

TBI Television Business International

UK Screenings

Life after Netflix
Long-tail rights 6

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Travel under lockdown 14

RFDS

ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

8 x 1 HOUR



BEYOND OUR EARTH

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BIG BEN: SAVING THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CLOCK

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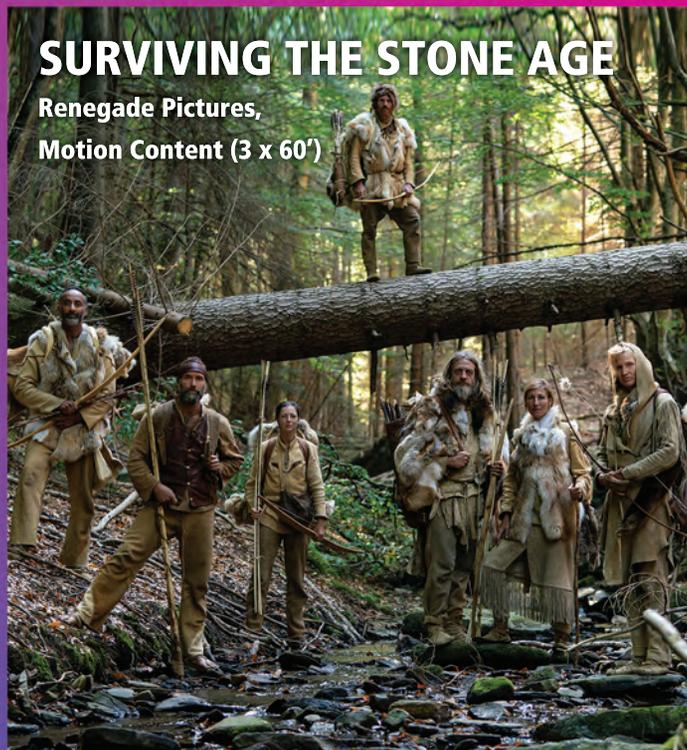
CHEF VS CORNER SHOP

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SURVIVING THE STONE AGE

Renegade Pictures,
Motion Content (3 x 60')



UK Screenings issue February/March 2021

Editor's note

It has been a 12-months to remember – or perhaps, forget – since the last iteration of TBI's UK Screenings magazine in February 2020. Back then, hundreds of buyers were packed into planes heading into the UK from around the world – a concept that now seems as otherworldly as it did then feel perfectly normal. That desire to travel, to explore and to experience other cultures and meet new people is a backbone of the global content business, but it is also a booming programming trend as viewers find themselves limited to their own particular patch of earth. Travelogues have arguably never been as popular as audiences seek escapism, something which we explore in this issue. And as UK-based distributors prepare their virtual shopfronts for London Screenings and BBC Studios Showcase, we delve into rights – diving into how format creators can best-protect their IP and unpacking the increasing allure of the second window. Happy selling.



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Well-being Tracy Forsyth

How to be charming

Former BBC Studios exec and corporate wellness coach Tracy Forsyth shares tips for how to turn on the charm

They say opposites attract. In my case, it was certainly the case. When I was in my late 20s, I met my now husband and, in many ways, we were as different as could be. He was gregarious, great fun in any crowd and a real people person. I was reserved, fiercely independent and, some would say, abrupt. If I didn't like someone or wasn't interested, I just wouldn't bother; if I didn't like a party, I'd just leave.

One thing I'd marvel at was my husband's ability to meet anybody, no matter how difficult or irritating, and win them over.

It was almost like a challenge for him. If he met someone who was opinionated, pig-headed and even objectionable, something would kick in and, in the matter of 30 minutes, that person would be laughing, joking and acting as if they and my husband would be bosom buddies for the rest of their lives. How did he do it?

Well, over the years, this is what I've learned.

Be charmed to charm

"Charming people are charmed." I don't know where I first heard this expression or who said it, but I've thought about it a lot and I really believe it. If you want people to find you charming the thing you need to do is find them charming first. People are charmed by others who find them interesting.

When you meet someone, find some reason to be genuinely delighted to be with them. This could be anything from finally getting to meet them because of their professional reputation, to sharing a passion or just loving the colour of their shoes. Anything. Just find some way to connect in a positive way.

Think about others

If you are at a networking event, look after them as if you really care. If they are on the periphery,

welcome them into the circle, if they are looking a bit lost then save them by speaking to them. Be the one to think of their needs, rather than the other way around.

Truly listen

Be an active listener. This doesn't mean nodding your head furiously at everything they say and agreeing with it all. It means really listening and playing back your interpretation of what they are saying, underlining their point and saying what you find interesting about it. We all love to be really heard and feel understood.

Play detective

Ask questions. Back in the early days of us dating, my husband used to say I was like a detective at parties, because I'd meet someone and then spend an hour grilling them about their life. I was just really curious, and they never seemed to mind. They were actually really flattered and loved talking about themselves and the things that mattered to them. I still ask questions now because I'm still intensely curious and people still love it!

Share praise

Don't go empty-handed. Everyone loves presents of some kind, even if they are not monetary. Be generous with compliments or praise. Whatever comes up in the conversation, find a way to articulate something positive about them — a quality they've shown, an achievement they've talked about.

Don't be squeamish about praise, it is always welcome. Try to give people a reason to feel good about themselves and they are likely to feel good about you too. **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



Diversity Deborah Williams

Taking a holistic approach

The Creative Diversity Network's executive director Deborah Williams reflects on how Covid is affecting diversity and inclusivity across the industry

Last year ended in a way that few anticipated or hoped for. Going into another open-ended lockdown here in the UK – at a time when the industry was hoping to continue opening up – was shocking and felt like a deep blow.

In my view, the fallout from this was diversity – in some sections of our industry – becoming even more of an afterthought than has been apparent through our Diamond annual reports, the latest of which we released last month. We had been spending nine months trying to make sure it stayed on people's agendas, and that it was embedded strategically in everyone's working practices, rather than just as a knee-jerk reaction to Black Lives Matter or the latest conversations around gender – whether that was disparity and pay gaps or the changing of identities.

The public debate around the way that under-represented groups had been impacted during Covid became a real media issue, highlighting inequalities that have been embedded for centuries. Some people in the industry were realising this for the first time, which was useful. Those of us that work in this space on a day-to-day basis are aware that these inequalities have always been hidden in plain sight – either ignored or unseen.

That sense of togetherness from last year came, to a large extent, from people who don't work in this area or who struggle with the idea of diversity as a business imperative. So what I am about to say will take some adjusting to: there needs to be a different way of approaching diversity. I'm going to call it taking a holistic approach, and it will be my mission for the year in my role as leader of the Creative Diversity Network (CDN).

This holistic approach involves developing a model that includes as many voices as possible, as many characteristics, and as much understanding of diversity as possible. We need to think about the economic impact of Covid on our freelancers and entire supply chains. Not just in theoretical or academic terms such as socio-economic status or how people identify with different groups, but what it actually means in the real world: for example, the ability to choose to travel

from one part of the country – or world – to another in order to work.

Using Diamond, we already publish the most accurate reflection of any workforce in the world, but we can look harder and see more. Last month we published Diamond: The 4th Cut, which again held a mirror up to the industry, showing that in amongst the gains, the commitments and the general atmosphere of forward momentum, there is back sliding, and worse, there are areas of complete inertia.

For me, it's about choice. If some people, because of their background or characteristics, can't choose how they work, where they work and when they work, then we do not have an inclusive industry.

We continue working from home, with different work patterns becoming more acceptable and still creating, producing and delivering great TV content – some of which will no doubt be on show to international buyers at this month's London Screenings. This demonstrates that there is an opportunity to use these new ways of working to increase choice and therefore build inclusivity and diversity in the industry. We can see that the artificial barriers to working which in the past have led to people being rejected because of a location or access requirements can be removed, if we want them to be.

For CDN, keeping diversity on the agenda means keeping it on the agenda at every development session, every pitching meeting, every commissioning meeting and every casting and crewing up decision. And every festival or awards celebrating the best of our industry. On that last point, as we enter this year's cycle of awards, I was pleased to see more recognition of female writers and directors at the Golden Globes nominations, but it was very monocultural. I'm intrigued to see what the other awards do and if the Globes are going with or against the tide.

Fundamentally, this year needs to be about turning up the speed dial on the treadmill. We need to keep up the pressure on ourselves and each other to ensure that we are accountable, removing any ambiguity about diversity being critical to the future of our industry. **TBI**

Deborah is executive director at the UK's Creative Diversity Network and has worked in arts, culture and the creative industries for more than three decades



Life after Netflix

Streamer competition is rife and demand for exclusivity is huge – but what happens once SVODs first window comes to an end? Richard Middleton explores the potential of long-tail rights and their impact on production

One of the emergent trends of the past 12 months – if not longer – has been the ability of global streamers to snag success with veteran shows.

From *The Sopranos* to *Friends*, premium IP has always had long-tail value, but the SVODs in particular have been able to derive success from this in new ways. Yet it happens in reverse too.

BBC One in the UK debuted World Productions' *Bodyguard* in 2018 as part of a deal that saw Netflix taking global rights elsewhere, excluding Ireland and China. The agreement, struck via ITV Studios, raised eyebrows – then largely fell away from view.

Fast-forward to last summer and the streamer's licence period had ended – meaning ITVS could return to the fray.

From Seven Network in Australia to CJE&M in South Korea, countless broadcasters made their moves, as did France 2, which saw the show attract an average audience of 4.2 million. There might be more than 200 million people around the world who subscribe and watch Netflix, but there are billions of others who do not.

L-R: *Bodyguard*, *Marcella*, *Narcos* and *Bosch* have all sold well on second window

"*Bodyguard* has definitely been one of the standout successes for us in terms of maximising the longtail value of our IP, post the Netflix window," says Greg Johnson, EVP EMEA & Americas sales & distribution at ITV Studios. He says its success in France "goes some way to prove that a series that has already enjoyed great popularity on Netflix can also work on other platforms to drive complementary or alternative audiences."

Flex & shift

It is perhaps worth setting the scene here, because since the pandemic and the launch of numerous US studio streamers, cut-through content has been at increasing premiums. HBO Max has been notably active in the international scripted acquisition space, but others such as Apple TV+ have also made moves, such as taking Israeli espionage thriller *Tehran* from Cineflix Rights.

Chris Bonney, CEO for rights at Cineflix Media, points to the competitive SVOD marketplace and suggests there are two trends. One is that streamers

want to protect rights more than ever to enable them to brand their shows as ‘original’ across their geographies “for longer periods than previously.”

Yet global streamers such as Netflix, Amazon and Apple are still willing to pick up locally commissioned series, like *Tehran* from KAN11 in Israel, “and as the competition becomes increasingly tough, [they will take] series where only a partial footprint is available,” he says.

Add that to a relatively stalled pipeline because of Covid – plus the competitiveness of streamers with regional footprints – and a less rigid rights ecosystem appears to be emerging.

“Over the past 12 months, there has been a high demand for content which has generated a lot of interest across the board,” adds Dan Loewy, EVP of Americas, international distribution at eOne. “As a result, we’re finding more flexible and unique ways to work with various partners simultaneously. Global streamers and other platforms are more open to collaborating on terms of length and allowing more flexibility for territories than ever before.”

Jamie Lynn, Fremantle’s EVP of co-production & distribution for EMEA, seconds that take on the market. While deals of course vary depending on partners, he says that “even the truly global streamers have shown a pragmatic approach to deal-making that can hopefully benefit both parties.”

Eating the SVOD stack

Loewy at eOne is open about his optimism around second windows. His company struck a worldwide deal with Amazon for upcoming psychological thriller *Cruel Summer* – with Jessica Biel and Michelle Purple attached as executive producers – but admits he’s now “looking forward to bringing out second window linear following Amazon.”

Such deals are not uncommon but Fremantle’s Lynn points to the fact that the rights market is changing as viewing habits evolve.

“At the beginning of the SVOD boom, there was a real belief built into business models that streaming and linear windows could always co-exist after the SVOD’s exclusive premiere window, without affecting each other’s audiences,” he says.

“But as streaming and on-demand quickly reached mainstream and mass adoption, a non-linear component is now a necessary extension of virtually every linear deal. It has become more complex to see them co-exist without challenge.”

At the heart of the issue is stacking rights. If a linear operator can’t get them, networks rely on commitment from the audience, which increases risk.



Global streamers appear more than willing to pick up locally commissioned series such as *Tehran*

“We’ve established innovative partnerships with customers across the world to allow our factual shows to find their best home.”

Katie Benbow,
BBC Studios Global
Distribution



“You can’t show up late, join episode four and expect to easily follow the story,” continues Lynn. “So even with the huge audiences they can reach, in 2021 if a linear broadcaster can’t stack all episodes on their accompanying VOD offering, they run the real risk of frustrating and alienating audiences of all ages. This is a risk they have to weigh up when acquiring even a hot property.”

Bonney agrees, adding that it is still “early days” in the post-Netflix window era, and linear broadcasters have, so far, “been highly reluctant to consider ‘off-Netflix’ shows, often because they find the five episode rolling catch-up too limiting.”

At the same time, SVODs who pay top dollar for first windows are loathed to hand over the stack because, as Lynn puts it, they consider this “their hard fought for USP.”

“Second windows to linear after a streamer still happen all the time, but can’t be relied upon as much as they were, unless the grant of at least one stacking VOD window can be offered. We’ve all learned to watch TV in a new way, so you can’t put the genie back in the bottle,” he adds.

Rising costs & Covid

Yet while demand soars so has production cost, never more so than in a world of Covid-enforced protocols.

Tim Gerhartz, SVP of global sales at Red Arrow Studios International, has been selling Amazon drama *Bosch* on second windows for years. The show, produced by Red Arrow-owned Fabrik Entertainment, is set to end after its seventh and final season, but Gerhartz says the model remains vital.

“Complex rights and financing deals that require windowing amongst traditional and new platforms is key to financing big budget drama these days and will continue to be so.”

On *Bosch*, he adds: “It’s a series we have been able to window extensively after Amazon’s first-run rights and the initial deals we did were with broadcasters in territories such as Australia and the Nordics. Second window deals have been concluded, covering dozens of territories including key markets like France and Germany, with local platforms sometimes airing day and date with the Amazon launch.

“We find that, in general, many platforms – global, regional and national – are open to a degree of flexibility when it comes to windowing and we expect that to continue as the cost of producing drama remains high and the trend for producing local content continues.”

Bonney also agrees that when it comes to second windows, the US studio streamers and “pandemic-

driven delays” will mean stacking preferences could change. But there are other trends too – Netflix’s tendency for three season shows and its reliance on “refreshing its offering with new titles”, for example, means there “are more opportunities” for distributors to sell this content.

“Our experience with shows like *Wynonna Earp* and *Marcella* illustrates that there is still a huge appetite for these fantastic series following their initial periods of exclusivity on Netflix,” says the Cineflix exec.

Adding up with AVOD

The growth of ad-supported streaming is also affecting how windows are being used. In late 2019, Gaumont sold its drugs drama *Narcos* – which debuted on Netflix to huge acclaim – to numerous international networks such as SPI/Filmbox. This was followed a year later by an AVOD deal in the US, which saw ViacomCBS-owned Pluto snagging rights, demonstrating the potential.

“We’re already seeing AVOD quickly growing and evolving, creating more competition in the landscape and allowing us to drive better deals,” says Loewy.

“For the past few years, AVOD had been more focused on library content; however, with the success it’s been having coupled with increased budgets, they are able to license content earlier. AVOD has gone from acquiring mostly library content to striking new release licensing deals and now having discussions about potential co-productions. It’s all very exciting and we anticipate these changes will create more opportunities,” he adds.

For ITVS’s Johnson, the emergence and recent rapid growth of AVOD is another shift in the ecosystem. “It’s an ongoing and changing market dynamic and there is no one ‘right’ way of windowing, you have to look at each show as a unique case. As distributors, our job is to weigh up the advantages of getting shows financed, while also considering the long-term value of the IP to ensure successful series make the best returns to our producers,” he says.

Gerhartz adds that the growth of AVOD “is also creating additional windowing opportunities for more cost-effective factual content or library material”, with sales of packages of content to AVOD platforms potentially adding another two or three years to a show’s lifespan.

He adds: “We are seeing more opportunities to window factual content, certainly when it comes to high-end factual or topical current affairs content. *Framing Britney Spears*, one of *The Weekly: Special Edition* collection of documentaries, produced by The



Framing Britney Spears will remain of interest for some time, making the doc ideal as a second window play

“Bodyguard’s success in France goes some way to prove that a series that has already enjoyed great popularity on Netflix can also work on other platforms.”

Greg Johnson,
ITV Studios



New York Times and *Left/Right* for FX and Hulu, is a good example of this.

“It’s a show that has captured the current zeitgeist in a really big way, so linear channels want it for their current affairs slots to capitalise on that massive media and social buzz the show has generated. However because of the on-going interest in Britney Spears and the court case, it’s a story that is likely to continue to dominate headlines for a good while yet, so the documentary is also of interest to other platforms as a second window play.”

Katie Benbow, director of sales planning for BBCS global distribution, agrees that factual is offering great potential. She points to “innovative partnerships” with companies such as Discovery+, ZDF in Germany, France TV in France and streamers in China, which allow the UK-based firm to ensure content can “find its home across multiple windows where it can reach new audiences over and over.”

Johnson, meanwhile, points to finished tape sales of *Love Island* as an example of the myriad opportunities available, despite the fact that managing various local format deals versus global buyout conversations – along with sales of finished tape of shows into those same markets – can create “a creative and financial jigsaw puzzle.”

“But it works,” he says, pointing to *Love Island’s* US show airing on CBS while the UK and Australian versions “find their own significant audience on Disney-owned Hulu.”

The key to securing valuable long-tail rights lies, of course, at the start of a project. Bonney points to *Unabomber: In His Own Words* as one show that Cineflix was involved with that was able to be better monetised because of the way it was financed.

“We have had success in retaining network rights to streamer originals when they have been only part-funded by the streamer. We negotiated a co-pro deal with Netflix for the unscripted mini-series *Unabomber: In His Own Words*. Producers Yap Films had secured additional funding from Discovery Canada and Reelz, which meant we were able to retain certain international rights after an initial holdback by Netflix,” he says.

With growing competition and increasing flexibility from some streamers – plus the surging growth of AVOD – the potential of the second window is only rising in importance. As ITVS’s Johnson suggests, the “foresight and skill to broker deals” that enable the most efficient monetisation of secondary windows is now an increasingly important part in the overall funding of shows at their inception.

The tail isn’t wagging the dog yet, but it’s importance appears only set to grow. **TBI**

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DEADLY TROPICS

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2

federation
entertainment

Fighting for your format

Mark Layton talks to format rights holders from around the world about what they can do if they believe their IP has been copied and explores how a damaged reputation may be the best weapon in their arsenal



Hotel Romantiek, is distributed by Primitives, who told TBI that they have to pick their battles when it comes to IP protection

There are few things more coveted than a great piece of original IP that has the legs to travel and be adapted globally. Format rights owners will of course want to do whatever it takes to protect their product from imitations, but when these situations occur, either by accident or wilful copycatting, there are usually no perfect solutions. However, there are things that can be done to dissuade copycats or that may be useful down the line if it comes to a formal settlement or a lawsuit.

Three simple rules

Jan Salling, co-chair of FRAPA, says there are three key preventative measures rights owners can take before getting to where they may need to take action.

The first step is to register the format with FRAPA's format registration system: "Because if you don't, then further down the line, if you think you're being infringed, you have no chance in hell to prove it."

Secondly: "Whenever you speak to potential partners, employees, clients, sponsors, make sure

that always in your presentation, mention that this is registered by FRAPA, because there is a lot of protection in just scaring bad guys off."

Thirdly: "You should never leave any materials with a client or sponsor," but Salling adds that if you have to, then "whether you've pitched it verbally in a meeting room or in a Zoom call, if you've left something, always ask for some kind of receipt." This can be as simple as a confirmation by email.

South Korea's CJ ENM, meanwhile, told TBI that IP owners can "reduce the risk by doing more marketing and promotion so that it's actually cheaper to buy the format than to copy the format economically."

Tony Stern, EVP of commercial and business affairs at Fremantle, also stresses the importance of being sure your format has been copied before making any accusations. "I've seen quite a few instances where people have come up with extremely similar shows in isolation," he says.

Stern also adds that format and genre are not the same thing and recounts how he was once asked if *Dragon's Den* could be a rip-off of *The Apprentice*.

This caution is echoed by Maksym Kryvytsky, head of television business at Ukraine's 1+1 Media, which recently settled a dispute with Fremantle around *The Masked Singer* and *Maskarad*.

"There are not so many ideas for shows, but they can be implemented in lots of different ways," he says, noting that despite superficial similarities between 1+1 show *Blind Marriage* and US reality series *Married at First Sight*, "we did nothing then because the idea was on the surface."

David vs Goliath

When it appears clear, however, that a format has been copied, the first recourse is usually to FRAPA for a format analysis to be used as evidence, either to negotiate a settlement, or in stronger legal action.

Stern urges infringed companies not to wait around in pursuing action. "Ideally you want them to stop production or make changes to differentiate their show from yours and it goes without saying that it's a lot easier to do that when they're in pre-production than it is when they've got 12 episodes on tape."

However, TBI spoke to several smaller format rights owners for this piece, some of whom did not want to go on record, and they suggested that even with a FRAPA analysis in hand, there is little smaller companies can do if their format is copied by a larger, better-funded one.

"From an independent standpoint, IP protection is difficult because provenance can so easily be disputed," says Siobhan Crawford, head of sales and acquisitions at Belgian distributor Primitives. "Unfortunately, there are local IP bureaus in each country that in a lawsuit can be used to challenge registration dates at FRAPA.

"You can pay the fee for the FRAPA report, you can achieve an 83% comparison rating, like Primitives has previously, and you can then weigh the pros and cons of a lawsuit. Content be damned, it is a battle of resources and the legal precedence in the country the suit is filed."

"Remember FRAPA is just a tool that provides you with information, it is not a white knight. IP protection is for the rich," Crawford surmises. "And certainly, you will hear about the IP disputes from the larger groups in our industry more than you hear about cases from the smaller indies, our outrage is internalised now – the threat of defamation counter-suits and the impact of legal costs on EBIDTA will do that."

FRAPA's Salling acknowledges that while the desire to see justice done is understandable, legal action is not likely to succeed, especially for those independent companies with shallower pockets, and that forcing a settlement is the recommended course of action.



"If you're a small independent producer fighting against a big corporate national broadcaster that has infringed you, stolen your IP, 99% of the time people will say move on, I can't do anything. Then 1% of the time they will actually try to do something and fail.

"You need to be pragmatic about it. You can either keep on fighting to get your will and then potentially ruin yourself or you can move on. What you can do, and what we often advise our smaller members to do, is to use the shaming factor."

Salling advises that the threat of proving a company as untrustworthy can be far more effective: "All broadcasters depend on getting the best IP pitched first. Put out a press release saying broadcaster X is a crook and according to FRAPA my property has been stolen and the score is so high there is absolutely no doubt that I have been infringed. Everybody else will pitch to their competitors first and if they don't get the best things first that will harm their business significantly."

Short-term gain

Salling says that the number of cases brought to FRAPA over the past five years have been steady and Stern estimates that Fremantle deals with such cases around 4-5 times "in a bad year".

He adds that copying formats is "a very short-term gain," and perhaps if there is any grim satisfaction to be taken, it is that most copies fail.

"And most of them fail because – it's a bit like when you're watching a swan in the water – the bit you see is the elegant bit up front, you don't see the frantic paddling beneath the water. There are a lot of decisions that go into producing a successful show and unless you've got the inside knowledge it's very hard to understand what makes the show successful." **TBI**

The Apprentice was one of the first business-reality formats, but genre is not the same thing as format

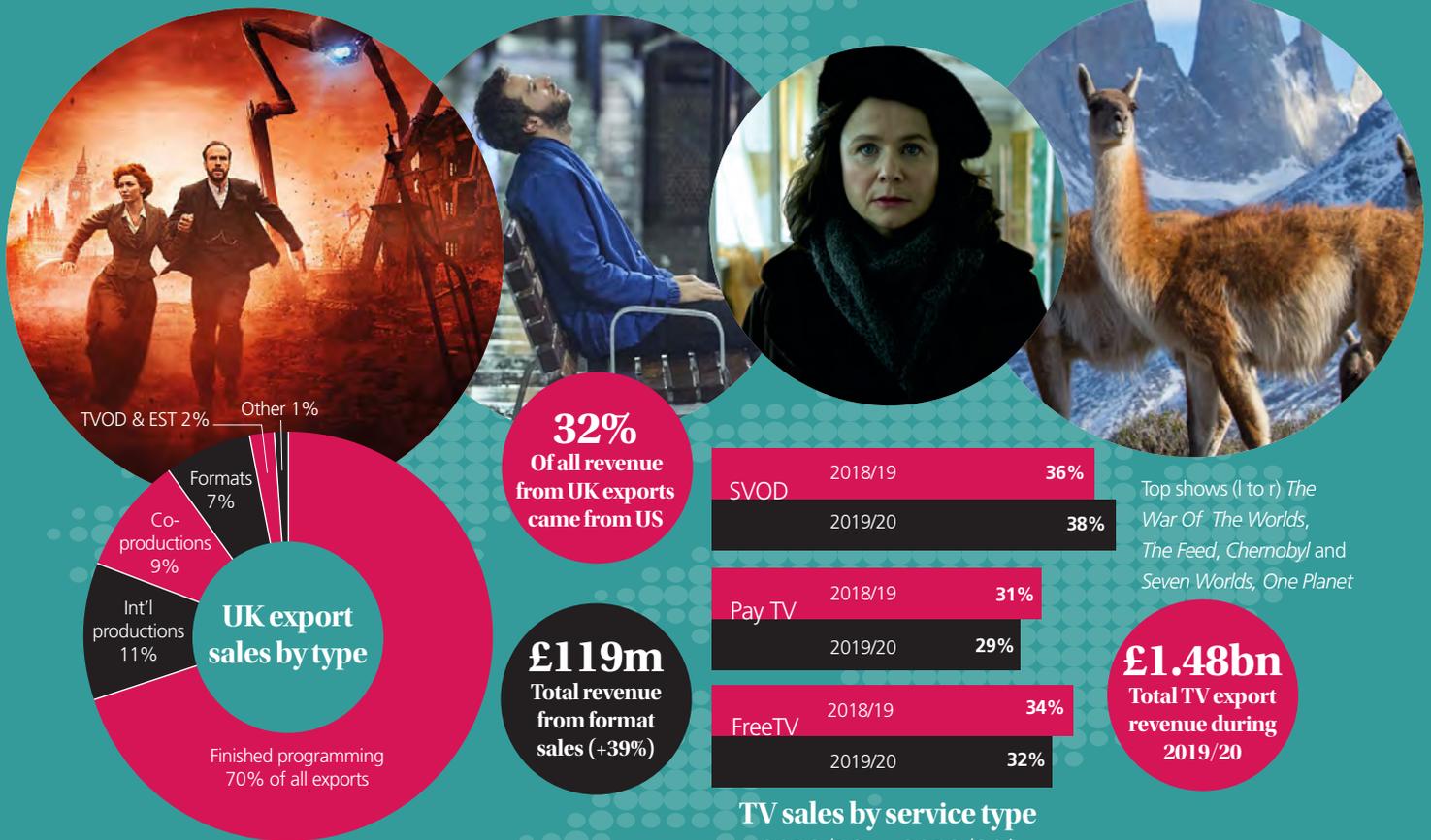
"Ideally you want them to stop production or make changes to differentiate their show from yours"

Tony Stern,
Fremantle



Revenue raisers

Scripted series and formats helped to deliver record-breaking export numbers from the UK content industry in 2019/20, while sales to streamers continued to grow



It has been a tumultuous period for the global content industry, but annual figures released late last year have shown that the UK industry was in fine fettle during 2019/20.

The results from the Pact TV Exports report – produced by 3Vision with funding partner the Department for International Trade – highlighted the power of UK scripted product, with series such as *Chernobyl*, *The War Of The Worlds* and *The Feed* powering UK TV exports to a record-breaking £1.48bn (\$2bn) in revenue during the 2019/20 financial year.

Scripted series accounted for 48% of all revenue, helping to push total UK TV exports up by 6% between April 2019 and March 2020.

The report also found factual programming – such as *Seven Worlds, One Planet* – increased its share from 23% to 28% year-on-year, while China and Latin America were identified as major growth prospects.

The US remains the most important market for UK exporters, contributing 32% (£466m) of all revenue in the 2019/20 financial year, an increase of £22m year-on-year.

France (£102m) and Australia (£98m) complete the top three, while exports to China – which was identified last year as a key growth market – saw revenues increase by 25% to £40m.

Pact said sales into both China and the US are expected to rise over the coming years, while exports to Latin American buyers are also predicted to offer further opportunities for distributors.

Finished tape remained the largest source of income (70% of the total) and this year surpassed £1bn for the first time, an increase of 7% year-on-year, while total revenue from the sale of formats increased by 39% to £119m.

The majority (51%) of sales were to buyers in Europe, while co-production revenues also increased by 6% to £133m with North America – at 88% – the largest buyer.

Library sales (content aged 4+ years) comprised 22% of revenues this year, compared to 38% last year, but Pact noted that the effect of the pandemic would likely mean an increased contribution from library sales in the next financial year. **TBI**

Source: PACT TV Exports report * numbers rounded

NZ'S #1 CRIME DRAMA

THE GULF

BRAND NEW SEASON 2: 8 x 60'



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New Zealand
We are Banijay

letterbox
FILMPRODUKTION



Broadening horizons



Locked down audiences are craving new environments and the content business is doing its best to deliver them. Helen Dugdale delves explores how the UK industry is embracing the travelogue

With international and domestic travel currently off the cards for swathes of the world's population because of the pandemic, a surging demand for onscreen escapism has developed.

While scripted programming and entertainment formats have faced considerable production challenges over the past year, factual producers have found themselves better able to work around Covid, delivering shows to commissioners who are eager for vistas and mind-broadening experiences.

Greg Barnett, commissioning editor at the UK's Channel 5, says that his network has a raft of shows in the works that offer viewers the chance to expand their horizons, albeit virtually.

"Our travel slate continues to provide a source of escapism and inspiration, with every destination choice tailored to inspire those editorial specifications," he says. "We want to take our viewers on a journey to great places, with plenty to experience and lots they can learn, without it feeling like homework."

The slate includes *Weekend Escapes With Gregg Wallace*, which sees the UK's *MasterChef* co-host travel to parts of Europe including Rome, Istanbul, Munich, and Budapest.

Conservation programming, such as *Survival Of The Species With Ben Fogle*, is currently proving popular

World's Most Scenic River Journeys, meanwhile, showcases beautiful rivers including The River Spey (Scotland) River Shannon (Ireland), The Po (Italy) and The Moselle (Germany), and *Robson Green Walking Coast To Coast* allows viewers to explore the full length of Hadrian's Wall in the UK.

ITV1 has also enjoyed travelogue success, with the first two seasons of Tin Can Island's *Breaking Dad* returning earlier this year – again featuring father and son combo Bradley and Barney Walsh as they travel across Europe.

"The first two seasons of *Breaking Dad* were a huge hit for the channel when the highly likeable and intrepid pair travelled across the US," explains Sarah Tong, director of sales at Hat Trick International, which sells *Breaking Dad*. "For something different, this series remains closer to home in Europe where they experience even more offbeat adventures."

The distributors are also working on other travel-related series, including with Back2Back and UKTV's Dave on *Lost Land Of The Volcanoes*, which is in production. The show is being filmed in South America as well as Africa, and explores landscapes and cuisines, reflecting the current uptick of interest in food-related travel shows.

Cooking up deals

UK distributor DCD Rights has seen success with similar shows that combine cookery and some of the most glorious parts of the world. Nicky Davies Williams, CEO at the London-based distributor, points to *A Taste Of Italy* with Nisha Katona, which will air on Channel 4 in the UK.

Conservation programmes are also proving powerful, allowing viewers to learn more about a particular climate issue or ecological topic, while also enjoying grand scenic footage.

Davies Williams says DCD has three shows to watch out for. “*Survival Of The Species With Ben Fogle* is our marquee new animal conservation series.

“He travels across Africa to find the positive work being undertaken by dedicated and committed teams across the continent, as well as a balance of the other side of the debate toward the commercial needs of those involved.

“There is also both season six of *Aussie Gold Hunters*, showing on Discovery and *Aussie Bull Catchers* available on ABC Australia, both filming in the Australian Outback. *Aussie Gold Hunters* covers the thrills and all-round crises that make up the life of searching for gold in some of the most difficult terrains on earth,” she adds.

Public interest

As ratings figures attest, travelogues are proving increasingly popular and the distribution business is keen to keep channels and streamers well stocked. Davies Williams from DCD believes this type of content provides a huge opportunity.

“For commercial channels, there is certainly a benefit and huge value,” she says. “The insights into

“We want to take our viewers on a journey to great places, with plenty to experience and lots they can learn, without it feeling like homework”

Greg Barnett
Channel 5



Shows that combine travel with cookery, such as DCD Rights’ *A Taste Of Italy*, have seen notable success

new worlds and learning certainly deliver a public interest remit. For example, for people who have not travelled to Italy, Nisha Katona provides a charming tour and the wildlife of Africa, as well as the great expanse of Australia, provide the escapism we are all searching for.”

WaterBear, the streamer that showcases stories dedicated to supporting the planet from over 80 international NGOs, believes the TV industry has a responsibility to go one step further and help educate the audience with the content it shares.

Andrea Walji, head of content and production, says content on her platform allows locked-down viewers “to immerse themselves into the lives of others who are dotted around the world,” gaining knowledge about conservation initiatives, NGOs and general environmental interests.

Tong at Hat Trick also thinks seeing presenters visiting long-forgotten locations around the world will help the audience to look beyond the end of lockdown and lift them out of their living room. “I’m not sure anyone will be travelling to see volcanoes, after watching *Lost Land Of The Volcanoes*, but it will appeal to daredevil travellers.

“*South Africa With Gregg Wallace* is a more traditional travel series and certainly an aspirational as well as an inspirational travel location. *Breaking Dad* may give some ideas on father/son and mother/daughter trips, for the more daring parents amongst us,” she says.

Barnett at Channel 5 adds that commissioners must also stay in tune with the mood of viewers and that means travelogue programming can develop. “At a time when a lot of people are struggling during a lockdown, we’re offering an abundance of hope and inspirational content on Channel 5,” he says.

“Whether it’s through specific travel series or shows such as *Ben Fogle’s New Lives In The Wild* or *A Country Life For Half The Price With Kate Humble* – we’re not just offering viewers the chance to escape, but possibly also motivating and even empowering some of them to make changes in their own lives once normal life resumes.”

How viewers will react to this abundance of travel-related content once lockdowns are lifted is unclear, but Walji and the WaterBear team are looking to extend their content further and to build on their growing audience with more global stories.

“We are always on the lookout to have the most diverse range of content on the platform,” says Walji. “Of course, a lot of the wildlife conservation stories come out of Africa, India and North America, so it would be great to license more content from Asia, especially the Far East,” she adds. **TBI**



Lining up London Screenings

The London Screenings might have gone virtual, but it remains packed with choice events. Here's a handy schedule to find out what's happening and when

BBC Studios Showcase

Date & Time: Monday 22 February – Wednesday 24 February

How to sign up: Visit myshowcase.bbcstudios.com/invite-request

Three key shows: *Superhoe*, *TIME* and *In Ten Pictures*
Description: Personalised digital event. Access to early footage, full-length programming, genre presentations and masterclasses from creative talent and BBC executives

TVF International Virtual Showcase

Date & Time: Thursday 25 February, 8am & 5pm GMT

How to sign up: Invite only

Three key shows: *The Station: Trouble On The Tracks*, *The Lost Pyramids Of The Aztecs* and *US And China: When Titans Clash*

Description: As close as we could get to our London Showcase – virtual networking event followed by clips from latest titles

Sony Pictures Television Virtual Formats Showcase

Date & Time: Thursday 25 February, 9am GMT & 6pm GMT

How to sign up: Email SPT_Formats_Showcase@spe.sony.com

Site address: spt.spe.sony.com

Three key shows: *District Z*, *Second Chance Salon* and *Mums: Famous & Unfiltered*

Description: A live-streamed exclusive broadcast of SPT's unscripted formats slate, broadcast to global clients from SPT's London HQ

TBI Talks: Unwrapping Unscripted's Potential*

Date & Time: Monday 1 March, 3pm GMT

Description: Join Facebook's Toby Faulkner, Passion's Nick Rees, Omdia's Matt Bailey & TBI's Richard Middleton as they dive into unscripted content

SmartScreen 24/7

Date & Time: Monday 1 March – Friday 12 March

How to sign up: amy.kemp@orangesmarty.com

Site address: www.orangesmarty.com

Three key shows: *Inside the Spitfire Factory*, *Locked In: Breaking The Silence* and *Bound Together*

Description: Real-time buyer video conferencing, access to Smart Portal, exclusive content launches & opportunity to enjoy a virtual restaurant experience

Passion Showcase

Date & Time: Tuesday 2 March

How to sign up: Invite only

Description: Exclusive digital preview of key highlights of upcoming new slate of programming

TBI Talks: Driving Global Drama*

Date & Time: Monday 2 March, 3pm GMT

Description: Join Acorn TV & Sundance Now's Matt Graham, ViacomCBS's Seb Cardwell, Omdia's Tim Westcott & TBI's Richard Middleton as they talk drama

TBI Talks: Landing A Format Hit*

Date & Time: Wednesday 3 March, 5pm GMT

Description: Join FOX's Rob Wade, ViacomCBS's Laura Burrell, Omdia's Tim Westcott & TBI's Richard Middleton on a journey into formats

Banijay Rights London Screenings

Date & Time: Wednesday 3 March, content available

to view all day. Scripted live streams from 3.30pm GMT / 10:30am EST / 7:30am PST

How to sign up: Invite only

Site address: www.banijayrights.com

Three key shows: *Viewpoint*, *RFDS: Royal Flying Doctors Service* and *Ben Fogle: Inside Chernobyl*

Description: Banijay Rights highlights multi-genre programming from its 100,000 hour catalogue and premieres exclusive scripted dramas

All3Media International Upfronts – Scripted/ Non-scripted/ Formats

Date & Time: 4 March, various starts time globally

How to sign up: Invite only

Site address: www.all3mediainternational.com

Three key shows: *Angela Black*, *Whole New Ball Game* and *The Traitors*

Description: Closed room event covering all the company's main three genres, showcasing new content that will deliver in 2021. The event features talent, producers and footage

Fremantle Presents At The 2021 London TV Screenings

Date & Time: Friday 5 March

How to sign up: Email sales@fremantle.com

Site address: www.fremantlescreenings.com

Three key shows: *Reyka*, *Arctic Drift*, *Good With Wood*

Description: A showcase of new titles from Fremantle's scripted, factual, entertainment and lifestyle portfolio

eOne Preview

When: Tuesday 9 March

How to sign up: Invite only (eOnePreview@entonegroup.com)

Site address: eOne.InternationalDistribution.com

Three key shows: *Cruel Summer*, *The Newsreader* and *Feudal*

Description: Showcase of new & returning highlights, including six-part drama *The Newsreader* and exclusive look at the evolution of *Cruel Summer*

ITV Studios Non-Scripted Festival

Date & Time: Wednesday 10 March, 4.30am GMT & 4pm GMT

How to sign up: Invite only

Three key shows: *Secrets Of The Lost Ark*, *Hotel Inspector's Hotel* (w/t), *Secrets Of The Supercars*

Description: A session filled with exclusive clips, interviews, special guests and a look ahead at shows that are sure to entertain

ITV Studios Formats Festival

Date & Time: Wednesday 10 March, 6am GMT;

11.30am GMT & 6.30pm GMT

How to sign up: Invite only

Three key shows: *Beat The Chasers*, *Let Love Rule*, *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here – The Castle*

Description: Thirty-minute session with updates of biggest brands & sneak peeks of what's to come, across dating, quiz, comfort TV & spin-offs

ITV Studios Drama Festival

Date & Time: Wednesday 10 March, 9am GMT & 5pm GMT

How to sign up: Invite only

Three key shows: *Grace*, *Harry Palmer: The Ipcress File* (w/t) and *The Pembrokeshire Murders*

Description: A session filled with exclusive clips, interviews, special guests and a look ahead at shows sure to inspire and delight

Cineflix Content Fest

Date & Time: On demand

How to sign up: cineflixcontentfest.com

Three key shows: *Inside The Forest: Seasons Of Wonder*, *WWII By Drone* and *I Got Lucky*

Description: Cineflix Content Fest showcases the newest shows in a unique, interactive experience allowing buyers to explore them at any time

Warner Bros. International Television Production – Formats Showcase 2021

Date & Time: Friday 26 March, 8.30am GMT

How to sign up: Invitation only – contact your

Warner Bros. sales executive or email wbitvp@warnerbros.com

Three key shows: *The Wheel*, *Mute It!* and *Ultimate Chain Reaction*

Description: Join us as we live stream the best new non-scripted and scripted formats from WBIVP and our partners

*TBI talks London Screenings sessions

How to sign up: Visit tbivision.com for details or [click here](#)



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Lifting the covers on safe & authentic screen sex

Mark Layton talks to intimacy coordinator Vanessa Coffey about her role helping actors to establish personal boundaries when filming scenes of a sexual nature

The #MeToo movement in 2017 brought with it changes to the way in which productions shot scenes of an intimate and sexual nature. The days of actors being asked to ad lib were numbered and instead intimacy coordinators have appeared within the industry.

“When there’s any kind of sexual activity or nudity, a production will bring in an intimacy coordinator,” explains Vanessa Coffey, the first person in Scotland to be employed in this still relatively emerging role.

The job does not just cover simulated sex scenes, she elaborates, but rather many aspects of intimacy and physical proximity.

“So being inside someone else’s space or kissing; it might even be for a very young person sitting on somebody’s lap. You want to make sure that you’ve got consent for all of these situations and that everybody understands what’s about to happen, rather than just assuming people do and that they’re OK with it.”

At the end of the day, intimate scenes are as much about storytelling as any other, says Coffey. “It is about picking apart what this particular moment means for the characters. I think that is something that has been skipped over a little bit until now.

“People will learn in drama school how to walk as the character, how to talk as the character, what they’re like in different given circumstances. They do all of this wonderful work, but they’re very rarely asked how does that character have sex?”

In Coffey’s experience, when an actor comes to those moments without the input of an intimacy coordinator, “they immediately revert to what they would do, because they’re not approaching it through character, which is the thing that they do with every other scene.”

Coffey has worked on several high-end scripted productions, including *I Hate Suzie* for Sky, *The War Of The Worlds* for the BBC and Netflix’s *Fate: The Winx Saga*, which made its debut on the streamer last month.

“That particular programme was so respectful of the actors and really just took everything to that next level in terms of safety for them,” says Coffey of the young adult fantasy drama.

“On *Winx*, we were working with really young actors, some of whom had never had an on-screen kiss before. So we talked through, how long does this kiss need to be, are we using tongues for the kiss, what’s happening with people’s bodies, hands, where is okay to touch and not okay to touch and really mapping that out.”

#MeToo & its implications

It is hard to understate the importance of the #MeToo movement in kickstarting a revolution in the way intimate scenes are filmed.

“These conversations, in my experience, weren’t had at all prior to 2017; we didn’t ask actors what they were comfortable with,” says Coffey. “A lot of directors would say ‘let’s just see what happens’.

With actors left to their own devices, the results could sometimes be mixed, at one end of the spectrum “there was obviously the possibility that boundaries would be overstepped,” says Coffey, while at the other was the risk “quite frankly that it was a bit of a terrible scene.”

There are now clear advancements in this area. “I think people are much more mindful of thinking about whether or not they need to bring an intimacy coordinator into something and they’re seeing us less as the police of an intimate scene.”

Coffey says this change was clearly long overdue: “We’ve always had this role for stunt coordination. So as soon as somebody is walking towards somebody else with a knife or with their fists, there’s always been a choreography for that.

“We don’t expect actors to just ‘go for it’, yet we’ve expected them to do it with intimacy, with no understanding of literally where people’s hands, mouths and other body parts are going.” **TBI**

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What is driving the factual boom?

TBI deputy editor Mark Layton talks to top executives at global factual distributors about recent market trends and how the rise of streamers, coupled with the ongoing pandemic, is driving a factual boom

As the global pandemic and its myriad lockdowns, quarantine procedures and safety protocols continue to disrupt TV production, the nimble factual market has emerged as a growth area.

While gaps open up in the schedules as a result of delayed scripted productions and newly emerging streamers go in search of stand-out IP, it's not hard to see why the industry is entering a factual boom, hastened by Covid-19. New factual productions, with smaller crews and the ability to rely on archive footage, have been able to flourish over the course of the past year, while completed content has also proven a schedule-saver for many a broadcaster.

"There was definitely an increased demand in factual content, which seems to have worked for many channels that lost programming slots due to sports and live events being cancelled," notes Mirjam Strasser, head of sales and acquisitions at Germany's Autentic Distribution, whose best-selling shows of the past year have included science series *The Animal Within* and history mini-series *Berlin 1945*.

The Animal Within has been one of Autentic's best-selling shows of the year

"We had many clients coming back to us asking for more titles several times during last year. Genres in demand certainly were travel and wildlife titles, however most factual genres were in demand."

"There's no doubt that sales of completed content have been up these past 10 months since the pandemic really set in," agrees Fiona Gilroy, content sales and acquisitions director at Australia's Flame Distribution, whose returning shows *Outback Truckers* and *Outback Opal Hunters* have remained key titles for the company during the pandemic.

"The other trend we've seen is for content that provides a bit of a break from the day-to-day grind of the way we are all living these days – and anything that offers an uplifting form of escapism. In the factual entertainment space that's content that focuses on travel and adventure in some form."

Come fly with me

It is unsurprising that global audiences, many still locked down in their homes, are seeking warm,

escapist content, and views of locations they are currently unable to visit in person.

This is a picture reflected in other parts of the world too, with Solange Attwood, EVP International of Canada's Blue Ant Media, also seeing rising demand for "factual programming that provides escapist content, DIY and cooking themes, travel series and high-impact documentaries," citing nature doc *A Wild Year On Earth* and long-running true crime series *See No Evil* as among their most recent best-sellers.

Matthew Ashcroft, CEO of UK & Singapore-based Parade Media Group has seen strong sales recently for shows with an element of outdoor adventure, such as *Outback Vet* and *Field Trip With Curtis Stone*, while Harriet Armston-Clarke, director of distribution at UK-based TVF International, reports a "huge demand" for family-friendly travel programming, particularly from their aerial catalogue, with interest in titles such as flagship *The World From Above* franchise, and the company adding six further hours of *Aerial Profiles* "to keep up with demand".

Chloé Persyn-Preljocaj, head of distribution at ZED in France, meanwhile noted a strong demand for "escape and entertainment", with history shows such as *Megapolis: The Ancient World Revealed* and *Blood Money: Inside The Nazi Economy* doing good trade with buyers, and Teremoana Seguin, MD of Hong Kong's Harbour Rights, adds weight to the case for the travel shows being in high international demand, revealing that ongoing travel series *Flavors* remained the distributor's best-selling show during 2020.

Streaming support

Viewers, fed up with the same four walls, are clearly looking to get away from it all, while buyers might simply be looking to get it all and demand, as ever, is being driven by the proliferation of streaming services.

"Put simply, there is a thirst for great content," says Parade's Ashcroft "In fact, demand is at an all-time high, fuelled by streamers and linear networks competing for original commissions and finished tape."

Harbour's Seguin says in his experience it is streamers that have buoyed factual distribution during the pandemic. "The demand for documentary and factual from broadcasters remained stable, but budgets have been cut down or at least it seems buying such content was not a priority. On the other hand, VOD platforms have sustained the business of factual and documentary distribution, with a number of players launching nationally or across regions resulting in an increasing demand and large volume deals."

Attwood at Blue Ant has also seen "an acceleration in the adoption of streaming, both SVOD and AVOD,



Flame Distribution's *Outback Truckers* has remained a key title during the pandemic

as consumers continue to discover and adopt emerging platforms. "With high demand for content to fill the pipelines of both broadcaster and streaming services, the industry was anticipating a content gap and a run on older series. However, we've seen that there is still enough content on the market for brands to remain true to their editorial line and continue to be selective as far as their content choices are concerned."

Ashcroft agrees: "Long gone are the days of walking into a commissioning editor's office and throwing ten ideas against the wall and hoping something sticks."

Old vs new

This thirst for new content means that many buyers seem as likely to take a chance on new IP, despite budget constraints.

Authentic's Strasser says that "as there are not enough long-running and/or returning series on the market, there is a high appetite for new IP," with ZED's Persyn-Preljocaj noting that broadcasters "are always on the lookout for new strong programs and IP".

Armston-Clarke at TVF agrees that "there is definitely an appetite for new IP – when the global streamers are delivering stellar new shows the competition is fierce," but adds that: "when the world is topsy turvy, there is definitely something comforting about returning to another season of a familiar show."

Seguin points out that "established IP remains an easy and safe choice especially in time of budget constraints and lower revenues," but also highlights how Harbour found success relicensing shows for which broadcasters already had localised version.

"In our experience, there's always an IP that has not been licensed somewhere, so we went back to basics and it worked, focusing on existing IP rather than on building new ones in these difficult times." **TBI**

"There is still enough content on the market for brands to remain true to their editorial line"

Solange Attwood
Blue Ant Media



Hot Picks

A selection of dramas, formats and unscripted series heading to market

Reyka

Distributor: Fremantle

Producers: Fremantle & M-Net

Broadcaster: M-Net

Logline: A brilliant but troubled South African criminal profiler tracks down a serial killer while grappling with the trauma of her own past

This upcoming 8 x 60-minute crime series represents a true first for global producer and distributor Fremantle, being the company's first-ever South African drama.

Reyka is set to broadcast this July on co-production partner M-Net, with Fremantle distributing the series globally.

South African star Kim Engelbrecht (*Dominion*, *The Flash*) heads the cast as the brilliant but troubled criminal profiler Reyka Gama who, haunted by ghosts from her own past, sets out to investigate a string of brutal murders that

have been committed by a serial killer in the sugarcane fields of KwaZulu-Natal.

Iain Glen (*Game Of Thrones*, *Jack Taylor*) co-stars as Speelman, a farmer who abducted Gama when she was a child, and the source of her trauma. However, while her childhood experiences have helped Gama to enter the minds of some of Africa's most notorious criminals, the charming and manipulative Speelman still has a hold over her, two decades since his crime.

Binnelanders and *Poppie Nongena* star Anna-Mart



van der Merwe co-stars as Gama's mother Elsa, with their relationship playing a backbone to the story; a tale which Fremantle says "exposes the secrets and lies, truth and trust,

damage, healing and forgiveness" against "a dramatic backdrop of sugarcane fields, tropical beaches, stifling heat, dangerous wildlife, a criminal underworld, and shadowy politics."

Guessable

Distributor: ViacomCBS International Studios Distribution

Producers: Tuesday's Child Television

Broadcaster: Comedy Central UK

Logline: A format that puts a twist on classic family games

This comedy gameshow format has emerged from UK production outfit Tuesday's Child Television – known for creating *Lego Masters* among numerous others – and sets itself apart from competitors in the genre by offering a play-along element for viewers at home.

The show features two teams of comedians and celebrities battling it out with each other to guess what could be inside a mystery box, which takes centre stage. As the show progresses, each round offers a twist on a classic family guessing game,

with the answers then being used as clues to help contestants – as well as viewers at home – to predict what could be hidden inside the box.

Comedy Central in the UK ordered the format to series last year as part of a wider push designed to expand the entertainment offering on the ViacomCBS-owned channel, and the initial 8 x 60-minute order has since been extended with a second 12-part season, which is now in the works.

Colourful, catchy and engaging, the format is easy

to understand but also offers deeper takeaways, with a myriad of trivia questions that are cleverly dotted throughout the show's format and providing moments for thought.

Sara Pascoe hosts the UK version with John Kearns on hand as her assistant, whilst Alan Davies and Darren Harriott are on board as captains of the respective teams.





Paris Police 1900

Distributor: StudioCanal

Producers: Tetra Media Fiction, AFPI

Broadcaster: Canal+

Logline: Murders, blackmail, riots, conspiracies, coups – welcome to la Belle Époque

This lavish eight-part period crime drama hails from France and taps into the country's Belle Époque era, offering up an alternative take on many of the preconceived ideas about the period.

The show, which is part of French pay operator Canal+'s Creation Originale, takes viewers into the heart of Paris and kicks off in 1899, with news that the French president Félix Faure has just died. It also taps into some arguably more current themes for countries around the world today, including exploring how far-right anti-Semitic groups threaten France and its future.

The story tracks police chief Louis Lepine, who is urgently called out of retirement to restore order in the French capital. In the midst of the anarchy,

a young woman's torso is found floating in a suitcase down the Seine, spurring a young, ambitious detective into action at the heart of the police headquarters. Meanwhile, a corrupt officer known for blackmail has taken a particular interest in this investigation and enlists Meg Steinheil – the courtesan accused of killing the frail-hearted president during sex – to work as a spy for him.

A stellar cast includes Jérémie Laheurte (*Blue Is The Warmest Colour*), Evelyne Brochu (*Orphan Black*), Marc Barbé (*La Vie En Rose*) and Patrick D'Assunção (*Stranger By The Lake*), while a reported budget for the season that almost touches \$20m suggests plenty of confidence in the premise. A second season is reportedly in development.

The Great British Dig: History In Your Back Garden

Distributor: Hat Trick International

Producers: Strawberry Blond TV

Broadcaster: Channel 4

Logline: A team of expert archaeologists are joined by local residents of ordinary locations to see what amazing history they can dig up

Forget stately homes and grandiose castles, this new "alternative archaeology" format gives everyday people the chance to uncover some of the amazing history hidden beneath their feet in the most ordinary of places – their own back yards.

Each episode of *The Great British Dig: History In Your Back Garden* follows the host and their team of crack archaeologists as they travel to a street, town or village that has lost touch with its own remarkable history – whether that may be an important building or other location that deserves a special mention in the history books.

The team will recruit local people to help unearth artefacts and structures by embarking on a series of exploratory digs across the back gardens of an entire street. They'll delve into the local legends and distant history of these locations to pinpoint the best site for each dig and hopefully convince homeowners to let them into their property to start digging up their daisies.

Over the course of a week, the host, the experts and the helpful amateurs, will all seek to unearth some real buried treasures and artefacts that shed light on the local histories of the communities in which they have been digging. **TBI**





Last Word Tim Stirzaker

Never, ever give up

“These films aren’t just about access, they are about timeliness”

When we started developing *Trump Takes On The World* in the autumn of 2019, we knew access would be our biggest challenge. Our goal was to interview those who were in the room for the crucial moments of Donald Trump’s foreign policy. Trump’s White House was not famed for its openness to journalists – certainly not from the mainstream media – and we were asking insiders to tell us about their most sensitive conversations with the president.

The reputation of Brook Lapping – in particular series producer Norma Percy – is a great way to open doors at the start of a production like this. But that’s just the first step. Next comes many months of talking to people off-the-record to try to convince them to go on camera. When it became clear that we were going to have to make the series during a pandemic, without the ability to meet anyone face to face, most of us wondered whether it would be possible.

Fortunately, we were able to make two research trips to the US before the lockdown. While we were in Washington, one of Trump’s own officials warned us of the crisis that we were about to see unfold. His words stayed with us in the months ahead as we saw his predictions play out across the world.

We had been due to start filming in April and pushed this back while adjusting the production, but we knew the push for access couldn’t wait so continued as best we could.

By this stage, we’d met a number of Trump’s top officials who had already left office, like National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and his deputy, K.T. McFarland. Having their agreement proved essential, because we could reassure others that they weren’t going to be alone if they went on camera.

It wasn’t just in the US that we needed access. In a film about Trump’s foreign policy we would need the other side, so the team drew on contacts across Europe, the Middle East, China and Korea.

In the first months of the lockdown, we were surprised at how open some people were to having an off the record talk on Zoom rather than in person. But the Covid crisis did slow us down – especially with more

evasive targets. And it was far from the only crisis that hampered the production – an impeachment, multiple resignations from top Trump officials, a contested election – we became all-too familiar with hearing the phrase, “We just need to wait for the dust to settle.”

By the time we started filming, we were far from certain what our final cast list would be. Last July, when we shot our first interviews, it felt more of an act of faith than normal that we’d get some of our big targets. We could have just said that we would put the production on hold.

But these films aren’t just about access, they are about timeliness. The intention was always for it to go out around the end of Trump’s presidency or the beginning of his second term, which in either case would have felt like the right time to take a rational, in-depth look back at the past four years.

And so we pushed on, still filming interviews long after the edits had started. Some of our top interviewees only agreed to take part after the election results and so came very late in the day. It made for a slightly less streamlined edit than normal but the access steadily improved month by month.

Our indefatigable researcher kept on calling the White House on an almost daily basis and we eventually got Trump’s top economic adviser Larry Kudlow, as well as trade representative Robert Lighthizer. Our Middle East producer chased down every contact she had and the elusive Israeli ambassador finally agreed to an interview; our fixer in South Korea managed a breakthrough after months of rejections and got someone who’d met face to face with Kim Jong-un. John Bolton proved especially difficult to pin down and we had to scramble to find a location at the last minute when he gave us a date.

We shot the final interview of the series in the last week of January and it was a particularly satisfying one. On our very first research trip in September 2019 we were told that this person was absolutely key to understanding Trump’s strategy in Asia. We set about contacting him from that moment, and nearly 18 months later, we finally pinned him down. Persistence really does pay off. **TBI**

Tim Stirzaker is series director on Brook Lapping’s docuseries *Trump Takes On The World*

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1. Unwrapping Unscripted's Potential Monday 1 March, 3pm GMT

Speaker lineup



Toby Faulkner
Head, Unscripted,
Facebook Watch Originals



Nick Rees
COO,
PassionDistribution



Matthew Bailey
Senior Analyst,
Advertising and Games,
Omdia



Richard Middleton
Editor,
TBI

2. Driving Global Drama Tuesday 2 March, 3pm GMT

Speaker lineup



Seb Cardwell
SVP, Deputy Director of
Programmes,
ViacomCBS Networks UK



Matthew Graham
General Manager, Acorn
TV & Sundance Now,
AMC Networks



Tim Westcott
Senior Principal Analyst,
Content Strategies,
Omdia



Richard Middleton
Editor,
TBI

3. Landing a Format Hit Tuesday 2 March, 5pm GMT

Speaker lineup



Rob Wade
President, Alternative
Entertainment & Specials,
FOX Entertainment



Laura Burrell
VP, International Formats,
ViacomCBS International
Studios Distribution



Tim Westcott
Senior Principal Analyst,
Content Strategies,
Omdia



Richard Middleton
Editor,
TBI

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