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MIPTV 2024



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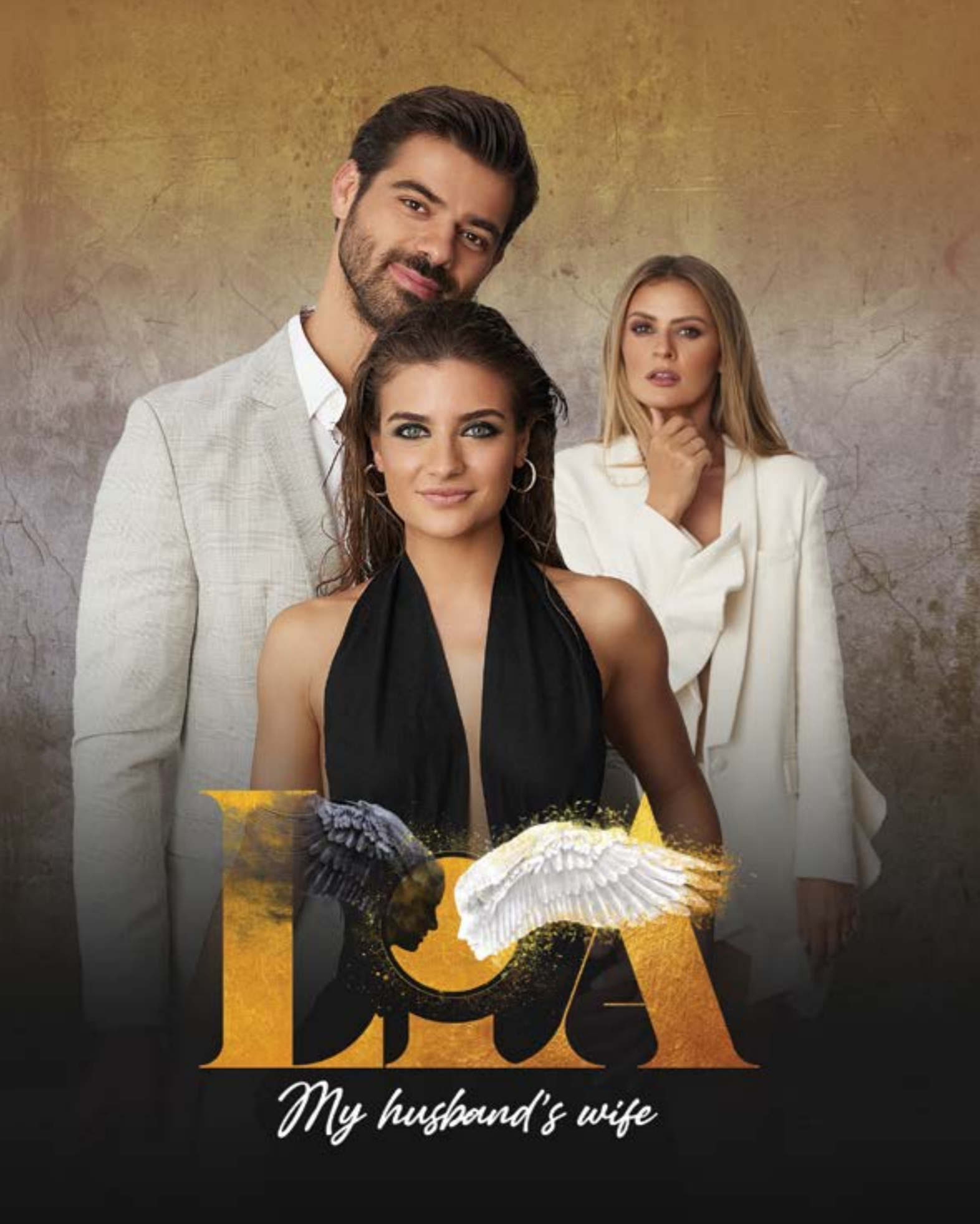


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Georgi R. Chakarov
Editor-in-chief

Blame It on Cannes!



People do forget fast. Less than three years ago, everyone was so happy the world's biggest TV market is back in Cannes and now almost everyone tends to agree that "there is no need for a second market" in April. So, what changed in two MIPTVs after "the comeback"?

The rising popularity of Series Mania and the London TV Screenings and the successful revival of NATPE proved that people are not "tired" of markets and conferences, but rather looking for those that "work". For the past two years, MIPTV was not among them, and there was little effort by the organizers to change anything, including for the bigger MIPCOM.

Last October, in our MIPCOM 2023 edition I noted that everyone will try to avoid the relevant topics during the market, because it is too painful to talk about television as a dying business. A year earlier, I wondered why the conference program is not addressing the crisis and raising issues that truly concern the industry. It was just "more of the same" two times a year, so naturally the opinion that "once a year is enough" quickly spread among MIP goers.

Instead of working on the transformation of its two key markets, the organizers came up with the radical decision to shut MIPTV down and launch MIP London.

The business logic behind this move has not been communicated well, and there has been no effort made to explain why that would be better for the industry/clients. How would this relocation make it a relevant event? Why should people, besides those already used to going to the London TV Screenings, attend it? Would more people want to go to cold and rainy London in February than to the warm and bright Cannes in April? Does London have the facilities to host an event for tens of thousands of TV professionals in one place? Do the UK distributors who organize the London TV Screenings really need a "supporting event"?

I have my answers: No, relocation will not change anything. No, it would not attract more people. No, London is not the place for the world's biggest TV market. No, London TV Screenings does not need another event running alongside it.

Switching MIPTV for MIP London means downsizing for RX. This is one thing we all know. The second biggest market in the world will be swapped for a "boutique" event. But even bigger problems could arise from this decision. RX now face the challenge of making MIPCOM better than ever, because once people start losing the habit of going to Cannes the fall of MIPTV could lead to the fall of MIPCOM.

And then what? Blame it on Cannes again?



Paramount Global credit rating lowered to 'junk status'

Paramount Global's credit rating has been lowered to junk status by S&P Global. The company said it dropped Paramount's rating to BB+ from BBB- due to the "accelerating declines in linear media and the shift toward a more competitive and less certain streaming model." S&P warned a month ago that a downgrade would be possible due to adjustments it was making to its ratings evaluation metrics.



Saudi Arabia to set up mammoth \$40 billion fund to invest in AI start-ups

Saudi Arabia is in talks to establish a colossal \$40 billion fund to invest in artificial intelligence, as the kingdom seeks to enter an industry already awash with money and strengthen its hand in high-tech industries. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), estimated to have \$925 billion in assets, is reportedly in talks with Silicon Valley venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz about the plan. The fund could be established as soon as the end of 2024, according to The New York Times, while the \$40 billion figure would dwarf already healthy investments in the market.



Major US pay TV providers lose close to 10 million subscribers in two year

Leichtman Research Group, Inc. found that the largest pay TV providers in the US - representing about 96% of the market - lost about 5,035,000 net video subscribers in 2023, compared to a pro forma net loss of about 4,590,000 in 2022. The top pay TV providers now account for about 71.3 million subscribers - with the top seven cable companies having about 34.1 million video subscribers, other traditional pay TV services having 21 million subscribers, and the top Internet-delivered (vMVPD) pay TV services (including estimates for YouTube TV) having 16.2 million subscribers.



YouTube TV becomes the largest Live TV streaming service in the US

In a letter, Neal Mohan, YouTube's Chief Executive Officer, announced that YouTube TV has 8 million subscribers, making it the largest live TV streaming service in the US. "We're also seeing growing consumer interest in our subscription services. We're excited to announce that we have more than 8 million subscribers to YouTube TV. And we passed 100 million Music and Premium subscribers, including trials. Music subscriptions help us deliver on our goal to be the best place for artists to connect with fans..."



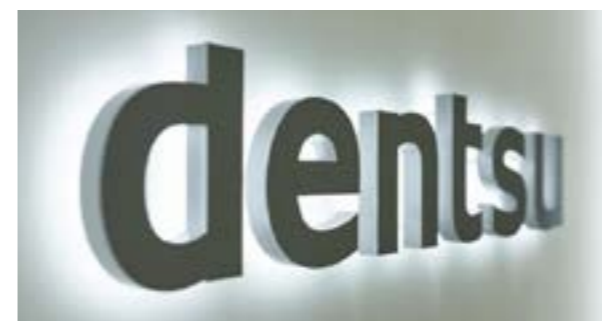
RedBird IMI pays \$1.45 billion for All3Media's assets

Jeff Zucker-led investment group RedBird IMI acquired the leading international production and distribution company All3Media in mid-February for the price of \$1.45 billion. Back in 2014, Discovery (now Warner Bros. Discovery) and Liberty Global jointly acquired All3Media for half a billion US dollars. RedBird IMI is backed by Emirati royal Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who also owns soccer club Manchester City and Telegraph Media Group.



New streamer from BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 to launch shortly

Everyone TV - the organization leading the evolution of free TV in the UK - will launch its new streaming service Freely, backed by BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, in Q2 2024. Earlier, BBC Studios took full control of BritBox International in a deal worth £255 million for ITV's 50% stake. In January, ITVX set a new all-time high with a total of 315 million streams.



Highest ever ad spend in Japan in 2023

CCI, Dentsu and Septeni reported that in 2023, advertising expenditures in Japan totaled 7,316.7 billion yen (up 3.0% year on year), breaking the record set in 2022 for highest ad spend since estimates began in 1947. Internet advertising expenditures grew by 7.8% to the record 3,333.0 billion yen. The video advertising market was up 15.9% year on year to 686.0 billion yen, the highest growth rate among all ad categories.



Fremantle completes Asacha Media Group acquisition

At the end of March, Fremantle completed the acquisition of Asacha Media Group which is made up of eight labels including Kabo Family, Mintee and Srab Films in France; Picomedia and Stand by Me in Italy; and Arrow Media, Red Planet Pictures, and Wag in the United Kingdom. Headquartered in Paris, France, Asacha will continue to be run by Co-Founder and Group CEO Gaspard de Chavagnac.



AI copy of anchor delivers news on Arabic channel

Asharq News, the multi-platform Arabic news service provider, has integrated AI-anchors speaking in multiple languages on air. During the evening show *Colors of the East*, Asharq News introduced its inaugural AI generated look-alike of the program anchor, 'Hadil Eleyan,' who presented the technology segment in multiple languages, including Russian, Spanish and Mandarin. According to the company, Eleyan herself observed her AI copy and admired its precision and qualities.



Tyler Perry halts \$800M studio expansion over AI concerns

Tyler Perry has put the plan of his Atlanta studio expansion on hold. The actor and filmmaker revealed to The Hollywood Reporter that his \$800 million expansion plan that would have added twelve sound stages to the aforesaid facility has taken a back seat, primarily due to OpenAI's text-to-video model Sora, which debuted on February 15, and others of its kind. While Perry noted that he sees the potential in technology as a filmmaker, he also raised flags about the work opportunities it would end up taking from the human workforce.



Amazon content spend rises to \$18.9 billion in 2023

The global tech giant said that its 2023 content spend totaled 18.9 billion. Amazon spent \$16.6 billion on content in 2022, "approximately \$7 billion" of which was spent on "Amazon originals, live sports and licensed third-party video content included with Prime." The company did not break out that figure for 2023 in which it expanded its NFL coverage and also fully integrated MGM into its operations.



M6 Group aims to double streaming revenue by 2028

M6 Group increased its net income in the 2023 financial year by 42.9% year over year to €231.7 million. The company's revenues fell by 3% to €1.315 billion. The company pledged to invest €100 million in the expansion of streaming over the next four years in order to double revenue and usage in this area by 2028, with breakeven to be reached in 2027. The group's chairman, Nicolas de Tavernost, is stepping down in August after nearly 40 years with the company. He will be replaced by David Larramendy, CEO of M6 Publicité.



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What to Buy at MIPTV 2024?

NON-SCRIPTED



■ Couple Palace / CJ ENM

Couple Palace is a mega couple matching survival show where 100 singles desperate for marriage gather in the 'Couple Palace' in search of life partners. 50 men and 50 women with different backgrounds reveal their detailed status and look for ideal partners concerning their own ideal marriage value, physical appearance, and economic status.



■ SHARK! Celebrity Infested Waters / ITV Studios

The show will dare a group of ocean-phobic celebrities to confront their greatest fear - sharks. Airing to coincide with 50th Anniversary of *Jaws*, the format will welcome a group of famous faces to the Bahamas, where they will push past their limits to come nose to nose with nature's 'villains.'



■ No Way Back / Talpa Studios

Following the recent deal in the US and the successful launch in the Netherlands, Talpa will be looking to turn this adventure show into its next big international hit. 16 untrained, everyday contestants embark on a 2-week-long survival mission designed by the special forces. It is divided into four stages, and each takes up to 2 days to complete.



■ Freeze / Fremantle

A big hit for Amazon Prime Video in Japan, in this unique show the rules of the game are simple - players enter a closed room and simply must "freeze" until the presenter releases them.



■ No Strings Attached / Banijay

In this daring format, celebrities will read and voice the recreation of erotic fan fiction, set against the backdrop of scenes enacted with puppets. This intimate, mischievous, and sometimes surreal series, catapults well-known faces out of their comfort zone, for a night the celebrities, and the viewers, will never forget.



■ The Detectives / SVT

Developed by the Swedish pubcaster, the format will put the magnifying glass on exciting and strange mysteries to be solved with the help of the seven Detectives. They will be forced to handle surveillance cameras, witness interviews and reconnaissance missions to the best of their ability in order to ultimately have a chance to be crowned the series' "master detective".



■ 15 Questions / Duo Media & TVBIZZ

The biggest daily quiz in Estonia is all set to conquer the world. Anyone can play this game of strategy filled with surprising and unexpected 15 Questions which often require (or not) a bit more than a good general knowledge. Fun for the viewers and high ratings guaranteed.



■ Stars on the Shelf / Nippon TV

A cutting-edge business reality format that taps into celebrities' creativity, showcasing their prowess to shine in the competitive business arena. In each episode, four celebrities each develop a new product to compete against professionally made items in a trendy shop.



■ Ask Me Something Easy / Fremantle

The new daytime quiz from the creators of *Who Knew?* has just premiered on ARD. The format starts with the difficult questions and little by little things will be getting easier for the two competing teams, or will they?



■ Made in Korea / ITV Studios

The show follows a fledgling boy band as it departs for Korea to attend the ultimate K-Pop boot camp, learning from the experts who have created the world's biggest K-Pop superstars. Will these young artists have what it takes to learn from the best and make the jump from ordinary life to new pop sensations?

TVBIZZ Magazine takes a look at some of the **most-interesting and hottest** new formats and series making their debut at this year's MIPTV.

SCRIPTED



■ Marry My Husband / CJ ENM

Marry My Husband follows the story of Kang Ji Won as she teams up with her boss after being granted a second chance at life to get revenge on her former best friend and ex-husband following their affair. The show was a huge hit for tvN in Korea this spring.



■ Swift Street / ABC Commercial

The Australian crime drama will have its world premiere at Canneseries 2024. *Swift Street* is a fast, dynamic, and cinematic crime-family drama. It tells the story of 21-year-old street smart Elsie who must team up with her jaded old-school hustler father, Robert, to get him out of debt and save him from a merciless crime boss who wants her money NOW.



■ The Best Worst Thing / Keshet International

A huge hit in Israel, *The Best Worst Thing* tells the love story between a renowned breast cancer surgeon and her patient - a promising politician. On the very same day, the two of them discover that they have breast cancer. So, this isn't quite love at first sight, but more love at first lump.



■ Secretos de Familia / Canal 13

The new hit series follows Elena Valdés whose life will change forever upon her return to Chile after spending 15 years in Spain and learning about the mysterious suicide of her only sister Sara. Suspecting that this was a homicide, Elena will embark on a frantic search to find the culprit...



■ Soul Daughters / Antenna Studios

A huge streaming hit in Greece, *Soul Daughters* tells the story of four poor orphaned sisters who are forced to be separated into abusive servitude. Their struggle against "the foster families" and desire to be reunited gain is at the center of this dramatic tale.



■ Beasts / ORF

ORF's streaming hit was renewed for a second season ahead of its linear TV premiere in February. Two worlds collide when two best friends from modest backgrounds who dream of a better life and two sisters who live their dreams - mainly with their parents' money. Love, lies and recklessness are inevitable.



■ Tuurenmäki 98 / WBTV

In the series set in 1998, the life of the main character Mikael opens up when the internet comes to the village of Tuurenmäki. Mikael starts to build his own portal, and it is easy to escape to IRC but also uncovers the secret of his parents, the revelation of which makes Mikael more embarrassed than anything before.



■ Suenos de Libertad / Banijay

Antena 3's new afternoon hit is set in 1958 and tells the story of Begoña Montes, a woman trapped in a toxic marriage but with an optimistic and hopeful future due to her constant search for freedom. Topics like family, love, rivalry, friendship and secrets mix with big twists and turns.



■ Panda / Newen Connect

Renewed by TF1 for a second season, *Panda* reached nearly 6 million viewers in December. A relaxed pacifist and convinced vegan, Panda (Julien Doré) runs a small beach bar in a remote corner of the Camargue with his 16-year old son in a perfect cocoon of peace and serenity. One day he is forced to return to the police but in his own way: no guns, no violence and no early morning starts!



■ In Her Car / Beta Film

Premiered at this year's Berlinale, *In Her Car* follows the journey of Lydia who embarks on a mission to bring people to safety following the Russian invasion in February 2022. The Ukrainian drama focuses on the emotional and social effects of war.

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Future-minded and passionate about technology's convergence with media, **Daniel Anstandig** launched Futuri Media after success in the media and technology industries as a young entrepreneur and advisor to some of the world's top media brands.

Futuri Media develops innovative interactive consumer platforms and SaaS-based solutions for broadcasters and digital publishers. The company specializes in audience engagement and sales intelligence technology solutions.

Anstandig has advised The Wall Street Journal, CBS News, Clear Channel R&D, and various broadcasting companies in the USA, Canada, and Europe on digital audience and revenue growth strategies. A proud two-time recipient of Edison Research's 30 Under 30 Award, Daniel has also been recognized by Entrepreneur magazine for his work as a young entrepreneur.



The Answer is AI

Interview with Futuri Media CEO Daniel Anstandig

As the technology evolves and companies look for answers what the future holds, Futuri Media's CEO Daniel Anstandig says that the answer is one – AI.

Anstandig leads the US-based software company which has been making the headlines in recent months with its revolutionary media solutions aimed at driving both audience engagement and advertising sales. In this exclusive interview with Georgi R. Chakarov, Daniel discusses the latest AI-powered innovations and how they will transform the media business.

Daniel, you are CEO and co-founder of Futuri Media. When was your company founded, what are your main activities and businesses you are targeting with your products?

Since Futuri was launched in 2009, we've been passionately dedicated to equipping media companies with innovative technology. We are living in an incredibly fast-paced world, and everyone is expected to achieve more with less. Our team is always looking ahead, anticipating the next big challenge in the media industry, so we can develop the tools you'll need to stay ahead of the curve. Currently, we're doubling down on our efforts to support TV broadcasters and streaming services, knowing that your success in these areas is more critical than ever before.

Media companies, both large and small, face the challenge of shrinking budgets and teams, yet there's still a pressing need for TV to produce engaging content to maintain its appeal. As the production costs of entertainment and news escalate and audience demand continues to grow, the question arises: How can media companies keep captivating their viewers?

The answer is AI.

At Futuri, we've developed a range of AI tools not just to enhance efficiency but to fundamentally transform how TV stations create content. These tools are designed to foster personalized viewer experiences, improve ratings and audience growth, and introduce innovative approaches to programming and advertising.

As CEO, my role involves looking forward and identifying the future needs of media audiences. I engage in regular

discussions with executives and board members about their challenges and concerns. We conduct extensive audience research to understand viewer expectations from content creators. Additionally, I analyze our data and client success stories from around the world to identify effective strategies and upcoming needs.

My background in media (a background also shared by our executive team) informs our understanding of the vital role TV stations play, not just locally but in society at large. We recognize the challenges they face, from competition with streaming services and concerns about misinformation to limited resources. Media-focused AI can be a key part of the solution, enhancing the capabilities of media professionals globally.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been the Topic lately, in all walks of life but especially in content production. What are its main advantages in your opinion? Are companies willing to adopt it?

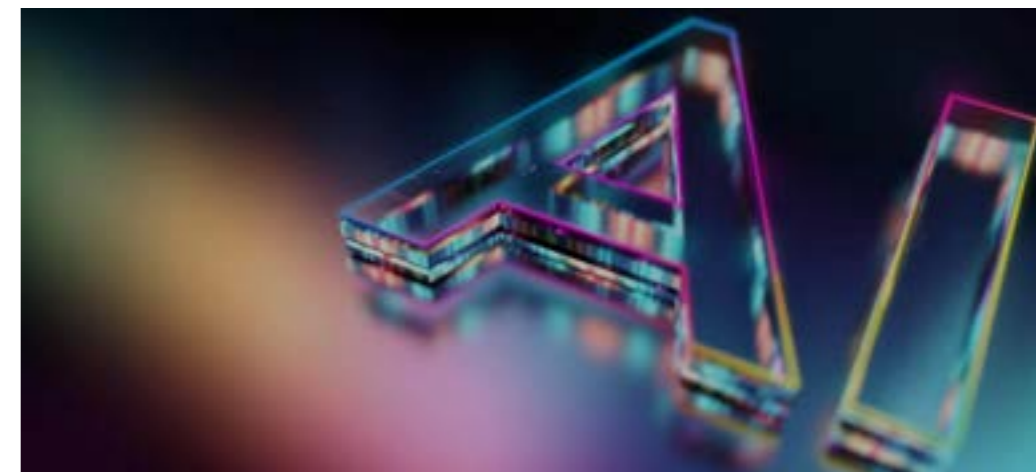
Ever since ChatGPT arrived on the scene in 2022, flipping the script on what we

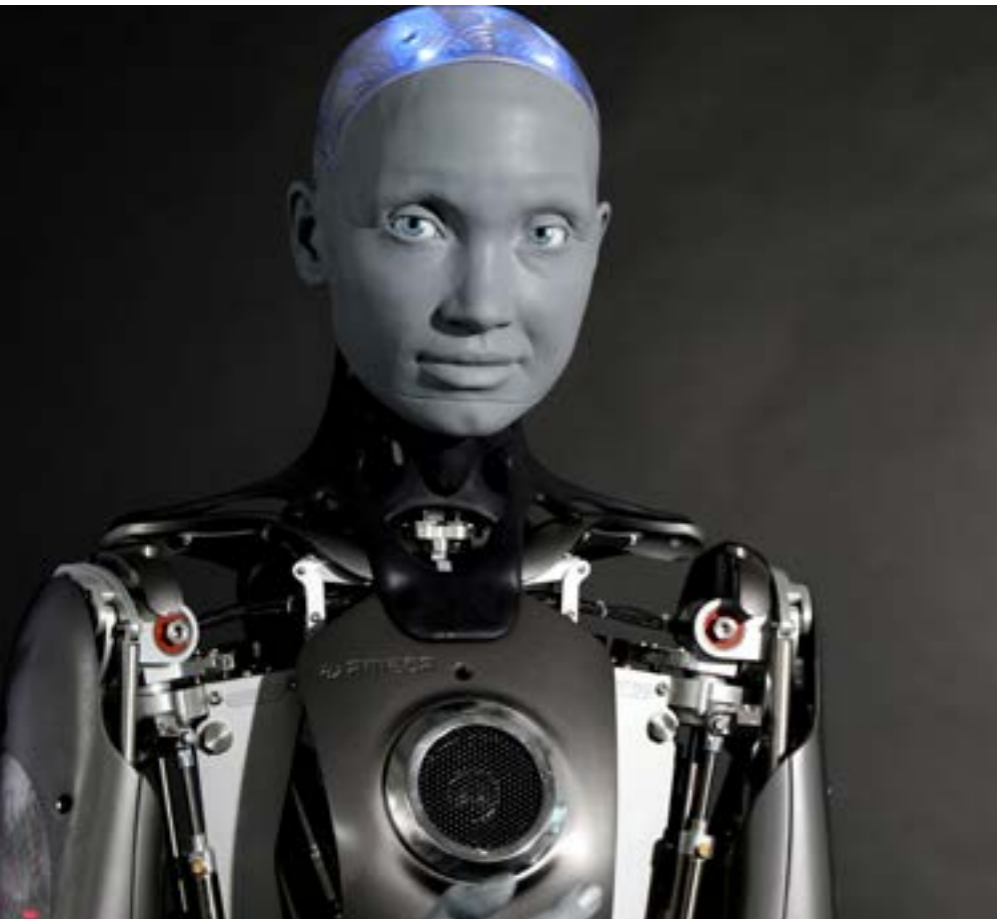
The benefits of weaving AI into the fabric of media are crystal clear.

thought we knew about AI, the game has changed. Initially, there was a lot of eyebrow-raising, doubting, and even pushback – from the media and other sectors. But fast forward to today, and the conversation has shifted dramatically. Now, everyone's no longer asking "Should I be using AI?" but rather "How can I use AI?"

The early adopters have already played around with Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT or Gemini, using them for quick email responses or to spitball ideas. But AI's potential stretches way beyond that.

In the world of content production, whether you're in front of the camera or behind it, AI can be a game-changer. Think curating fresh local stories, whipping up scripts, crafting ads, or spreading content far and wide across





different platforms – and that’s just scratching the surface.

The benefits of weaving AI into the fabric of media are crystal clear. So, yeah, companies are jumping on the AI bandwagon because, let’s face it, this is where media – and our world – is headed.

You have developed several tools that help media companies to attract, build and keep audiences. Could you briefly describe them?

Everything Futuri has developed is designed to address the specific challenges media companies and content/sales teams face.

POST, for example, is an AI tool that quickly converts broadcasts into pod-

casts. Immediately after a broadcast concludes, POST processes the audio, segments it, applies metadata, and distributes it across major platforms like Apple, Spotify, Google, as well as social media channels such as Facebook and YouTube. Tasks that once took hours now can be accomplished in seconds.

Addressing the time-consuming nature of creating spec commercials, we introduced SpotOn. Previously, developing a successful spec spot concept could attract significant advertising accounts but would take days to produce. SpotOn streamlines this process, generating ready-to-use spec commercials and promos that include scripts, lifelike synthetic voices, and soundtracks. TV stations also utilize SpotOn for creating ad breaks and promos, especially useful when breaking stories occur after their station’s voiceover talent has left. SpotOn instantly resolves these challenges with a few clicks.

For monitoring up-to-the-minute news stories and trends, Futuri’s TopicPulse employs Machine Learning to track real-time trends on platforms like Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, and over 250,000 news sources. This enables us to identify what’s trending

in any local market and predict each station’s unique audience interests over the next 4-6 hours.

Companies like Futuri’s strategic partner Sinclair are leveraging AI to enhance sales efficiency and revenue growth. Our TopLine system combines AI technology with extensive sales research and data-driven presentations, enabling sales teams to explore new categories, secure more appointments, and engage with new advertiser segments.

You work with a lot of data. What do the numbers show? How are people responding to AI content and services?

We recently conducted a national survey of both TV and radio audiences to find out exactly how audiences are reacting to AI and explore their perceptions and expectations. What do audiences think about AI content? What are they accepting of and what are they resistant to? I’ll be sharing these findings on the mainstage at NAB, so I can’t say too much here. But what I can say is that we have a clear path with AI that audiences are not only ready for, they’re even expecting it. I’ll be sharing more at NAB, but one stat that has stuck with me is that 75% of respondents were either somewhat or very likely to watch AI-created video content, and they are open to AI avatars/anchors presenting content. Technology, science, and entertainment news topped the list of content people would be most interested in watching.

To some people AI is synonymous with machine learning. Do you think AI-generated content can become indistinguishable from that created by humans and are there any threats if that happens?

In many ways, yes. I think that’s possible. Audio AI Hosts, like Futuri’s AudioAI voices that are presenting weather/news and hosting shows on radio/streams are already nearly impossible to distinguish from human DJs; and AI is just getting started! But with that said, the best content that we’re seeing, and I believe the best content we’ll continue to see, is that which is created with human creativity, oversight, and authenticity – albeit augmented with AI tools.

I can understand how some people might perceive the changes we’re ex-

periencing as threats. With every revolutionary technology, there has been skepticism and even pessimism. But I can tell you that the vast majority of those in media (and their audiences) are open and optimistic about the possibilities of AI and what it could mean for how we communicate and connect with one another.

Next week (April 15) you will hold a major presentation with an AI-humanoid. What can we expect from “the world’s first AI-Human presentation”?

I’m honored and excited to be presenting on the main stage at this year’s NAB, in what promises to be a historic session. This will mark the world’s first keynote co-presented by both a human and AI, featuring the most advanced AI-powered humanoid robot in the world, Ameca. We aim to unveil current audience perceptions of AI and their readiness to integrate AI into their media consumption, sharing fresh off the presses study data across the audio and video landscape. Beyond providing insights, this session will be interactive, demonstrating the sophistication, effectiveness and fun of AI in today’s technology landscape.

“AI influencers” are a hot trend on social media and we are already seeing examples of “AI hosts” on TV. Do you believe that this could become a “norm” in the future?

I believe AI hosts will become part of the broadcasting landscape more and more. Through our Futuri AudioAI technology, we’re offering broadcasters AI-hosted alternatives for hours where they don’t have humans, moving away from the



Local Ad Spend Trends for 2024 to Keep You in the Know

1 According to EIA Advisory Services, revenues across all media in the U.S. will reach **\$175.6 billion** this year, largely driven by the political season.

2 What’s the split?
52% Traditional (\$75.5 billion) **48%** Digital (\$94.1 billion)

3 What’s the top growth channel?
 CTV/OTT Surge:
 CTV/OTT will experience a **40%** YoY increase from 2023.

4 Which categories are ramping up ad spending?
 Top Three Fastest Growing Categories: YoY
+2,028.3% Political **+17.2%** Special Restaurants, Food, & Beverage Stores **+16.7%** Retailers

TopLine

standard pre-recorded or syndicated content. This way, listeners get to enjoy content that’s both live and local, exactly what they’re looking for.

Is this going to be a thing for TV as well? Yes, quite probable.

But a big caveat, audience receptivity to AI integration hinges on transparency – it’s crucial that viewers know when they’re interacting with AI. They’re not looking to be deceived; they want content that resonates with them, and information that’s both current and accurate. AI has the capability to ensure a level of service continuity, even in the absence of human staff, but audiences want to know when that’s happening.

The European Union recently adopted the AI Act. What is your opinion on AI regulations, what are the necessary steps and safeguards that need to be considered?

We’re talking about technology that’s as powerful as it is promising, so

making sure it plays nice and fair is crucial. There are some guardrails that, to me, should be non-negotiable.

First off, transparency is key. People should know when they’re interacting with AI, understand what it’s doing, and why. Then there’s the matter of fairness and bias. We’ve got to ensure AI doesn’t pick up and perpetuate the biases humans are working hard to leave behind. These types of biases were a huge issue in the early days of AI, and are slowly (perhaps too slowly) being resolved.

Another non-negotiable are privacy and data protections. With AI feasting on data to learn and grow, making sure that data is handled with the utmost care is essential. And let’s not forget accountability – when AI makes a decision, there should be a clear line back to humans who can explain and, if necessary, correct course. Just like with self-driving cars, it’s essential to have a human behind the wheel in some way or another.

Finally, there’s safety and security. As AI becomes more integrated into everyday life, ensuring it’s safe to use and resilient against misuse is paramount. That means protections against hacking, malware, or even bad code that was written internally.

So yeah, stepping forward with regulations like the EU’s AI Act is a step in this direction. It’s about setting the ground rules for a tech that’s going to shape our future. Think of it as laying down the law in the wild west of technology – it’s all about keeping the peace and making sure everyone benefits from the incredible potential AI has to offer. (And so things don’t become some nightmarish sci-fi experience). ■



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The FAST Challenge

Interview with Alan Wolk

Alan Wolk, Co-Founder/Lead Analyst at TVREV, will be hosting the MIP Global FAST & AVOD Summit: Ad-Supported Licensing & Distribution at MIPTV. Ahead of this much anticipated session, scheduled for two hours in the conference program, Yako Molhov got in touch with Alan for this exclusive interview for TVBIZZ Magazine, focusin on the current trends, challenges and prospects for the quickly evolving FAST industry.

Alan, you are the person who coined the term “FAST” for Free Ad-Supported Streaming TV. FAST has been one of the hottest trends in the world of broadcasting and digital in the past couple of years. Is there confusion about what the actual term covers and is FAST used incorrectly for other types of services nowadays?

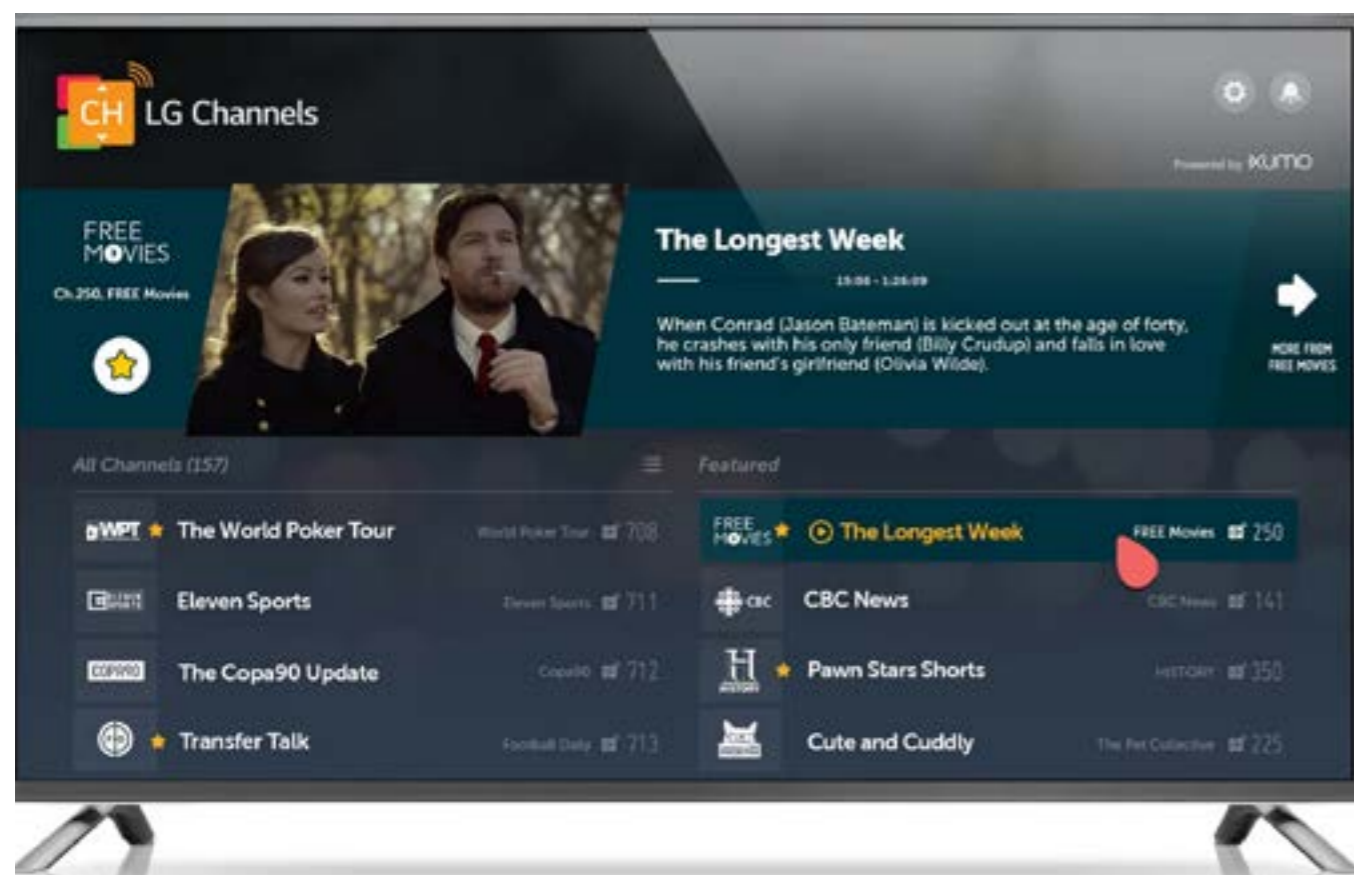
There is indeed a great deal of confusion around nomenclature. There

are FAST services like Tubi, Pluto, Samsung TV Plus, Rakuten and LG Channels. They have a combination of on-demand programming and linear channels. The linear channels are often called “FAST channels” and come from a range of sources, so the FAST services essentially act as aggregators. But the channels don’t exist separately from the on-demand content. Ad buys go against both and the user experience frequently

allows viewers to start watching on a linear channel and then continue watching additional episodes on demand.

Too many people confuse “FAST channels” and “FAST services” and that is not good as they are two completely different entities. I jokingly blame this on The Roku Channel, which is a FAST service, though it has “channel” in its name.

It is important that we are all using



Alan Wolk

is Co-Founder and Lead Analyst at the legendary media analyst firm TVREV. Wolk has established himself as one of the industry’s most influential thought leaders, especially noted for his deep understanding of the intersection of streaming and advertising.

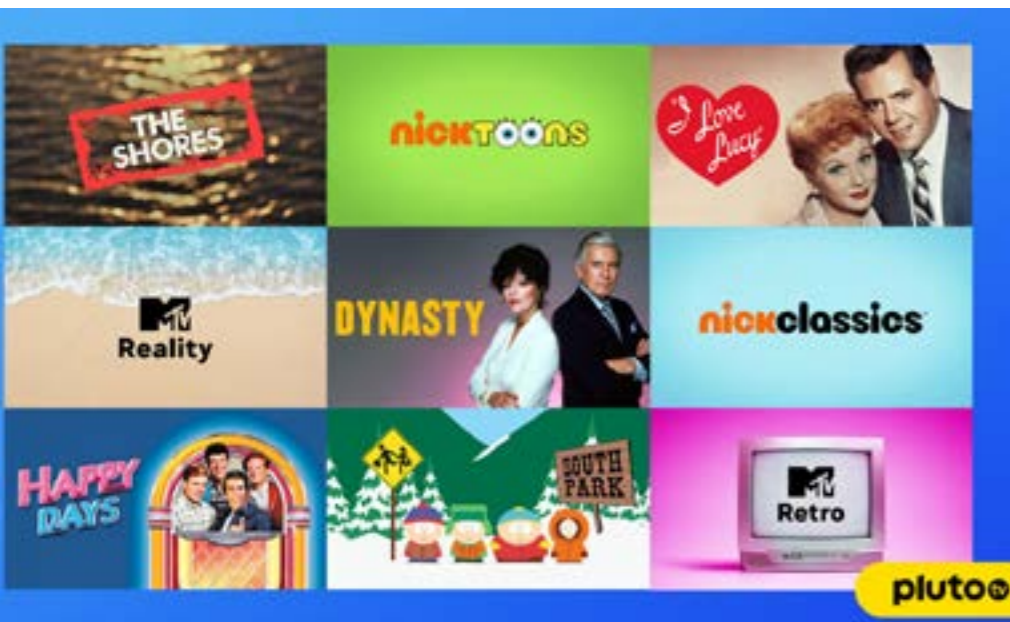
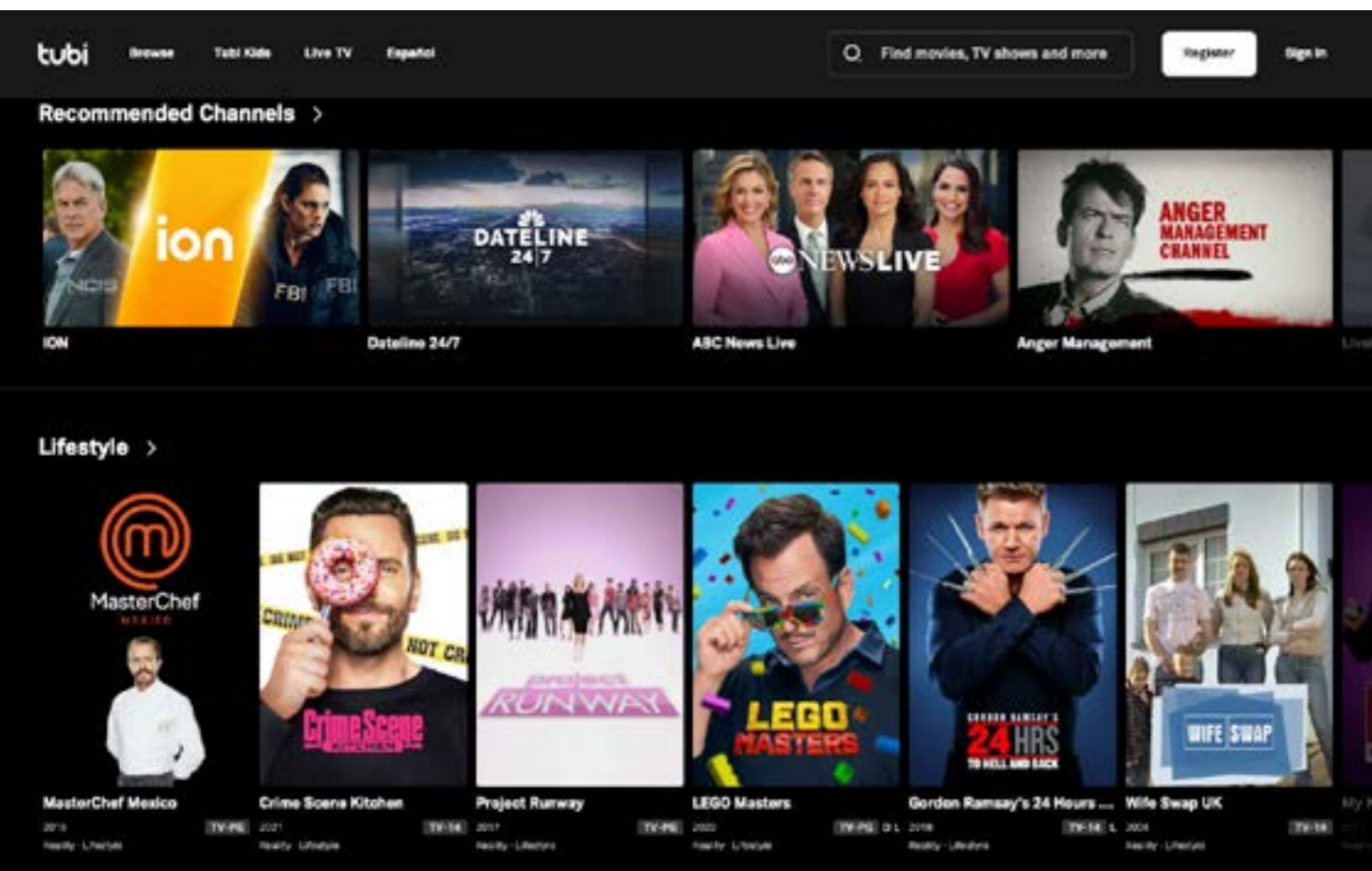
What sets Wolk apart is his unique ability to demystify complex ideas in a manner that’s easily understandable yet never oversimplified. This talent makes him a sought-after writer, speaker, and consultant, striking a rare balance between depth and accessibility in his communications.

He regularly speaks about the future of television, both at conferences and to anyone who’ll listen.

the same words to describe the same things. So if there is one thing I am hoping people walk away with from this event, it is the understanding that there are FAST services and FAST channels and they are not the same thing.

We have seen many new trends “fade out” with time, losing their moniker “the hottest thing”. What will make FAST a model that can be sustainable and profitable in the long run and in many different regions?

In much of the world, few people have the sort of disposable income that lets them spend the equivalent of \$5 or \$10 on a subscription TV service. So FAST will be the preferred way for people to watch—it will be the digital equivalent of broadcast.



In the US there is a challenge because cable TV was so profitable thanks to carriage and retrans fees—the money that the MVPDs are required to pay to the cable (carriage) and broadcast (retrans) networks. These fees generate billions (not a typo!) each year and have made cable TV a very profitable industry. FAST will

still be profitable in the US—just not as profitable.

What would be your main advice to anyone planning to launch a FAST channel? What are the main prerequisites for success, alongside having great content?

There are three types of content that

are very much in demand these days:

1. Content that appeals to a specific type of advertiser, where there is a clear tie-in, so a travel show channel, where it will be easy to get hotels and airlines to advertise. (Only there are numerous travel show channels already, so you'll need to find a unique hook!)

2. Content with a very passionate fan base—Japanese manga is an easy example, or a channel devoted to surfing. This will guarantee a loyal audience, one that certain advertisers are happy to target.

3. High profile shows from major studios—Warner Bros.' shows like *Westworld* are a good example—where the studio is curating the channel.

It is worth noting that many FAST services like to curate their own channels around a specific topic, and so it's not a bad idea to think about selling your shows rather than a pre-set channel.

What are the best regions for launching FAST channels right now? And what are the “undiscovered territories” in your opinion?

I think there is some room in Europe, but I would focus on Latin America.

There is one language (other than Brazil) so no need for translations and dubbing and there is a growing middle class that is attractive to advertisers. Plus there is a good supply of locally produced content to round out the offerings on the FAST services so they are not completely dominated by programas estadounidenses.

We see many paid services also launching cheaper ad-funded packages. How is FAST affecting the streaming industry as a whole?

I think services will see FAST as one leg of a three-legged stool: an ad-free subscription service, an ad-supported subscription service and a free ad-supported service (FAST.) The goal will be to keep at least 60% of the viewers in one of the ad-supported tiers. The FAST will be part of a fly-wheel, where the service shows older seasons of its current hits to try and get viewers to upgrade to one of the subscription tiers, while also promoting new series. It was a strategy that worked for Netflix for many years in the 2010s.

Do you expect that advertisers will be gradually moving away from linear TV to FAST platforms?

Very gradually. Nothing happens quickly in TV.

But it will likely happen in the Global South before the US and Europe, as they do not have a very built up linear ecosystem—it's similar to how many of those countries had robust mobile phone systems because they did not really have landlines.

The real push in the US will come when the ad-supported subscription tiers really take off. They have original programming, and if you are, say, Pepsi, you do not want to run your \$20 million commercial against some reruns. You want to run it against a new episode of *White Lotus* or *The Crown*. So once those services reach critical mass, the big, 9 digits-per-year advertisers will move money to streaming, on the theory that SVOD is the new primetime and FASTs are the new cable—a place to reach audiences you are missing elsewhere and to heavy up on specific targets.

You will be hosting the MIP Global FAST & AVOD Summit: Ad-Supported Licensing & Distribution at MIPTV this April. What will be the highlights and the most-important issues covered during the event?

We are going to look at many of the topics mentioned above—nomenclature, what types of content FAST services are looking for and where opportunity lies. We will also look at some of the challenges in programming for a global

audience and what some of the issues are around measurement and how to solve them. I always like my events to be entertaining—that is something we strive for at TVREV—to explain things in plain English without dumbing them down. And there will be actionable takeaways because I always make sure people walk away from all our events with some ideas on what to do with what they've just learned.

The other hot trend in the world of content production and distribution, alongside FAST, is artificial intelligence (AI). Will those two go hand-in-hand in the future, can AI help the development of FAST channels?

AI will be great for advertising. It is already being used to identify the emotions in a scene, the actors, and the action in order to serve up ads that are more in line with the show—the technical term for this is “contextual targeting.” AI will also be used to create personalized channels for viewers based on their preferences—sort of like Spotify playlists—and to provide better recommendations. But it will not be writing shows anytime soon. At best, it can provide scripts for things like nature documentaries where the narration is all off camera. And even then, we are many years off. ■



EPC and CEPI Demand EU Wide Regulations for Streaming Platforms

Earlier this year, several organizations representing the interests of independent producers across the world released a joint statement encouraging governments to regulate streaming platforms in their respective markets. Among the European organizations that support this initiative are The European Producers Club (EPC) and CEPI, the European Audiovisual Production Association.

In this exclusive interview, Alexandra Lebret, Managing Director of the EPC, and Mathilde Fiquet, Secretary General of CEPI, talk about the activities of their organizations in facilitating a favorable EU legislature for the independent audiovisual sector in the face of numerous challenges like regulating the streaming platforms and the protection of intellectual property with the emergence of artificial intelligence.

Alexandra Lebret, Managing Director of The European Producers Club (EPC)



Alexandra, the European Producers Club (EPC) represents 185 members from over 37 countries. What are your main activities and what is your mission?

We are today the most important organization of individual independent productions companies in Europe. We act on 3 pillars: the first one is to represent the producers when it comes to regulation; the second one is to support them for producing their film and TV series, by giving them contacts, information, advice; the third one is to think the future together, the production being part of a wider ecosystem in order to foster our industry.

Which are the territories you have members from and do you plan to attract producers from new countries?

We have producers coming from 36 countries in Europe plus Quebec. It means that we cover the Council of Europe perimeters rather than the strict European Union one. We don't tackle specific countries when we recruit new

members. We just welcome them. The balance of the different countries in our organization reflects the balance of co-productions in Europe: the countries which are coproducing the most: Germany, Italy, France, Spain.

Most recently, we had ATM Virtual joining from Poland, Mandragora from Romania, NDF GmbH from Germany and Fabula from Italy. It shows the diversity of Members in our organization.

What are the main challenges for film and TV producers in Europe nowadays and the necessary steps to tackle them?

This period is a fast-changing one. Producers are known for being able to adapt; to be pragmatic animals. Nowadays it's even more relevant than ever. After a blooming market due to the arrival of the streaming services in Europe, we are now witnessing a strong contraction of the market. Many producers and countries have sized up their production capacity to respond to the high volume of content demand. This is not the case anymore. Produc-

tion companies must reduce their production volume and size; technicians are left over. In the UK, which has been hit by the US strike and the contraction of the market, local revenues have decreased by 60%, unemployment is at 70%, and 40% of the workforce in the UK industry may not return.

However, traditional broadcasters have not decreased their investment, on the contrary.

The main challenge today is to readapt to these new conditions of market, but keeping in mind that the demand of content remains very strong.

Earlier this year EPC supported a joint statement from international organizations regarding the regulation of powerful digital streaming platforms. What is the main purpose of the statement and what are the necessary steps in order to ensure the independence and viability of the global screen industry?

The EPC has been deeply involved for many years with the AVMS Directive, which is a European law giving the

possibility to Member States to impose a levy or/and investment obligation to media online services based on their turnover on the targeted country. France has been the first country to handle this new regulatory tool to impose to streaming services an investment obligation of 25% (20% in certain cases) based on the turnover in France. This measure is also accompanied by regulations when it comes to IP ownership and associate remuneration. The French law is highly sophisticated and responds with the conditions attached to the investment obligations to the market imbalances.

We presented the French law to many countries, from Chile to Australia, New Zealand and Israel. We discovered that we were all facing the same problems: a lack of bargaining power when it comes to investment in countries and contractual relations. We discovered that it was not an epiphenomenon reserved to indies in Europe. It was a worldwide issue.

We were in collaboration with Matthew Deaner from Screen Producers in Australia and we have had this idea

of expressing strongly and widely our concern. Many other organizations joined this call.

The first objective of this call was to create awareness. In many countries, the arrival of the big US platforms has been acclaimed. And it's true that they are investing massively in local content, not in all countries nonetheless, and not at the good conditions to maintain the industry.

We need an EU regulation, that will help as example for the rest of the world, on IP ownership. We need to protect more strongly the independent sector, which is the guarantee of the cultural diversity of the content offer.

The recent intense lobbying that happened in Italy where we have seen the force of the streaming services removing all conditions about ownership of IP shows how much of the bargaining power is in the hands of these giants.

How could an individual producer succeed where a State has not?

Only a strong regulation, applying to all Member States can rebalance the

game and insure the perennity of the European audiovisual sector.

In the statement you put focus on local content and intellectual property. What is the best way for European governments and the EU to ensure that digital platforms make fair and proportional contributions to the creation of new local content in the markets in which they receive revenue?

By a strong EU regulation. IP is key, it's an asset for our companies. It's what creates their value. The European Commission is willing to foster the private equity financing in the sector, but this will not happen without the control of the IP. Not one equity fund will invest into a service production company, whose benefit is in the sole hands of streaming services based in LA. It brings too much uncertainty as well as low turnover. Independent production companies need to make profit, and for that they need to own the IP they created or co created.

IP ownership covers many aspects: Ownership of the copyright (or a

share of it in coproductions) in any audiovisual works produced which were developed and codeveloped by an independent producer. Ownership also of the underlying works which were used to develop the audiovisual work. These rights include sequels, prequels, remakes, spin-offs, subsequent series and merchandising rights.

Rights to proportionate remuneration, on a mandatory basis, linked to the exploitation of the work on the VOD service commissioning the work and on any other service it is made available. We have seen over the past months financing models leaving a possible remuneration to independent production companies linked to a delayed exploitation of downstream rights, or to secondary sales of the work done by the producer. What is needed is the obligation on the streaming services to pay proportionate remuneration based on the exploitation of the work on the service for which the contract is signed, on the platform itself.

Ownership of the ancillary and secondary rights in the Film or TV series itself, whatever the manner of financing of the work: the independent producer, by investing in the creation and development of an IP is creating a European asset. As in any biotech innovation: what matters is the ownership of the creation of the protected asset, not its reproduction which is licensed. All the rights to license this exploitation should be owned, whether wholly or partially, by the independent production company.

Rights linked to the exploitation of the work. We are focusing here on the exploitation of the primary audiovisual work. We recommend limiting the number of exploitation mandates in the contracts signed between independent production companies and streaming services. However, ANY exploitation of the work should give a proportionate remuneration linked to its exploitation to the independent production company.

In order to prevent the total vertical integration of the industry, we need to protect the independent producer with the right to exploit and sell the works they produce. A limitation in the number of mandates by the commissioning entity, as it is in the French law, is a solution.

Limitation of the duration of the rights granted to the commissioning



Mathilde Fiquet, Secretary General of CEPI

Mathilde, CEPI represents 19 different national associations and 1 European association of independent producers across Europe. What are your main activities?

CEPI's role is to represent the interest of European independent producers at European level. We are the interface between producers and diverse European institutions. CEPI supports the activities of its film and television producers, helping them to inform and engage with the European policy makers it promotes the importance of sustainable cultural and economic growth in the European audiovisual sector.

In 2018, CEPI relaunched itself as European Audiovisual Production, representing over 2.400 independent production companies in Europe. Which are the territories you have members from and do you plan to attract producers from new countries?

Some of our members are Animation in Europe, Asociacion Estatal de Cine - Spain, Association of Independent TV Producers - Portugal, Audiovisual Producers Association - Italy, Association of Film Producers of Slovenia, Film Industry Association of Ukraine, Audiovisual Producers' Association - Czech Republic, Polish Producers Alliance, Screen Producers Ireland, Slovakia Audiovisual Producers Association, Union Syndicate for Audiovisual Production - France; etc.

CEPI is in contact with national associations from other territories in order to grow our community of independent producers. We believe that the challenges and opportunities the European independent producer sector faces are better addressed together and we place a large emphasis on information sharing and collaboration among our members.

What are the main challenges for the independent producers in Europe nowadays and the necessary steps to tackle them?

Independent producers are facing very fast changes in the industry, with consolidation of actors, the presence of very large players such as non-European streamers, offering opportunities, but also bringing different business practices. We need to ensure that independent producers continue to benefit from an environment which promotes diversity of creation. Very fast technology evolutions, as well as environmental and societal considerations also create challenges which independent producers need to adapt to.

Earlier this year CEPI supported a joint statement from international organizations regarding the regulation of powerful digital streaming platforms. What is the main purpose of the statement and what are the necessary steps in order to ensure the independence and viability of the global screen industry?

This global statement shows that independent producers across the world face similar challenges, with the rapid evolution of the sector. It was important to communicate this to policy makers as well as the other stakeholders of our industry. It emphasizes the importance of the creation of local and diverse content and the major role that IP detention plays for producers.

Different regions of the world will look at different solutions but with similar objective. In Europe, European and national film fundings as well as legislations are important pillars to support independent creations. They need to adapt in order to continue play this role in a changing ecosystem.

In the statement you put focus also on local content and intel-

lectual property. What is the best way for European governments and the EU to ensure that digital platforms make fair and proportional contributions to the creation of new local content in the markets in which they receive revenue?

The European AVMS Directive introduced the possibility for member states to impose financial obligations on streamers. An opportunity that the majority of EU Members have now taken, with obligations adapted to their respective market. This has been a great first steps towards better contribution to the European AV sector. These investments should respond to qualitative criteria in order to steer them towards independent productions as well as ensure they benefit a diversity of genre.

The use of AI (artificial intelligence) has been booming lately, not only in the content production and distribution sector. What is CEPI's stance on the use of AI in content production and the main points of the AI Act which you support?

We welcome the approval of the EU AI Act by the European Parliament, and we thank Members of the European Parliament for the essential role they have played in supporting creators and rightsholders throughout the legislative process.

It was essential that the AI Act recognize the existence of the EU copyright directive and open the door for rightsholders to enforce their rights.

AI is increasingly going to play an important role for production and distribution, it will develop tools to help the ecosystem enabling creators to focus on creation. However, it is absolutely essential that AI does not replace creators. We will need to ensure that training is available to provide the skills to use these new tools. ■

service: examples in national regulation provides for limits at 3, 5 and 8 years.

Reversion of the rights when they are not being used.

The use of AI (artificial intelligence) has been booming lately, not only in the content production and distribution sector. What is EPC's stance on the use of AI in content production?

AI is already used in many fields of the value chain to produce a film, from the script to the exploitation. Many of our jobs will evolve by the arrival of AI. But I am sure the sector will adapt, as it always did.

As highlighted by Microsoft's decision to include an AI software into its Bing search tool, we will very soon not be able to identify which are the tools we use that have AI implementation. We need to have transparency on

where AI is used. That's the benefit of the AI Act that has been just voted.

Many of the AI tools used by producers are solutions owned by US companies. We should be careful of not depending on US-based solutions and having some European software developed as well. That's for the big picture.

There is another important issue that is related to AI and the copyright. AI needs to be fed to be relevant, while protecting the copyright. How can we protect our works while working with software companies? That's a key question. The second question is in regards to the nature of the works including AI? The "synthetic works". What is their status on the copyright basis? For all these we are following all the cases at different jurisdictions: in the US, UK and Europe. What we need is a clear regulation that enhance predictability and certainty.



Best Horror & Mystery TV Series

The horror & mystery genre is a popular one in the film and TV industry with its compelling and thrilling stories full of memorable characters. TVBIZZ Magazine pays tribute to the shows that have made their mark in TV history's books.

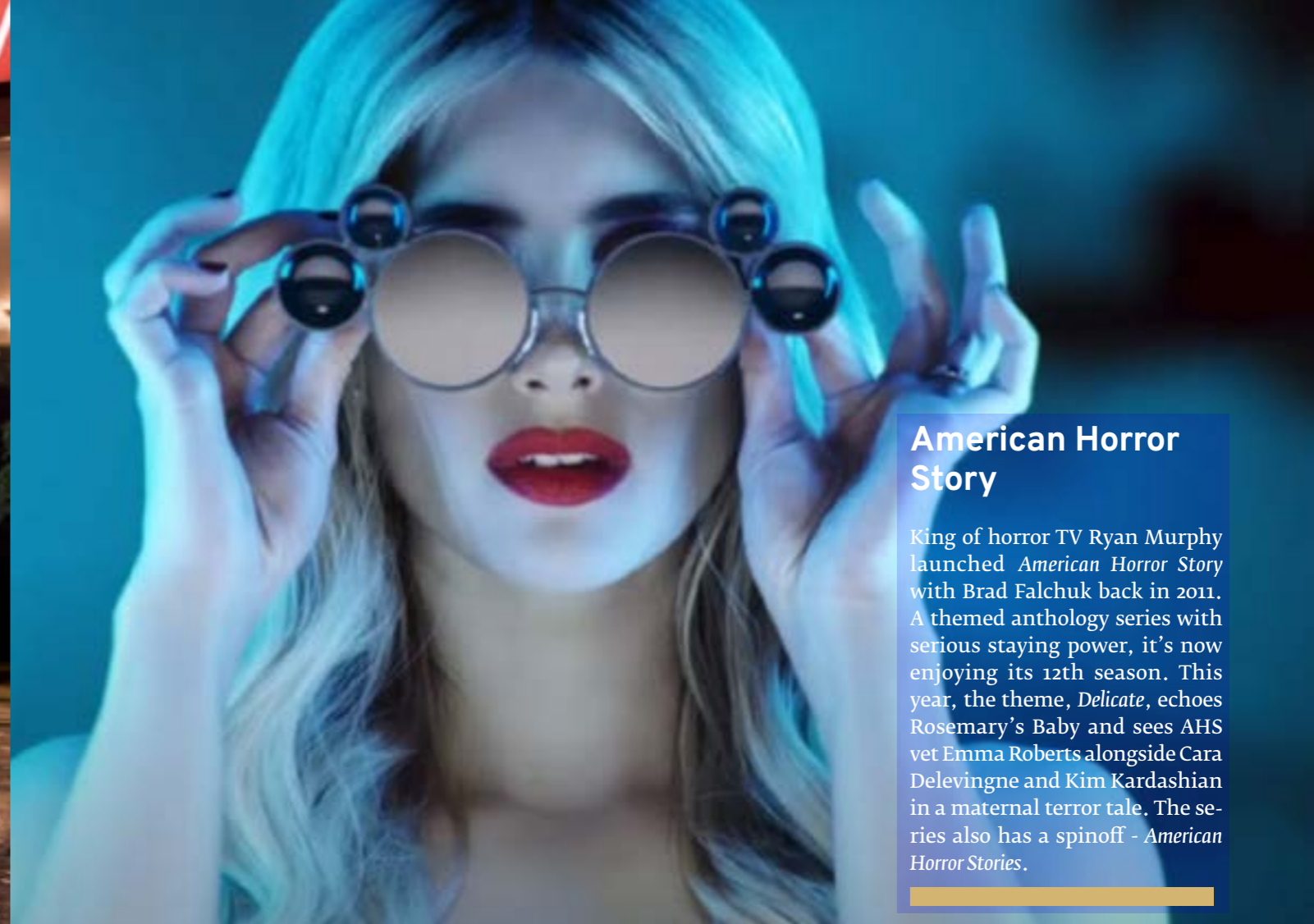
The Walking Dead and its spinoffs

It's no coincidence that we start with the latest spinoff of the hugely popular AMC franchise: *The Walking Dead*. The premiere of *The Ones Who Live* delivered 3 million viewers after three days of viewing. That makes it the biggest premiere night audience for a new AMC series in six years, since 2018's premiere of *The Terror*. The premiere is also the most-watched episode of any show ever on AMC+.



Stranger Things

The Netflix series quickly gained a cult status following its premiere in July 2016. The final fifth season is expected in 2025. One of Netflix's flagship series, *Stranger Things* has attracted record viewership on the streaming platform and won many awards, with an animated spinoff in the works.



American Horror Story

King of horror TV Ryan Murphy launched *American Horror Story* with Brad Falchuk back in 2011. A themed anthology series with serious staying power, it's now enjoying its 12th season. This year, the theme, *Delicate*, echoes Rosemary's Baby and sees AHS vet Emma Roberts alongside Cara Delevingne and Kim Kardashian in a maternal terror tale. The series also has a spinoff - *American Horror Stories*.



The Last of Us

The post-apocalyptic horror drama once again proved that HBO is the home of some of the biggest hits on TV. The first season, based on the 2013 game, premiered in January 2023 with 4.7 million and wrapping up with 8.2 million viewers. Season 2 is coming in 2025.



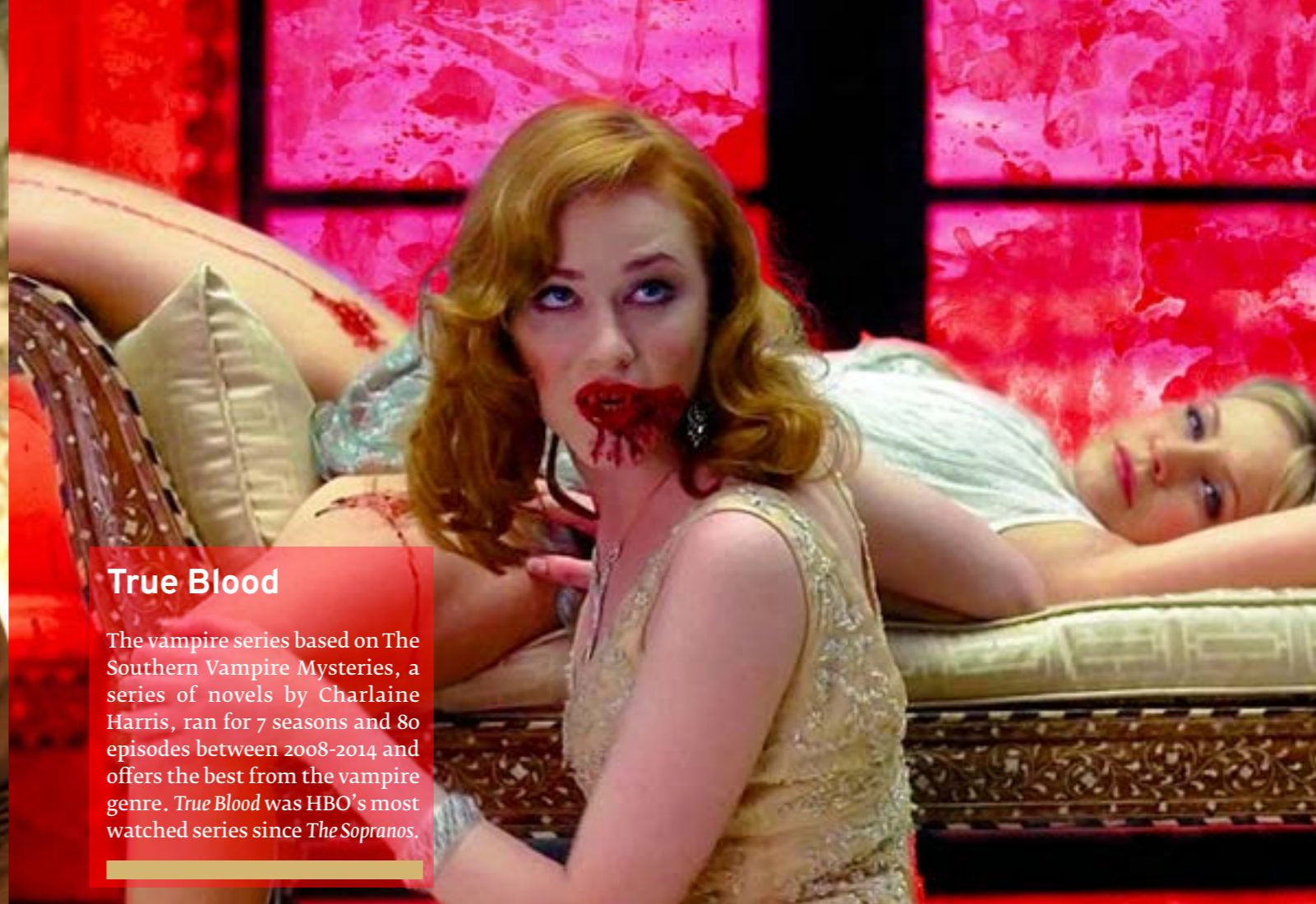
Hannibal

Hannibal introduces viewers to the enthralling yet terrifying world of Dr. Hannibal Lecter, the brilliant psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer. The series premiered on NBC in 2013 and aired for three seasons. The series received critical acclaim for the performances of the lead actors and the visual style of the show.



Supernatural

This iconic series about two evil-riding brothers following in their father's footsteps, ran from 2005 to 2020 on The CW (The WB). That's an amazing tenure we'll attribute to the stellar leading duo—Jensen Ackles and Jared Padalecki—two actors who evolve in their craft as much as their fictional characters, the brothers Winchester, evolve on the screen.



True Blood

The vampire series based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, a series of novels by Charlaine Harris, ran for 7 seasons and 80 episodes between 2008-2014 and offers the best from the vampire genre. *True Blood* was HBO's most watched series since *The Sopranos*.



The Vampire Diaries

The supernatural drama series developed by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec, based on the book series by L. J. Smith, premiered on The CW in 2009 and concluded in 2017, having aired 171 episodes over eight seasons. It might not be a gory horror in the classical sense of the word but still the series took its rightful place in the genre.



Buffy the Vampire Slayer

We can't forget about Buffy! The titular ass-kicking high schooler battling all things evil in between classes, Buffy is played by Sarah Michelle Gellar. Celebrating diversity, inclusion, and queer love, the show gave millennials plenty to talk about back in the '90s becoming a cult title in the genre, even though it is not so scary.



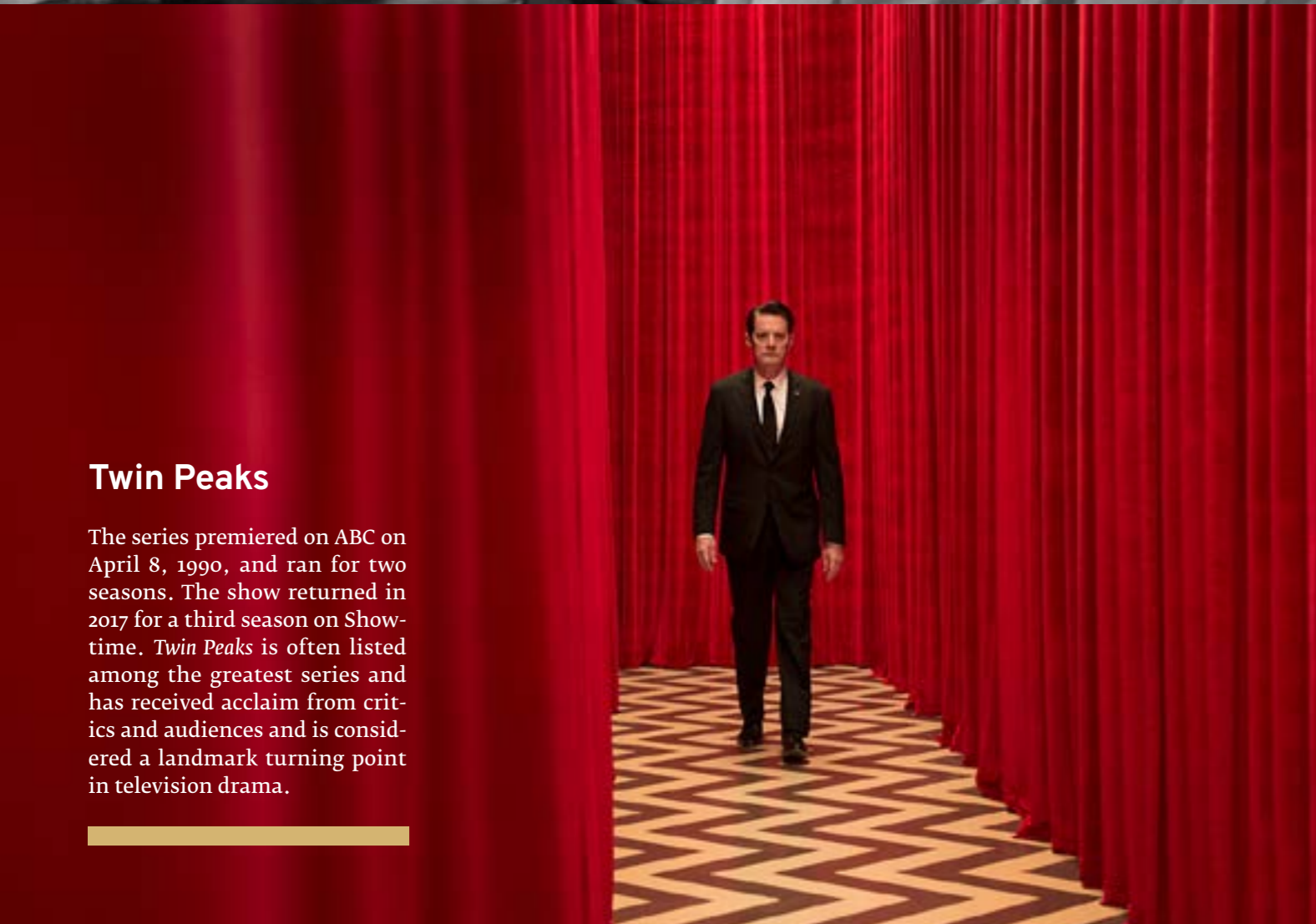
The Twilight Zone

The anthology series ran for five seasons on CBS between 1959 and 1964, combining fantasy, horror and science fiction elements. Each episode presented a standalone story in which characters found themselves dealing with often disturbing or unusual events. It is widely regarded as one of the greatest series of all time, and saw three revivals, the last one in 2022.



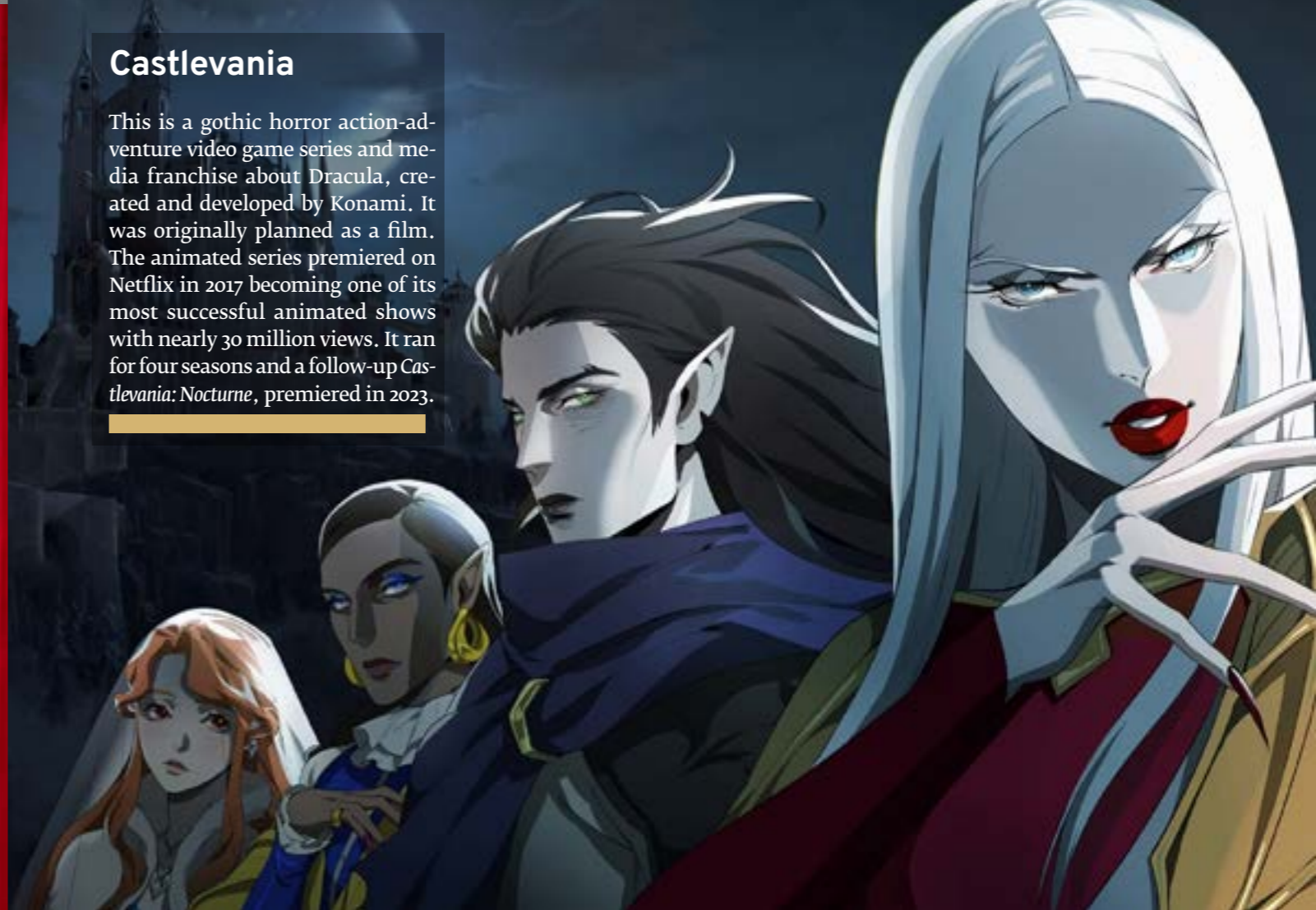
Tales from the Crypt

The series ran for seven seasons on the premium cable channel HBO between 1989 and 1996, with a total of 93 episodes. It did not have to be censored by the standards and practices of most networks and made history with its graphic violence, profanity, sexual activity, and nudity.



Twin Peaks

The series premiered on ABC on April 8, 1990, and ran for two seasons. The show returned in 2017 for a third season on Showtime. *Twin Peaks* is often listed among the greatest series and has received acclaim from critics and audiences and is considered a landmark turning point in television drama.



Castlevania

This is a gothic horror action-adventure video game series and media franchise about Dracula, created and developed by Konami. It was originally planned as a film. The animated series premiered on Netflix in 2017 becoming one of its most successful animated shows with nearly 30 million views. It ran for four seasons and a follow-up *Castlevania: Nocturne*, premiered in 2023.



We're On It, Comrades!

A Czech-German Mystery Comedy About How Communists Fought the Paranormal in the 80s

This March, the Czech pubcaster premiered the new mystery comedy series *We're On It, Comrades!* which revived the popular tradition from the 1980s which saw Czechoslovakia and West Germany co-produce films and series together. The project united Czechia's CT and Barletta with Germany's ZDF and Network Movie. The series which is part of ZDF Studios' catalog will debut internationally as part of the MIPDrama selection at MIPTV.

Yako Molhov talks with writer Miro Šifra and producers Maja Hamplova, Matěj Chlupáček, Robert Schaefer and Bettina Wentte about the idea to bring back the Czech-German co-productions and the challenge of making a series that would interest viewers not only in the two countries, but also internationally.

We're On It, *Comrades!* re-vives the great tradition of Czechoslovak-German co-productions from the 80s, with many of them receiving cult status in Eastern Europe. How was the idea about this co-production born and what was the main inspiration?

Miro Šifra: It all started with Czech Television, which gave us the opportunity to infuse a fresh twist into classic, proven genres. After we wrote the script, we found that the story and its tone also resonated with international audiences. It was at this point that Net-

work Movie and ZDFneo joined us. We further consulted with them to ensure that the scripts would be understandable to a German audience as well.

The series focuses on the Institute of Paranormal Phenomena. Tell us more about the storyline and the main characters - are they based on real events/people?

Miro Šifra: During the Cold War, scientific institutes around the world were investigating paranormal phenomena such as telepathy and teleportation. One such institute existed in Czechoslovakia, which we used as inspiration. Each

week, our scientists investigate a different paranormal phenomenon - ranging from UFO abductions and spontaneous combustion to forest monsters - while constantly being followed by two agents of secret service. Our main character is David, a skeptic and weary man who claims not to believe in paranormal phenomena, yet his own daughter levitates at home. The reason behind her levitation and what happened in his family forms a powerful personal storyline that we follow across the episodes.

We're On It, Comrades! was produced by Czech Barletta Production and

German Network Movie. Where was the series shot, how was financing secured and who had the creative oversight?

Maja Hamplova and Matěj Chlupáček: The whole series was shot in the Czech Republic, using a lot of sound stages, especially for the Institute of Paranormal Activities and apartments of the characters. For exteriors, we basically travelled all around the country, and spent more than a half of the project outside of Prague, in different cities and villages.

The series was financed by the Czech Television, Barletta, the Czech Film Fund, Network Movie, ZDF and ZDF Studios. Each partner had a creative oversight, as this team was really a blessing, with amazing creative producers at each side.

Having Robert Schaefer, Bettina Wentte and Maik Platzen from ZDF/Network Movie involved already from the development process was something very unique though, as Czech

series rarely get this kind of precise dramaturgical treatment.

Period dramas and comedies have been on the rise in the CEE lately, while the crime and mystery genre has been a mainstay for many years in Czechia and the region and is also very popular in Germany. Did those trends play a role in choosing the storyline?

Miro Šifra: Absolutely. We sought to find a new way to combine genres which we know resonate well with the audience. While we have already produced several crime and period dramas, this time we aimed for a lighter, comedic tone. The element of mystery naturally emerged due to the subject matter of our investigators delving into paranormal phenomena.

Are Czech and German TV viewers similar when it comes to their taste in fiction?

Robert Schaefer and Bettina Wentte:

Even while reading the scripts we got a good impression of how close we are culturally. So we think that everybody who loves a good mystery and is up for some supernatural fun on TV will have a great time - in Czech Republic as well as in Germany.

What was the budget of the series and was it higher, being a co-production, compared to other Czech series?

Maja Hamplova and Matěj Chlupáček: The budget of the series was approximately 3.7 million euros, which is higher than usual for Czech productions. Considering its historical setting, the genre and production value, it is still considerably less than it would probably cost in any other Eastern European country.

The series recently debuted on CT1 in the Czech Republic, with strong ratings, attracting nearly 1 million viewers. When will the series premiere in Germany and in other territories; are you negotiating deals for the series in other regions as well?

Robert Schaefer and Bettina Wentte:

The series is prepared for release in Germany on ZDFneo in fall 2024. ZDF Studios as world distributor will launch the series at MIP Drama in Cannes in April 2024.

Have you planned more partnerships with Czech and with Slovak broadcasters/producers?

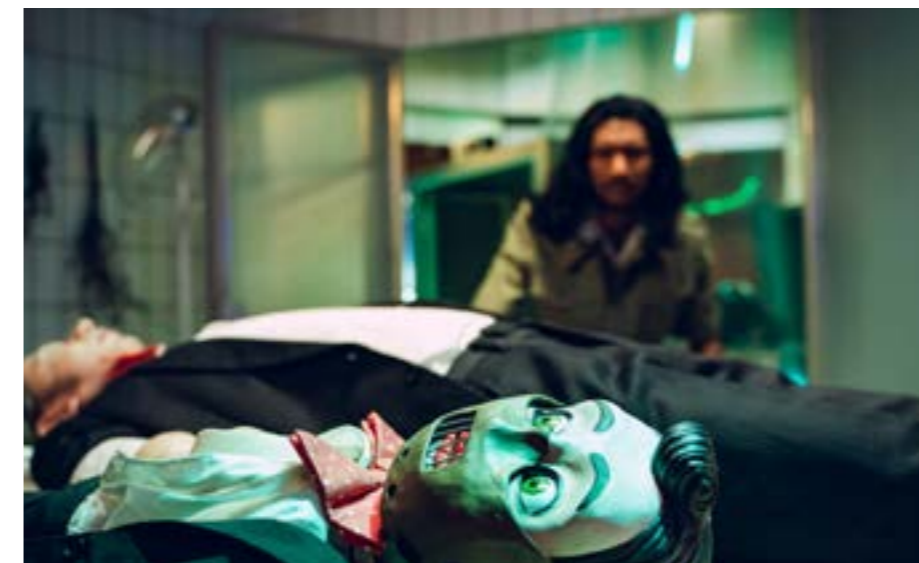
Robert Schaefer and Bettina

Wentte: We are looking forward to keeping things going which started so great with this show. We are planning to collaborate again on *Comrades* season 2, and of course we are also interested in more projects promoted by such talented partners like Matej, Miro and Maja.

ZDF Studios is distributing the series. What will attract international audiences to *We're On It, Comrades!*

Robert Schaefer and Bettina Wentte:

We're On It, Comrades! combines 1980s nostalgia, Eastern European culture, and comedic paranormal investigations to attract international audiences. Its humorous approach, cultural exploration, familiar references, and universal themes make it accessible and entertaining for viewers worldwide. ■



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Doing Business in the MENA Region in a Different Way

Interview with Mazen Laham, Different Productions

In March, Different Productions, led by Mazen Laham, celebrated its tenth anniversary. During that period, the company became one of the leading independent producers in the MENA region specializing in non-scripted content, with a portfolio spanning international mega-hit *Dubai Bling*, and regional audience magnets *It's OK* and *Shark Tank Dubai*, to name a few.

In this exclusive interview, Mr. Laham talks with Georgi R. Chakarov about the company's success, the challenges of working on the Arab market and the prospects and "different" plans for the future of Different Productions.

Mazen, you are the CEO of Different Productions, an award-winning media independent production, distribution and consultancy company in the MENA region. Could you tell us a bit more about yourself and your business activities?

In March, we celebrated the tenth anniversary since the launch of the company. I personally started my career in 2019 and I was in different roles: segment director, assistant director, and assistant and executive producer. In 2014, I started Different Productions which was my dream; the dream to have a production house Different from the others by producing high-quality shows with high production value. It wasn't easy to penetrate the market at the start, but now after 10 years I can say that we are one of the leading production companies in our region and we are producing content that is trending globally, like *Dubai Bling* on Netflix. Another hit we have right now on Netflix is *It's OK* – it's a docu series about the famous Lebanese singer Elissa.

We are based in Dubai, Lebanon, and soon we will have a branch in Saudi Arabia, and we are mainly specialized in non-scripted shows.

Who are your main clients?

We produce for international platforms and local platforms and broad-

casters such as Netflix, Discovery+, Starzplay, Shahid, MBC, Dubai TV, Abu Dhabi TV, Comedy Central, Saudi TV... We are doing *Shark Tank Dubai* for Dubai TV which is coming back with a second season. Today we finished filming *Dubai Bling* Season 3 for Netflix. We have also produced lots of international formats for our local broadcasters. We produced *Chopped* and *Astronauts* for Dubai TV, and also *Stand-Up Sketch Show* for Shahid (MBC Group). Our portfolio also includes *My Mom Cooks Better than Yours*, *Master-Chef*, *The Price is Right*, *Say Yes to the Dress*, *Najem Al Saudiya*, *The Mall* and lots of our original stand-up shows, poetry shows which aired on local channels. We are in the middle of production of the football reality show *The Italian Dream* in cooperation with Image Nation, Starzplay and the Italian football league Serie A.

How big is your team?

Our core team is around 11 people, but we work with lots of freelancers. For example, the production team of *Dubai Bling* is around 150 people, The football show counts around 120. The core team overlooks all the shows which we produce to maintain the same quality we deliver. I think per year we work with around 500 freelancers. We don't produce that many hours per year. For example, *Dubai Bling* is 7 hours, but it takes 12 months to produce.

Which shows have been your biggest hits?

Dubai Bling has turned into a huge international hit, topping the Netflix charts in more than 60 countries globally. Also, *Say Yes to the Dress* which we did in English-Arabic for discovery+ UK and was aired on Starzplay and Amazon UK, and of course in the region *Shark Tank Dubai* has been quite successful. And on top of it, the docuseries *It's OK* was

With over 25 years of experience in television production and creative endeavors,

Mazen Laham

is a seasoned executive known for his ability to bring innovative concepts to life. In 2014, Mazen launched Different Productions. Under his leadership, the company has produced acclaimed shows like *Dubai Bling*, *It's OK*, *Shark Tank Dubai*, *Astronauts* and others, becoming one of the leading independent production companies in the MENA region.





trending on Netflix in the top 10 chart for more than a month in the MENA region.

Can we say that there are differences in the taste of viewers in the Arab world and internationally, or are they similar?

To be honest, I don't really see a big difference. We have done lots of big formats and original shows and they

were trending in the region, but they were not on a platform that allows them to travel. With Netflix and international platforms, for example, if you have a good show, it will have a bigger potential to be a global hit and *Dubai Bling* is a good example. *It's OK* did not trend globally because it features a very famous A-class artist from the region, so its audience is different and smaller.

I believe global hits can easily be regional hits, for example, *The Voice* is a success globally and also a hit in our region and this applies to most of the international formats. The trends are very similar. What is nice about the formats is that you have a track record to count on. For me it's a very big challenge when you do an original than doing a format. With the format you get 70-80% of the success guaranteed and the risk is lower. You just need to do your homework properly. With originals, it's a bigger risk, you are testing something new, and you don't know if the recipe would work or not.

Do you have a different approach when producing shows for the platforms or channels which have quite different content policy?

Yes, each channel and platform have their own strategies and policies. We do our pitches to them based on this. With time and experience you get to understand what your clients like and dislike and what content they desire. In addition, the non-scripted content globally and in our region doesn't exceed 20% of the content produced yearly which also makes it even more challenging. But I believe, non-scripted is going to grow in the coming years because platforms have started discovering that there is a very big potential in the non-scripted.



Yes, for many years the Arab market was known just for scripted content, but your success with introducing the genre proves that non-scripted is growing in the region...

Exactly... it took us time. I started working with terrestrial broadcasters in Lebanon and then came the era of satellites, so all of a sudden, we were working for the whole region and we had to adapt because we were targeting different audiences, in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Egypt, and it is so different. Later on, we got the transition from linear to non-linear and then again it took us time to adapt- for example, at the start we had lots of refusals on our pitches from Netflix before landing a commission, maybe more than ten. That was mostly because we were pitching content that works for classical TV channels rather than non-linear platforms and it took us time to understand, adapt and learn, but now I can say that we know exactly what works for platforms and what works for TV channels. There is always a learning curve and we need to adapt as we go or else we will be out of the market.

We are now in the Ramadan period, and we know that this is the time the biggest volume of new shows is being launched; so, is there a difference in the commissioning policy for Ramadan and let's call it the regular season?

Until now, we have not done any show for Ramadan, but definitely there is a difference because any show must fill

30 days in the schedule, and it should be more culturally sensitive and also Ramadan is much more focused on scripted...

What happens after Ramadan, after this boom of watching television? Do people get tired of it and take a break? How does that affect the planning, the productions?

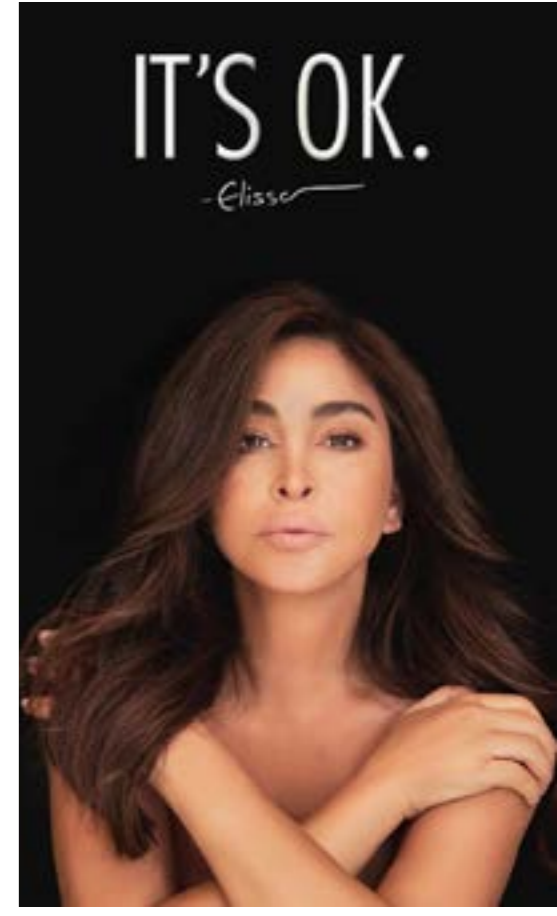
It depends on when Ramadan is during the year - when it is in May and June it is considered a low season, and you can have up to five months of not releasing new content. This year, because it's April, we will be back with a regular season, but you usually don't see many premieres after Ramadan.

Have you considered shooting a series?

The idea of doing this has been there for two years, but we are still "cooking" it, because we want to do it properly. One wrong step in scripted could even affect what we have done in the non-scripted, we need to be careful in any step. But we definitely would want to do movies and series soon.

Are you working on new projects?

Yes, we have several in the pipeline. We just finished filming *Dubai Bling* and now we have the football reality show *The Italian Dream* in the making and we will be filming *Shark Tank* after Ramadan. We don't focus a lot on the volume of the shows or the quantity because we are very quality-oriented, and we want to maintain that. We don't produce lots of shows because we



don't want to start losing the quality we deliver and we insist on being different, and that is why we are called *Different Productions*, we do things in a different way.

What original formats have you produced?

Besides *Dubai Bling* and *It's OK*, we have done the talent signing competition show *Saudi Star* for Saudi TV SBC, the music travel show *Notet Wasel* for Abu Dhabi TV where a music composer travels to city and tours locations related to music and at the end of the episode he does fusion music with the hosting musician from each country. We also produced *The Mall* in which the contestants have to survive in a very luxurious shopping mall without money, food, housing ... We filmed it in Saudi Arabia. In addition, we filmed local poetry shows and race competitions shows and many others.

Have you considered licensing your formats internationally?

It is something we are aiming to do. Actually, the years are passing very fast we have lots of plans but not enough time to realize them all. ■





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Eurovision Sport

The New Sports Streaming Service of the EBU

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) recently expanded its portfolio of services with the launch of the direct-to-consumer free sports streaming platform Eurovision Sport. Jean-Baptiste Casta, Head of Strategy and Business Operations, Eurovision Sport, tells TVBIZZ Magazine more details about the newly launched project and what are the plans to develop it further.



In February this year, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) launched Eurovision Sport, a new streaming service that will house thousands of hours of content to complement coverage from the continent's Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs). Where is the new service available, how can users subscribe and is the service free?

We were really excited to get Eurovision Sport live at the start of the year, it's a huge part of our commitment to enhancing the amount of free public access to sports content across Member territories.

The vision for Eurovision Sport is to be the best destination for digital sport consumption across Europe, aggregating all content, and harnessing and complementing the power of Public Service Media values and reach. Our aim is to democratize access to live sports coverage, helping to grow individual sports through visibility and engagement, and facilitate greater participation.

Access is easy and yes, it's completely free. Users simply register on our Eurovision Sport App, on mobile, tablet or web (iOS & Android). The only requirement is to complete the short registration process by creating an account on the platform.

How long did it take to prepare and launch EBU's first direct-to-consumer (DTC) service and how will Eurovision Sport complement the free-to-air broadcasts?

Eurovision Sport is a project that's been three years in the making and

it's something we are immensely proud of due to the collaborative nature of the product.

It complements Public Service Media brands, values, and reach by connecting Members, Federations, and audiences to sports events. Eurovision Sport provides wrap-around coverage, ensuring audiences never miss a moment of their favourite events, and enhances the offerings of our Members who already broadcast leading sporting events free-to-air. Working in partnership with our Members, we can ensure that every second of these events is available for free to audiences across the continent.

Is there geo-blocking for the service?

All live content will be fully accessible to users unless specific content restrictions exist when certain national broadcasters are providing coverage to those live events. If content is geo-blocked in the territory a user is in, they'll be redirect-

ed automatically to the national broadcaster in their territory when they click to watch the content - which means fans can watch their favourite competitions end-to-end.

What about advertising? What is Eurovision Sport's business model and way of financing?

To ensure audiences enjoy Eurovision Sport content for free, the platform is financed through in-content advertising and sponsorship. This consists of a mixture of pre-roll video ads, mid-roll video ads and billboard video ads for live and VOD replays and static and non-video advertising.

What content is Eurovision Sport currently offering and what are your plans for the future?

We currently offer an extensive program of sport events which includes competitions and events for Aquatics, Athletics,



Biathlon, Canoeing, Electric Off-Road Racing, Gymnastics, Sailing and Skiing.

For now, the focus will primarily be on coverage of Olympic Sports but we're actively exploring new properties including additional women's sport including football, and American and other team sports. We're also very proud that the platform is the first sports streaming service committed to providing true gender equality across all our live sports content. This is actually something that's reflected in the vibrant, accessible and gender-neutral branding of the platform, where we wanted to create a warm and welcoming environment for all who engage with Eurovision Sport.

Will Eurovision Sport offer coverage of less popular sports to its users?

If by 'less-popular' you mean non-Tier One - then, yes! Presently, Tier One Sports dominate focus and broadcasting hours, limiting the growth, development, and awareness of other sports. Part of the Public Service Broadcasting mission is to make sport more available to the wider masses and through Eurovision Sport there will be a wider range of accessible competitions and events, giving visibility to sports that previously may not have received the same coverage as Tier One properties. This is what's different about Eurovision Sport!

Your research shows that only a third of sports fans have access to premium sports channels. What are the major advantages of Eurovision Sport over premium sports channels, alongside the fact that it is free?

From our perspective, the advantages are extensive. Eurovision Sport gives fans the flexibility to watch content anytime, anywhere, and allows users to create their own viewing schedule. We have such a diverse content library, that gives access to a wide range of sports and exclusive content that can't be found anywhere else. This is also a completely free streaming service with no financial commitment, and regularly updated sports offerings.

Does Eurovision Sport have a specially dedicated team working on the service and how will EBU members cooperate on content for the streaming platform?

Yes, we benefit from an experienced, dedicated team focused on optimizing the service's performance and user experience on an on-going basis. Collaboration among EBU Members, Member broadcasters and Federations has also ensured a robust pipeline of high-quality content for the platform.

Will your new service use artificial intelligence (AI) in any way?

It's something we have experimented with. We previously partnered with European Athletics to utilize AI technology for the European Athletics Team Championships. We used AI to replicate the content of the European Athletics' live blog for the event, including audio versions using the cloned voice of former athlete Hannah England - an initiative that aimed to explore how AI can enhance the fan experience and provide more content across multiple platforms. We hope that as the platform develops, we can look at similar projects with our Member broadcasters and Federations for future competitions.

EBU is working together with Nagravision on Eurovision Sport. Can you give us more details about this partnership?

We have a long-term, strategic partnership with Nagravision, who we have worked with to develop and operate the Eurovision Sport platform. With the aim of providing a unique service for viewers, the development was guided by deep market research to ensure it met the needs of fans, Members, Federations, and sponsors. Nagravision have a wealth of experience in this industry, and importantly have offices across the globe, and therefore have a great understanding of the diverse culture of our Members. ■



Password-Sharing Crackdown Works for Netflix. Will It Work for Other Streamers?

By Yako Molhov

The latest development in the ever-busy streaming world was the announcement of Warner Bros. Discovery that Max, its enhanced streaming service, will launch in the first European countries beginning May 21. “Max brings together HBO Max’s can’t-miss programming, Discovery’s engaging real-life entertainment and all the world-class action from Eurosport’s premium subscription service to create a complete viewing experience for the whole household with premier TV shows, fresh and iconic movies, unmissable sports, and flagship TV networks in select countries, in a single destination for the first time,” the company announced.

On May 21, Max will become available across the Nordics, Iberia, and Central and Eastern Europe. Launches will follow closely after in Poland, the Netherlands, France, and Belgium. France and Belgium are the first new countries where WBD has launched its streaming service in over two years. These launches mean Max will be available in 25 countries in Europe and 65 countries and territories worldwide after launching in the U.S. in May 2023, and launching in Latin America and the Caribbean earlier this year. Max will offer a choice of different plans, plus a Sports Add-On which may be added to any base plan. Full details about pricing will be announced in the

coming weeks and will vary country by country.

Max is also the latest company to announce that it will be cracking down on accounts it suspects of password sharing and the original shows on Max are among the most sought out. HBO’s *Game of Thrones*, *House of the Dragon*, and *The Last of Us* have topped the most-pirated show lists over the year. Netflix was the first of the big streamers to end password-sharing last year. Disney followed suit by prohibiting password-sharing in its policies for Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+.

Password sharing is one of the biggest challenges facing streamers – but it was largely ignored in the past. In fact, in the early days of the streaming

boom, password sharing may have actually helped streamers grow in popularity if not revenue. However, as the space tightened and production and licensing costs increased, streamers became increasingly pressured to deliver revenue and profits, which means getting subscription fees from more people.

Most companies see password sharing as a paying subscriber allowing individuals outside of their household access to their account. Streamers typically provide plans which allow for multiple devices within a household to access content on a single paid account. However, allowing others outside the paying subscribers’ household to do so is quickly becoming against the rules across the industry. Streaming services that have already introduced crackdowns typically send out emails warning users suspected of password sharing. Netflix has rolled out add-on plans which allow subscribers to pay extra to add individuals outside of their household to their account. Disney’s streaming services have yet to provide such an offering to customers but plan to launch such a feature later this year. During an earnings call earlier this year, Disney chief financial officer Hugh Johnston said Disney+ accounts “suspected of improper sharing” will see an option to sign up for their own subscription.

Earlier this year WBD announced that it will be cracking down on accounts it suspects of password sharing as well. The announcement came from Warner Bros. Discovery CEO JB Perrette while speaking at Morgan



Stanley’s 2024 Technology, Media & Telecom Conference. Max will begin informing password-sharing subscribers of the company’s new policy enforcement later this year with the intent to fully roll out paid sharing in 2025. Regarding cracking down on password sharing, Perrette commented that “obviously Netflix has implemented [that] extremely successfully. We’re going to be doing that starting later this year and into ‘25, which is another growth opportunity for us.”

Disney will also start letting account holders add people outside their household for an “additional fee” — but it didn’t say how much

that will cost. “We want to reach as large an audience as possible with our outstanding content,” Disney chief financial officer Hugh Johnston said. “We’re looking forward to rolling out this new functionality to improve the overall customer experience and grow our subscriber base.”

This year, both Disney+ and Hulu have updated their terms of service to ban users from sharing their subscriptions with people outside their households. The new terms started applying to new subscribers on January 25th, but it’s coming for existing members on March 14th. Netflix already rolled out a similar version of paid sharing last year, costing subscribers an extra \$7.99 per month to add a person located outside their home.

According to Max’s terms of use, most recently updated Feb. 27, Warner Bros. Discovery reserves the right to “modify access or disable features, including for security reasons, to limit the impact of account sharing outside of your household or where we have concluded in our discretion that there has been misuse of your Max Account. If a suspension or termination occurs, you must stop using the Platform.”

WBD’s move to monetize Max password sharing is part of its efforts to boost the financial performance of streaming. In 2022 Max’s streaming business sustained a loss of more than





\$2 billion, and it got a \$103 million profit for its direct-to-consumer business in 2023. The company is targeting \$1 billion in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization by 2025, according to Perrette. “We said, we are moving from a world of subs at all cost, which is kind of the narrative that existed in the old media landscape, to a one of profitable growth as our key North Star,” the exec said at the Morgan Stanley conference.

The password-sharing crackdown is definitely paying off, at least for Netflix. The streamer added 29.5 million net new subscribers in 2023, up from an annual average of 21 million in 2020-22, boosted by its global implementation of “paid sharing,” a program that prompts users who are borrowing someone else’s account to sign up for their own plan or to have primary account holders add them as an “extra member.”

Under the new restrictions introduced in May 2023, users were asked to set a “primary location”, which Netflix will likely determine based on their device’s IP address. Once this primary location is set, people who don’t live there will have three options. Option 1: abandon Netflix; option 2: sign up and pay for their own private Netflix

account; option 3: pay an additional fee and become an “extra member” to the existing account. This extra member feature does offer a few benefits. The main one is that the fee is cheaper than paying for a standalone Standard or Premium subscription – but it also comes with a few restrictions. It is only available if the primary account is subscribed to the Standard or Premium tier. Secondly, a Standard subscription can only have one extra member, while a Premium account can only have two extra members.

The latest Internet-Delivered TV Services report from Leichtman Research Group also points to Netflix’s efforts to limit password and account sharing appear to be helping. According to LRG’s survey of 2,546 households, U.S. password sharing is down to about 10% of users. That figure has been declining slowly from 16% in 2018 to 14% in 2022 and 15% in 2023. The latest data shows a large drop in sharing accounts, though it’s important to note the figures are based on users self-reporting password sharing. LRG also reports that 10% of DTC video services are shared outside an immediate household, compared to 12% in 2022, according to its survey data. 73% of all these types of service are reported as being used by only members of a single household.

Another research, this time from MTM in the UK, shows that Netflix’s

password-sharing crackdown has resulted in a 10-percentage point increase in paying subscribers (from 60% to 70% of total Netflix users). MTM also found that despite the strong numbers, a majority (60%) of Netflix users surveyed said they were experiencing “content fatigue”. In an interview with The Media Leader at the Connected TV World Summit, Rob Collier, MTM’s head of strategy, said the data showed Netflix’s password-sharing crackdown had been a success. However, Collier is not convinced password-sharing crackdowns will work out as well for Netflix’s competitors. “I think it’s a tough one. Obviously, all of the operators would like to maximise their subscription revenue and this is one way,” he said. “But equally, Netflix did take quite a cautious approach to market and I’m sure internally it was quite progressive. You know, a bit of messaging, soft nudges in the UI and then slowly turning the screw on people who are sharing with lots of people.

“It’s a success for Netflix, so they’ve shown that it can be done. But at the same time, we see that Netflix has a really strong content proposition, is a really popular service, awareness is really high, it’s the biggest operator in the market. It’d be quite difficult for smaller operators to follow in those footsteps,” he added. ■

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PROGRAMMING



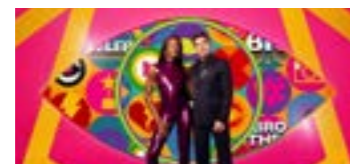
NRK plays Easter Crime Games with celebrities

Markus Neby will be presenting NRK's new project *Påskekrimlekene* (*Easter Crime Games*) this Easter. "This is a program where famous people compete in mastering the traditional Easter at the cottage, where those who perform the tasks poorly are killed in a morbid way, unfortunately," Neby said in a press release from NRK. Every day during Easter, the viewers and participants will have new hints about who the killer is. The aim of the game is to find out who the murderer is before that person takes off the mask on Easter Eve.



RTVE announces new dancing show Baila Como Puedas

RTVE is preparing a new dance format in which 16 professionals from the world of dance must make the most of several celebrities. The show titled *Baila Como Puedas* will not be the only project of this kind, which the Spanish viewers will see in the near future as it will premiere in the same year in which *Dancing with the Stars* will arrive on Telecinco. The show, which will be hosted by Anne Igartiburu, added several names at the end of last year and has now recruited an international star - Italian singer Sabrina Salerno, who will put the microphone aside for a while in order to demonstrate her dancing skills.



Celebrity Big Brother renewed for second series on ITV

ITV's *Celebrity Big Brother* launch episode attracted the biggest audience in over a decade with 3.8m viewers across all devices, 7-day consolidated figures show. This is up on the last Channel 5 launch (2018) by +1.3m viewers. It attracted 0.8m 16-34 year old TV viewers and so far *Celebrity Big Brother* has been streamed over 7 million times on ITVX.

RATINGS



The Genius Game off to strong start on TV 2

Spillet, the local version of *The Genius Game*, got off to a strong start on TV 2 Norway on Friday night. By Monday, the show generated 815,000 viewers, 450,000 of which came from streaming on TV 2 Play. Content chief Trygve Rønningen commented that he can't remember a better start for a show on their streaming service.



Problems for Telecinco continue as Temptation Island lands its weakest premiere

Telecinco kicked off the seventh edition of *Temptation Island* last night. The show became the second disappointing premiere for the channel this week, after *La Mejor Generacion* on Monday. *Temptation Island* gathered only 1.1 million people for 13.9% of the market. This was the lowest start for the format ever. The last season scored 1.53 million viewers with its debut.



France 2 scores with new nature program

France 2 premiered a new nature program last night billed *Notre Vraie Nature*. The show was the second choice of the local audience with 13.5% market share and 2.45 million viewers. Leader in the slot was France 3 with the series *Poulets Grilles*. The fiction drew 3.45 million viewers scoring 17.7% share. The third episode of *Destination X* was stable on M6 with 1.37 million viewers and 6.8% share in total and 19.4% concerning the housewives.

M&A/FINANCIALS



Canal+ offers to buy MultiChoice for R31.7b

Canal+ has announced that it submitted a non-binding indicative offer to acquire South African pay-TV giant MultiChoice for around R31.7 billion. In a statement on Thursday, Canal+ said it sent a letter to MultiChoice's board containing a non-binding indicative offer to acquire all of the issued ordinary shares of MultiChoice it does not already own, subject to obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals. It has offered R105 per ordinary share, representing a premium of 40% to MultiChoice's closing share price of R75 on 31 January 2024.



RDF Television to close after 30 years

RDF Television is to close after 30 years as parent company Banijay UK realigns its business to make it "strategic and agile" as broadcasters look to digital-first strategies. Set up by the late David Frank and initially supercharged by one-time director of programs Stephen Lambert, RDF Television's output has spanned *Wife Swap*, *Faking It*, *The Secret Life of 4, 5 and 6 Year Olds*, *Dickinson's Real Deal*, *Eat Well for Less?*, *The Crystal Maze* and current returners *Tipping Point* and *Only Connect*. The indie currently employs 18 people and operates out of West London and Cardiff, the latter through its RDF West outpost.



BBC Studios takes full ownership of BritBox International in historic deal

BBC Studios, the BBC's commercial content studio and media & streaming business, has announced it is taking full ownership of BritBox International, acquiring ITV's 50% share for a cash consideration of £255 million. As the world's biggest distributor of British programs, the UK's most awarded production house and the home of the widest-read English language news website, BBC.com, BBC Studios has a proven track record of creating and taking the best British content to audiences around the world. This historic deal brings greater scale and opportunity for both BBC Studios and BritBox International.

APPOINTMENTS



Kosack leaves UFA as well

After nearly 28 years with the producer, Joachim Kosack is set to leave UFA at the end of July. His exit follows on the recent departure of Nico Hofmann who Kosack temporarily replaced as CEO several weeks ago with a focus on UFA Serial Drama. CEO Sascha Schwengel thanked Kosack for his work. Kosack noted that he wants to start a new chapter in his professional career.



Simon Pitts appointed Global's Group Chief Executive

Global, the Media and Entertainment group, today announced Simon Pitts as the next Group Chief Executive of the company from Q1 next year, replacing Stephen Miron, who announced last week he was stepping down as Group Chief Executive after 16 years at the helm to become Global's Chairman. Simon Pitts joins Global from STV, where he has been CEO since 2018. Prior to this he spent 17 years at ITV where he was on the executive board for seven years and held a variety of roles including Director of Strategy & Transformation and Managing Director of Online, Pay TV, Interactive & Technology.



Change in governance at Newen Studios

Newen Studios will see a change in governance in April. Pierre Branco, former Country Manager of Warner Bros. Discovery for France, Benelux and Africa, will join Newen Studios. Rodolphe Belmer, the Chairman & CEO of TFI Group, will be appointed Chairman of Newen Studios. Since being acquired by TFI Group, Newen Studios has become a leading European player in production and distribution. Newen is now a diversified group, whose labels and programs have achieved strong brand recognition thanks to its talented people.

DISTRIBUTION



CJ ENM unveils a mega-couple matching survival format Couple Palace

Leading entertainment company CJ ENM is launching sales on its new dating show format *Couple Palace*. *Couple Palace* is a mega couple matching survival show where 100 singles desperate for marriage gather in the 'Couple Palace' in search of life partners. 50 men and 50 women with different backgrounds reveal their detailed status and look for ideal partners concerning their own ideal marriage value, physical appearance, and economic status.



Red Arrow sells Beat the Channel to Spain

Red Arrow Studios International has secured a deal with production company Boxfish for a local Spanish version of the smash hit entertainment format *Beat the Channel*. To be called *López y Leal contra el Canal* in Spain, it will be produced by Boxfish for Atresmedia Televisión. The original *Beat the Channel*, produced by Florida Entertainment for ProSieben (local title: *Joko & Klaas gegen ProSieben*) is a huge hit in Germany where it continues to grow in popularity. The latest season five reached a show high average market share of 17.9% among Viewers 14-49 and an even greater 25.2% among Viewers 14-39.



Mediaset buys another Turkish series

Turkish series are set to replace local fiction series in the new strategy of Mediaset, picking up on their success in Spain. For this purpose, the Italian broadcaster has acquired yet another title from Turkey - *Everywhere I Go*, represented by Echo Rights. The series will first premiere on Mediaset Infinity on March 1.

ADVERTISING



Swedish ad market loses 800 million in one year, TV cash shrinks the most

The total media investments in Sweden decreased by the equivalent of SEK 800 million, a drop of 5.6% compared to 2022. Media investments declined during ten of the year's twelve months, the Swedish Media Bureaus report. Moving image showed a negative growth of 9% and print dropped by 17%. The category that grew the most during the year was radio with +5.4%. The total volume, SEK 13.7 billion, apart from the pandemic year 2020, is the lowest since 2015. For the year, TV dropped 13.9% to SEK 4.121 billion. Online video was up 4.3% to 1.705 billion. The agencies do not expect a turnaround during the first half of 2024.



Arcom forecasts 2.3% growth for the French ad market by 2030

According to the study titled *Prospects for the Evolution of the French Advertising Market by 2030* conducted by PMP Strategy 1 for Arcom and the Ministry of Culture in 6 years from now, content consumption will shift more towards digital uses, online commerce will continue to grow and advertisers will be more and more obsessed with performance. By 2030, two thirds of advertising revenue (65%), or €18.3bn will be captured by digital players compared to the 52% today and €11.3bn in 2012. The authors of the study also emphasized upon 'the resilience of linear TV (-1.4% by 2030), which remains a key part of the advertising landscape'.

National TV ad spending fell 5% to \$43.7B in 2023

Although household TV ad impressions and TV advertising airings grew in 2023, national TV advertising spend fell 4.7% to \$43.71 billion versus 2022, according to iSpot.tv. For much of the first half of the year, there was widespread softness in the TV advertising market -- especially in near-term "scatter" market deal-making. There were also unfavorable comparisons to the year before, when the Winter Olympics aired and mid-term political elections were held.

DIGITAL



KRO-NCRV leaves the X platform

KRO-NCRV announced yesterday that it is immediately stopping the use of X (formerly Twitter) as a communication channel. The reason is the persistent, often anonymous, hateful and downright racist statements made on X. KRO-NCRV and the programs remain active on the social media channels Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, Threads and YouTube.



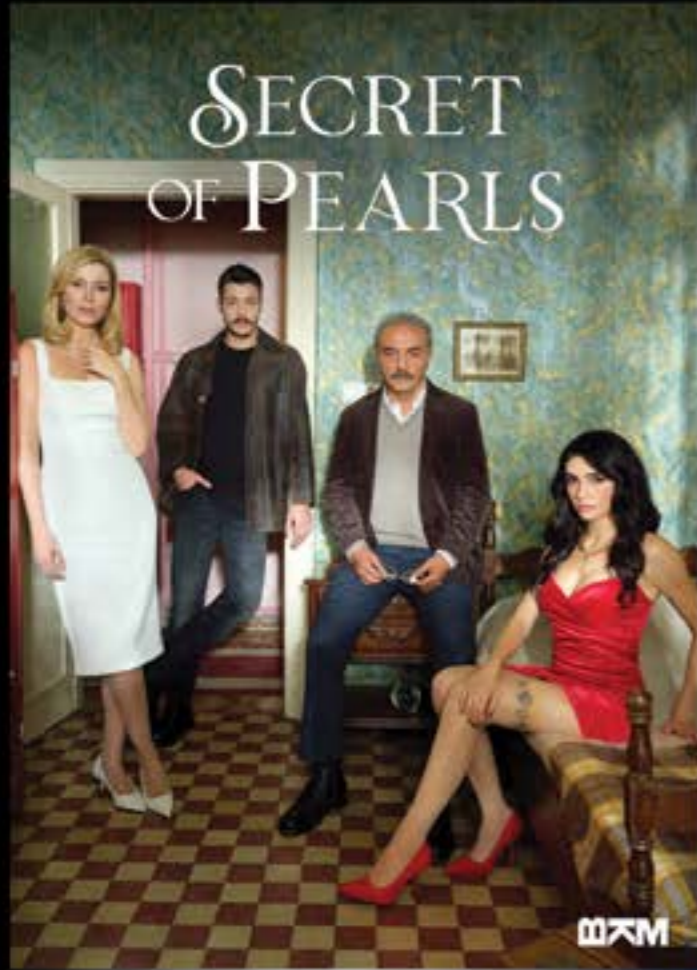
TF1 touts AI capabilities, distribution deals, and FAST channels, new ad-supported streamer

French broadcaster TF1 has launched TF1+, a new ad-supported streaming service, as it seeks to become the leader in free streaming in France. TF1 chairman and CEO Rodolphe Belmer described the launch as a "turning point" in the evolution of TF1's business model, adding that the launch of TF1+ "strengthens the position of TF1 in the digital video market, with a unique value proposition for both French audiences and advertisers".



Love Island puts fans in charge for All Stars twist

Viewers are being given the chance to pick which Islanders couple up in the launch of *Love Island All Stars*. *Love Island: All Stars* is giving fans the power to pick which Islanders will couple up in the eagerly anticipated first episode. Voting is free via the *Love Island App*.



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