon, as well as the newer streaming services entering the scene.

## The Viaplay effect

Perhaps the most significant change to the Nordic TV landscape has come in the shape of its regional streamer Viaplay. Part of Nordic Entertainment (NENT) Group, it has been ramping up investment in scripted drama since 2016.

Most notably, whereas regional public service providers make around five productions a year, Viaplay made 21 in 2019, will make more than 30 in 2020 and has an ultimate goal of premiering a minimum of 40 original productions per year.

“Looking a couple of years ahead, I don't think we will develop much more in the Nordic region than we are already producing,” says Filippa Wallestam, EVP & chief content officer at NENT, “but

then, of course, we can work on quality and more target groups.”

However, they are not planning on restricting themselves to the Nordic region. NENT will sell the non-scripted, branded entertainment and events wings of the company to focus their commitment on making even more drama. “We’re entering Iceland this year and we’re planning on taking on more new markets. Exactly how many and which ones is yet to be defined. So of course we will produce more content that doesn’t just have Nordic appeal,” says Wallestam.

Such productions are often in English, have plots which are not just based in the Nordics, or recruit internationally recognised stars such as *Wisting*, which features *The Matrix* trilogy’s Carrie-Anne Moss.

“When we reach a tipping point and when we make more content with appeal beyond the Nordics, that’s harder to say,” adds Wallestam.

## Nordics on tour

Nordic drama itself continues to travel and the range of choice available is reflected in the thoughts of Christian Modersbach, curator of the TV series wing of the Nordic Film Days festival in Lübeck, Germany, which was recently expanded to reflect the burgeoning sector. “There is such a wide variety of stories, characters, genre and formats, and often a mix within every show. There is so much to choose from sometimes I feel like I am a kid in a candy store.”

The creativity and abundance of content within the region is a direct result of the competition brought about by entrants such as Netflix. And it works both ways: *30 Degrees In February*, for example, was commissioned by SVT in 2012. The show is a collection of various personal stories that unfold in Thailand and was particularly adventurous in terms of narrative style and subject matter, such as the focus on the relationship between a stereotypical male Swede and a transgender Thai woman. The series found its way to global audiences via Netflix.

“It was not mainstream but it worked really well with audiences and critics, not only in Sweden but worldwide, which helped our local commissioners to widen the types of series they dared to commission,” says Hakan Hammaren of Gothenburg-based Fundament Film.

“Now, Nordic drama is just part of all the other good drama that’s around. It’s not a sensation anymore. And we are not just known for crime,” adds Piv Bernth, former head of drama at DR, whose ITV Studios-backed Apple Tree Productions has just created supernatural thriller *Equinox*, which will premiere on Netflix in September.

In this arena, subscription service HBO Nordic has been able to push challenging storytelling as far the medium will allow, just like its bigger US sibling did with shows such as *The Wire* and *Game Of Thrones*.

Hanne Palmquist, the outgoing commissioning editor & VP of original programming at HBO Nordic, describes its upcoming

**“Maybe there is too much content, but people can’t get enough of the shows that are really good”**

Filippa Wallestam,  
NENT



production *Beartown* as “a place where civilisation and wilderness meet and where individuals have this conflict within them.”

“It’s a story about a sexual assault,” she explains, “but there is a complexity around the reason why this happens. It’s not as simplistic as the boy is a monster and the girl is the victim. It’s a far more nuanced look at how we raise children, particularly boys,” she says.

## Fluctuating quality

However, the opportunities that have come since the days when *The Bridge*, *The Killing* and *Wallander* broke out of the Nordic region have put new pressures on an industry that has grown fast.

With so much drama being made at home, talent and crews are booked up for months in advance.

“Right now, it’s really hard to find a good team for your productions, because so many shows are being made,” says Fundament’s Hammaren, speaking from the Lübeck festival where his latest show *Inner Circle* – produced for Viaplay – was showcased.

Commissioners who are investing millions of Euros over a season want established names with a record of success to oversee their new productions. However, because of the demand for talent overseas, many of the best writers and directors who made their names on shows such as *The Killing* and *The Bridge* have been lured abroad, particularly to the US, where fees are so much higher.

“The extreme increase in content, like in the rest of the world, has come with a fluctuation in quality,” says Christian Wikander, former head of drama at SVT, which was behind *The Bridge* and *Jordskott*. His current role is head of drama for Europe at the Pinewood Studio-owned Twelve Town, which has recently been behind *Conspiracy Of Silence* for Viaplay.

Others agree and these growing pains are perhaps natural when the numbers of shows emerging from one region rises so quickly.

Ultimately, the main issues stem from the increasing cost of production. As Wikander points out, “co-financing has never been harder for the Nordics.”



Political thriller *Inner Circle*



## Diverging co-productions

In the early days, Germany was the go-to partner for those in the Nordics. All the early Nordic noir shows were co-financed by German channels but they are now making more original productions themselves, such as UFA Fiction's *Deutschland 83/86/89*, Sky's *Babylon Berlin*, and Netflix's *Dark*. The result is that they can no longer be relied upon to get the most groundbreaking Scandi shows off the ground.

However, in terms of crime, particularly selling rights, the German market and Europe in general, has never been more buoyant.

"They really need crime dramas that fit into 90 minutes, shows like *Wisting* and *Backstrom* work really well," says Caroline Torrance, head of scripted at Banijay Rights.

"Every time that the media announces the death of Nordic noir, it doesn't happen. We've just had a huge hit with *Wisting* on BBC Four in the UK – outperforming the slot norm by 55% and adding even more viewers via [on-demand service] iPlayer."

And as Wikander admits, "to fill the financial gaps you need to be successful outside of the Nordics." Projects looking beyond local funding need to have an international element, which most commonly involves an English-language element or stars who resonate outside of the region.

The results are shows such as Viaplay's *Wisting*, *Conspiracy Of Silence*, or its new project *Cold Courage*. The latter stars British actor John Simm, was written by English-language scribes Brendan Foley and David Joss Buckley, and produced by Finnish Luminoir, with Lionsgate onboard for global sales.

Apple Tree Productions also uses this model, says Bernth. "We are

BBC drama *Wisting* recruited international stars among its cast



**"It's so hard when you have to pick only two out of 20 potentially great ideas"**

Piv Bernth

Apple Tree Productions



working on a script that has an American writer. We helped develop it and we think it will be a Danish director. It's a natural US/Danish story – one of the antagonists is Danish but living in London. We hope to start filming in the next couple of months."

## Moving the story on

Whilst streamers' demands for content are growing because of their business models, they are no longer necessarily the home of edgier content.

"When Netflix started they were new and commissioning the cool stuff, but now a lot of commissioning is aimed at a broader audience and the edgier stuff is being done by the PSB's," says Wikander, citing SVT's *Caliphate*, which explores religious fundamentalism, and NRK's *Exit*, which explores the toxicity of the banking world.

"It's great they're doing this as they have the security of public finances to do so, which means they can take risks. If they don't, who will?" he adds.

Despite making supernatural thriller *Equinox* for Netflix, Bernth agrees. "The industry is less risk-taking than it was." However, as a former commissioner herself, she understands the dilemma. "It's so hard when you have to pick only two out of 20 potentially great ideas," she says.

For Viaplay, the aim is to offer "something for everyone," says Wallestam. "We started off doing a lot of crime," such as *Alex* and the reboot of *Those Who Kill*. "Then, we moved into more innovative drama, such as the political-thriller *Inner Circle*, as well as rethinking crime with shows like *Honour* and *Box 21*."

"And then we have *Love Me*, a comedy-drama, which is the most original show we've done, precisely because it was so quirky, so it was talked about, then word spread and traditional audiences started to want to see it."

"You have to go for quality, not volume," adds Wikander. "The only path to success in the market today is to find a project that awakens curiosity in you. Then you and your team can discuss if it will work in the broader market."

For Palmquist, this has always been the ethos of HBO Nordic. "We make roughly three shows a year but it's not fixed. Sometimes it's two, sometimes it's four. If we don't find them it's better not to make them."

"Everybody wants channel-defining series, and channels are willing to pay for them because audiences want to watch them," explains Torrance, speaking from a distributor's perspective.

"If you're a buyer, you're not going to struggle to find shows. As a distributor, we look for strong IP and really good storytelling because those shows are the ones that will travel around the world."

And for those who believe the surging amount of content from the region is diluting the Nordic brand, Wallestam makes this observation: "People can't get enough of the shows that are really good and they are impatient for the next season. So there can't be that much." **TBI**

# TV France brings French créativité at your door



EXPORT



MARKET

INFORMATION

NETWORK



All the time. Everywhere.



Le  
**Guide**

19,000 programs  
15,000 videos

[screenopsis.com](http://screenopsis.com)

With the support of



**TV France**   
international  
Made in France. For the world.



# A seat at the table

Keshet Studios president Peter Traugott discusses how the Israeli company's Stateside studio is competing – and winning – in an increasingly consolidated US market

**I**sraeli companies have tended to punch above their weight on the global stage over the past decade, but Keshet has been arguably the most prolific of all.

Its US studio has been in existence for almost five years and, fed by a steady supply of remarkably successful products from its home country, has managed to establish itself Stateside at a time when competition has never been greater.

It has of course been helped by the proliferation of buyers, but also a tactically astute first-look deal with Universal TV. The combined result is a list of clients that includes the major US networks, the streaming giants and more recent entrants such as Apple.

Yet for industry observers, one of its most keenly watched shows is not an edgy tale for one of the new entrants but a US remake of a warm Israeli drama for ABC. Based on the Israeli drama that aired on Keshet, *The Baker And The Beauty* – which debuts 13 April – reflects not just the US receptivity to global scripted formats but an evolutionary shift that has moved US networks from gritty fare to romantic comedy.

“When I first started here five years ago, it was one of the formats that we looked at, it was one we watched and we fell in love immediately,” says Peter Traugott, who founded TBD Entertainment before being named president of programming at Keshet Studios in 2015.

“But the truth is that it just wasn’t in vogue then, cable was doing darker shows and the lighter fare wasn’t really what people were looking for.” Things have changed in the intervening years and Traugott is now eagerly waiting to see how the show fares.

“It certainly feels like broadcast is leaning into escapist and lighter fare,” he continues, “those kinds of bigger ideas that broadcast networks do so well that you don’t see on cable.” It plays into a similar vein as *Zoey’s Extraordinary Playlist*, he says, the musical dramedy created by Austin Winsberg that premiered earlier this year on NBC.

“The tone of that show is very specific and there are more shows now that are more entertaining – they might have a message, but they’re also really focused on an element of escapism and fun,” he adds.

Keshet’s broadcast slate also includes a pair of NBC shows, *Lincoln Rhymes: The Hunt For The Bone*

*Collector* and *La Brea*, a big, ambitious show starring Jon Ceda (*Chicago PD*) that has made it to pilot.

“We sell and produce everywhere, from streaming, to cable and broadcast, but I really like broadcast because it is still built around the Upfronts so there’s that seasonality around the business.

“And there is something about trying to appeal to a broad audience that is fun. They spend money, they are well aware of the platforms out there and the budgets are very fair.”

The thing that has changed, he says, is the declining number of pilots, but there are now numerous new buyers in town and Traugott seems to have been busily making deals with most of them.

“We have projects everywhere,” he says, more matter of fact than in any way arrogant.

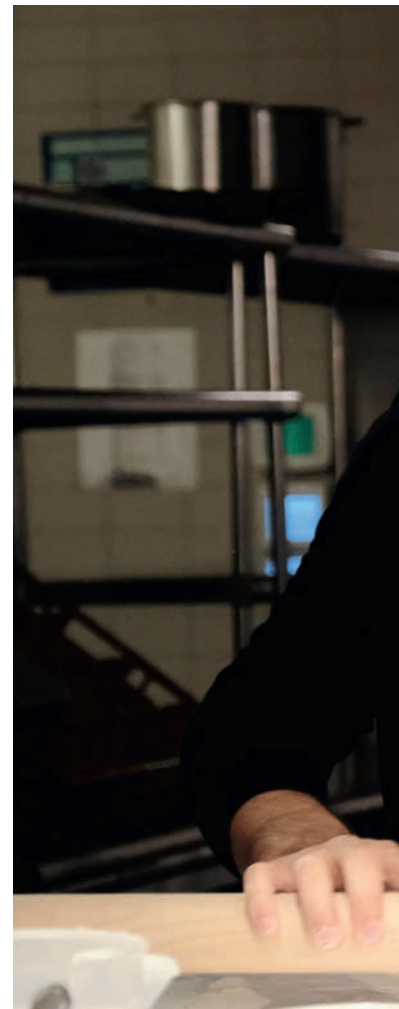
Netflix has already taken Israeli drama *When Heroes Fly* around the world and a US version is in the works with “one of the streamers”, the exec says, while fellow Keshet series *Stockholm* is also being re-worked Stateside.

Then there’s *Generation B*, based on the Belgian series *Generatie B* from deMensen about the impact of an economic meltdown on young people, and *The Stuntwoman*, based on the book by Julie Ann Johnson, explores the pioneering female stunt performer and one of Hollywood’s first whistle-blowers. *The A Word*, known in Israel as *Yellow Peppers*, is also on the Keshet Studios slate following its format success in the UK with the BBC.

The company also has shows with streamers such as HBO Max – Traugott declines to go into specifics – but he says the AT&T-owned operator has been flexible in deals, “in part because they’re new.” He concedes, however, that he’s not sure how much longer that will last as the “synergies” within parent AT&T continue – something he is also expecting with other US operators. Hulu, he adds, is becoming more closed off following Disney’s full acquisition of the US-based streamer and Netflix prefers shows to go through its own studio. Apple, he says, has been “great”.

The point, however, is that Traugott’s studio has been able to navigate this changing landscape. “We tend to be a very entrepreneurial company and we’re flexible in deal making because the business changes every day. You have to reflect that in deals, but of

Keshet Studios’ *The Baker And The Beauty* was remade for ABC in the US



course there are some shows and platforms that are better business for us than others.”

Traugott says there is a “trade off” between streamers that tend to take all world rights and programming for others that can be distributed through sales arm Keshet International.

The other impact of the increasing consolidation has been the impact on talent. Netflix snapped up Ryan Murphy and Shonda Rhimes among tens if not hundreds of others; Amazon’s list includes Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Steve McQueen; WarnerMedia has Steven Soderbergh and JJ Abrams. It means competition for creatives is rife, but Traugott says the Universal deal and his studio’s compelling IP are vital factors in allowing Keshet to compete.

“We have that first-look arrangement, so a lot goes through there and it’s been great. They, like other studios, have been doing overall deals with writers but it is challenging,” he says, though points out that one of Keshet’s key attributes is bringing IP to the table.

“Not everything is based on IP, *La Brea* wasn’t,

**“It certainly feels like broadcast is leaning into escapist and lighter fare”**

Peter Traugott,  
Keshet Studios



but most of the time we’ll have a piece of IP from a produced series, or a book or an article or something on Keshet – and if the IP is strong enough then that helps us put the right writer in place.”

It perhaps explains why the scripted format market is bubbling, with “everyone looking for some sort of advantage, something that will allow a show to stand out and be marketable and cut through the clutter. And having a great piece of IP is always an advantage because you can show what this show might be.”

Looking at the market “from 30,000 feet”, Traugott admits that companies such as Disney, AT&T’s WarnerMedia, Comcast, ViacomCBS and Amazon are to some degree in their own worlds. The challenges of this ‘walled garden’ landscape, particularly in the US, undoubtedly makes the task of selling shows trickier. But for those acquiring content, Keshet Studios’ IP clearly provides opportunities, highlighted by its burgeoning slate. For Traugott and his company, the challenge is to nimbly adapt deals to ensure they retain their seat at the table. **TBI**







## Scripted Hot Picks

This edition's drama hot picks bring together shows from across the world including crime series *Dark Woods* from Germany, French thriller *Shadowplay*, HBO's *Run* and the hard-hitting *Unchained* from Israel

### Run

**T**his half-hour comedy, which had been due to receive its world premiere at Series Mania in Lille, comes from two of the creative talents whose previous work includes the likes of *Killing Eve* and *Fleabag*

*Run*, which has been created by Phoebe Waller-Bridge and writer Vicky Jones, follows the life of a woman, played by Merritt Wever (*Godless*, *Nurse Jackie*), who walks away from her ordinary life in the suburbs to revisit her past with her college boyfriend (Domhnall Gleeson).

Almost 20 years prior, the pair had made a pact that if either one of them texted the word "run" and the other replied with the same, they would drop everything and meet in New York's Grand Central Station and travel across America together.

The story picks up on their life-changing decision and follows Wever, who plays Ruby, and Gleeson, starring as Billy, as they traverse the US, coming across an array of unusual characters along the way. One of those is played by Waller-Bridge, who is attached as recurring character Laurel.

The *Fleabag* creator is also attached as an

executive producer on the series, alongside her writer and frequent collaborator Jones. Other exec producers include Jenny Robins, Emily Leo and Oliver Roskill of Wigwam Films, while the widely respected Kate Dennis, who has been behind *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Fear The Walking Dead* and *G.L.O.W.*, is also onboard and directed the pilot.

Supporting Wever, Gleeson and Waller-Bridge is a supporting cast that includes Rich Sommer (*Mad Men*) as Laurence, playing Ruby's husband, and Tamara Podemski of *Coroner* fame, who features as police detective Babe Cloud.

Also starring is Archie Panjabi, who is set to star in HBO's upcoming series *I Know This Much Is True* and will play Billy's former PA in *Run*.

The show hails from Entertainment One, the studio behind HBO's *Sharp Objects*, plus Jones and Waller-Bridge's banner DryWrite, and Wigwam Films. It is slated to premiere on HBO on 12 April and a day later on OCS, while Sky has picked up the eight-part show for its recently launched Sky Comedy. **TBI**

#### Run

**Distributors:** HBO

**Producers:** Entertainment One, Wigwam Films

**Broadcaster:** HBO (US), OCS (France), Sky Comedy (UK)

**Logline:** Comedy-thriller about a ex-couple who leave their lives behind to embark on an unusual roadtrip





## Dark Woods

**G**erman drama has become increasingly sought after over the past couple of years and *Dark Woods* (aka *Das Geheimnis Des Totenwaldes*) is another worth taking a look at.

The 6 x 45 minute series has been inspired by the real-life disappearance of a woman in the German region of Lower Saxony and is set during the late 1980s, when the sister of a high-ranking police officer – Thomas Bethge, played by *Babylon Berlin*'s Matthias Brandt – disappears without a trace. Shortly before, two couples had been cruelly murdered in nearby woodlands, with an artist and gun enthusiast living on the edge of the forest quickly coming under suspicion.

As a Hamburg police officer, Bethge is not permitted to investigate the crime so seeks support from his

colleagues, played by Karoline Schuch (*Hanna's Journey*) and Andreas Lust (*The Robber*). But his quest for justice continues long after his retirement, as he and his team eventually, through painstaking and meticulous research, finally get on the track of a suspected serial killer.

Wolfgang Sielaff, the brother of Birgit Meier, the real missing woman who inspired the series, is attached as a consultant on the drama as is the former head of the Hamburg State Office of Criminal Investigation.

“On top of a gripping crime story, it’s foremost a family drama,” exec producer Marc Conrad tells TBI. “*Dark Woods* shows the effects an unsolved crime has on a family and the accusations within a family that come with it. Why the investigations took so long and the exposure of mistakes along the way delivers an absorbing story and will leave viewers speechless.”

*Ku'damm 56 & 59*'s Sven Bohse is attached to direct and Stefan Kolditz (*Generation War*) writes. And the performances and narrative will grab attention worldwide, says Bavaria Fiction's Maren Knieling. “To this day, the real crime is still not solved, as it is assumed that the dimensions of this case are far bigger than expected,” she adds. **TBI**

### Dark Woods

**Distributor:** Global Screen

**Producers:** ConradFilm, Bavaria Fiction

**Broadcaster:** NDR, ARD Degeto

**Logline:** Inspired by a real criminal case that has remained unsolved for nearly 30 years

# Unchained

**I**srael-based producer and distributor ADD Content previously sold *Fauda* to Netflix and is now bringing this hard-hitting drama about divorce to international buyers.

Being sold as both a scripted format and a finished series, *Unchained* has been produced by United Studios of Israel and premiered on public broadcaster Kan.

It was created by Joseph Madmoni, Tamar Kay, and David Ofek, and explores how orthodox Jewish women face a huge challenge in getting a divorce from their estranged husbands without their co-operation. The show stars Aviv Alush (*Beauty And The Baker*) as Yossef Mourad, one of a small group of orthodox rabbis tasked with acting as a hybrid detective and psychologist for women whose husbands either refuse them divorce or have disappeared. Mourad will go to any lengths within Jewish law – and sometimes outside of it – to get justice and closure for the women he represents, however his world begins to crumble when he uncovers a secret which threatens to dissolve his own marriage.

“Two things led to writing the series,” head writer and co-creator Madmoni tells TBI. “The first is my

personal background as someone born into the Jewish Orthodox world, and the feeling that the area where that religion clashes the most with the modern world is the woman’s place in society. This is an unresolved conflict, and I feel that exploring the topic in this way through *Unchained* might transform it or, perhaps, cause it to implode.

“The second thing that led to the creation of the series is the desire to portray a far more universal situation – a life of a couple who live alongside each other, but in fact, don’t know much about one another.” For Madmoni, the show “has resonance with a lot of other conservative ideologies globally, which are clashing with modern ideals, especially in the realm of women’s rights.” **TBI**

## Unchained

**Distributor:** ADD Content

**Producer:** United Studios of Israel

**Broadcaster:** Kan

**Logline:** Explores the reality of orthodox Jewish women unable to get a divorce without co-operation from their estranged husbands







## Shadowplay

Created by Måns Mårild, whose previous shows include *The Bridge* and *Midnight Sun*, this Berlin-based drama is set in what producers describe as “the wild west of purgatory”. It follows the exploits of US cop Max McLaughlin, played by *True Detective*’s Taylor Kitsch, with the 16-episode series split into two eight-part seasons.

Having landed in the German city in 1946, McLaughlin is tasked with creating a police force in the chaotic aftermath of the war. In his sights is Engelmacher Gladow, played by *Homeland*’s Sebastian Koch, who has established himself as the ruling gangster of the city.

“Secretly, Max undertakes a personal crusade to find his missing brother, who is killing ex-Nazis in hiding,” explains Françoise Guyonnet, MD for TV series at Studiocanal. “And unbeknownst to him, Max is being used as a pawn in what will become the Cold War.”

Mårild has written the show and directs four of the first eight episodes, alongside *Midnight Sun* directing partner Björn Stein.

The cast includes Michael C. Hall of *Dexter* and *Safe* fame, as well as Nina Hoss (*A Most Wanted Man*), Tuppence Middleton (*Sense8*), Logan Marshall-Green

(*Prometheus*) and Mala Emde (*Brecht, Charité*).

The “recurring one-hour gritty thriller” nature of the show and that “stellar international cast” will set the show apart, Guyonnet tells TBI, and the Studiocanal exec adds that the drama’s premise and the world that has been created will ensure viewers are drawn in.

“Måns has created a very unique world in a time and place that we have never seen before on television. Set in post-war Berlin, the characters are all survivors who emanate hope. They are aspirational and relatable figures who take us on compelling, tumultuous and unexpected journeys,” she says.

Filming of the first eight episodes, which are being brought to market now, took place in Prague last year and the second eight-episode instalment is planned for later this year. **TBI**

### Shadowplay

**Distributor:** Studiocanal

**Producer:** Tandem Productions, Bron Studios,

**Broadcasters:** Canal+, Viaplay, NC+, ZDF

**Logline:** A recurring cop-based gritty thriller set in Berlin in 1946



## The Minister

**T**his rather timely drama delves into what might happen if the person in charge of a nation fails to disclose an illness that could potentially impact their ability to govern.

The 8 x 60-minute show stars Ólafur Darri Ólafsson (*Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald, Trapped*) and revolves around populist politician Benedikt Ríkardsson, who takes a radical approach that earns him the support of the Icelandic people.

Following a whirlwind rise to power, Ríkardsson is named Iceland's Prime Minister but what the nation does not know is that their leader is suffering from an underlying bipolar disorder. As his disorder worsens, the politician's team and their allies are forced to endanger both the stability of the government and their private lives.

"The series has been in development for a few years with RUV Iceland before being introduced to international partners," Julien Leroux, SVP of global scripted co-productions at Cineflix Media tells TBI.

"We boarded the project at an early stage in July 2018 as we were immediately struck by how timely it was. The writing was very subtle as well, in the way

### The Minister

**Distributor:** Cineflix Rights

**Producer:** Sagafilm

**Broadcaster:** RUV Iceland

**Logline:** A populist Prime Minister with a worsening medical condition threatens the stability of the government

it was approaching the character of Benedikt and not making him an extremist but rather a random guy with ordinary problems who is taken into an extraordinary set of circumstances."

For Leroux, the show will work worldwide because "the hopes and disappointments" of politics are universal. "Each country in the world already has or will soon have their own Benedikt. We also believe viewers will be blown away by the absolutely breathtaking performance of Olafur Darri. Audiences throughout the world have loved him since the international success of *Trapped*. Seeing him as such a charismatic as well as crazy character is so compelling and exciting that it's difficult to turn your attention away from the series." **TBI**





## We Got This

**T**he death of real-life Prime Minister Olof Palme rocked Sweden and the world in the 1980s yet his death has never been solved. Enter George English, an American living in Sweden, who is grieving from the death of his father, the collapse of his career and an insurmountable tax bill.

Although fictional, the story is based on the experiences of Schiaffino Musarra, who wrote and stars in the show. “While looking for a way to make some fast cash, without having to break the law, I stumbled onto the fact that the murder of former Olof Palme was not only still an open investigation, but that there is also a 50m Swedish Crown reward for anyone who can provide information that leads to the killer,” he explains to TBL.

“After spending a few days thinking about actually solving the case, I realised I would be better off writing a dark comedy about a guy who thinks that solving the most unsolvable murder mystery in Swedish history could be the answer to all his problems.”

A major discovery means George finds himself on a collision course with history, as the investigation goes from a laughing stock to a closely watched operation by those who would rather the case remain forever unsolved.

So how did the show come about? “Hard work and countless hours of research led to nothing but five years of total rejection for *We Got This*,” jokes Musarra.

“Olof Palme is a sensitive subject in Sweden and comedy is a difficult thing to prove on a piece of paper, so I decided to make a trailer that made it look like the show was already done. The concept trailer and the storyline I had put together to prove that this could be a TV series completely changed the conversation and led to signing on with Jarowskij, which also brought Banijay into the mix. It led to winning the Series Mania co-pro pitching competition and ultimately led to a full development deal with SVT, Sweden’s biggest channel.”

For Chris Stewart, Banijay Rights’ scripted commercial director, the show proves that “Nordic television can be brilliant without being traditional noir.” **TBI**

### We Got This

**Distributor:** Banijay Rights

**Producer:** Jarowskij, Film i Väst

**Broadcaster:** SVT, Viaplay

**Logline:** An intriguing exploration into one of the most infamous political murders



# NATPE BUDAPEST

## INTERNATIONAL

30 JUNE - 3 JULY | 2020



**500+**  
International  
Buyers

**200+**  
Distribution  
& Production  
Companies

**70+**  
Countries  
Represented



[NATPE.com/Budapest](https://NATPE.com/Budapest)

 **INTERCONTINENTAL.**  
BUDAPEST





## Writer's Room Dan Sefton

### Ending the 'gun for hire' approach

**"We should make every writer feel genuine creative ownership of the show. It's their show too, no one should simply be a 'gun for hire.'"**

**W**hen I was offered the opportunity to develop a 10-part crime series for a German broadcaster, their sensible and logical request for 10 fully worked out crime stories caused a certain amount of trepidation. Ten! That's a lot of work. Too much for one person, at least in the time available. We're going to need a team.

When money is no object, writer's rooms are a cinch. Hire the best you can and pay well for exclusivity. Problem was, we didn't have that much cash. The usual UK solution is a pretty bad deal for writers – a story conference at a day rate with the promise of an episode sometime in the future. Maybe you'll get through, maybe you'll get fired. Write, try to please the capricious producers and move on. It works, and I'd been part of it for years. But this wasn't a UK primetime show and didn't have obvious cachet. However, we still needed to be attractive to talented and in demand writers. How could we offer more?

In the previous year, I'd been working far closer to production as a UK showrunner on shows like *Trust Me* and *The Good Karma Hospital*. It was eye-opening, exciting and stimulating. Decisions that had previously made little sense to me as a writer for hire became clearer. Surely all writers on a show should have access to this kind of information?

With *The Mallorca Files*, I wanted to do things a little differently – effectively offering writers the chance to step into an EP role on their own episodes. Luckily, Cosmopolitan founder and EP Ben Donald was fully supportive.

Our initial writer's room on *The Mallorca Files* started with a statement of intent that later morphed into a semi-serious, written 'manifesto'. In pre-production we paid for stories and scripts but made sure everyone was across the entirety of the series, so any story clashes were organically kept to a minimum. A WhatsApp group was set up to share ideas (and co-ordinate social gatherings). The culture was one of mutual support, not divide and rule.

As the show went into production, all the writers remained at the heart of the show. This meant going on production reces, watching casting tapes, seeing key costume choices early, taking meaningful director meetings, going on set with cast and finally giving notes on the edit and mix. In addition, being script polished by the showrunner was not failure, but part of the process.

This all sounds very reasonable, but the enthusiastic response from the writing team speaks to just how unusual this has been in the UK industry to date. For too long, writers have been excluded from the 'grown up' conversations, expected just to hand over their scripts and wait until their episode is transmitted to see the results, good, bad or indifferent. It breeds a sense of 'us and them' among writers. They create the episode, but they feel a long way from the levers of control. There's a reason writers rarely go to wrap parties.

This is wrong. We should make every writer feel genuine creative ownership of the show. It's their show too, no one should simply be a 'gun for hire'. The *quid quo pro* has always been explicit – in return for a writer's time and talent we offer an open opportunity to acquire the skills they need to become a showrunner. Not everyone wants to do that, and that's fine, but as a writer myself, this deal seems fair to me. The *quid pro quo* is that 'bad behaviour' is not allowed – no foot stamping or hissy fits. As I explained to one of our writers, when it comes to production decisions, you have a vote, not a veto.

We are now filming season two of *The Mallorca Files* and creating season three. The team has grown but our only drop out has been someone who had their own original series greenlit. The WhatsApp group remains active. New writers have been initially skeptical but are soon convinced that we really do walk it like we talk it. The process really does work, not just for writers, but for the entire creative team. Not a cult (yet) but a culture of genuine respect for that initial spark of creativity from which everything else follows. **TBI**

Dan Sefton has been behind shows including *Trust Me* and *The Good Karma Hospital*. He is currently showrunner and lead writer on *The Mallorca Files*, the big budget drama recently extended into a second season by the UK's BBC, Germany's ZDF and France 2

# COMING BACK ON MULTIPLE TERRITORIES!

MORE THAN 700 EPISODES IN 18 COUNTRIES



MEXICO

ISRAEL

ITALY

BRAZIL

SLOVENIA



# DEAL WITH

Genre: Hidden Camera Game Show  
Duration: 30'/60'/120'  
Slot: Daily/Weekly



Catalogue: [www.keshetinternational.com](http://www.keshetinternational.com) Contact us: [info@keshetinternational.com](mailto:info@keshetinternational.com)

[@KeshetIntl](https://twitter.com/KeshetIntl) | [f KeshetInternational](https://www.facebook.com/KeshetInternational) | [@KeshetInternational](https://www.instagram.com/KeshetInternational)



## Scaling new heights



Rebooting scripted series has become big business, but it remains a flawed science. Stephen Arnell questions why there is such an attraction to remakes and explores what makes a TV hit – or turns it into a flop

It's not hard to work out the reasoning behind the ongoing stream of rebooted and revived scripted shows: name recognition and residual affection almost guarantee high initial sampling. While it's unclear how many people actually remember the likes of *Perry Mason* (currently being rebooted by HBO) or sitcom *Designing Women* (ABC), the argument that reboots can cut through largely stands.

“Revivals have been going on for years on both sides of the Atlantic,” says David Walton, joint MD and creative director at Free@LastTV, producers of the hit comedy-detective series *Agatha Raisin* for US streamer Acorn and Sky One. He points to shows such as *Endeavour*, *Prime Suspect* and *Hawaii Five 0* as “familiar brands that audiences can easily identify” in a sea of product.

However, he adds: “Reboots are only successful in the longer term if they're sufficiently creative and visionary to initially build upon their past – but then, very importantly, forge their own future. The original series should always be seen as springboards rather than straitjackets.”

Free@LastTV is in the process of developing *First Frost*, a prequel to the long-running ITV detective series *A Touch Of Frost*, as well as a new adaptation of *Hamish Macbeth*, which aired on the BBC in the 1990s. Barry Ryan, co-MD and creative director at the firm, says the key “is to look with fresh eyes on old friends.”

He continues: “These aren't lazy legacy projects, they are IP-led. The original source material is more important to us than the initial television show. The US doesn't have the hang ups that the UK has about remakes because they look at story first.

“The 1990s *Hamish Macbeth* series took the character but not the stories and in the process – in my opinion – lost both the wit and the integrity. With *Hamish*, it's our intention to go back to the late M.C Beaton's stories.”

The two shows are among the surging number of reboots in the works around the world and the trend for bringing back dramas from the 1970s and '80s will soon see Dutch detective *Van Der Valk* debuting on ITV in the UK and PBS in the US. Meanwhile, remakes of *Lovejoy*, *Rumpole Of The Bailey*, *All Creatures Great*



*Lost In Space* (opposite) is a remake of the classic 1960s sci-fi adventure, while *Magnum P.I.* (top) is a reboot of the popular 1980s cop show originally fronted by Tom Selleck. India's LGI is meanwhile working on a local-language version of Showtime's hit drama *Ray Donovan* (bottom)

*Small*, and *Bergerac* are all in varying stages of production or development with different producers.

## Kicking off a reboot

Each reboot differs, of course, and has its own backstory but all share nostalgia value as part of a shared viewing experience, at least for audiences who remember the originals – although *Van Der Valk* may well be a grittier proposition this time around.

The All3Media International show is set in Amsterdam and explores *Van Der Valk*'s engaging, unapologetic and street-smart approach to solving murders. For David Swetman, SVP of scripted acquisitions, it's a show that offers more than the sum of its parts.

"*Van Der Valk* was a hugely successful brand in the past and we're excited to combine that heritage with writer Chris Murray's fresh new take on the books and Michele Buck's experience of producing detective shows," says Swetman.

With Marc Warren in the lead role, "our *Van Der Valk* is more at home in the modern, cosmopolitan Amsterdam and is tackling cases that would be familiar to contemporary police forces."

Partners include ARD Degeto in Germany and NPO in the Netherlands, along with PBS and ITV, and Swetman says the aim, as

with all remakes, is "to build on the heritage of shows that have gone before and bring them to a whole new audience."

## Less risk doesn't mean low risk

Despite the apparently lower risk strategy of reviving classic shows, there's no guarantee of success – as the resurrections of the BBC's *Upstairs Downstairs* and *Minder* on Channel 5 can attest.

Casting is, of course, of prime importance: original stars can usually entice viewers, hence the popularity of returners such as ITV's *Cold Feet* and BBC duo *Gavin & Stacey* and *Open All Hours* spin-off *Still Open All Hours*.

But it's not a given – witness the failure of reboots such as *Kojak* for USA Network 15 years ago, *Knight Rider* on NBC, TNT's *Dallas* resurrection and the revived *Murphy Brown* on CBS in 2018.

And without the unique performances of lead actors, producers can at times seem to be on a hiding to nothing. ITV's *Prime Suspect 1973* in 2017 had many flaws, primarily the failure of star Stefanie Martini to successfully evoke Helen Mirren in her role as a younger Jane Tennison. Then there was the ill-advised decision to resuscitate political satire *Yes, Prime Minister* in 2013 on UKTV comedy channel Gold, which saw the impeccable trio of Paul Eddington, Nigel Hawthorne and the late Derek Fawlds replaced by David Haig, Henry Goodman and Chris Larkin.

Despite these challenges, there's little chance the remake is going anywhere soon, as the instant recognition factor becomes ever-more important as drama proliferates, a point made by BBC Studios' global VOD director Jon Farrar.

"There was a great piece of research a couple of years ago, which found that the average person will spend 2.4 years of their life just looking for something to watch. We are totally overloaded with content from every direction. We need cues – the familiar and the well-loved – to help direct us through that fog."

But the reboot surge also underlines the trend for nostalgia, he adds. "In a world that's getting more complex, angry, and uncertain we have a need to seek comfort. We want to escape into the familiar that reminds of us simpler and, perhaps, happier times.

"What's interesting here is also the need to escape to older brands for a generation that weren't born first time around, but crave warmer, simpler programming. Gen Z's embrace of *Friends* suggests older brands have value far beyond the audiences that remember them first time."

## To remake or reboot?

For Farrar, there are two approaches that work. "You have a faithful homage to the original or a complete breaking out, taking the bare bones and re-inventing it into an unrecognisable new drama," he says. "The dangerous ground is what lies between those two approaches. It's littered with corpses."

The US has always been fertile ground for remakes and reboots – in a broadcasting environment where shows can be pulled after a few episodes, name recognition is a vital part of the arsenal in attracting viewers.



And the US tends to have a stronger hit rate in bringing back TV classics – recast, rejigged and usually with higher budgets, although that is in part because of the huge volume of shows produced.

Streamers such as Netflix have made hay with reviving shows, including *Fuller House*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Lost In Space*, *The Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina*, *Tales Of The City* and *Arrested Development*, to varying degrees of critical approval.

Cablers and broadcast networks have been busy at the same game, with The CW rebooting *Dynasty*, CBS returning to *Magnum P.I.*, *The L Word* and *Twin Peaks* airing on Showtime and *MacGyver* airing on ABC. All performed fairly well, as did the likes of *Mad About You* for Spectrum and *Will & Grace* on NBC, while time will tell on Freeform's *Party Of Five*.

So perhaps it's no surprise that the outlook for the reboot in the US is bright. Cult comedy-drama *Northern Exposure* is reportedly coming back for CBS, *Battlestar Galactica* is returning in some form for NBCUniversal's streamer Peacock, while shows ranging from *American Gigolo* to *Gossip Girl* are all in some state of revival. All provide an instant pathway in for viewers, a point made by Sunder Aaron, former VP at Sony Pix and currently principal of Indian production company Locomotive Global.

"As a child of the 1980s and 90s, it's amusing to see some of those shows revived," he says, pointing to *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Will & Grace*. "Admittedly, I haven't been able to stick with any of these shows beyond an episode or two. Most are just leveraging the well-known brand name to launch what really are entirely new series. For these shows to succeed, they've got to develop their own audiences, as if they were completely new and unrelated shows.

"Of course, the shows are easier to promote at launch as viewers will have an idea of what to expect, but they face a hard time retaining and building an audience if they aren't good enough in their own right. And familiarity isn't necessarily the enemy of creativity," he says, pointing to what the creators of *Riverdale* were able to pull off. "That was a creative and unique take on the beloved *Archie* characters."



**"You have a faithful homage to the original or a complete breaking out, taking the bare bones and re-inventing it into an unrecognisable new drama. The dangerous ground is what lies between those two approaches. It's littered with corpses"**

Jon Farrar, BBC Studios

## Away from the Atlantic

Aaron adds that in India, there is little "archival value for scripted series television. Therefore, it's very rare to see a revival of a series or a remake of something that came years before." That isn't stopping the exec however from developing an Indian remake of Showtime's hit drama *Ray Donovan*, with the lead character now a Bollywood fixer.

"There have been a number of successful adaptations of premium



The CW rebooted popular 1980s soap *Dynasty*

series in the Indian market, including *Criminal Justice* and *The Office*. Israeli formats such as *Hostages* and *Fauda* are also being adapted in India. These shows are all incredibly well written. My company, LGI is working on a local-language version of Showtime's *Ray Donovan*.

"This is only possible because *Ray Donovan* is an exceptionally well-written series. It also happens to perfectly lend itself to adaptation in India, given the similarities between Hollywood and Bollywood."

Outside the US, 2019 saw a return of the Canadian court-room drama *Street Legal*, back on CBC after 25 years, while in Australia, a spate of reboots have seen *Prisoner* reimagined as *Wentworth* and comedy *Pizza* ordered by streamer 7mate after a lengthy absence.

Alex Kessel is head of Russian production company Sputnik Vostok, which has been behind *Better Than Us*, available widely on Netflix, and UK-based series *Londongrad*. For him, a remake is not simply about using existing IP awareness to cut through.

"The best stories are remade with nearly every generation," he says. "However it's not only because of the recognition factor, but because these shows will need updating – especially in Russia, usually with more complexity and faster pacing, so that it can reach younger generations, who otherwise may treat the originals as old hat.

"In post-Soviet Russia there's been around a dozen features remade for theatrical release. Most failed to replicate the success of the originals, which are often broadcast in the Russian Federation. That could mean that some stories are hard to accept in any new iteration, so deep is their cultural footprint. This works differently on TV, where the logic of lowering risk supports remakes in a similar fashion to 'based-on-the-book' or other IP-driven projects," he explains.

But the increasing clutter of content means shows in Russia also require big names and budgets to punch through. Some broadcasters or streamers can fail to support "strong ideas", which can be buried. "This is when golden oldies become new again. And again."

Clearly, it's unlikely that the trend for bringing back older shows will end soon, as demand for product continues. Ownership of IP and name recognition will always be strong drivers to revisit past glories, and Covid-19 will see an increase in repeats from broadcasters – with comfort TV featuring strongly, potentially spurring more remakes as and when the world returns to near normalcy. Whether this is good news for new writing talent and viewers is another matter. **TBI**

**MOST WATCHED SHOW IN CHANNEL'S HISTORY**  
**5 TIMES THE SLOT AVERAGE**

TELECINCO / CUATRO (SPAIN)

**RATINGS HIT - 68% ABOVE SLOT AVERAGE**

USA NETWORK



60' REALITY FORMAT

# TEMPTATION ISLAND

[banijayrights.com](http://banijayrights.com)

 **Banijay**  
Rights





## Keeping it Korea

Korea's left-field but heartfelt entertainment shows are cutting through domestically and internationally. Jane Marlowe reports on the country's ongoing formats' success story and explores what's next

**Q**uirky. Out of the box. Bat-shit crazy. All words that have been used not only to describe Korean formats but also to account for their success. *The Masked Singer* is the Korean format credited with bringing a new wave of creativity to the global formats market and Argonon Group joint venture, Bandicoot – founded by Daniel Nettleton and Derek McClean – won the race to secure the UK rights.

The duo had been tracking the show since its launch in Korea in 2015 and describe the format,

*300: War Of United Voices* sees a music superstar work towards a performance with 300 superfans

now a hit on ITV, as the most British foreign format they'd seen. Pitched as a family-friendly guessing game, the format's joyousness and lack of cynicism has piqued broadcasters' interest.

"Since *The Masked Singer*, we've been speaking to Korean broadcasters about what other shows they have on their roster and I'd be very surprised if we don't see more come through," adds Nettleton. He predicts a rush towards Korean formats but adds that doesn't mean to say everything coming out of the territory will turn to gold.





**“[Korean formats] traditionally appealed to the Chinese and Japanese as the emotional dynamic, engagement and storytelling is very similar. But over the last 10 years, Korean TV has evolved towards the standard and industry practice of Western businesses”**

Jean Dong,  
Zespa Media



### ‘Surplus of ideas’

The ground-breaking Oscar win for *Parasite* and the breakthrough scripted hit *The Good Doctor* have also helped Korea wedge a toe in the door of the Western markets. If it’s a numbers game, they certainly have the upper hand. K7 Media founder and CEO Keri Lewis Brown gives a sense of the intensity of the industry and the surplus of ideas that is out there.

“According to KOCCA (Korea Creative Content Agency) and KCA (Korea Communications Agency), an average of 300 new shows launch in Korea each year only to never be renewed and disappear from air,” says Lewis Brown. “The zeitgeist is ever shifting, and even for shows once considered a hit, remaining on air for three or four years can be very tough. This fast turnover is one of the key strengths of the territory in

terms of the practice and experience of coming up with ideas. Creative directors have to be sensitive to trends, constantly bringing new ideas.”

CJ ENM travel reality format, *Grandpas Over Flowers*, adapted as *Better Late Than Never* for NBC, was one of the first successful Korean imports in the West. MD of ITV Studios Global Creative Network Mike Beale says Korea’s shift from buyer to seller of formats came around five years ago, but the biggest problem to date has been translating them for Western audiences. He mentions CJ ENM format *Produce 101*, a talent show that uses the K-Pop algorithm to narrow constants down to a final 11.

“I haven’t worked out how to do that here,” he says. “If you look at boy or girl bands [in the UK] there’s a formula, yet these guys are absolutely up front and put that formula on screen. That’s what we’ve got to work through.”

ITV Studios brokered a co-development deal with CJ ENM back in 2017, but now, Beale says: “Korea is on the list of Netherlands, Nordics, Israel, Japan, where we’ll constantly be looking at and working with the creatives both in scripted and non-scripted.”

Hot on the heels of *The Masked Singer* is CJ ENM’s music studio format *I Can See Your Voice*, created by Lee Seon-young and the latest format picked up by Fox. Diane Min, head of format sales at CJ ENM, says they’re currently developing ideas with a twist to traditional genres.

“We are happy to experiment with all sorts of genre hybrids,” she adds. “For example, we would add dating to singing/dancing, or a music show with a guessing factor. Our most famous format, *I Can See Your Voice*, is a music studio format that doesn’t involve actual singing until the very end. It’s more of a game show where you have to guess using your senses. *Love At First Song*, is also a hybrid format adding dating to singing.”

### Korea’s embrace of global

The international market is becoming more important to the Korean entertainment company. CJ ENM head of global content development, Jihee Kim, says: “Up until a few years ago, a vast majority of our shows targeted the home market, but these days, we’re increasingly developing shows with international sales in mind. Also, we set a separate production budget for content targeting overseas sales, taking various approaches such as global co-production and co-development. In addition to our flagship channel, there is room for niche formats, such as lifestyle, food shows or short-form content targeting women and youth.”

Other IP includes *300: War Of United Voices*, which



sees a superstar work towards a performance with 300 superfans and launches this month in Germany on ProSiebenSat.1. *Falling In Dance* combines dating and dance in the reality genre, while a new format for 2020 is music competition, *Double Casting*.

Streamers are also feeding the frenzy for formats. The Bridge specialises in developing international television between English-speaking broadcasters and producers and their Asian counterparts, and MD Amanda Groom reports that the co-production business is thriving now that production companies increasingly need partners in order to compete with the streamers.

“Each deal is case-by-case and requires clever, skilled and brave individuals to follow through,” she says. “Only noisy programming is cutting through the increasingly competitive markets that we all face. Increasingly what we all need to make a hit is noise, and certainly one of Korea’s many strengths is creating noisy formats.”

The UK and US versions of *The Masked Singer*, with its energy, humour and comedy, highlight the USP of Korean formats and there’s no doubt they’ve created a buzz. President of Pernel Media, Samuel Kissous, is excited by the fact that the territory is shaking up the global market. “People who have been doing formats for a long time were just reiterating the same formats over again and then it took an outsider like Korea to come around with a fresher take on it,” he says. “It’s

## The PDs behind the IP

Production directors (PDs) in Korea create and produce entertainment shows on an exclusive basis for broadcasters. The best are highly sought after and can help IP cut through in the same way a lead writer can on a drama

**Na Young-seok** Works for CJ ENM’s tvN channel and is the creator/producer of tvN’s *Grandpas Over Flowers* and *2 Days & 1 Night* for KBS

**Kim Tae-ho** Has been behind hits including *Infinite Challenge* and works for MBC

**Yoo Ho-jin** A highly-regarded producer of *2 Days & 1 Night*, working for KBS

**Park Seong-hoon** The creator/producer of *K-Pop Star*, working for SBS

**Kim Young-wook** Also working for SBS and creator/producer of *Fantastic Duo*

Source: K7 Media

*Falling In Dance* combines dating and dance in the reality genre

the tale of the outsider who rocks the town because they have a different take on things.”

Jen Hur, who heads international co-productions at *The Masked Singer* broadcaster MBC, says that although Korea’s singing formats are the most popular internationally, local audiences also love watching celebrity observation reality formats. *Home Alone* is the longest running weekly programme in this genre.

“*Home Alone* films single celebrities living alone,



like a documentary through hidden cameras, capturing the real image of a single life. MBC's advertisement and sales profit from *Home Alone* is more than 20 times the production cost invested in the show," says Hur.

## Extreme left-field

Perhaps one of the most left-field formats from a territory that specialises in left-field is MBC's new VR documentary *Meeting You*. The programme uses high quality VR technology to enable a mother's reunion with her deceased daughter. Hur says: "This unique documentary not only recorded the number one rating among non-scripted programs but also received millions of SNS supporting messages from worldwide as soon as the promotional clips were released via YouTube. The world audience was touched and overwhelmed by the VR encounter of a mother and her daughter who no longer belongs to this world."

This sounds like ground-breaking programme-making, but a market doesn't mature overnight. The groundwork to Korea's success in the format's market was laid in its initial relationship with China. Zespa Media is a group of production and licensing companies connecting global content with the Chinese market and CEO Jean Dong says that a decade ago culture and common values meant Korean formats were among the most successful shows in China and celebrity travel format *Daddy, Where Are We Going?* was a big hit.

Dong adds: "[Korean formats] were traditionally quite Asian in culture, which appealed to the Chinese and Japanese as the emotional dynamic, engagement and storytelling is very similar. But in the last 10 years, Korean television has evolved towards the standard and industry practice of Western businesses."

An inability to retain rights, Chinese regulatory changes and copycats, prompted Korean developers to look for growth globally. Co-founder of The Format People, Michel Rodrigue, suggests the situation regarding rights ownership has to change before creatives can grow. "KOCCA is helping [creatives] come to markets and they're trying to pitch their ideas directly to foreigners, but in the US and UK people who buy paper formats are very rare; the idea has to be out of this world. Broadcasters don't buy from creative people, they buy from a producer."

There is movement on this issue however. K7 Media's Lewis Brown says traditional broadcasters like KBS and MBC are moving away from a model where they paid 100% of any production fee to outside suppliers, to one in which they will pay 60% only. This leaves producers to find the remainder, but in exchange they will keep international rights.

**"The zeitgeist is ever shifting, and even for shows once considered a hit, remaining on air for three or four years can be very tough. This fast turnover is one of the key strengths of the territory"**

Keri Lewis Brown,  
K7 Media



She adds: "The Korean government has announced that this year it is tripling the budget it puts into supporting the country's creative output – and in the TV industry that extra money is being channelled primarily into funding co-developments and co-productions with international partners. This presents a real opportunity for Western Indies and broadcasters alike to take a chance on a Korean collaboration knowing some of the associated costs will be externally funded."

## State-supported growth

Government agency KOCCA also supports this industry by offering subsidies for pilot episodes as well as attendance at markets. A scripted format, *Sky Castle*, from JTBC was launched at MipFormats in 2018 and is now in development at NBC as *TriBeCa*.

In addition, 'bridging' agencies are taking advantage of the current hunger for Korean ideas and creativity. Former head of formats and development at CJ ENM, Jin Woo Hwang, has set up Something Special, format content development, production and distribution business with a mission to connect and create content.

"In the age of disruption, with higher demands in streaming platforms, growth of K-wave consumers and international co-operations, Korean creative talents are trying to find effective ways to enter into the global market," says Jin Woo Hwang. "Simply, they just do not know who to meet and how to start. And I have been asked of this from so many people. This is why Something Special was needed."

Talent deals are now being struck though. Park Won-woo, the creator of *King Of Mask Singer* – as *The Masked Singer* was known in its original territory – has now signed a first-look deal with NBC Universal-owned Universal Television Alternative Studio. Indeed, the concept of production directors is well trodden in Korea (see box opposite) and it's leading some to wonder if other Korean format creators will follow in his footsteps.

Yet wherever the talent flows, there's no doubt that Korea's TV format industry is having its moment in the sun at present. *I Can See Your Voice* and *The Masked Singer* are showing broadcasters their viewers are more open and less culturally ring-fenced than they'd imagined. The challenge for Korean developers is to prevent their USP of quirky, out of the box ideas becoming the norm. With their emphasis on celebrity and humanity at their heart, Dong says there are more hits to come from Korea.

"They have a lot up their sleeves. In the last 10 years, I know how many good formats they've got. They have a good stock to adapt now that the world is finally taking notice." **TBI**



# Formats Hot Picks

The formats that caught our eye this month



## Small Town. Big Love

**Distributor:** Fremantle

**Producer:** Blu

**Broadcaster:** TV2 Denmark

**Logline:** A group of lovesick men try to persuade city-dwelling ladies to give up urban glitz for small-town charm

In a certain rural area of Denmark, eligible young men have run into a problem – 70% of the women have left home

and moved into the big city and those bachelors left behind are struggling to find the right girl. “The show bridges the gap

between city and country folk, bringing romance and emotion to this new spin on a dating show,” Rob Clark, director of global entertainment at Fremantle, tells TBI.

“We have had huge success with our format *Farmer Wants A Wife* all around the world, and through casting that show we saw another opportunity to help people who live in small towns also find love.

“The show was created in Denmark, where many women move to the big cities like Copenhagen and leave the men behind in the smaller towns,” Clark explains. “So, we play Cupid and bring a group of 20 stylish, single girls to the hometowns of these young, successful men who have good careers, nice homes and cars, but they’re missing the one thing that money can’t buy – love.”

The show begins with a group date and a speed date and while the men are friends, they may also be competitors if they are interested in the same woman. Each man chooses four women and eliminates them until only one is left. If two men are interested in the same woman, it is up to the woman to choose the man she likes the most.

“What’s really different about it, is that both the men and the women are competing,” says Clark. “It’s not one person picking between a group of suitors, everyone is competing against each other to find love. It’s an authentic and life-changing show, they are looking for real love – with the women willing to swap urban glitz and glamour for small-town comforts if they meet the man of their dreams.”

## Sing Or Spin

**Distributor:** Endemol Shine

**Producer:** Endemol Shine

**Broadcaster:** Hunan TV (China)

**Logline:** Singing contest is given a unique spin – literally

First showcased at MIPCOM in October last year, this dizzying new music entertainment format is now being rolled out to buyers and pulls no punches in letting its contestants know exactly how they are scoring.

The hopefuls sing their hearts out on a unique spinning stage that lets them know whether their performance is managing to impress. Those singers who know how to hold a tune are rotated to the centre of the stage ready for the next round,

but those who sound more like a strangled cat are given a goodbye spin out of the door.

In the first round, the contestants have just 60 seconds to win the approval from at least half of a panel of celebrity judges, then they must gain the support of the studio audience. If they make it that far then the hosts will decide their ultimate fate.

The show has been developed as part of Hunan TV’s Biu Project – China’s first pilot production programme.

Lester Hu, head of format and international business at Hunan TV, says: “*Sing or Spin* is a milestone co-development which reinforces our strategy to partner with international content creators to bring original Chinese TV formats to

the global market.

“As we continue our hunt for fresh new format ideas that work in China and the rest of the world, it’s fantastic to launch our third primetime entertainment show developed through Biu Project.”



## 1 Year Off

**Distributor:** Lineup Industries

**Producer:** Roses Are Blue

**Broadcaster:** VRT1 (Belgium)

**Logline:** Contestants battle one another and their own assumptions to win a cash prize

Not so much a brand new format as a returning idea for contemporary audiences, this show plays on our prejudices and assumptions. It has been almost two decades since the quizzier first aired and after a successful run spanning 2001-2007, it has now been revitalised for a second go.

The premise sees 16 players compete over 13 episodes, with one eliminated each week. For each question, the three lowest ranking contestants take to the podiums to answer while the rest try to correctly predict who will get the answer right. If the player answers correctly, their points are divided by all those fellow contestants who selected them.

The finale of is played by the final four candidates who have the most points. Only then is the prize money revealed – the annual income of the highest earning contestant.

“The basic core of this show is, of course, a quiz, but with the unique [features] that bring in elements of social experiment programmes,” says Ed Louwerse, co-founder of format distributor Lineup Industries. “As a viewer or as a contestant, our prejudices are constantly being challenged in

a fun and engaging quiz. Will the hairdresser know anything about the last team to win the World Cup? Is the pilot really the richest person playing this game?”

The relaunched series has already proven popular – when the first episode aired on VRT1 earlier in March, it took almost 40% of the audience share.

“When you bring back a show it’s because fundamentally the game hasn’t aged,” says Louwerse. “In *1 Year Off*, the game structure works and the other key element is the casting. Get the casting right and game structure looks after the rest.”

He explains: “Most formats that have been successful the second time around have not needed any kind of significant update. One has to resist the urge to add an awkward social media element for the sake of it. They work because fundamentally they are entertaining and trigger emotions in people, plus there is an element of nostalgia for the older viewers.

“In *1 Year Off* there have really just been cosmetic changes, it’s faster, visually a lot richer and more colourful, but in its core very much the same game.”



## Legacy List

**Distributor:** DRG

**Producer:** MY Entertainment

**Broadcaster:** PBS (US)

**Logline:** Revealing the unique personal stories uncovered as people leave behind their family homes

Moving out of a family home can be an incredibly emotional experience; as each room is decluttered and every box filled up with a lifetime of belongings, decades of personal history can be unearthed.

*Legacy List* seeks to learn the stories behind these memories. In each episode, a host – *Hoarders*’ Matt Paxton in the PBS version – and their team visit the home of a person aged over 50 as they prepare to move and scour the home for family memorabilia.

“The process [of moving] may be time-consuming, sometimes even sad, but the upside is that the downsizer and their family are forced to go through their memory bank – and that can be fascinating,” Elin Thomas, EVP of sales at DRG, tells TBI.

“Every belonging holds a cherished memory, borne of a lifetime of experiences – and perhaps the lifetimes of generations before. Some items are sentimental, some have historical value, some tell an

incredible story.”

What sets this series apart from others is that these downsizers are not looking to sell their possessions – even if a few unexpectedly valuable trinkets are unearthed during the move. Instead, the show focuses on the memories that the items bring back and the uniquely personal stories that these homeowners and their children can share.

Thomas adds that the series should hold global appeal as “downsizing is universal” once the children have flown the nest.

“This show would appeal to wide-range of broadcasters, especially for daytime and early primetime slots looking for warm-hearted content,” says Thomas. “With its unique mix of relatable personal stories, set against a backdrop of social history, *Legacy List* ticks many boxes, especially at the present time. We would expect most immediate interest to come from Europe and Australia/New Zealand in particular.”







## Copycatting true crime

Are true crime shows fuelling their own fame-hungry criminals? Tim Dams explores whether the genre's popularity is in fact creating a problem of its own making

**T**he true crime genre has enjoyed a well-documented surge in popularity over recent years. In particular, streamers like Netflix have enjoyed huge success with cinematic, box set series such as *The Staircase*, *Making A Murderer*, *Evil Genius* and *Conversations With A Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*.

Many took inspiration from 2014's acclaimed podcast *Serial* – experimenting with the genre's traditional closed episode structure to produce smart, long-form true crime that could be devoured like a box set, keeping subscribers hooked in.

However, a background sense of disquiet has always accompanied such shows. This has come out into the open much more in recent months following the December launch of Netflix's *Don't F\*\*k With Cats*, with a surge of commentary in the media about true crime docs

– and whether they might in fact be driving fame-hungry criminals.

The three-part *Cats* tells the story of the hunt for one of Canada's most infamous killers, Luka Magnotta, who courted internet infamy by circulating videos of himself killing kittens, and then murdering and dismembering a Chinese student. Soon after launching, *Cats* was listed as one of Netflix's Top 5 most-watched documentaries.

In a largely positive review of the series, UK newspaper *The Guardian* echoed this sense of simmering concern: "It still makes me deeply uneasy that a man who committed an awful crime purely to gain notoriety has now been dragged out of obscurity to be celebrated in a buzzy Netflix show," said reviewer Stuart Heritage.

The director of the series, Mark Lewis, himself acknowledges such concerns. In a YouTube video to accompany *Cats*, Lewis argues that

(Opposite, l-r) *Nurses Who Kill*, *British Police: Our Toughest Cases* and *Inside The Mind Of A Serial Killer* are all popular examples of the true crime genre – but filmmakers seem divided over whether such shows inspire copycats

the series is not so much about Magnotta but about the internet sleuths who track him down, as well as internet culture. Nevertheless, he adds: “I think in the case of Luka Magnotta, we are all in some ways complicit in creating the monster a bit.”

Indeed, the whole subject of whether killers are inspired by the media can be something of a grey area, notes Kate Beal, CEO of producer Woodcut Media, whose credits include *World’s Most Evil Killers*, *The Killers in My Family* and *Jo Frost on Britain’s Killer Kids*.

She points out that there is a long history of narcissistic killers, such as Jack the Ripper and the Son of Sam, courting the media for coverage – but notes that many happened before the surge in popularity of true crime programmes. “There is always a type of killer who is doing it for the notoriety, or just to be special.”

However, Beal says social media could be having an impact, and points to studies being undertaken on the issue. “It could be argued that the narcissism of social media and the whole selfie culture does play into new, different types of killers. I don’t necessarily attribute it to the true crime explosion on TV, but to a wider cultural shift – a shift on to one’s self by social media.”

Will Hanrahan, the founder and creative director of FirstLook TV, whose credits include *Nurses Who Kill* and *A Killer’s Mistake*, says video games may spark copycats, but not TV shows. “The number of cases we come across where the perpetrators have been inspired by violent video games is more than I can think of.”

His point is echoed by Alexandra Böhm, head of international co-production at German producer Autentic, who is developing a true crime series on the psychology of con artists. Asked if true crime TV can inspire crime, she replies: “I already know this discussion from the gaming industry and I think the debate is of course legitimate but not easy to answer.”

Böhm says that filmmakers can only be aware of the responsibility that comes with any true crime production. “Producers and filmmakers must always be aware of the possibility of copycats and should therefore stick to the facts and above all not glorify violence.”

In fact, talk to producers and distributors of such programming and all will point to the huge levels of demand for the genre – and will reject accusations that the shows risk spawning copycat killers.

If anything, argue producers, true crime shows act as a deterrent. “Why do we do this – is it that true crime TV pays, so we choose to work in this genre?” says Hanrahan. “We regularly have crisis meetings where we discuss why we are doing this. And the answer consistently comes back – because justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done.” This is particularly so at a time when few criminal cases are covered by the cash-strapped news media, he adds.

It is why viewers watch true crime shows, argues Hanrahan: because they want to see justice being carried out, and because ultimately it makes them feel safer and better about life. “I sincerely believe that it prevents rather than causes crime.”

He says that a show like *Cats* is much more likely to act as a deterrent. The unspoken rule of true crime shows, he adds, is that the bad guy always has to be caught. Indeed, channels like Investigation Discovery, Crime & Investigation and Sky Crime tend to want programmes where the crimes are solved.

True crime also attracts viewers “because evil fascinates us,” says Böhm. Viewers not only want to find out what drove a killer to commit a crime, they also “serve our human lust for thrill and they have a certain amount of voyeurism in them. As a viewer, you can watch the series from the comfort of your own home. From there, you are able to expose yourself to the horror and the collapse of our moral order in a well dosed manner.”

Notably, women tend to be the most avid viewers of these shows. “I always call true crime TV ‘specialist factual for women,’” says Beal, who says that it taps into female interest in psychology, criminology, sociology and culture. True crime, she adds, can ask

fundamental questions about humanity – whether people are born, or become, evil.

Nicky Davies Williams, CEO of DCD Rights, which distributes shows such as *The Lady Killers*, echoes this point. “Women are the key audience with true crime, and I think the motivation for women viewing tends to be more defensive than aggressive – it really speaks to a defensive emotion of ‘I don’t want to be there, so I want to see what it looks like.’”

Davies Williams adds that in the UK true crime production has to adhere to strict guidelines from regulator Ofcom, which says programme-makers and broadcasters should always consider the impact on those involved such as victims or their relatives.

Ofcom, for example, says those whose experience is to feature in a true crime show, or their family, should normally be informed of the plans to make a programme.

Given this, Davies Williams says it is key for a distributor like DCD to work with experienced producers on true crime shows.

Indeed, producers say that making true crime TV is arguably more challenging than any other genre. “It is the most complex area of factual to do properly,” says Hanrahan. “If you are considering as a company getting into true crime, good luck – it is a compliance and litigation nightmare.”

Beal says that, in every case, the responsibility is to the family of the victim. Woodcut will always contact them before making a show. “In some cases the reaction is heartbreaking, so sometimes you just say it’s only TV, this is not worth it. There are moments you pull away.”

She also says that true crime’s dark subject matter can impact production teams. Beal stresses the importance of execs having monthly catch ups with every single person working on such shows. “It’s just to say, Are you ok?’ We have had moments where we have taken people off a crime show, to go into development or to work on a history show. And that’s fine – there is a route out if they want it.”

Hanrahan echoes this point. Over a 30-year career in TV, he has worked across multiple genres – from current affairs through to factual entertainment, sitcom and entertainment. “Working in true crime TV is the hardest job I have ever done.” **TBI**

### “Working in true crime TV is the hardest job I have ever done”

Will Hanrahan,  
FirstLook TV





# Factual Hot Picks

The best factual one-offs and series hitting screens now

## Costa Rica: The Rise Of Nature

**Distributor:** Off The Fence

**Producer:** Bamboo Doc/Arte

**Broadcaster:** Arte (France)

**Tagline:** Uncovering the incredible treasures of a beautiful landscape

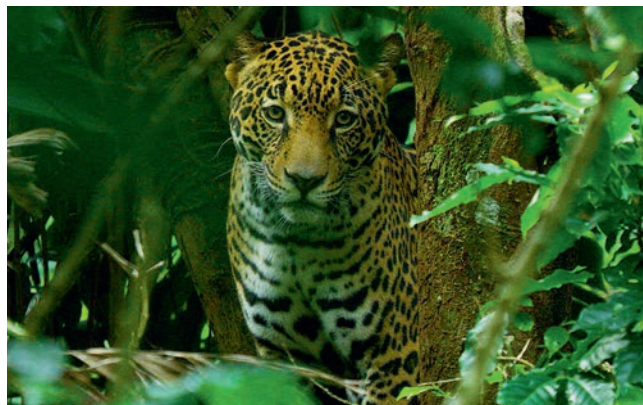
One for the natural history lovers, this three-parter explores Costa Rica, which offers a range of ecosystems – from dry forests and volcanoes to rainforests and marine parks, all abundant in fauna and flora. They also provide a sanctuary to more than 5% of the world’s biodiversity, thanks to an innovative and proactive ecological policy that makes it one of the few countries in the world to have seen year-on-year growth in forest cover.

And despite countless challenges, this small Central

American country has become a world reference in environmental protection and the fight against global warming.

The 3 x 60-minute series, produced by Bamboo Doc and Arte, takes viewers on a journey into the heart of this unique landscape and follows the efforts undertaken by scientists and citizens to preserve and restore this valuable natural heritage.

Cameras reveal the secrets of the dry forest, which once covered the entire Pacific coast of Central America, but now only



exists as isolated “vestiges” and is being revived and expanded in Costa Rica.

Viewers will also enter the Corcovado National Park, once described as “the most biodiverse site on the planet” and follow researchers and conservationists

through the “green corridors” in search of key species.

The series also looks at its amazing marine ecosystem where humpback whales converge to give birth and the highest concentration of hammerhead sharks on the planet call home.

## Tony Robinson’s VE Day: Minute By Minute

**Distributor:** TVF International

**Producer:** Woodcut Media

**Broadcaster:** Histoire TV

**Tagline:** Tony Robinson takes viewers back to the day the Second World War ended

This one will be of interest to acquisition execs looking for a show to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which falls this year. This 1 x 60-minute documentary, produced by Woodcut Media and distributed by TVF International, has already been presold to France’s Histoire TV and is scheduled to be broadcast on the anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) day, 8 May 1945, following the loss of almost 80 million lives.

It is presented by actor, comedian and history specialist Tony Robinson (*Time Team*) as he transports viewers back to

the celebrations and the colossal global changes of that time.

Visual effects will place the presenter into actual archive footage from VE Day, alongside eye-witness accounts and expert contributions that will help Robinson paint a picture of untold tales of that day – from revellers in the streets and soldiers taking their first steps out of the prisoner of war camps, to the surrender of Nazi divisions.

“Our documentary celebrates the jubilation felt by millions of people on VE Day and honours those who lost their lives during the Second World War,” says Robinson. “It explores the

fascinating accounts of historical figures and ordinary people who experienced that day and hopefully will give viewers a vivid insight into what the 8 May 1945 would have felt like as events unfolded.”

Victoria Noble, VP of original content, factual, at Discovery, describes the show as “a truly immersive commission that aims to give a new and moving

perspective, going beyond the traditional portrayal of such a historic and momentous day.”

Noble adds that the show uses “a carefully curated collection of stories gathered from across the globe” to give viewers “the opportunity to understand the lived, sensory experiences of the day and really appreciate the intensity of emotions felt by people in the UK and beyond.”





### Extinction Rebellion: The Inside Story

**Distributor:** Hat Trick International

**Producer:** Keo Films

**Broadcaster:** Channel 5 (UK)

**Tagline:** A month in the life of a climate change 'rebel'

The global scientific community is in near-unanimous agreement – human activity is the driving force behind a climate crisis. While the experts attempt to hammer home warnings, other groups, such as protest movement Extinction Rebellion, resort to civil disturbance in the hope of influencing world governments into taking action.

This behind-the-scenes documentary, produced by Keo Films for ViacomCBS-owned Channel 5, and distributed by Hat Trick International, follows the controversial climate change group as they attempt to stage their largest-ever protests.

“For most, there’s little doubt that climate change is one of the big challenges of our time. But there seems to be no real consensus on how radical we need to be in tackling it,” director Tom Beard tells TBI. “By being deep inside Extinction Rebellion as they attempted to pull off the largest act of civil disturbance the UK has ever seen, we wanted to explore how justified the movement’s tactics felt, and how important it was to take others along with them.”

The programme meets a cast of ‘rebels’ over the course of a month as they organise and strategise inside their UK headquarters and regional hubs around the country.

From blocking busy London streets and disrupting the workings of government to clogging up the judicial system by getting hundreds of people arrested, these ‘rebels’ will go to great lengths to draw attention to their cause.

“The level of organisation and thought being applied during the build-up to the rebellion took me completely by surprise,” says Beard. “It’s a far cry from newspaper headlines suggesting an impulsive, shambolic movement. At the national HQ in East London, the ‘rebels’ were acutely aware of the history of social movements and were busy applying every lesson they could to give their message maximum impact on the streets.”

“Climate change is a universal theme, so what this action group has done in the UK should appeal to international audiences,” adds Sarah Tong, director of sales for Hat Trick International.

### Steel Monsters

**Distributor:** Quintus Media

**Producer:** WeltN24

**Broadcaster:** WeltN24

**Tagline:** Getting to know big vehicles built for mammoth tasks

*Steel Monsters* has a pretty focused target demo, Gerrit Kemming, MD at Quintus Media, tells TBI. “It’s a show that is focusing purely on what has proved to be interesting for an international factual male audience: steel, size, astonishment. Very straightforward,” he explains.

This 4 x 60-minute show is from WeltN24 and definitely has those three attributes going for it, as viewers are introduced to some of the biggest, heaviest or deadliest machines ever developed and built for very specific “mega tasks”. From the Antonov An-225, the biggest cargo plane in the world, to the 13,000+ tons Colossus, the largest movable machine in the world, these are all machines seemingly built to impress.

Deciding which ‘monsters’ to feature was easy, says Kemming: “Machines needed to be exceptional, superlative and spectacular in various aspects. We always try to get an insight

into – and understand – what the audience is looking for and researching for episodes serves this goal.”

That’s not to say that the production was always so straightforward. “Producing in a military environment is always a challenge, as camera positions and the scope of the story is often highly limited. Coal mining on the other hand is a highly political topic. So, keeping the rules while still enforcing your story requires pure instinct.”

Kemming says that broadcaster interest in this type of show is on the rise internationally. “The fact that Quintus runs its own platform-agnostic documentary channel also helps, as we can match our discussions with broadcasters with the data from a worldwide audience. This kind of show resonates extremely positively for both – broadcasters and data – hence our focus on these types of factual shows.”





# Running the gauntlet

Helen Dugdale explores how streamers' demands for kids content – and the proliferating number of SVOD's – is affecting the deals available for producers

Since the SVOD's arrived on the scene over a decade ago, the TV industry has changed drastically, especially when it comes to securing a deal that suits both producer and platform. Conversations behind the camera suggest the strict rules that streamers used to demand are relaxing and programme makers are getting more of a say.

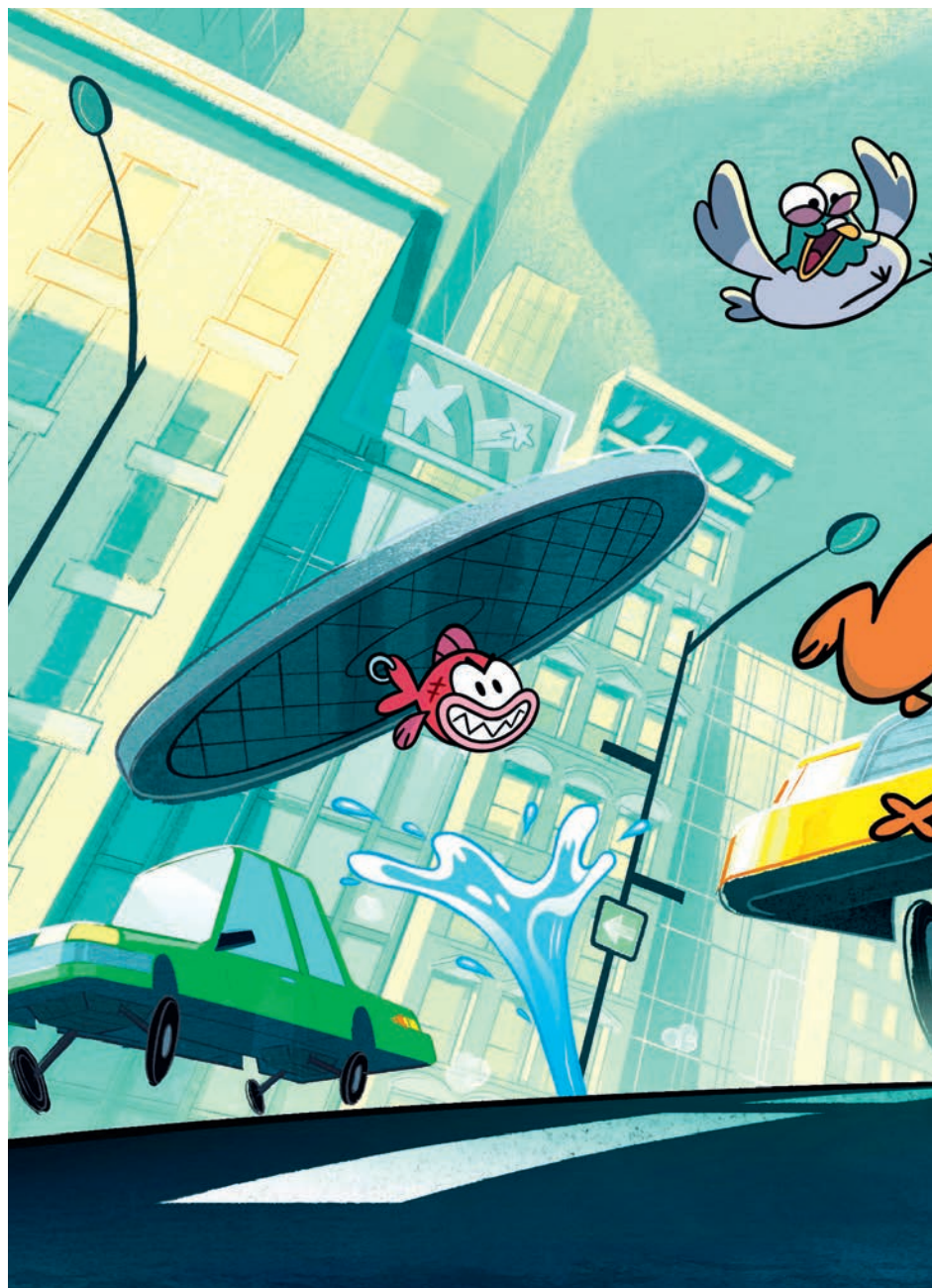
Monica Levy, head of sales at Federation Kids & Family, has found things are changing fast. "It seems 20 years ago things would change every few years," she says. "Now it feels like things change month-to-month. It's a healthy atmosphere with a lot of competition, which creates a need for programmes, for distributors and channels, which makes them all thrive."

For production companies with a large back catalogue of content, SVODs are well placed to breathe new life into old shows that can be once again appreciated by a new audience. Anna Moorefield, VP of global distribution for The Jim Henson Company, says streamers are "ideal" acquirors of its content, with plenty of emergent opportunities. "Our evergreen programming is in strong demand from fans seeking favourite titles to stream and new viewers looking for on-demand content they can trust," she says.

Morgann Favennec, EVP of global sales development at Xilam Animation, has also seen wider opportunities from streamers, including on the originals front. "We're currently in production on *Chip 'n' Dale*, which is set for global release as a Disney+ Original. We're developing it in collaboration with Disney's London-based animation team. Alongside this, we're also in production on our first CGI animated series, *OggyOggy*, with Netflix."

## Striking a deal in a world with 'no rules'

If you've got content waiting, the next step is to secure a deal. But what that arrangement looks like with an SVOD is as different for each production company as the programmes they create.



Levy at Federation Kids & Family, which has been behind shows such as teen drama *Find Me In Paris* for Hulu, holds fast to the belief that there are no rules when it comes to making deals with the streamers. "Before there were only SVOD exclusive deals and then linear deals. No one deal resembles the other. People are becoming more open to sharing and taking different rights that they wouldn't normally have shared – there are no rules.

"You can make it for worldwide and exclusive or non-exclusive and territory-by-territory. Netflix would take worldwide or nothing – now, that isn't the case."





Moorefield agrees. “It varies and there is no ‘one’ formula. Negotiating a deal with a global streaming platform that wants all rights, and a hold on further exploitation of them, can be complex. There are many opportunities for revenue share deals and while financial advances are wonderful to have, we’re now seeing a growing trend in the release of data and performance metrics that have proven invaluable in the SVOD space.”

In contrast, Paul Robinson, EVP of branded channels and strategic alliances at Toonz Media Group, reassures content makers that deals are put

*Xilam Animation is in production on Chip ‘n’ Dale, which is set for global release on Disney+*

together in much the same way as they have always been in pay and free TV. “The trick is to identify content that meets the need of the SVOD in terms of which segment of the kids’ audience – pre-school, bridge or tweens – the territories, and the languages. Library has a place, but brands and well-known creators are preferred,” he explains.

Mike Watts, co-founder and CEO of *Horrid Henry* prodco Novel Entertainment, says: “In our experience, linear platforms increasingly understand the importance of our relationship with our SVOD partners. We work closely to agree on



the windowing across linear and VOD so all of our partners are comfortable and we make value judgements in terms of the licence fees we agree for the different rights to reflect that.”

Caroline Tyre, SVP of international distribution and head of Genius Brands Network, shares another experience. “There are multiple options depending on how your show is financed. If you have a primary financing broadcaster, it’s easier to carve out and reserve some rights.

“Also, if you have a hit series on YouTube, backing it into an SVOD or multiple VOD platforms is becoming more common. This strategy gives you the ability to get your program on multiple devices before the rights are locked up by a major SVOD player. Granted, the licensee fee won’t be as big, but it depends on your needs in terms of number of eyeballs or largest fee.

“We’re getting feedback that broadcasters aren’t getting as scared off now by a hit show being on multiple platforms in their territory. They still find the show will be a top performer for them even if it’s on a few other platforms in their territory. They are starting to understand that they just need to have that hit show even if it’s shared,” she reveals.

### What to watch out for?

“The goal is to maximise eyeballs and revenue,” says Robinson, explaining what to look out for when signing a deal with an SVOD partner. “The former is vital to drive licensing and merchandising revenue because retailers and other partners will require this, and revenue is critical to ensure that

**“SVODs can offer greater creative and artistic freedom, along with the bigger budgets. However, this can come at the expense of potentially more limited visibility of your content”**

Morgann Favennec,  
Xilam Animation



*Horrid Henry* was produced by Novel Entertainment

you at minimum get back your investment and ideally make a margin on that investment.”

Favennec has found that the structure all depends on the nature of a deal. “If it’s a second or third window acquisition, SVODs are more flexible as they have to take the programme’s history into consideration,” she shares.

“For first window commitments, each term really counts – especially the length of exclusivity, the exact parameters of non-linear rights, and of course the fee. What remains crucial is to get some flexibility, as you need to secure catch-up and VOD rights for linear partners who follow. On the positive, SVODs can offer greater creative and artistic freedom, along with the bigger budgets. However, this can come at the expense of potentially more limited visibility of your content, depending on the algorithm of the individual platform, which can become an issue if you have licensing and merchandise plans.”

### How do SVOD’s view licensing and merchandising rights?

When it comes to securing a deal for licensing and merchandising that makes everyone happy, Levy believes that SVODs aren’t particularly focused on global rights and that it has more to do with exposure in different territories. “What is key for merchandising is that it has an enormous exposure for the kids. The essential part of being successful is the audience that it will have in that territory.”

Robinson has found the rights wanted by SVOD, when it comes to products and licensing, varies by market and operator. “If they want to push the show as an original it is likely that exclusive rights will be required, which might not be the preferred strategy for L&M but be highly attractive financially in terms of licence fee revenue. Deal durations vary but are typically two or three years, often with first right of renewal.”

Most SVOD deals are still non-exclusive, he adds, and “some operators will licence a brand or well-known title non-exclusively to ensure that they are not outgunned by competitors. Ultimately, the rights owner controls the rights and must use them to maximum value of the IP.”

This environment is creating a necessity to be nimble, something Favennec from Xilam Animation points out. “Overall, the rapidly evolving SVOD landscape means we need to adjust, change our mindsets and adopt new, flexible business strategies,” she says. “It is hard work but much more exciting.” **TBI**





# 100% WOLF

LEGEND OF THE MOONSTONE

26 x 22'

© Flying Bark Pty Ltd



65 x 22'  
2 SEASONS

© Studio 100 Animation / Heidi Productions™ Studio 100 www.studio100.com



104 x 23'  
4 SEASONS

© 2020 m4e GmbH Lizenz durch Studio 100





## Casting a spell

Kids TV producers have regularly used magic as a plot device, but shows such as Amazon's *Just Add Magic* have seen its frequency only increase. Helen Dugdale finds out why

**A**mazon Prime Video's *Just Add Magic*, based on tween novels by Cindy Callaghan, has caught the attention of the kids. And it seems the secret, addictive ingredient really is magic.

The show first appeared on screen back in 2016 and a new spin-off series *Just Add Magic: Mystery City* was released in late January.

The original series follows three best friends, Kelly, Barbie and Hannah, as they discover a magic cookery

book in an attic. Each episode revolves around the characters cooking up a magic recipe in order to help them solve a mystery.

"My daughter and two of her kooky friends were cooking and I had the inspiration for a cooking club," says creator and writer Callaghan, who worked closely with Amazon on the show. "Then, I thought about a 'secret cooking club.' Why is it secret? And then I became obsessed with the notion of 'Kelly Quinn's Secret Cooking Club.' Throughout the story, the girls



need to discover the origins of the mysterious book and learn about its authors,” she says.

Distributed globally by Sinking Ship, head of sales and distribution Kate Sanagan believes the show – and the power of magic in general – appeals because of its empowering qualities.

“Magic, in general, is always an incredible genre for six-to-12-year-olds,” she says. “It’s a time in their life when they often feel powerless, as grown-ups are always making decisions for them. *Just Add Magic* doesn’t talk down to kids. It takes the girls’ friendship and their relationship with the grandmother seriously.

“Kids have big lives and big feelings, so when they see magic on screen it allows those feelings to be reflected

back to them – especially when you see fantasy come to life. Magic also allows TV creators to get into those inner dialogues that kids have,” Sanagan adds.

### Putting the impossible on screen

In the age of user-generated content, TV shows with magic sitting at the core can stop young audiences (and their parents) in their tracks. But what is it about magic that people still love? For David Sauerwein, chief creative officer at APC Kids’ animation studio Zephyr Animation, magic offers the promise that we can all do great things.

“Magic is the stuff of dreams, it’s excitement itself. When kids identify to heroes who use magic, they connect with the idea that growing up will allow them to do things that seem impossible to them for the time being. Magic makes them realise that the impossible can be possible.”

Corinne Kouper is SVP of development & production and co-founder at TeamTO, which is producing one of the only animated series based on traditional magic, titled *Presto! School Of Magic*. The comedy features a band of talented and curious kids who dream of becoming magicians.

“Magic is at the centre of the show. Our characters are aspiring magicians who love the art above and beyond all else and are training with the world-renowned magician, Lorenzo,” explains Kouper.

“So, the audience gets to see the kids practising their magic skills, creating and performing new tricks on stage, and using those same talents every day to deal with life at Presto!

“It’s amazing how magic has caught on with all ages in the past 10 years. Magician shows get packed audiences around the world and are also one of the most viewed subjects on YouTube.”

Sarah Mottershead, senior sales manager for StudioCanal, believes that magic helps to develop kids’ imagination and creative thinking. “It breaks the barriers and offers children a world to explore without limitations. It opens a new world of imagination,” she says, adding that “viewers of any age enjoy the element of surprise and the unexpected.”

### Making rules in a magical world

Whether magic is used for comedic reasons or to tell a darker narrative, there needs to be boundaries and parameters of how characters interact, says Halle Stanford, president of TV and executive producer at The Jim Henson Company.

“During the creation of *The Dark Crystal* series, it was my role to be the magic rule maker. Once you’ve

### “Magic allows TV creators to get into those inner dialogues that kids have”

Kate Sanagan,  
Sinking Ship



*The Dark Crystal* fantasy series has a set of consistent magical “rules” for the show to follow, which are made clear to the audience





set up the rules, the magic feels true. The rules give the fans things to hang their hats on for each type of magic. All this is leading to the fact that we're trying to make it true and real within that particular story. You absolutely need logic behind the magic and with it you can make people believe the impossible is possible."

Sauerwein from Zephyr Animation echoes Stanford's thoughts on the need for strict guidelines when introducing magical abilities to programming. "I believe that magic needs to be organically woven into the narrative, and most importantly that the rules of magic must be clear for the audience. Without rules or boundaries, then the audience stops believing, and stops caring."

What's clear is that there's plenty more magic on its way to our screens in the coming months. The Sinking Ship team is currently in development with a show called *Making Friends*, which got a warm welcome at this year's Kidscreen. The tween show is being developed with publisher Scholastic and based on a graphic novel series of the same name by Kristen Gudsnuik.

"We're constantly asking how we make shows interesting and exciting, and which tell kids that their inner dialogue is worth listening to," says Sanagan. "*Making Friends* is about a girl who is lonely and draws herself a perfect friend and that friend comes to life."

The Jim Henson Company, meanwhile, is working on a variety of shows with different types of magic

*Minimoons* aims to give children a better understanding of the natural world around them

**"You absolutely need logic behind the magic and with it you can make people believe the impossible is possible"**

Halle Stanford,  
The Jim Henson  
Company



running through them, including historical magic. Stanford says one series to watch out for is based on a collection of young adult feminist fantasy books called *The Witchlands*, written by Susan Dennard.

"What attracted me to the books was that I'd never seen magic portrayed in such detail in such a cool, feminist way," she says. "It's a high fantasy universe and we're following two girls' friends in their late teens as they discover that they are the saviours of their world. One of them is a 'truth witch' and another is a 'thread witch', meaning she can see the threads between people. We're so excited to bring this project out to sell to the marketplace."

For Sauerwein, the focus is on a 3D CGI animated adventure that's in development, titled *Minimoons*. The series is a co-production between Zephyr and Supamonks, and is aimed at four to eight-year-olds. It centres around five creatures with magical powers that come from the moon down to Earth to help animals and plants that are suffering or in trouble.

Sauerwein describes the new series as a show that helps children to understand their place in the universe using magic. "*Minimoons* has a special approach to these magical powers in that they are based on our real senses. And they have a different purpose: to give a better understanding of the natural world around us and a better understanding of our place in the biosphere," he says, perhaps partly explaining magic's current place within the world of kids TV. **TBI**

# Cartoon Forum

14-17 September 2020

Occitanie / Pyrénées-Méditerranée

## The European co-production forum for **animated TV series**



- Over 980 animation professionals from 40 countries
- Incl. 270 broadcasters and investors
- Find co-producers, distributors and financing
- Project submission: **6 May**



 [www.cartoon-media.eu](http://www.cartoon-media.eu)





**HAT TRICK INTERNATIONAL**

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7184 7777  
**Web:** hattrickinternational.com  
**Contacts:** Sarah Tong, Director of Sales; Sarah Bickley, Senior Sales Executive; Elyn Morris, Senior Sales Executive; Jonathan South, Senior Sales Executive



**Bloodlands Episodes** 4x60' **Genre** Drama **Synopsis** From Exec Producer Jed Mercurio (*Line of Duty*), starring James Nesbitt (*The Missing*). A gripping thriller set in Northern Ireland. The hunt for justice in a cold case awakens ghosts of the past.



**Kate And Koji Episodes** 6x30' **Genre** Comedy Drama **Synopsis** Stars Brenda Blethyn (*Vera*) and Jimmy Akingbola (*In The Long Run*). Kate owns a seaside cafe and forms an unlikely friendship with an asylum-seeking doctor. From the writers of *Outnumbered*.



**Inside Missguided Episodes** 4x60' **Genre** Factual Entertainment **Synopsis** With exclusive behind-the-scenes access, this series explores the dizzying growth and frenzied expansion of Missguided, one of the UK's largest online fashion retailers.

**Hot Properties Q&A: Sarah Tong, Director of Sales, Hat Trick International**

**What makes *Bloodlands* stand out from the crowd?**

What sets it apart is that the hero's struggles mirror those that are faced by his country. Tom Brannick (James Nesbitt) must deal with memory and forgiveness, violence and consequence at a crucial moment in Northern Ireland's own story.

**How well does British comedy, such as *Kate & Koji*, do globally?**

It is very hard to predict where comedy will work, and which countries will find a particular show funny, or not. The British sense of humour isn't always popular abroad. . . However, we are confident that as *Kate & Koji* has universal themes and is a down-to-earth and genuinely amusing series for all the family, it is something that many viewers will be able to relate to and will find funny wherever or whoever they are! It also helps that it extremely well-written and features award-winning and popular talent that channels or platforms can plan their marketing around.

**What can viewers expect to learn about the fashion world from *Inside Missguided*?**

This series is an exploration of one of the UK's fastest growing and most profitable industries: fast fashion. Whilst there is an extraordinary story to be told in the success and future plans of Missguided, there is a cost beyond the price-tag. The company must address the way it operates globally, and how best to move forward in an everchanging and ever-ethical clothing industry. Missguided's headquarters is more like a millennial theme park than office space, and the party atmosphere is encouraged by Nitin. However, it's also the story of the working lives of young, ambitious women. The 300 strong workforce is 80% female, and the average age is 26. It's a business run for – and by – millennial women who play hard, but definitely work harder. Cameras capture the gossip, the fall outs and everyday challenges that come with launching 100 new products each week.



**Tel:** +331 40 74 76 76  
**Web:** lagardere-studiosdistribution.com  
**Contacts:** Emmanuelle Bouilhaguet, Managing Director; Catherine Couriat, Senior VP Sales; Julie Mateille, Sales Manager



**Commandos Episodes** 10x45' **Genre** Action thriller **Synopsis** Hunting down a mysterious killer, a former Special Forces officer enters a high-stakes game of deceit, betrayal and revenge.



**The Machinery Episodes** 8x45' **Genre** Action thriller **Synopsis** This action-packed thriller is one man's quest for the truth after waking up in a ferry with a bagful of money, a gun—and no idea how he got there.



**Merli: Sapere Aude Episodes** 8x50' **Genre** Teen drama **Synopsis** *Merli: Sapere Aude* follows Merli's favorite student Pol, now at college studying philosophy, in a personal (and sexual) coming-of-age as he discovers his true self.

**Hot Properties Q&A: Emmanuelle Bouilhaguet, Managing Director at Lagardere Studios Distribution**

**How do you make a show like *Commandos* stand out among so many high-quality action dramas on the market?**

Until now, we focused on high-concept shows like *Ad Vitam* and *Beau Séjour* or mainstream series like *Philharmonia* and *Arctic Circle*. As a distributor, our strength is to offer a diversity of genres to a variety of clients. We wanted to target more male-skewed broadcasters and platforms, so *Commandos* was the perfect fit. NPO3 is targeting younger audiences which is an asset for us. And, of course, we have the three key elements: action/emotion/thriller.

**How do you explain the enduring appeal of the "man on the run" genre, which includes shows like *The Machinery*?**

The fugitive concept is a winner. You have an innocent man in a bad situation, but is he really innocent? Our hero is surrounded by three women: his loving wife, a tough cop and a woman from his past. Add a few secrets and you have a recipe for success!

**How did you go about reinventing the Merli formula for this spinoff show *Merli: Sapere Aude*?**

The Catalan series was a smash hit on TV3 and a huge success internationally, through platform sales and ongoing remakes. The spin-off follows two young characters from the original series but in a way it's a new series, younger-skewed for sure. It's produced for Movistar +, which has a different DNA than TV3, and even if we handle both series as a franchise, we're targeting different clients and audiences.



**Tel:** +44 20 3970 5577  
**Web:** tcbmediarights.com  
**Contact:** Federica Rossi, Senior Sales Executive, TCB Media Rights



**Henry VIII: Man, Monarch, Monster**  
**Episodes** 3X60' **Genre** History **Synopsis**  
 This series reveals Henry VIII like never before, bringing together a team of renowned Tudor experts to investigate the real man behind the myth.



**Lawyer X Episodes** 2x60' **Genre** Crime and Investigation **Synopsis** Revealing how a barrister from one of Victoria's most respected families became a double-agent and police informer, handing over secret information on her high-profile gangster clients.



**Bondi Rescue S14 Episodes** 10x30'  
**Genre** Reality and Entertainment **Synopsis** These lifeguards look after up to 40,000 people and carry out over 100 rescues each day, dealing with emergencies from non-swimmers to drug addicts to sharks!

### Hot Properties Q&A: Federica Rossi, Senior Sales Executive, TCB Media Rights

**The story of Henry VIII is pretty well-known, what does *Henry VIII: Man, Monarch, Monster* offer viewers who might already be familiar with his tale?**

*Henry VIII: Man, Monarch, Monster* will show viewers Henry like he's never been seen before, bringing together a team of renowned Tudor experts to investigate the real man behind the myth. Delving deep into the historical records to unearth documents – this series gets to grips with Henry's psychology and explores the ways in which his personality fundamentally shaped England as a nation.

**What sets *Lawyer X* apart from other dramas of this type?**

This story proves that sometimes truth is stranger than fiction! A once brilliant barrister turns double agent, informing on the gangster clients she swore to defend. In playing both sides of the criminal system, Nicola Gobbo builds strong

and even intimate personal relationships with them. She puts not only her own but others' lives at risk, making her story truly dramatic and unique.

**How do you keep *Bondi Rescue* fresh as it now enters its 14th season?**

Bondi beach provides an exotic backdrop where high drama happens daily and there are always new cases keeping the series fresh and current. The lifeguards' humour teamed with their lifesaving skills continues to charm beachgoers and viewers alike. These real-life heroes do so much more than saving swimmers from the surf *Baywatch* style: they deal with sharks, break up fights, make drug busts, treat heart attacks and even handled a navy bomb that washed ashore one afternoon.



**Tel:** +0043-1-87003  
**Web:** terramater.at



**Lake Balaton – Europe's hidden Paradise**  
**Episodes** 1x50' **Genre** Nature **Synopsis**  
 There are few places left unexplored in the world, let alone in Europe. Welcome to a hidden paradise, Lake Balaton, the largest body of freshwater in Central Europe!



**Born in the Rockies**  
**Episodes** 1x50' **Genre** Nature **Synopsis**  
 We follow the lives of three courageous animal families as they struggle to survive in one of the most challenging habitats on Earth – North America's Rocky Mountains.



**Nature's Networks**  
**Episodes** 1x50' **Genre** Nature **Synopsis**  
 It is considered essential, invaluable and worthy of our protection, and yet its impact continues to be underestimated: biodiversity. But what does it actually mean?

### Hot Properties Q&A: Sabine Holzer, Head of Specialist Factual, Terra Mater

**What can you tell us about *Lake Balaton – Europe's Hidden Paradise*?**

There are few places left unexplored in the world, let alone in Europe. Welcome to a hidden paradise, Lake Balaton, the largest body of freshwater in Central Europe! In and around the shores, fields, forests and shallow bays of Lake Balaton, a huge variety of animals survive. Most of them are specialists, many are rare, and some have extraordinary behaviour!

**What are the challenges of producing a show like *Born in the Rockies* in such an inhospitable environment with unpredictable animal 'stars'?**

Filming in many natural environments, let alone the Rocky Mountains, can prove difficult, as we all know. Unpredictable weather conditions, while trying to film wild animals undetected and without influencing their behaviour? It's a challenge for the best. We follow the lives of a herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and their new-born lambs; a mother grizzly bear

and her cubs; and a wild mare and her foal, and we'll find out how legends in the Rockies are truly made!

**Do you think the environmental message of *Nature's Network* holds global appeal?**

2020 is a super year for nature and biodiversity alike. Considering the global decline of species, it's time to shine a light on what biodiversity even means – and why we urgently need it, and need to preserve it!





## Last Word Bethan Corney

# Why virtual meetings can provide unexpected benefits

**“Video meetings are a far cry from the 15-20 half-hour meetings in a day at the market, where one catalogue may blur into another for buyers”**

**A** few weeks before MIPTV 2020 was officially cancelled, Silverlining decided to line up video meetings as an alternative to the market. These have taught us a thing or two about the challenges and advantages of this new way of working.

### Find your platform and get your buyers at ease

Whilst the go-to might be Skype, and there are a multitude of video conferencing services offering very professional options, you need to find the right one for you and your business. Silverlining is utilising a platform that allows us to share our digital catalogue with channels in real time as we flip through it, just as we would at a market, with our buyers displayed in webcams alongside. It would be useful to be able to show video clips within the platform as a next step but this works for now and buyers have loved it. We've made sure to hold their hands through the very simple mechanics of the platform, which requires no sign ups or downloads – just a web browser, a web cam and a microphone – one click of a video link and we are all connected.

### Provide (even more) exceptional client service

The digital interface means you can do live note-taking and immediate follow-up that a market simply doesn't allow. All clients have received an email within an hour of the call with any documents or video material they may have requested in order to help their acquisition decisions along. You literally have all your resources at your fingertips, from screeners and treatments to contracts and agreements, so there is no need for a lag in helping a decision along.

### Be flexible where you can

Being prepared is everything, but embrace the ability to tailor on the hop. Having a digital catalogue, which we emailed to buyers beforehand to preview, means

they were already well prepared for our pitch. It was, however, great to be able to surprise them with a new idea for a documentary special on the Coronavirus and test out whether it would be of interest.

### Relax

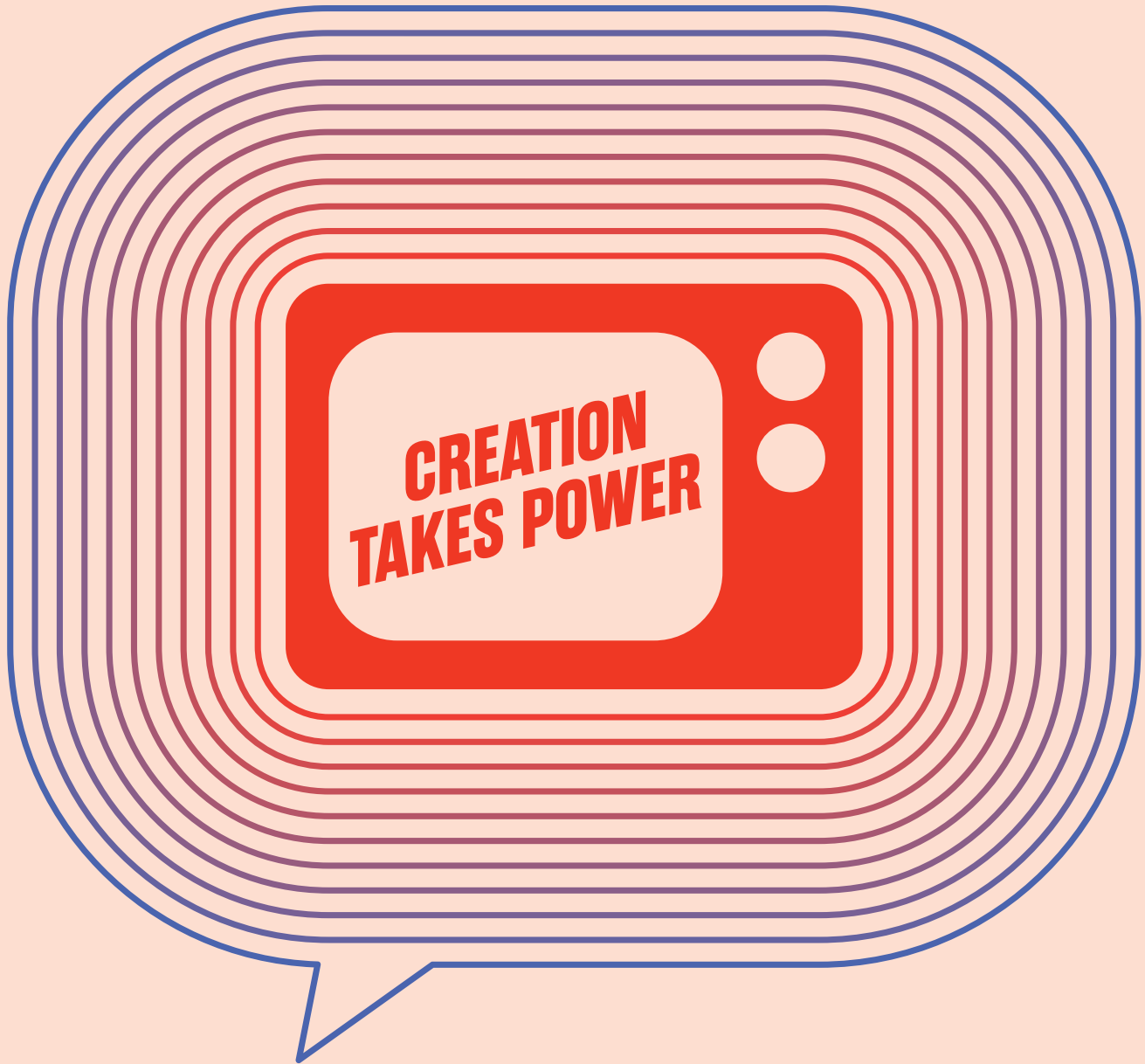
Video meetings are more relaxed and frequently more rewarding. In the middle of chatting about Surrogate Diaries, a refreshing and contemporary look at the fascinating world of surrogacy (3 x 60' from Sundog Pictures), our buyer's son walked in with a cup of coffee for her while they self-isolate at home. It's a far cry from 15-20 half-hour meetings in a day at the market, where one catalogue may blur into another for buyers. Here, there is less fatigue. The sales team are less pressured to cram a snapshot of the new slate into a rushed catch-up – instead, you have time to take in buyer feedback, which has, by and large, been clearer and more frank amidst less distraction and pressure.

### Time saved is invaluable

Whilst discussions are more relaxed, the ability to tailor your pitch on the spot means you are actually able to have a more concise and efficient meeting, leaving time in between calls to input all feedback into our internal databases and complete all necessary feedback before the next meeting begins. In fact, because our platform has no limit to the number of people who can join the meeting, we were able to do these inputs during the meeting itself, saving further time. This is in sharp contrast to the hectic period after a market processing and actioning meeting notes.

Whilst feedback from our buyers has been excellent, our video meetings have not been without their challenges. As more people are urged to work from home, the strain on the technology may start to show, as it did with us just this morning when our platform suffered a crash. We imagine there will be new offerings in the wake of this crisis that will take video conferencing to the next level and we're looking forward to being on the sharp edge of that when it's available. **TBI**

Bethan Corney is MD, co-production broker and head of originals at UK-based distributor and financier Silverlining



# SÉRIE SERIES

THE EUROPEAN SERIES SUMMIT  
FONTAINEBLEAU · ÎLE-DE-FRANCE

SEASON 9

30 JUNE

> 2 JULY

2020



TERRA MATTER



**BORN IN THE ROCKIES** 1x50 min.



**LAKE BALATON EUROPE'S HIDDEN PARADISE** 1x50 min.



**NATURE'S NETWORKS** 1x50 min.



[www.terramater.com](http://www.terramater.com)  
#terramatters



**TERRA MATER**  
Factual Studios