

TBI Television Business International

Market futures

How will the industry react when global travel returns?

Page 10

Untapped voices

Global producers on the benefits of neurodiverse TV

Page 23



Landscape
Artist
OF THE YEAR



Portrait
Artist
OF THE YEAR

Sky Arts highest rating factual programmes ever

WE ARE 10

333 HOURS
352 AWARDS
537 NOMINATIONS

Coming soon: "Hippo King", 1 x 50 min.

Our terrific last ten years
wouldn't have been possible
without the miracles of
our planet. So, thank you,
Mother Nature. We owe you.
We won't stop caring for you
and driving change
frame by frame—because
#terramatters



Check out our YouTube Channel 
www.terramater.com

TBI April/May 2021

Editor's note



There might have been the odd forward-thinker who 12 months ago predicted that this pernicious pandemic would still be with us come MIPTV 2021, but I didn't come across them. Back then, it was more of an 'all hands to the pump' approach - in a hands-off sort of way, of course - as producers desperately tried to work out how they could keep filming going. Acquisition execs and commissioners were fraught with concerns that their pipeline might soon run out, as were distributors.

Today, working from home is second nature. The global industry as a whole has been hugely affected by the pandemic, with freelancers particularly hard hit, but there are green shoots appearing in this new-look environment. In this issue, we hear from a raft of distributors about their opinions on the future of markets and discover that the online environment is actually speeding up decision-making and greenlights.

We also speak to a raft of creators of shows that bring more diverse characters to screen, and explore commissioning opportunities - check out James Gibbons' plans for Discovery+ and hear how the format business is rebounding too. For those looking for some escapism, take a trip to India to explore its scripted output or dive into the fascinating world of access documentaries. The world has changed 12 months on, but the future is, finally, looking brighter.

Contents

6. The TBI Interview: James Gibbons at Discovery

Six months after the launch of Discovery+ in the UK, Richard Middleton speaks to UK & Nordics boss James Gibbons to find out the lessons learned & future plans

10. The shape of things to come

TBI discovers how attitudes are changing to the annual cycle of markets

14. Out of India

Mark Layton dives into the rapidly evolving scripted market in India

18. Gaining access

Tim Dams explores how producers of access docs are accommodating surging demand

20. Balancing act

We discover how niche formats are gaining ground, despite risk-adversity

23. Embracing autism & disability

Global producers discuss creating their neurodiversity & disability-focused shows

26. TBI In Conversation: James Townley, Banijay

The head of global content development discusses streamers, protocols & dominoes

29. Hot Picks

Our selection of the best one-offs and series heading to market now

Plus: 4 Well-being, 5 Diversity, 34 Last Word

Contact us

Editor Richard Middleton
richard.middleton@informa.com

Deputy editor Mark Layton
mark.layton@informa.com

Contributors Tim Dams, Deborah Williams, Tracy Forsyth

Sales manager Michael Callan
michael.callan@informa.com

Art director Matthew Humberstone
matthew.humberstone@informa.com

Senior marketing executive Abigail Dede
abigail.dede@informa.com

Commercial director Patricia Arescy
patricia.arescy@informa.com

Editorial director Stuart Thomson
stuart.thomson@informa.com



Published by Informa Tech, Blue Fin Building,
110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TA
e-mail: tbi@informa.com web: www.tbivision.com

© 2021 Informa UK Ltd All rights reserved
Reproduction without permission is prohibited

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.



Well-being Tracy Forsyth

Don't let the grindstone grind you down

Corporate wellness coach Tracy Forsyth shares advice on surviving what we hope is the last stretch of lockdown

Never have I felt more like a kid on the backseat of a stuffy car on a never-ending, hot motorway journey asking, “Are we there yet?” The length of the lockdown, over a year now, is exasperating.

Our collective adrenal glands have been working overtime with stress, anxiety and uncertainty. We've practiced resilience techniques, we've been mindful about self-care, some of us have got superfit, others, like me, have a coronastone added to their midriff.

The end, which can appear tantalisingly in sight, seems to disappear like an oasis every time we get near. Ugh! So, what do you do if your inner toddler is ready to throw all your toys out of the pram? Here are my suggestions:

Express yourself

Get it off your chest. Have a good moan. Have a cry. Wail and shake your fists at the sky if it helps. Like a toddler having a tantrum who then sleeps like a baby, sometimes it's good to let all that emotion out.

Don't bottle it up, whatever you do, otherwise you are likely to explode in other ways.

Dance it out

Think like Snoopy. If you throw on some great dance tunes (for me 1980s pop) and dance like no-one's watching, singing at the top of your lungs, it's a joyful, energetic, feel-good, wonderful experience. The heartbeat rises, oxygen whizzes around your system, refreshing and revitalising you.

Be gentle with yourself

OK, here I'm talking to everyone who hasn't been walking 20,000 steps a day or doing 60km on the Peloton. If you are emerging from lockdown with a much-expanded waistline and feeling terribly unfit then take it easy. Just start slowly to get active.

Put in a pretend commute and walk 45 minutes to the imaginary office and then back again at the end of the day. Ease into it. Be kind to yourself.

Spring clean

Spring is indeed in the air (in the northern hemisphere, at least) and this is the traditional time for a clear out and tidy up.

We all know the psychological benefits of a declutter, clearing not only the home but often the mind as well. Get rid of stuff that no longer serves you.

Think like Marie Kondo (Japan's organisational guru and TV host) and ask yourself, “Does this spark joy?” If not, out it goes, making space for new energy, new possibilities.

Do something different

We are curious creatures on the whole. We need to learn, innovate, have new things to experience. So try something new just for the fun of it. Whether it's new recipes, new sources of information, new skills – whatever it might be, just try something from a different perspective.

Book something to look forward to

Finally, and the one that is my personal carrot on a stick, give yourself something to look forward to - be it barbecues with a few good friends in the garden or days out. Book it in, have it on the calendar.

These days many things are refundable from bookings at pubs and restaurants to staycations and holidays abroad. For me, often the anticipation of going somewhere is half the fun. So read the small print and if you are happy, book that trip and let it help you keep going.

Above all, hang in there. And remember, as the saying goes, “This too shall pass.” We are only 10 minutes away, kids. **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

Reaching out to create bonds

In her latest column, the Creative Diversity Network's executive director Deborah Williams urges the industry to learn from its experiences under lockdown

Spring has sprung and in the UK we are starting to move out of the lockdowns and the pandemic structures that have been in place for the last year. We have seen good progress in the UK television sector in getting productions going again with the help of social distancing guidelines and the government-backed insurance scheme.

That's great. However, I'm concerned that diversity is not properly included front and centre in conversations about how the industry recovers. So I want to continue this month looking at what a holistic approach to this process might feel like in practice.

Before we go any further, I would urge our industry at all levels to think hard about the issue, as well as how and when it comes into view. Is it something that is only a reaction to pressure coming from external circumstances similar to last year's Black Lives Matter movement? Or is it something that is absolutely embedded in the way that we work? Let me break this down into what it means for me.

Fresh approach

Firstly, it means that when you look at going into production, and recruiting freelancers for roles, you don't simply go back to the places you went before. Instead, think about the relationships you have built, the new ways you have connected with others and the new places you have discovered over the last 12 months. For example, the online spaces which were used for masterclasses, education and training.

The last year has made everyone think about new ways to reach talent that some of us haven't reached before. It is critical that we think about how this translates into production. Rather than just virtue signalling through on-screen casting, we need to mature our approach and get to the real substance of what we are seeking to achieve.

Secondly, when you are putting together your guidelines for working together, how do you include diversity? Do you write about the behaviour, culture,

principles and values that people should adhere to? Who takes responsibility for making sure that action is taken when needed? Who is the responsible adult on set for people to talk to about any negative issues they are experiencing?

How is disability and accessibility folded into your planning? Are you asking people what their access requirements are? Are you checking that any information you provide is in a format that they can read and understand?

Grassroots

This month I am participating in a MIPTV session about 'truth to power'. One of the most important things to have come out of the last year is how a lot of grassroots workers have been galvanised and feel empowered to speak truthfully about what is happening within our industry. About the things that either we didn't know about, pretended we weren't aware of, or just ignored.

We must continue to support those who are working hard and bringing genuine concerns to people's attention. One of the things I'll be talking about is how you bring diversity into a conversation with people who are senior to you. It's going to be interesting and I hope you can participate in it to share your thoughts.

When I started at CDN a few years ago, I would use a quote from painter and teacher William Merritt Chase to explain my understanding of diversity. It gets to the heart of how we as an organisation think about how this is wider than us. "Diversity... is not casual liberal tolerance of anything not yourself. It is not polite accommodation. Instead, diversity is, in action, the sometimes painful awareness that other people, other races, other voices, other habits of mind have as much integrity of being, as much claim on the world as you do... And I urge you, amid all the differences present to the eye and mind, to reach out to create the bond that... will protect us all. We are all meant to be here together." **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



Digging deeper into Discovery+

Six months after the UK launch of Discovery+, Richard Middleton speaks to UK & Nordic boss James Gibbons to find out the lessons learned

The recent launch of streaming service Discovery+ has been closely watched by those with even the vaguest of connections to the unscripted business and the reason is simple: despite the flurry of major SVOD launches over the past 12 months, this particular streamer is something of an outlier.

Incumbents such as Amazon and Netflix, along with more recent entrants such as Disney+ and Apple TV+, produce across the genre board, as do most of the recent streamers from the US studios such as WarnerMedia's HBO Max and NBCUniversal's Peacock.

There are smaller rivals that focus on specific genres or types of programmes – documentaries, perhaps – but it is only Discovery+ that is betting such a large house on such a relatively narrow unscripted focus. And in the UK, where its DPlay service was essentially rebranded to facilitate the launch of Discovery+ last year, viewers have had a while to get used to the offering.

Two things are in its favour, of course: one is that its key genre, factual entertainment, is hugely diverse and

Strong, exclusive content is "key" to the success of streamer Discovery+, says James Gibbons

allows the streamer to house blue chip natural history shows next to reality and lifestyle fare that ranges from well-known series such as *90 Day Fiancé* to *Estonia*, which explores the sinking of a passenger ferry.

The other factor at play here is that this is Discovery. There are few unscripted rivals that would be able to assemble such a range of programming for a global streamer, something that James Gibbons, EVP & MD of the UK and Nordics, is clearly aware of.

"It's true that the factual category in a broad sense is something that lots of people are investing in," he says. "But at the same time, we do it in a way that is unique, because we create series and long running franchises that people can inhabit as a world."

Building on bedrock

Discovery+ offers a bevy of specials, of course, but Gibbons describes the likes of *Gold Rush* and *90 Day Fiancé* as "the bedrock" of the service. "You basically get to know a group of people or a world and then



Shows like *Gold Rush* are the “bedrock” of Discovery+ with the potential to run for years over multiple seasons

you live in it and you follow it over time, often years,” he continues.

“We have that in motoring, in food, in adventure, in reality and that is the key point – if you don’t have that background in doing those long-running key series, you can’t imagine them out of nowhere. You can acquire library, that’s fine if someone will sell it to you, but you can’t just easily take it over. You can do one-offs and specials, but you can’t offer that world of factual entertainment.”

In an increasingly crowded streaming ecosystem, it is – Discovery hopes – a key differentiator. But the balance is far from simple: the company still operates a raft of pay and free-to-air linear channels globally that enjoy pick-up but also reduce that whiff of exclusivity that Discovery+ has been primed to offer.

The result is more SVOD-only commissions. “Strong, exclusive content is the key for us,” Gibbons says of Discovery+, adding that the company has “really pumped up the investment in that area”. He describes the company as being in a “renewed phase” of spending on programming: in straight numerical terms, that means Discovery UK’s investment in original content this year is up 25% on 2019. So where’s it all going?

Sweet spots & segues

With the UK version of Discovery+ now six months old, some clear – perhaps predictable – trends have emerged. True crime is a major category with successes such as the *Faking It* franchise, Gibbons says, while reality and factual are also of course key.

The aim is to create “best in class” in these genres, he adds, but the ideal is to commission a show that appeals to, say, a true crime fan, but which also entices viewers from other genre groups too. “That is our sweet spot, a show that appeals to a core audience but which is broad enough to appeal to others.”

Recent UK orders also provide some insight into how Discovery+ is working with its channels: *Michel Roux Jr.’s Simple French Country Cooking* (w/t) and a second season of *Gok Wan’s Easy Asian*, for example, were ordered for Food Network, while *My Mortgage Free Home* was extended for HGTV. But all three will have exclusive previews on the streamer.

Back on the genre-front, Discovery+ has seen surging interest in the mystery and paranormal categories too, while also piggybacking on the success of shows such as Netflix’s *Tiger King*, offering its take on the story with programmes such as *Joe Exotic*:

Tigers, Lies And Cover-Up.

The investigation space is growing fast for Discovery+ too, and it neatly highlights the true value of a global streamer: just as Netflix and Amazon have found in scripted, it turns out there is appetite for unscripted stories that may seem very local but which in fact have global resonance.

Gibbons points to *Estonia*, which explores the tragic passenger ferry sinking 20 years ago. “It was not in English, but it became a real hit on the service and not just in the UK but elsewhere too. In the linear world, it probably wouldn’t have been aired as broadly, but as a streaming product it is easy to put it into more places.”

Rights & reorganisation

Any conversation about shows that could resonate globally is normally swiftly followed by an exploration of required rights. It’s no different for Discovery+, but Gibbons says there is flexibility.

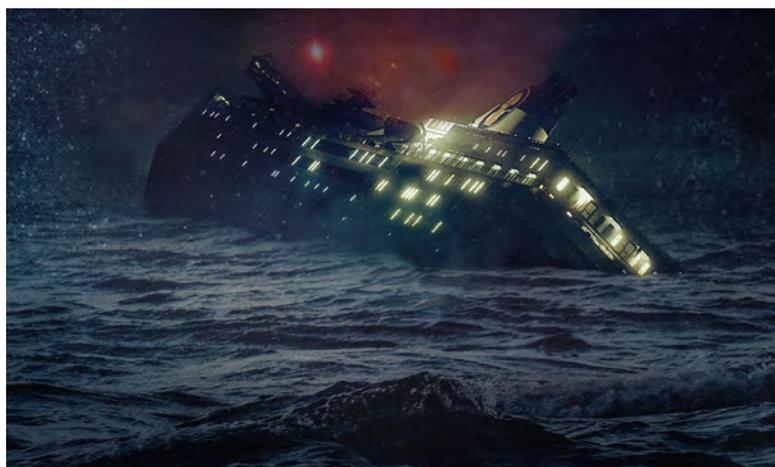
“When we [the UK] commission, there’s a decision point at which the rest of world can choose whether to come in and invest as well. If they don’t, it remains – in our case – UK only and we will do a deal for international rights or the producer can keep rights. If the rest of world wants the rights, we’ll come in and fully fund the show.”

At present, content on various versions of the streamer around the world differ of course, but it is predominantly stocked with IP from its US-based mothership. “The next biggest category for us in the UK will be local commissions, and then there’ll be shows produced by other Discovery markets in the Nordics or wherever.”

There are also those aforementioned linear networks to consider, but it’s clear that the streamer is taking a dominant role in commissioning. The UK team was recently trimmed down by around 10% because, as Gibbons says, “like everyone else, we wanted to make sure we are organised in the right way for the future.” That doesn’t mean the linear networks will disappear any time soon, he adds, but the focus is on shows for Discovery+, which can then populate the linear schedule as required.

Streaming is, however, a different beast when it comes to content consumption and subscriber growth for most SVODs has largely focused on using new shows rather than the “bedrock” of returning series. Just how this trend will play out on a pure fact-ent streamer remains to be seen.

“We can generally carry on with shows that are popular, but the pressure to bring new characters is very high and streamers are very hungry in that respect. We wouldn’t want to underestimate that – our content



Estonia is one example of a show about a local event with a global resonance

“Our sweet spot is a show that appeals to a core audience, but which is broad enough to appeal to others”

James Gibbons
Discovery



people have a big challenge with new characters and ideas, but that is why there is a renewed focus on investment and more energy put into that area.”

Discovery+ is aided and abetted in that regard through its close relationship with All3Media, which it owns with Liberty Global. But don’t expect to see Netflix and Shonda Rhimes-style deals in the unscripted space just yet, Gibbons adds.

“We don’t have a plan to in-house production or to virtually in-house [talent] by tying people down in a very close way, because it works very well at the moment with the companies producing our long-running series. There’s no need to do further integration on the commercial arrangements.”

Do, however, expect more deals like Discovery’s decade-long pact with BBC Studios struck in 2019, which handed it landmark natural history IP such as *Planet Earth*, *Blue Planet* and *Life*.

“We want to be the destination for real life and so we need to aggregate other players to make sure we deliver on that message,” Gibbons says. “There are companies that produce their own content and which might aspire – or have – their own DTC service, but there are many others that produce or own content where that streaming imperative isn’t there.

“We are in a world where your future share price depends on having your own streamer, so there’s not much point trying to figure out how to buy up someone’s content. That story has to play out.

“Yet there are a number of producers and companies with libraries that don’t see themselves in that way, they don’t value themselves in that way. We are very actively talking to a number of those companies to be a single destination, an aggregator destination of factual entertainment content. So yes, you will see more sorts of those deals,” Gibbons adds, suggesting the industry’s attention on Discovery+ will not wane for some time yet. **TBI**



Hell On Earth: WWII

8 x 60', History, HD



The Witness Is A Whale

1 x 60', Nature, 4K



Europe's New Wild

6 x 60', Nature, 4K



Family Man

1 x 60', Crime, HD



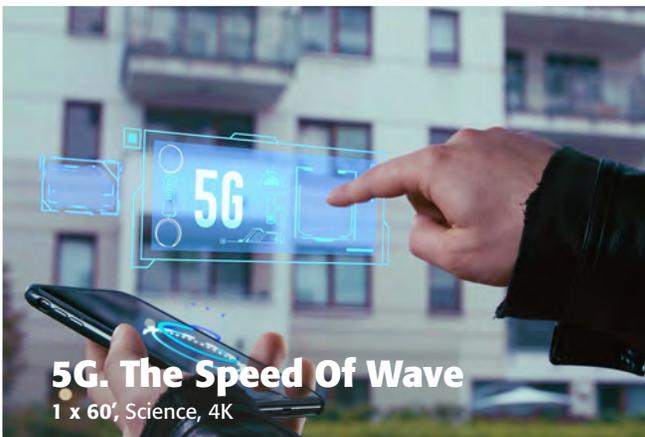
Hitler's Last Stand

10 x 60', History, HD



Plane Crash Recreated

10 x 60', Science, HD



5G. The Speed Of Wave

1 x 60', Science, 4K



Beyond The Pole

17 x 60' or 1 x 90', Lifestyle, HD

For sales enquiries please contact:
info@offthefence.com
www.offthefence.com





The shape of things to come

Distribution has evolved rapidly over recent years, but one area that had remained remarkably similar was the annual cycle of markets. Richard Middleton explores how that's about to change

At the start of 2020, the proliferation of markets, conferences and large-scale networking events had reached a new high.

For those working in – or indeed writing about – the global content business, the events calendar was seemingly becoming unsustainable. There was an evolution of sorts already occurring pre-pandemic, with certain markets such as MIPTV evolving into more Europe-centric events, but COVID now looks set to have shaken up the way business is being done more fundamentally.

Absence of FOMO

Prior to global lockdowns, there had always been an opportunity cost attached to missing a market or conference. Or, as Katy Llewellyn-Jones, CEO at Australia and UK-based Beyond Rights puts it, FOMO.

“Even before the pandemic there was a sense amongst some in the industry that there were perhaps too many events, but there was an expectation that you had to be at them all or most of them – a bit FOMO [fear of missing out],” she tells TBI.

As the entire event circuit ground to a halt last March and as the content business

lurched into wholly unknown terrain, that opportunity cost was removed – along with a swathe of actual costs.

“We’ve found that it’s saved time and money,” says Richard Halliwell, the CEO of NENT Studios UK, who sums up the views of most of the industry on the lack of events. But, he adds, it hasn’t just been about the bottom-line. “The financial savings come from not travelling so much and investing in stands at events of course, but the time savings have been the most interesting, as

Above: *Pooch Perfect UK* rights holders Beyond Rights says buyers are making offers more quickly

whole parts of the industry seem to have sped up, with some decisions being made more swiftly, contracts not sitting in the ether for months on end and people really wanting to get things done, despite the pandemic issues.”

Jamie Lynn, EVP of co-production & distribution at Fremantle, tells a similar story. “The biggest benefits to be said for the new way of working are the speed and efficiency by which you can do business.

“It’s much easier logistically to plan big co-pro pitches that involve multiple parties or high-profile talent. Those types of meetings would often involve air travel and a tightly packed, heavily coordinated schedule. I’ve seen such meetings that used to take a month to plan come together in a few days,” he says, pointing to recent Sky commission *This Sceptred Isle* as just one example of a rapid turn-around.

Llewellyn-Jones agrees. Her firm, which is behind shows such as *Pooch Perfect UK* and *Aussie Snake Wranglers*, has found that house-bound buyers are “screening more, making offers more quickly and often wanting shows on air quickly too, especially where there are still gaps in the schedules due to a lack of sporting events,” she says. Talk to buyers, and a similar story emerges.

Unsurprisingly, many distributors moved quickly to divert the considerable savings into their own infrastructure, with companies such as BBC Studios and ITV Studios both building their own bespoke offerings. This is perhaps understandable for some of the deepest-pocketed of players, but they were far from alone.

TCB Media Rights co-founders Paul Heaney and Dina Subhani returned to the content business in October – six months into the pandemic – with new distribution and financing venture BossaNova. For Heaney, a man well-versed in creating buzz around projects, the bespoke potential of online has offered clear advantages.

“It means we can set up our own pitching platform to attract the community of buyers and producers that we are targeting,” he says, pointing to The BossaNova Development Day which ran in January.

“If you can somehow interlace and infuse these events... with your company culture and personality then bingo. You’re up and

“Clients are possibly looking harder for content during the pandemic”

Fiona Gilroy,
Flame Distribution



running, as you can mould it to fit your customer’s needs.”

Join the meeting

Canada’s Blue Ant International also enriched online experiences for buyers, and Solange Attwood, EVP of international at Blue Ant Media, tells TBI the results have been impressive. There have been “efficiencies” on transactions, she says, and new customers have been reached, with less time-pressed buyers connecting.

Llewellyn-Jones and Halliwell agree.

“In fact, it has probably helped some relationships develop more quickly,” says the NENT Studios UK CEO, who sells shows including drama *Manhunt II: The Night Stalker* and unscripted series *A&E: After Dark series 2*. “Zoom is more relaxed than rushing around a market, it’s more personal, and for one-on-one meetings it can be a great way to get to know each other.

“Everyone’s on home turf,” he adds, “and that can lead to a much more comfortable and open conversation much more quickly. It’s the ones who put on those fake Zoom backgrounds that I don’t trust,” he jokes. “What are those guys hiding?”

Fiona Gilroy, content sales & acquisitions director at Australia’s Flame Distribution, has also found benefits online. “We have met some new clients during the pandemic, possibly because they’re looking harder for content or have more time to connect with us, especially during the virtual conferences, many of which have spread out across more days,” she tells TBI.

As Gilroy points out, the market cycle has to some extent continued online, but longer dates and distributors’ events mean the peaks of sales activity are now spread more evenly across the year. “We can promote a project when the time is right,” adds Llewellyn-Jones, “not just specifically in line with a MIPTV because that’s what expected.”

“The rhythm of hitting the world with

Manhunt II: The Night Stalker has been picked up by Acorn TV for North America





your slates twice a year may continue but in differing locations and maybe with a continuing intensity, rather than two massive build-ups to two massive quick events,” Heaney adds. “That now feels a bit flabby.”

Banking on serendipity

All of this is not to say that markets are a thing of the past, of course. Attwood adds that for Blue Ant, physical events will remain an important focus for the company not least because it offers an efficient way to bring together buyers and creatives on a single time zone to thrash out ideas.

“People in our sector who are looking for the next hit programme enjoy collaborating in person because that creative process of riffing, massaging and developing ideas happens so effectively in person,” she says.

Indeed, one area that physical events have not been able to replicate is the informal catch-up, the serendipitous moment when you meet a friend of a friend during a midnight beverage at The Grand and a year later have a show in the works together.

Yet even on this front, distributors seem bullish. “Producers have been interested in talking about their development slates and requesting our feedback and help with getting content into production,” says Gilroy. “Our role in brokering those deals has become even more important with lots of opportunities to see that come to fruition.”

Blue Ant’s Attwood agrees, adding that her firm is now “hyperfocused on finding

new ways to collaborate” and get involved with projects. Recent additions to her sales slate include factual series *Search And Rescue: North Shore*, while Beyond’s Llewellyn-Jones adds that a pro-active approach can mitigate the risk of missing out on an unforeseen partnership struck by chance on the Croisette.

Heaney adds that most in the industry are now au fait with the new “rules of engagement” while Halliwell points to his company’s success with getting *Close To Me*, NENT Studios UK’s first drama series, greenlit and produced during lockdown. He also cites *The Holiday*, which has new partner Night Train Media attached, adding: “Our experience is that you can build successful relationships with the right project and the right approach. That’s no different to doing things in pre-pandemic times.

“Clearly you miss those random, serendipitous moment when someone has exactly the idea you had been looking for all along. However, serendipity isn’t a strategy - we’ve always worked hard to always get our feet in the door early.”

Future gazing

For the immediate future, distributors have little choice but to continue pressing the virtual flesh and striking deals online. Looking ahead to when travel restrictions lift, there is a common chain of thought that markets and conferences offer unique benefits that will ensure their survival.

Canadian distributor Blue Ant International recently added the series *Search And Rescue: North Shore* to its slate and EVP Solange Attwood says plenty of opportunities exist outside markets

Yet it is clear that distributors don’t expect to return to a pre-pandemic calendar. “There will always be a place for some markets,” says Llewellyn-Jones. “We do still need to meet, talk, get a feel for the marketplace in general and, indeed, celebrate our industry and its achievements – and events like MIPCOM are perfect for that. But the past year has proved that in the short term certainly, they are not essential.”

She believes Beyond will attend fewer events in 2022 than 2019 – assuming the world returns to some sort of normalcy by then – with a focus on “the big international sales markets and a couple of the regional events. In between, our sales team will arrange focused sales trips in all our major territories.” The events that she believes will prosper are “those that concentrate on production and co-productions,” she adds.

Halliwell agrees, adding that “the calendar had got too full, with too many similar and overlapping events” in recent years. “The pandemic will ultimately shake some out of the mix and that’s a good thing. We’ve proved we can pretty much continue business as normal without constantly jumping on a plane, so the markets going forward will need to think about what they offer to get us coming back, to commit our budgets. I can’t imagine anyone will attend as many events in 2022 as they used to.”

For the tentpole events in the global content industry, the future – at this juncture, at least – seems relatively positive. Everyone is looking forward to catching up with each other in person soon, but there’s a tangible feeling that the industry has moved on considerably from the calendar of 2019.

“Lockdowns have just sped up the changes that were taking place already,” says Gilroy, a point echoed by Halliwell. “The world has changed too much,” he says. “We’ll probably settle for a smaller schedule of events and more bespoke, direct activities between individual businesses.

“Personally, I think I have spent enough of my life already waving at the bloke behind the bar in The Grand.” **TBI**

RFDS

ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

8 x 1 HOUR





Out of India

Streamers are piling investment into India and invigorating local scripted content creation, but regulatory changes could change all that. Mark Layton speaks to producers and streamers about this giant market

India is the world's fastest-growing streaming market, with US SVOD giants trying to carve out a firm foothold in competition with established local leaders, in a territory that analysts say is still years away from saturation point.

All this activity is creating numerous opportunities in the region, but perhaps for nobody more so than the local creators who have been able to break into new genres for the first time.

"Traditionally, Indian television has stuck to just one style of content, which is soaps, the kitchen

Sacred Games was the first Indian original series made for global streamer Netflix

politics," explains Chaitanya Hegde, head of content at Mumbai-based talent and content management company Tulsea. "When OTT came in there was just this plethora of opportunities for everyone, irrespective of what genre you wanted to explore. That was just a godsend for most of the writers and directors."

This is a point echoed by Shibasish Sarkar, CEO of Mumbai production giant Reliance Entertainment, who elaborates: "Suddenly the genres have opened up; there are niche and edgy stories, thrillers and crime, and at the same time stories with lighter humour and

the quality of production is like, or better than, film. It's a moment that all content creators are thriving upon."

Emerging opportunities

Reliance's Phantom Films banner was one of the first companies to strike gold in this changing landscape, producing the crime thriller *Sacred Games* as Netflix's first Indian original series. Working with the streamer was a huge learning experience, says Sarkar, who reveals "we learned the pattern, we learned the format, what worked for their platform."

Sacred Games went on to receive global acclaim, with two-thirds of the show's audience coming from outside India. This exposure to international audiences, coupled with higher budgets, new genres to work in and less-restrictive episode counts, has proven very attractive to both Bollywood and indie film creators and talent, with Sarkar noting many are turning to television because they won't be limited to telling a story in just two hours or committed to a daily soap.

Reliance's relationship with Netflix continues, with multiple projects in the works, as well as with Disney+ Hotstar and Amazon, the latter of which will host the upcoming *Stardust*, a fictional take on 1950s Bollywood, from Vikramaditya Motwane, who was also the showrunner on *Sacred Games*.

"With the growth of content consumption on streaming services, one thing is manifestly clear – local is king," says Anish Mehta, CEO of Mumbai-based animation studio Cosmos-Maya, who reveals that the streaming boom has also been a boon to the local kids' content industry. "We have released five new projects in the Indian OTT market, and this was just in 2020. Moreover, it has allowed content creators like ourselves to release content simultaneously on pay-TV and the digital streaming space to maximise the audience base."

Mehta adds: "Since the arrival of big name SVOD platforms in India, we have carved out a new medium for our content, with bestselling titles like *Vir: The Robot Boy* and *Selfie With Bajrangi* topping viewership charts consistently."

Standing out from the crowd

While content creators are reaping the benefits, streamers are also striving to make the most of this rich battleground with a strong roster of local originals and their own USPs.

Rohit Jain, MD at Lionsgate South Asia and Networks – Emerging Markets Asia, says that US company Starz's Lionsgate Play, which launched in the country last year, has found "an edge over other new global streamers still looking for the right entry strategy

"Suddenly the genres have opened up - there are niche and edgy stories, thrillers and crime"

Shibasish Sarkar,
Reliance Entertainment



ZEE5 thriller *Abhay* has proved popular both with Indian and global audiences

in the Asian markets" by securing deep integration for its service with telcos and device manufacturers.

Lionsgate Play is busy at work on its debut slate of Indian originals, with a remake of US streamer Hulu's dramedy series *Casual* and new college drama *U-Special* recently announced as its first offerings.

Jain reveals the company is "always on the lookout" for original content with a focus on "untold, edgy, urban stories" as well as 'slice of life' comedy and young adult humour.

"We are trying to differentiate ourselves by not over indexing on the crime/thriller genre, which is the flavour of the season," says Jain, who reveals the streamer is also partnering with notable local content creators "who understand Indian audiences as well as the nuances of storytelling and OTT", including Kunal Kohli and Akarsh Khurana.

Manish Kalra, chief business officer for ZEE5 India, says that the indigenous service is likewise working to stand out from the crowd by presenting itself as a prominent local language streaming destination, with original content not necessarily in the more widespread Hindi and English languages. "Over the past three years, we have invented and reinvented ourselves and carved a strong niche as India's platform of choice and a multilingual storyteller for a billion Indians."

ZEE5 launched in 2018 with content in 12 different languages, and Kalra notes that this "extensive language focus and subsequent need for hyperlocal content has made ZEE5 the perfect conduit between local original creators and their Tinseltown aspirations.

"Since our inception, we have produced over 120 originals in local languages and diverse genres, which is at least 10 times more than any other OTT player. Some of our most watched shows have been created by content creators like Siddharth P Malhotra (*Kaafir*), Vijay Lalwani (*The Final Call*), Bhav Dhulia (*Rangbaaz*) and Ken Ghosh (*Abhay 2*) to name a few, and going forward, this number will only increase."





Taking Indian content global

As early successes like *Sacred Games* have shown, the streaming boom is very much a two-way street, with Indian-produced content travelling out of the country, as well as a new pipeline of global content coming in.

Archana Anand, chief business officer at ZEE5's international arm ZEE5 Global, says the company has seen success with dramas and thrillers such as *Abhay* and *Rangbaaz*, with "substantial demand for regional content driven by specific segments of diaspora audiences," such as in MENA, where there is nearly as much viewership for Malayalam and Tamil Shows as for Hindi content.

Mehta at Cosmos-Maya, meanwhile, notes that Indian animated content is also in demand and taking the place of shows from North American or Japanese/Korean studios. "Our show *Eena Meena Deeka* is a shining example of this, streaming digitally in over 100 countries and recognised by kids worldwide."

Tulsea's Hegde believes it is only a matter of time until India produces its first global 'watercooler' show. "We're very close to it but we haven't had our *Fauda* or *Narcos* or *Tehran*," he says, "It's just around the corner."

As for international content proving popular in India, viewers are tuning in to the same things doing well everywhere else in the world.

"We have seen a fantabulous response to *Normal People*, *The Girlfriend Experience*, *Love Island* and *Spartacus*," reveals Jain, while Sarkar says *Fauda*, *The Night Manager* and *The Queen's Gambit* have also been a hit with Indian audiences.

"That gives me a strong belief that language is not a barrier and that audiences across language, across geography, like similar shows."

ZEE5 original series *The Final Call*, from Jar Pictures, is one of its most-watched shows

Censorship concerns

There is, however, a storm cloud on the horizon of all this streaming sunshine. India's Supreme Court recently ruled that it would implement a 'streaming mechanism' allowing state control over content deemed unsuitable or politically unacceptable by the government.

Netflix has faced calls for censorship over BBC Studios series *A Suitable Boy* in November, while Amazon was forced to issue an apology over its political drama *Tandav* for allegedly offending Hindu religious beliefs, with Aparna Purohit, the company's head of original content in the country, going so far as to submit an anticipatory bail plea.

Reports indicate that Amazon has already delayed the latest season of spy thriller *The Family Man* as a result of the scrutiny, while Netflix is also looking to vet their output.

Hegde raises concerns that the ruling could stifle India's new avenue for creativity. "Most creators are responsible, they know where to draw the line. I think you should allow them to do their job - if you're going to curb their creativity by putting boundaries then you can't venture into certain areas such as religious or political or anything that is going to be remotely controversial."

Kalra at ZEE5 meanwhile adds that "self-regulation is a high priority for us" and that "through a logical lens, the content can be manoeuvred and should not be a reason for restriction," while Jain at Lionsgate Play says the company would "welcome clarity."

Whatever impact the ruling might have on India's future content creation, Hegde believes that the key to success in the territory lies, as always, with whoever is creating the best shows.

"We have six to seven players right now. There is Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, indigenous OTT players like ZEE5, Voot, ALTBalaji and SonyLIV, as well. I think the days of being enamoured by a platform are gone. The playing field has become somewhat level in that way," says Hegde.

"Recently we had a show called *Scam 1992*, which came out of SonyLIV, which was one of the most popular shows of last year. This was a show that actually drove subscription to a platform. The minute you have two-to-three such shows then the dynamics are going to change. Everyone has to be on their toes, because you don't know where the next good show is going to emerge from. Content is going to speak, so you really have to start investing in good shows and nothing else." **TBI**

FILMRISE





Films Of Record's *The Station: Trouble On The Tracks* is likely to remain on hiatus until the current lockdown lifts

Gaining access

Interest in access documentaries has soared but global lockdowns have made for a challenging production environment. Tim Dams explores how it's done and what's next for this rapidly growing genre

Demand for access docs has never been higher. 'Occu-soaps' have become ubiquitous across supermarkets, airports, train stations, retail and museums, while access docs focused on crime are also enjoying strong ratings.

"They're a tried-and-tested format and perform consistently well for us," says Daniel Pearl, factual commissioning editor at the UK's Channel 5, who stresses that the broadcaster is now hunting for more programmes that grant special, privileged access into the kinds of places that viewers might never get to visit.

However, the pandemic has created big problems for access docs with many of the traditional precincts shut or understaffed. In addition, there has been a justified caution among those locations that have remained open to allow camera crews into their workplaces, notes Pearl.

"Real life is definitely in demand," says Harry Bell, MD of producer Tern TV. "But the paradox is that it's never been harder to convince institutions and organisations and big traditional precincts that it's wise, safe and secure to film."

As a result, since the start of the pandemic, broadcasters have had to pause several productions until the location is open again, or they've had to adapt to new Covid-secure filming protocols.

Zinc Media's Films Of Record, for example, has been talking with Network Rail about making another season of *The Station: Trouble On The Tracks*, which first aired in March 2020. Conversations about access are going well, says executive producer Karen Edwards, but they are likely to wait until after lockdown to start filming.

Firstly, it would be hard – but not impossible – to film because of safety concerns, she says. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the stories would be limited because the trains are largely empty of commuters, and so much of the focus would be on Covid. By the time it aired, Edwards thinks that viewers would have moved on. "We are just better placed waiting, so we can film more freely," she says.

While tricky, these kinds of productions haven't ground to a halt. Middlechild Productions' creative director Andrew Eastel says most organisations are desperate to get back to normality and are happy to discuss filming when they can again. Middlechild was able to film its

new UKTV series, *Secrets Of The Transport Museum*, up until October last year, and it's been able to safely film a new observational doc series for Channel 5, largely uninterrupted, over the last couple of months. "These kinds of productions haven't stopped completely, but we have had to work extremely hard to make sure everybody involved is safe."

Tern TV has also continued making access docs during lockdown, including BBC2's *The Secret Science Of Sewage* and *Inside The Zoo* for BBC Scotland.

Bell reels off seven key tips that Tern has learnt while filming, above and beyond Covid-safe shooting protocols. Firstly, film outside, not inside if possible. Secondly, use props to achieve social distancing – for example, a methane-powered VW Beetle was used as a prop in *The Secret Science Of Sewage*, with a presenter and contributor on either side, so there wasn't a yawning two metre gap between them.

Third, make use of clever filming perspectives, such as adjusting the depth of field so backgrounds don't look so empty. Also, use more archive, such as licencing amateur drone footage. Fifth, employ the retrospective interview technique – getting a master interview that takes place after filming an event, and cutting it into the edit so they are commenting on what happened. "It's a lot safer and easier to do, you can control both the interview and the environment," says Bell.

"The groundwork done on phones and video calls before lays a foundation for the intimacy"

Lucie Ridout
Arrow



Sixth, make use of technology, such as 4K phones and GoPros that are in the hands of contributors, for remote filming. And seventh, use self-shooters more than crews. Bell also throws in a helpful final piece of advice – when filming on location in a town or city, there are no toilets available, as hotels, restaurants and cafes are closed. So book an Airbnb for the crew to use.

Production company Arrow, which has been behind shows such as *O.J. & Nicole: An American Tragedy*, has also continued filming in the US during the pandemic on its Discovery+ crime-focused series *Mind Of A Monster*. Executive producer Lucie Ridout says there have been some positives: when trying to talk to people, they are likely to be in at home. On the flip side, contributors can drop out for weeks at a time if they or a member of their family catch Covid. Often they are struggling too – having experienced mental health challenges as a result of horrific life experiences, the pandemic can trigger stress and emotion.

For Ridout, the biggest challenge is actually filming contributors. Rather than shooting outside or at the home of a contributor, the *Mind Of A Monster* team will rent an Airbnb or similar for filming. "It looks like you are filming in someone's home," says Ridout. They will make sure there are separate entrances for the contributors and crew, and separate bathrooms on site too. The Airbnb is deep cleaned between contributors, and also at the end of filming.

Arrow will also hire local crew to do the filming, with the UK-based director Zooming in to ask questions. For the first shoot, Ridout was worried how this would work. "But it hasn't stopped us getting amazing stories and amazing access. We have found that the groundwork that's done on the phones and video calls by the team before lays a foundation for the intimacy you need in the interview."

Looking ahead, Ridout predicts a "hybrid" future, with some of the techniques and technology learnt from the pandemic adopted by productions. She cites a 'box camera' that Arrow dispatches to contributor's houses that a DoP can instruct them to set up, complete with lighting, to film remotely. Middlechild's Eastel, meanwhile, reckons the Covid-friendly fixed rig, as used in Channel 4's *Grayson Perry's Art Club*, could have a resurgence. "Would the show have been so good with all the bells and whistles a full crew would have brought it? I don't think so. Watching the show feels like a very personal experience."

Channel 5's Pearl says the industry has become accustomed to the use of remote meetings, viewings and editing, and believes many of these online techniques will persist beyond lockdowns. One thing he does miss is the opportunity to go to an edit and properly discuss a cut with the team. "Over time, I think we will shift into a hybrid model of working, with some remote editing and some back in the office or edit house."

It's that word hybrid again – expect it to be all the rage as lockdowns ease. And when they do, the access market is likely to take off. Eastel predicts a potential lockdown release boom. "I think 2021 will be a good time to get access secured, as commercial entities seek as much press as they can get to help with their recovery." **TBI**



Top: Arrow's *O.J. & Nicole: An American Tragedy* was produced for Discovery. Below: Tern's *The Secret Science Of Sewage* made use of props to disguise the socially-distanced gap between presenters



Development on ITV Studios and Nippon TV's *Stacking It!* proved easier during lockdown

Balancing act

Evergreen formats have become a mainstay for risk-averse commissioners, but as Tim Dams discovers, the market seems to be shifting and providing relief for some of those in development with new and more niche ideas

Broadcasters have long focused their spend and schedules on formats with a proven track record, a trend that has only cemented itself over the past year as risk appetite declined.

Veteran quiz show *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* – which was rebooted last year by ABC in the US – remains the world's widest-selling format, leading K7 Media's most recent list of the 100 best travelling formats, with 102 sales around the world. *Deal Or No Deal* is in second place with 83, followed by *Got Talent* with 77.

These evergreen titles, as well as other big selling, long-runners like *Family Feud*, *The Voice*, *Minute To Win It*, *MasterChef* and *Survivor*, remain popular with broadcasters the world over, but their success can mean there is little room for new formats to emerge.

"It is difficult getting broadcasters to make

that leap and take a risk on something new," says Sarah Tong, director of sales at Hat Trick International, which sells well known titles such as *Have I Got News for You*, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *Rich House*, *Poor House* as well as newer formats like *Screen Grab*.

Indeed, it has been even harder for newer formats to make it to the screen during the lockdowns of the past year.

Throughout the pandemic, broadcasters have instinctively turned to tried-and-tested formats – which they know how to make and to which they can more easily apply Covid-19 production protocols – as the safest kinds of shows to film. In the UK, *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* was one of the first entertainment shows to return to production after the first lockdown eased in summer.

Meanwhile, some long-runners returned in new Covid-safe guises, such as *I'm A*

Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!, which relocated to a Welsh castle, and *Love Island USA*, which shot on the rooftop of a Las Vegas hotel.

There are many reasons that such shows remain popular with broadcasters and audiences. ITV Studios' global creative networks chief Mike Beale speaks of a "craving for nostalgia." Amsterdam-based Lineup Industries' co-founder Julian Curtis also says well-known formats are a safer bet for commercial channels and their advertisers.

However, both Beale and Curtis think there is movement afoot in the world of formats, and that risk appetite may be growing.

Many indies have been busy developing new ideas while stuck in lockdown and unable to produce. "We're hearing now that broadcasters are taking those pitches," says Curtis. "They are considering new things."

Beale, for example, says ITV Studios has a

slew of new ideas coming through, on top of a number of new shows it has managed to launch in the past 12 months like *Don't Rock The Boat*, quiz show *Winning Combination*, and *Don't Rock The Boat (The Cabins)*.

Beale cites three UK shows that have recently been announced: game show *Moneyball*, hosted by Ian Wright, for ITV; *Unbeatable*, a new daytime BBC One general knowledge-based quiz hosted by Jason Manford; and ITV Saturday night format *The Void*, which features one of the biggest bespoke water tanks ever constructed for a game show.

Elsewhere, *Big Brother* and *The Voice* creator John de Mol debuted *Marble Mania* in January, his first format since launching his new company last year. The format got off to a strong ratings start on de Mol-owned Dutch broadcaster SBS6, where he often tries out new formats.

In France, TF1 is experimenting with

The Late Night Show With Nitty & Gritty is one example of a riskier format gaining popularity

investing in run-throughs and pilots, they're launching shows in slots that allow them to grow under less scrutiny before transferring them to peak, they're developing their on-demand services which, going forward, will open up more commissioning opportunities for shows that could have been seen as too niche for the bigger terrestrial channels."

Roseman says that rather than judge broadcasters who face the same commercial pressures as any other business and want to uphold the brands that deliver year on year, indies should be looking for new ways to sell and test new IP. "Multi-strand entertainment shows are a great platform to do that. *Carpool Karaoke: The Series* and *Drop The Mic* both started as successful strands on *The Late Late Show With James Corden*. It allows you to pitch these shows with tape and proof of online

"Buyers seem to be much more open to looking at different, riskier formats"

Julian Curtis
Lineup Industries



co-development deal between ITV Studios and Nippon TV. *Stacking It!* sees two families go head-to-head in a series of stacking-based challenges in order to win a dream haul of prizes.

Beale says that, ironically, the development process for *Stacking It!* became easier during lockdowns.

Previously, the show might have been developed over time in a series of meetings in Tokyo, London or Cannes. Instead the idea was refined over a series of weekly

Zoom calls. "This environment has made the process probably much easier than it would have been in the old world. It's certainly cheaper, with no flights involved!"

Beale says it's impressive how far the industry has come to terms with working remotely on development, with quizzes one of the easiest kinds of formats to develop. "We are now doing dry runs, almost like mini-pilots, on Zoom now."

Lineup's Julian Curtis says that, since the beginning of the year, buyers "seem to be much more open to looking at different, riskier formats."

He cites one that Lineup is representing on behalf of Japan's NHK Enterprises, the candid puppet talk show *The Late Night Show With Nitty & Gritty*. The contributors never appear on camera, but are replaced by puppets, allowing them to anonymously reveal their secrets. Curtis says it has been optioned in three territories in the past few weeks. "All of a sudden, it has picked up. When we started pitching it last year, we had little feedback."

This could be something to do with buyers prepping for a post pandemic world. Whereas nostalgic, familiar and comforting shows might have thrived during lockdown, there are signs that audiences might be ready for something different and new as lockdowns ease.

The intensifying battle between global streamers, linear channels and local streamers is also likely to drive demand for new formats too, reckons Beale. "There's a real opportunity for content creators, because buyers need more content." **TBI**



new formats. The broadcaster launched big budget game show *District Z* in December, and *Mystery Duets* in February this year.

Caroline Roseman, head of development at *The Late Late Show With James Corden* and *Drop The Mic* producer Fulwell 73, says broadcasters want new shows to work, and are finding ways to set new formats up for success wherever possible. "They're

statistics and viewer engagement, which will always be more persuasive."

Meanwhile, Beale thinks the lockdown development push by many producers could lead to a "massive slate of new ideas coming online" in the months and years to come.

He hopes that one of those will be *Stacking It!*, a recently announced studio game show that's emerged as a result of a

Pop idols return to win

WEISEMANN
E R

in the new music show

SUPER STAR

+7(495)725-57-18
SALES@NTV.RU
SALES.NTV.RU



DON'T MISS NTV'S
SHOWCASE,
April 12, 9:30 (CEST)!



Embracing autism & disability representation

Mark Layton talks to producers from around the world and across a range of genres about their neurodiversity and disability-focused shows and what best practices can be learned from how they brought them to the screen

Authentic on-screen representations of disability and neurodiversity are, on the whole, few and far between. Despite global discourse around inclusivity in recent months, instances of tokenism or disabled characters being utilised for ‘teachable moments’ are still prevalent.

But there are shows and formats out there, across both scripted and unscripted, that have successfully put authentic stories and the real lived experiences of the disabled and neurodiverse on screen and can offer insight on the best way to include these communities on both sides of the camera.

Northern Pictures’ dating show *Love On The Spectrum* represents the myriad ways in which autism can present

Filming with respect

Love On The Spectrum is a reality dating series, which was produced for Australia’s ABC network by Sydney-based Northern Pictures and now streams globally on Netflix. It follows participants who are all on the autism spectrum as they search for love or take the next step in their current relationships.

The show is currently in production on a second season for ABC, with plans to follow a new group of participants. The series highlights the myriad ways in which autism can present and show director and producer Cian O’Clery says that it was important

to demonstrate this diversity to help to dispel misconceptions that can come, for example, from anchoring a representation of autism around the portrayal of a sole fictional character.

“The autism spectrum is incredibly diverse, and it’s important to include the stories of people who represent this diversity. That’s not to say that films and TV shows shouldn’t feature autistic characters, but the more diversity there is in that representation of autism the better,” says O’Clery.

When it came to production, O’Clery says that while some of the participants needed a little more care to ensure they weren’t placed in stressful situations, others faced no challenges at all.

“It’s about being respectful and sensitive to each person’s individual needs,” he says. “Our mantra is that ‘we are not filming on our terms, we are filming on your terms’. That goes from planning filming around their schedules, to not filming long 12-hour days. People can always put their hand up to pause filming if they are feeling overwhelmed, and we won’t chase them down alleyways as they try to escape the film crew.”

On the scripted side, Keshet International’s drama format *The A Word*, about a family coming to terms with their child’s autism spectrum diagnosis, has helped to bring a personal tale about autism to a wide, international audience.

Originally created by Israeli writer and director Keren Margalit as *Yellow Peppers* and produced by Tel Aviv-based July-August and Keshet Broadcasting for Channel 2 in 2010, the show has since been remade in the UK, Greece and the Netherlands, while Keshet Studios is currently developing the series alongside Universal Television for NBC in the US.

Margalit explains that she didn’t set out with any particular aim of educating people about autism when creating the show, but rather to tell an authentic and personal story from her own first-hand experiences as the mother of an autistic child. In-fact, Margalit reveals that she sees it more as a story about communication, than about autism.

“I generally don’t believe in agendas, it never works. I had a story to tell and it came out. When someone is passionate, the story just comes out. I never had that motivation,” she explains.

Given this growing global interest in what was a very personal story, Margalit likens the remakes to “sending my kid to boarding school. In my backpack I put three to four essential things that are crucial to him coming back alive; the first one is that it is not about autism, it is about communication skills; it’s funny; it’s human and [the notion that] the battle to be normal can drive you insane.”



Keren Margalit’s personal drama story *Yellow Peppers* has been adapted multiple times around the world

Finding the joy

British children’s series *Pablo*, meanwhile, explores autism from a unique perspective, using animation to bring to life the inner thoughts of the titular autistic five-year-old.

Creator and producer Gráinne McGuinness, of Belfast-based Paper Owl Films, says that the show, which is currently in development on its third season, came about because she sought to address the widespread bullying of autistic children by spreading awareness about the disorder.

“There’s a lot of real joy in there too,” says McGuinness. “Celebrating Pablo’s love of nature or the fact that he can completely disappear into another world inside a tiny bit of fluff or just be completely absorbed by the rain.”

Adding to its authenticity, *Pablo* features autistic creative talent on both sides of the camera. “Every single script was co-written by an autistic writer that we trained to write for children’s television,” reveals McGuinness, while all the animated characters on *Pablo* are also voiced by young people with autism.

McGuinness says that working with talent on the autism spectrum was “not really rocket science,” explaining: “It was just simple, really. It was just finding out what people needed in order to be able to work well and then doing that.”

Leading the way

Factual format *Down The Road*, meanwhile, is gaining ground in Europe. Created by Belgium’s Roses Are Blue, the format follows six young adults with Down syndrome as they embark on an adventure-filled international road trip.

“We never wanted to create a show ‘about’ Down syndrome or send out a big message,” explains Roses Are Blue’s creative director Maarten Millen. “We



wanted to create an entertaining and identifiable show ‘with’ people who have Down syndrome.”

Millen says that there were, of course, practical concerns to consider to accommodate the participants. “We always had full support of the cast’s parents and caretakers. Together with them we could decide whether or not they are up for the challenge. Both physically and emotionally a trip like this one demands a lot from our cast and they need enough time to rest and process everything. As a team, you also need to take into account things move slower than they usually would.”

With the format now having sold to several countries, Millen reveals that his main advice in the show bible, and also during consultancy, is “let the cast lead the way as much as possible. Let the cast tell the story as much as you can and let them decide what is a big story and what is not.”

He explains: “In season two, we planned all kinds of spectacular activities for our cast. The first holiday home we checked into was a beautiful beach front house around Cape Town. But instead of telling a story about admiring the view and the beautiful house, we ended up making ten minutes of compelling television about the cast complaining about the staircase. It was completely unexpected and pure. I loved it.”

Reasonable adjustments

CPL Productions, which, alongside fellow London-based outfit Motion Content Group, created factual series *The Restaurant That Makes Mistakes* for Channel 4 in the UK in 2019, brought together 14 volunteers of various ages, all of whom had dementia, to run a restaurant for five weeks.

“This was not a series about the old and infirm. It was a unique series about what happens when you are diagnosed with dementia whilst still of working age,” says exec producer Trish Powell of the show, which featured participants with ages ranging from 23 to 67.

“Let the cast lead the way” says Maarten Millen of *Roses Are Blue’s* reality format *Down The Road*

“The ambition was to see if staying in the workplace – with reasonable adjustments put in place by employers – could slow down the onslaught of this cruel disease. For example, in the kitchen, cutlery drawers had pictures on them so that the right implements went in the right places for the next day.”

Because of the nature of the show, CPL and Channel 4 agreed that all contributors would need to give their consent on camera each day at the start of filming, with an expert ensuring that they understood what it was they were consenting to. The producers also provided the use of a quiet room for any contributor that struggled during filming, while three medics were also on hand during filming, with another to stay with the guests at the hotel during the nights if any problems arose.

Taking the risk

While these shows all demonstrate the wide variety of programming focused around the neurodiverse and disabled that can achieve success, *Roses Are Blue’s* Millen notes the industry still appears hesitant to embrace such content: “I think there are still a lot of



Channel 4 factual series *The Restaurant That Makes Mistakes* demonstrated how, with the right support, people with dementia could run a working restaurant

reservations when it comes to disability representation on screen,” he says, but points to the success of his own *Down The Road*, which reached a 58% market share during primetime in its latest season in Belgium. “It’s absolutely possible to be extremely successful with this kind of content as well. Someone in the right seat just has to decide to go for it.”

McGuinness agrees: “As producers we’re always trying to minimise risk, but the real risk that we have is if we don’t find new ways of doing things and new voices in the world.”

Speaking of her own experience on *Pablo*, she says that creators unwilling to take the chance will miss out. “It’s just opened up this portal of creativity from these amazing people, so the real risk is not having those voices and not having these new stories to tell.” **TBI**

Building blocks

Banijay's global head of content development, James Townley, discusses streamers, pandemic protocols and dominoes with Richard Middleton

As weeks turned into months last year, it quickly became apparent that the completion of Banijay's \$2.2bn deal for Endemol Shine Group – and much of the restructuring – would occur under lockdown.

Fast-forward nine months and the overhaul is almost complete, with Banijay emerging a content behemoth on almost any metric. There are more than 100,000 hours of programming available to buy; more than 120 production labels under its umbrella; and a presence in 20+ countries.

There are also all manner of formats available, criss-crossing almost every genre and sub-genre ever imagined. Which makes James Townley's job rather tricky.

Green shoots

Banijay's global head of content development was appointed last summer in the midst of the pandemic, with a remit that focuses on the creation of original unscripted IP.

It's a considerable brief, particularly given that around 5,000 formats are already in the vault – and not made any easier because meeting the people coming up with new ideas has been all but impossible – but Townley is in buoyant mood.

"We've been able to bring people together far quicker because we don't have to travel," he says, "so the time and money attached to that feels far more efficient. In fact, the communication aspect has been a real positive," he says.

One suspects that starting life in a hugely turbulent commissioning environment has been less of a positive for the new-look Banijay, but Townley is honest about the



marketplace at present.

"If we were having this conversation six months or so ago, new IP and development had its challenges because you want a guarantee of the format for buyers and that meant leaning heavily towards key brands," he says, pointing to global veterans like *MasterChef*, *Survivor* and *Big Brother*.

"This year, however, we are seeing some really exciting green shoots coming through," Townley continues, highlighting the UK's ITV commissioning of new singing format *Starstruck* from Remarkable and *Domino Effect*, the Endemol Shine North America show that has already been ordered by RTL in the Netherlands. "I never thought I'd be talking about dominoes as much as we have, but it's a really great show."

Volumising effect

Broadcasters around the world have, to some extent, rebounded from the dire times they were facing this time last year as advertising revenues shrivelled and all-but-died. And there are signs of growth leading to increased risk appetite – ITV's *Starstruck* for example – but Townley admits there remains a focus on "higher volume, returnable shows with slightly lower to medium budgets".

For Banijay's myriad companies and formats, this isn't necessarily a bad thing, of course. It operates numerous 'hub' shows, such as *Survivor*, which can provide a cost-effective strategy for broadcasters. Townley points to these opportunities, but he's also noticeably



keen to highlight his company's approach to new IP and the labels under his purview.

"We're about individual creatives and while there is an over-arching home that is Banijay, buyers don't come here for a show from Banijay. They want a show from the individuals within the company."

Where the group's global footprint seems to have proven highly effective is in the creation and expansion of pandemic protocols, such as those used for *MasterChef*. While Australian producers created the rules of engagement, they have since been circulated worldwide, providing another string to the appeal of formats.

"That is why we have had 40-plus commissions of *MasterChef* in a year when we also had the challenges of lockdown and Covid," he adds, highlighting the effect that confidence can have on global buyers.

Streaming surge

A similar story is emerging in the streaming world, where a flurry of successful unscripted formats – such as Netflix's *The Circle* and *Too Hot To Handle* – have had a 'raise all boats' effect, according to Townley.

Another unexpected benefit of lockdown has been the uptick in speed around decision making from buyers, Townley says (read more about this in our feature on distribution on page 10). "The reaction times of [SVOD] buyers have become much quicker," he explains, with dating remaining a key genre, of course. The more interesting takeaway, he adds, is how the SVOD's view these type of shows.

"The consumption rates, when you speak to streamers, isn't about watching one or two eps. It's about watching every minute of

Co-family viewing on shows like *LEGO Masters* is "really resonating" right now, while reality series like *Hunted* in Italy are likewise proving popular

a series and to have total consumption – and viewers do that with dating and reality."

Across the industry, Townley picks out growing interest in shows exploring nostalgia, escapism and comedy, while social experiment and adventure reality are proving particularly popular for SVOD, he adds. Amazon has already remade escape format *Hunted* in Italy and another version is now set for the retail giant's service in France, with Banijay-owned companies producing both shows.

The footprints of global SVOD's offer opportunities of course, but IP and rights discussions remain "a very live and active question," as Townley diplomatically puts it.

Banijay is laser trained to retain as many rights as possible and that focus on IP retention is also leading the company to invest at the very earliest stages of creation, Townley adds.

"If that means we need to have to invest on the ground in embryonic ideas at development stage then we will do that to help us with those other conversations down the line," he explains, adding that there is a pot of money to fuel this ambition. Just how big said pot is remains under wraps.

Banijay – like its competitors – is also aided by the proliferation of new SVODs, from Peacock and Disney+ to HBO Max and Discovery+, while AVOD is also beginning to show its own potential.

Last year, Fox's ad-supported streamer Tubi snagged rights to international versions of the firm's shows including *MasterChef*, and Townley says that there are discussions over originals for various AVODs but adds that these are at the very early stages.

At present, the focus is on broadcasters and SVOD – alongside developing and adding to that rather formidable arsenal of existing IP.

Co-family viewing "is really resonating" on shows like *LEGO Masters*, Townley adds, and he can't wait for the return of studio audiences. Such developments will be another sign that the industry is getting back to some sort of normality and an opportunity that the new-look Banijay will be keen to build on. **TBI**

NATPE™

VIRTUAL



NEWS

TELEVISION

APRIL 20th
2021

REGISTER NOW

Hot Picks

Our selection of the best one-offs and series heading to market now



Line In The Sand

Producer: Koda Communications

Distributor: Keshet International

Broadcaster: Keshet 12 (Israel)

Logline: A cautionary tale of obsession, sacrifice and how one detective's quest for justice shifts his moral compass to the extent that he begins to lose himself in his investigation

Fans of the acclaimed Israeli thriller *Fauda* might find a lot to like in this new crime drama, which is based on true events. It has been co-created by *Fauda* director Rotem Shamir and writer Yuval Yefet, who was also behind the short, *Last Of You*.

The 8 x 60-minute *Line In The Sand* is set in the early 2000s and is inspired by real events along the golden coastline of Israel. Tshai Halevi, who previously starred in *Fauda*, as well as *The Grave*, heads the cast as Alon Shenhav, an idealistic and morally unshakeable police detective

who leaves behind a high-flying career to return to his sun-kissed hometown of Nahariya, with his wife Miki and teenage daughter Tom.

However, his homecoming is not a happy one, as Alon quickly discovers a community in turmoil and its residents in the iron grip of Maor Ezra, a tyrannical gangster who has his hooks in every aspect of the town's daily life.

With the crime kingpin extorting money from business owners, controlling money-laundering rackets and ruling the streets through an army

of ruthless henchmen, Alon believes he has no choice but to engage with the crime lord on his own terms. However, the honorable detective begins to question his own values when his lawful crusade sees him turning into the very thing that he despises.

With the situation escalating, Alon begins to question where the line between right and wrong really lies.

"This series is not about cynical or corrupt cops – it's about heroes that need to face their dark side," says writer Yefet, while Shamir adds that the show's unique setting mirrors the extraordinary real-life story that inspired it.

"These events never left this small beach town. A lot of the reason why this was able to happen was because it was so local – which is how that crime

lord was able to take over the Nahariya and his activity never got noticed on a national level."

Already making waves in Israel, following its debut on Keshet 12 in January, the show, which is produced by Koda Communications, has become the most-watched drama on Israeli television in the past six years. The first two episodes of *Line In The Sand* took 29.6% and 25.2% of the audience share, respectively, also making it Keshet 12's highest rating drama since the channel first launched in 2017.

Keshet International is selling the show as both a format and as finished tape, with the company's president of distribution and COO, Keren Shahar, praising "the heritage and creativity of the talent involved – both behind and in front of the cameras."



Lioness

Distributor: Fugitive

Producers: M-Net

Broadcaster: M-Net (South Africa)

Logline: A gripping crime drama from South Africa, following an affluent woman living the high-life with her husband and three children, who makes a shocking discovery about both her lover and her husband

South Africa is rapidly emerging on the international stage as a hotbed of creative talent and this 10 x 60-minute series looks set to join the growing ranks of highly rated scripted shows from the country.

The story tracks the life of a rich woman who falls in love with her security guard only to find out that he is actually an undercover detective tasked with bringing down her husband for a major fraud. She attempts to escape with her children but, when her husband is found dead, finds herself framed for the crime. Eight years later, she's released from prison and while fighting to reunite with her children and prove her innocence, she sees her husband on TV, alive.

The story follows her ongoing battle for justice, which

takes her to a remote mine in Botswana as she attempts to clear her name.

The drama is part of South African giant MultiChoice's major drama push, which will see it launch a dozen scripted series through its M-Net channel and Showmax streamer over the next year. A further slate of shows is in the works for the following 12 months as part of the strategy.

On the sales front, Anthony Kimble's UK-based production and financing company Fugitive has taken rights to *Lioness* as part of a wider deal, which will see it working with the South African company to help secure future co-productions and pre-sales. Two other dramas – *Dam* and *Legacy* – are also now being launched onto the international market.

The Unusual Suspects

Producer: Aquarius Films

Distributor: About Premium Content

Broadcaster: SBS (Australia)

Logline: Female-led comedy heist drama in which contrasting cultures collide against the glamorous backdrop of the Sydney suburbs

This four-part limited series follows the story of a group of wealthy Sydney suburbanites and their Filipino maids who realise they must join forces when they face a similar predicament.

Providing a fresh view into the immigrant experience, *The Unusual Suspects* combines soap opera and heist caper to follow these women from vastly different walks of life, who come together to ensure justice is served when a \$10m necklace is stolen.

The series is being produced by Angie Fielder and Polly Staniford, the filmmaking duo behind *Lion* and *Berlin Syndrome*, with a script from Jessica Redenbach (*Spirited*), Roger Monk (*Nowhere Boys*) and Vonne Patiag.

Aina Dumlao (*Sanzaru*), Miranda Otto (*The Chilling Adventures Of Sabrina*) and

Michelle Vergara Moore (*The Time Of Our Lives*) headline the cast of the dramedy which is shot on location in Sydney and marks the first major representation of Filipino-Australians on Australian TV.

“Having the opportunity to work with Filipinos both in front of and behind the camera – all while collaborating alongside a powerhouse cast and amazing filmmakers – is nothing short of pure joy for me,” says star Dumlao. “And the fact that *The Unusual Suspects* is also telling the story of my own family's struggles, in addition to countless other overseas workers, just humbles me. It's refreshing to see so many well-drawn female roles with depth and complexity in the one production and we look forward to bringing these amazing women to life.”





A Bee's Diary

Distributor: Blue Ant International

Producers: Taglicht Media

Broadcaster: Love Nature (Canada)

Logline: An extraordinary look at life in the beehive from the point of view of just two bees

Blue chip natural history programming featuring exotic animals has become a

hugely competitive genre over recent years as streamers join incumbent broadcasters on

lavish productions, but there is also an increasing push for content that explores the fascinating lives of wildlife closer to home.

A Bee's Diary is one such show, tapping into the surging interest in the insect's life and using a raft of modern techniques to produce a 1 x 60-minute special that pushes the boundaries of traditional natural history filmmaking.

It was originally commissioned by Blue Ant Media's Love Nature and wrapped production in late 2020, having been produced by Cologne-based Taglicht Media in association with Canadian pubcaster CBC and WDR in Germany.

The show, which has been shot in 4K, follows the trials and tribulations of two particular honeybees over two years from

birth to death, capturing the often overlooked drama of their lives in extraordinary detail.

It uses proprietary macro-imaging technology, CGI and first-person narration to tell the insect's story, following their lives at eye level and offering a raft of science-based insights that reveal the intricacies of a working bee colony.

Carlyn Staudt, global general manager at Love Nature, says that the show has managed to "unpack the lived experience and life's work of these tiny superheroes, a species that has fascinated humans for centuries."

Blue Ant International, which has already sold the show to Smithsonian Channel in the US and Sky Nature in the UK, oversees licensing outside of the commissioning broadcaster and partner territories.

In Search Of Monsters

Producer: Hoferichter & Jacobs

Distributor: Autentic Distribution

Broadcasters: ARD (Germany), Arte (France)

Logline: For many years, Mohamedou Slahi was considered one of the most dangerous terrorists in the world. Today, Slahi is a free man in search of his torturers, to take revenge – by forgiving

This is a thought-provoking doc telling the story of Mohamedou Slahi, a Mauritanian man who was detained without charge shortly after the September 11 terror attacks in New York. He went on to spend 14 years at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay and claims to have been tortured under the 'special interrogation' procedure.

At the time of his arrest, the US government claimed that he was a member of the terrorist organisation al Qaeda and Slahi recounts having endured sleep deprivation, sexual humiliation, beatings and a mock execution,

before being exonerated by two US courts and eventually released in 2016.

Slahi is now a free man and, following two years of intensive research, the filmmakers have been able to identify his tormentors. Some of the team responsible for Slahi's torture still believe he is guilty of the crimes for which he was imprisoned, while others see their former victim in a new light.

This investigative documentary, from Hoferichter & Jacobs, the German production company behind *Bad Nazi, Good Nazi* and

Human By Chance? – The Gene That Made Our Brain Grow, explores whether the years of abuse and torture at the hands of his captors created a special

relationship between Slahi and the perpetrators.

It also follows them all on a poignant and most unusual quest for forgiveness.



District Z

Distributor: Sony Pictures Television

Producers: Satisfaction, Ah! Productions

Broadcaster: TF1 (France)

Logline: An adventure gameshow set in an apocalyptic world filled with zombies

This adventure gameshow format hails from France and offers several seemingly stand-out features that set it apart from some of its competitors – the most obvious of which is that it features zombies.

The format originated from Satisfaction Group-owned Ah! Productions and became a ratings hit last year for French broadcaster TF1, which helped to develop the show with the Parisian production outfit.

The show begins at nightfall, when a group of celebrities enter a giant arena referred to as District Z, which is controlled by a mysterious figure known as Professor Z. The assembled contestants then must take on

an array of physical and mental challenges while facing zombie creatures controlled by the mysterious professor in order to reach gold kept in his secret vault. Each successful challenge completed earns the celebrities keys to safes in the Professor’s secret vault, some of which contain gold. In the end game, they will use these keys to raid the vault and, as dawn breaks, the viewers find out how much the team have raised for their chosen charity.

The format proved an immediate hit with viewers in France, becoming one of the country’s most-watched entertainment shows launched in almost 30 years. Billed as



family-skewing, it offers scale and scares, along with some of the more traditional tropes of the challenge-adventure gameshow genre.

District Z is among a number of shows being pitched to buyers following the joint venture struck between Satisfaction Group and SPT in July last year.

Reputation Rehab

Producer: CJZ

Distributor: Primitives

Broadcaster: ABC (Australia)

Logline: Public villains seek an image rehabilitation by putting themselves at the mercy of a judging panel



This ‘name and shame’ factual format takes on the negative headlines in the media in an attempt to redeem the reputations of reality TV villains, bad boy sports stars and others in need of an image rehabilitation.

The show features a panel filled with everyday people, who vote to decide who is worth a second chance in the eyes of the public, following interviews with both the shamed and the shamers.

Created by Sophie Braham and Melina Wicks and originally produced by Australian prodco CJZ for local broadcaster ABC, rights to the format have already been placed in the Netherlands.

In its original run on ABC last year, *Reputation Rehab*

was hosted by *The Checkout*’s Kirsten Drysdale and Zoe Norton Lodge, with each episode taking a deep-dive into an ‘outrage’ story or a person who has endured a public shaming in the press.

Among those featured were “bad boy of tennis” Nick Kyrgios, reality TV “villain” Abbie Chatfield, as well as headline grabber Todd Carney, tabloid target Osher Günsberg and more general targets of ill will, such as Covid shaming, Boomer trashing and the reputational crisis facing anyone named Karen.

Through interviews, media analysis and stunts, the hosts seek to rehabilitate the guest’s damaged reputation and aim to provide a unique opportunity for transformation.



The World According To Grandpa

Producer: Saffron Cherry TV

Distributor: Beyond Rights

Broadcaster: Channel 5 (UK)

Logline: Colourful series for three to seven-year-olds that blends live-action and animation

Based on the book series by Chris Heath, this 25 x 11-minute hybrid children's series blends live-action and puppetry with animation and stars Don Warrington (*Death In Paradise*) as the titular Grandpa, who offers imaginative and ridiculous responses to his grandchildren's many questions about the world. Luckily, Halifax the rabbit, voiced by Sally Lindsay (*Mount Pleasant*), is there to provide the real answers to counterbalance Grandpa's flights of fancy.

The live-action sequences all take place on a large sofa, with Grandpa at one end, the youngsters at the other and the Halifax puppet in the middle,

while Grandpa's explanations come in the form of animation taking place in the backdrop.

Not only does this minimal cast contact help to make the production more Covid-safe, but also ideal for the format to be adapted into other languages as required

"We wanted to make something that we could take to other territories as a kit of parts," explains Saffron Cherry MD and show exec producer Caroline Roberts-Cherry. "So if you want to remake it with French actors or Swedish actors, you just follow our technical bible and all of the elements are there for you to assemble yourself."

Abigail's Tales

Producer: One Animation

Distributor: One Animation

Broadcaster: TBC

Logline: A fun and surprising new pre-school CG series that offers a playful take on existing fairy tales and fables

This engaging 52 x 11-minute series comes from Singapore-based producer One Animation and offers an intriguing take on the traditional fairy tale.

The show revolves around six-year-old Abigail – an inquisitive puzzle-solver who is never afraid to ask questions – and her supportive best friends, Boomer the polar bear and Bing the penguin.

The trio travel to faraway worlds where they not only see well-known fairy tales taking place but also get to meet the characters involved and unearth a whole new side to every story through their own observations.

The result is a show with a modern sensibility that offers takeaways and – notably –

happier endings. There is also greater diversity and gender representation for pre-schoolers, who are encouraged to ask questions, gather information and learn that there may be more to the story than first meets the eye.

The lead character is designed to encourage the seeking of knowledge and understanding, while reinforcing social values like honesty, empathy and teamwork. Production values are also impressive, with the show coming from *Oddbods* producer One Animation. Broadcaster and streaming partners are yet to be revealed, with the show formally in development with One, but a delivery date of late 2022 has been slated by the Singaporean firm. **TBI**





Last Word Adam Rumanek

Fair dues

“Producers are becoming increasingly frustrated as they wait years to get paid”

The rise of digital platforms and increased viewership in the last year has created a significant problem within the monetisation of online content, particularly when it comes to producers trying to recoup their fees. To put it simply, producers are not getting their fair dues.

Believe it or not, a common experience for both distributors and producers online is finding their content on a platform without their permission. If it's already available for free elsewhere and has received a significant level of views, this then makes it harder to sell your show. On top of this, there's an added problem of not getting paid for it. This type of nefarious activity, wherein content is stolen and exploited online, has been going on since the inception of streaming, but it has ramped up significantly since the start of the pandemic.

How do we know this? Our volume of work since the onset of Covid has substantially increased, yet the fees paid to producers are not growing at the same pace. Aux Mode has never experienced more interest in our revenue-reporting software since inception. This may be a result of more platforms, or the growing understanding of the potential revenue that can be generated via streaming, but what is certain is that producers are becoming increasingly frustrated as they wait years to get paid.

As such, Aux Mode has noticed that producers and distributors are now asking for specific details and figures for individual video assets per platform. Although we are only working on YouTube today, our customers have been telling us that no other platform is doing revenue reporting by assets, by region, and by views and watch-time. Most platforms provide a monthly lump sum payment to cover the portfolio of content, but this is causing bookkeeping issues when trying to determine correct producer fees. This is exactly the problem that Aux Mode is solving and our tools carry out a process that can otherwise take a decade.

This problem has all stemmed from the fact that digital distribution is an entirely new game for most distributors and IP owners, and there aren't currently robust processes in place when it comes to correctly allocating fees. Digital firms know exactly how to add

a catchy title, description, tags, keywords, or a custom thumbnail to make content more visually appealing and clickable – and ultimately they're focused on finding an audience among the sea of channels on YouTube. But this comes at the expense of paying producers fairly from the revenue generated by these video assets.

From the creators' perspective, building an audience base that is fragmented and spread across multiple platforms is not the answer they want. This is because having their content across many platforms will ultimately create a lot of duplicates on numerous streaming platforms. We also know that if users can get content for free on AVOD platforms, such as YouTube, the likelihood for them to pay for it elsewhere is then very low. What they want is for their content not to be stolen and exploited, and for the resulting revenue generated to be fairly reported.

In the long term, I'd anticipate that content creators are going to realise it's the non-exclusive AVOD and SVODs – those with global reach and a large repository of content – which will not only survive, but also pay the creator fairly.

The streaming platform explosion and subsequent competition that erupted in 2020 is reminiscent of the browser and search engine wars of the 1990s and early 2000s – it will create winners and many losers. Today it's a producer fee problem, but tomorrow's platforms will be very different and be built with the content producers, not just the audience, in mind. The struggle today is finding a model that works effectively for audiences, as well as producers and platform owners – at present, the platforms are simply working for themselves and taking too long to make sure both are winners.

In the last year, we've seen over 10 new platforms launch and the challenge has been knowing what revenue reporting data is provided, and not provided, by the platform per video asset. The uncertainty has created a lot of experimentation to figure out how to report the fees producers should be paid. The solution is ultimately going to be for the platforms to form a solid understanding of their role in the equation, being flexible to the problem, and then committing to supporting both their audiences and content creators. **TBI**

Adam Rumanek is founder & CEO at rights management firm Aux Mode

EDINBURGH TV FESTIVAL

Brought to you by  YouTube  SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

#EDTVFEST

PASSES NOW ON SALE | AUGUST 2021 | WWW.THETVFESTIVAL.COM

CONNECT WITH THE MOST INFLUENTIAL NAMES IN TV



2021 ADVISORY CHAIR
GEORGIA BROWN
DIRECTOR OF EUROPEAN ORIGINALS, AMAZON STUDIOS

INTERNATIONAL EDITOR
TAN FRANCE
TV HOST, PRODUCER & FASHION DESIGNER

HEADLINE SPONSORS



SCREEN SCOTLAND
SGRÌN ALBA

MAJOR SPONSORS



LITTLE
DOT
STUDIOS

NETFLIX

sky



verizon
media

VIACOMCBS