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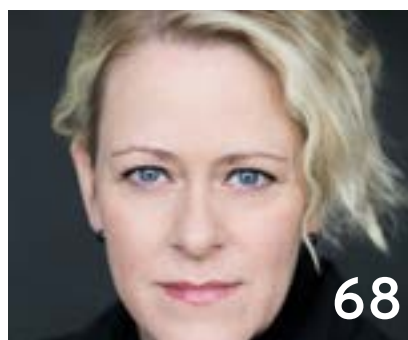
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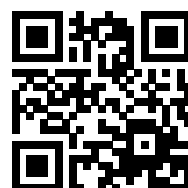
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Georgi R. Chakarov
Editor-in-chief

What's Next?



Back in Cannes. Back for MIPCOM. Back for business. But above all back to find out what's next, and most likely after the market we will be all asking that question even more than before.

Not even giants like Netflix and the newly created Skydance will know the answer any time soon as the streaming market seems to have reached a stagnation point, the audiences are shifting from platform to platform and the biggest issue - maximizing monetization - still remains a mystery for the industry because we see microdramas with tens of millions of views still make considerably less money than a regular TV show with a few hundred thousand linear viewers.

This was clearly expressed recently by Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos during the Bloomberg's 2026 Screentime event: "Overall, we're not growing as fast as I want us to, and we're working on making that move faster." In the meantime, the company's stock value has dropped by 42% year-over-year to around \$70, while last October it traded at around \$125. The same counts for Paramount: down 25% yoy to \$9.50.

In the meantime, YouTube seems to have the best position but faces competition from other players for the creators generating the biggest traffic with their original shows, meaning YouTube must also find new ways to maximize their monetization because rivals like Netflix are reportedly going as far as offering fixed upfront fees while also covering the cost of production and adding a profit margin on top.

Various reports tracking global usage or individual markets indicate that the streaming market has reached a point where user growth is flat and now the main battle is keeping the subscription base engaged and paying, even when prices are increasing and premium packages are turning into Premium + Ads. One good example of this: in March 2027 Netflix will expand its ad tier to nine more European markets on the back of declining subscription numbers in most of them due to the rising cost of the service. At the same time, Skydance will almost certainly merge HBO Max and Paramount+ but that transformation will not translate into immediate success and big cash.

These are some of the things we know now, but that is not enough to get the answer to: "What's next?"



France leads the world in AI adoption

A Goldman Sachs study puts France at the top amongst major economies in adopting artificial intelligence, as its effects on employment begin to show up in some sectors without, at this stage, triggering a broad-based shock. France is emerging as a global leader in adopting artificial intelligence. According to a new study from Goldman Sachs Research, the country ranks first in a modeled comparison of major economies, followed by the US and the Netherlands. In developed markets, the AI adoption rate is now estimated at between 15% and 20%, versus 10% to 15% in large emerging economies.



NPO reform finalized, streaming spending increases

The Dutch public broadcasting system NPO is set for a major overhaul as all 11 broadcasters are to be grouped into four houses, while the NOS and NTR will merge. The new broadcasting system must be ready by 2029. KRO-NCRV, MAX, and WNL have already indicated they will form one of the new broadcasting houses. BNNVARA and Omroep ZWART will form another, while AVROTROS and PowNed also intend to move forward together. The fourth house will include EO, HUMAN, and VPRO. At the same time, next year the budget of NPO's streaming services will increase by €94 million compared to 2026.



Mediaset faces plagiarism charges from Atresmedia and ITV Studios

Atresmedia and ITV Studios are exploring the possibility of filing legal action against Mediaset Spain over its new gameshow *Rueda la Letra* (Spin the Letter), which airs on Telecinco. Both parties are alleging that the media group owned by Alessandro Salem has 'plagiarized' their hit format *Pasapalabra / The Alphabet Game*. The new primetime show is hosted by Carlos Sobera and has generated low numbers since its debut on the network.



Egyptian TV presenter Sarah Khalifa sentenced to death in drug trafficking case

An Egyptian court has sentenced television presenter Sarah Khalifa and 11 others to death by hanging for forming a criminal gang involved in manufacturing and trafficking synthetic drugs, official media reported. The 39-year-old presenter, known for her program *Mission Impossible*, was convicted along with her brother and other co-defendants. Authorities seized more than 750kg of narcotics and raw materials, along with unlicensed firearms and ammunition, from two apartments used as laboratories.



Wanda Nara gets own reality show on Disney+

Super star Wanda Nara is getting her own reality show on Disney+ which will be shot as she works and travels between Argentina, Italy and Uruguay. The streamer posted a video where Wanda Nara is about to sign a contract, but since the pen didn't work, she wrote her name with a lipstick from her cosmetics brand. "In an intimate and revealing tone, Wanda will open the doors to her private world to show never-before-seen facets of her roles as a mother, media personality, and businesswoman," Disney+ announced.



TV Azteca files Chapter 15 proceeding in the U.S.

TV Azteca announced that it filed a petition under Chapter 15 of U.S. law before a court in the Southern District of New York, seeking formal recognition in the United States of its Mexican concurso mercantil and, through this action, consolidate and organize the company's reorganization process in Mexico. The proceeding seeks to enable creditors with interests in the United States to participate and assert their rights within the Mexican concurso mercantil, protect TV Azteca's assets in the United States.



France TV hit with massive €90 million budget squeeze

France Télévisions has been forced to save €90 million in 2027 due to a reduced State funding and a €20 million decline in ad revenues. President Delphine Ernotte Cunci warned that content investments may drop from €440 million down to €380 million, leading to re-negotiations of rights to broadcast major sports events like the Coupe de France. Following a 2026 funding cut of €80 million from the €2.37 billion budget, next year's allocations will fall by another €47 million.



MBC Group celebrates 35 years in shaping

MBC Group is celebrating its 35th anniversary, marking more than three decades of broadcasting, content creation and audience engagement across MENA. Founded in 1991 as the region's first private free-to-air satellite broadcaster, MBC has grown into a global media group. Key milestones include its move to Riyadh, 2024 listing on the Saudi Exchange, MBC Studios' productions and the expansion of MBC Shahid. Anniversary programming will run across MBC1 and digital platforms.



RTL and Sky to cut 500 jobs

The merger between RTL and Sky in Germany will be reflected in further job cuts inside the group. The broadcaster plans to cut around 500 more jobs by the end of 2027. The reason for the cuts is the cost savings targeted as part of the merger. RTL expects annual synergies of €250 million within three years. RTL cut more than 600 jobs at the end of 2025 ahead of the planned merger.



India's OTT audience rises 11% to 665 million

India's OTT audience grew 11% year-on-year to 664.9 million in 2026, while the country's active paid OTT subscriptions increased 16% to 172.6 million, according to the latest annual report by media consulting firm Ormax Media. Meanwhile, online video accounted for 46% of India's content investment in 2025, compared with 42% for television, according to MPA.



Channel 4 preps biggest layoffs in its history

Channel 4 is poised to cut about 300 jobs – about a quarter of its workforce – in the biggest round of layoffs in its 43-year history, as the broadcaster seeks to dramatically cut costs, The Guardian reported. The broadcaster's head count had risen to 1,276 by 2025, according to its latest annual report, after undergoing an expansion across the UK.



London Book Fair event replaces MIP London

After just two years, MIP London has been shut down by RX France. It will be replaced by a new two-day conference called MIP Talks that will run alongside the London Book Fair in March. The London Book Fair is organized by RX's Reed Exhibitions and is one of its flagship events. The short-lived MIP London market launched in 2025 as an alternative to the MIPTV market in Cannes.



Ynon Kreiz becomes co-CEO of the combined Paramount and WBD

David Ellison announced Ynon Kreiz as Co-CEO of the anticipated merged company, effective at closing of the merger between Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery. Kreiz joined Paramount already on October 5 from Mattel where he served as Chairman and CEO for 8 years. Previously, he also headed the Endemol Group.



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What to Buy at MIPCOM 2026?

NON-SCRIPTED



The Big Date / BBC Studios

The format sees 100 singles, all looking for a meaningful relationship, get together to find their perfect partner. A cutting-edge AI system has analyzed each of the singles and has found them their perfect match somewhere in the group, but can they find each other?



Trade Room / TV Asahi

A high-stakes psychological competition where trust is temporary, alliances are constantly rewritten, and today's teammate could become tomorrow's enemy. Ten celebrities are divided into two teams of five and placed in the BLACK ROOM and WHITE ROOM. They compete in physical, psychological, and strategic games to build their respective prize pots. But one mechanic can change everything: TRADE TIME.



Celebrity Padel / Seven. One Studios International

Taking on the global frenzy for padel, this primetime competition format pairs well-known TV personalities, influencers, and entertainers with professional elite athletes. A total of 10 dynamic duos go head-to-head on the court to battle for the official PadelCity Cup.



The Master Guides / Mediawan

The format tests six prominent people as they take on the role of museum guides. The jury is led by historian as a permanent jury member. The candidates will be guiding tours across several museums. Despite their existing affinity with art, their knowledge, improvisation, audience skills and persuasiveness will be tested, as they will only discover the art and the audience they are presenting on the spot.



New Love / Dori Media

A format that puts four single women into accelerated 72-hour live-in situations with carefully selected strangers — moving past dating apps and manufactured first dates directly into the texture of daily life: waking up together, meeting friends and family, navigating real everyday moments.



Random Driving Test / Flywheel Formats

A brand-new hit for RTÉ One, the format asks a simple question: Could you pass your driving test if you had to take it again today? In each episode, two unsuspecting drivers get a chance to prove they've still got what it takes and win €1,000 euros.



The Golden Elevators / Talpa Studios

Already commissioned by ITV in the UK and SBS6 in the Netherlands, *The Golden Elevators* looks set to be among the formats attracting the biggest interest at MIPCOM. Ten contestants begin together in the lobby of a spectacular skyscraper, all chasing the same goal: reach the top floor and claim a rolling jackpot that starts at \$100,000 and can grow dramatically as the game unfolds.



100 Knives / Banijay Rights

Could this be the next *MasterChef*? Banijay certainly hopes so with the show only just having premiered in Denmark and about to start in Sweden. The format throws 100 chefs into a pressure-cooker arena where teamwork, speed and precision determine who survives the heat. From Michelin-star talent to food content creators and aspiring culinary stars, contestants compete in brigades through escalating challenges that test skill and leadership.



Turned On: Dirty Sexy Money / Passion Distribution

Known for their provocative reality formats, Passion Distribution is bringing yet another title that has already made waves around the world with deals already confirmed in the Netherlands and Belgium. The Australian format follows a group of adult content creators reportedly sitting in the "top 1%" of the industry, many earning more than \$1 million a year through subscription platforms

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

SCRIPTED



Take Charge of My Heart / Netflix

Based on a web novel, the series follows a man whose artificial heart is running out of battery and a woman with the unique power to recharge him. When the two meet, they unintentionally share a kiss, and Bo-bae realizes her electricity doesn't seem to affect Ho-rang. For the first time ever, she thinks she has encountered her fated "human rubber glove".



Chaos in the Head / ZDF

A young woman whose life is overwhelmed by undiagnosed ADHD. The series uses a creative device to portray her inner world with different actresses playing personified emotions and thoughts. Combining humor, education, and relationship drama, the story follows Alma's self-discovery after her diagnosis.



Ann Droid / BBC Studios

Already commissioned for a second series after the first one got over 7.6 million viewers in the UK, *Ann Droid* is a comedy about Sue, a grieving widow and Linda her outdated care robot who gets things very wrong and causes chaos while also teaching Sue how to love life again. In a world where AI is looming larger and ever present, the series asks the question: what is replaceable and what is not?



The Target / Mediawan

La Cible/The Target is among the biggest premieres of the early fall 2026 season in France, leading its Monday primetime slot against the "traditional" leader *Farmer Wants a Wife*. Hugo, a bodyguard going through a divorce, finds himself in a race against time when his wife and two children are kidnapped on his son's birthday. Wrongly suspected by the police as the prime culprit, he escapes to track down his family.



Bulges / Sphere Abacus

Bulges is a workplace comedy that follows the lovably eccentric staff of an iconic, once-thriving, not-so-family-friendly Niagara Falls restaurant as they navigate friendship, complicated love lives, and ruthless cross-town rivals — all while sporting booty shorts that are tight in all the right places.



The Ordinary Jackpot / CJ ENM

A current big hit for tVN in Korea and on global streaming platforms, the series follows Gong Eun-tae, an ordinary, burned-out office worker whose life takes an unexpected turn when he wins 1.3 billion Korean won in the lottery. While the windfall is certainly life-changing, rather than pursuing an entirely new life, he returns to his familiar routine with a renewed perspective, comforted by the knowledge that he finally has a safety net...



The Man from Milan / Beta Film

Based on a true story, the series centers around Raffaele, a man who has lived life at full speed ever since his first theft as a teenager. His criminal career is defined by spectacular bank robberies, massive luxury, and beautiful women, but it eventually lands him a 27-year prison sentence. In jail, he finds a special rehabilitation program as his potential ticket to freedom but that forces him to face himself for the first time in his life.



Adapting / Big Time Decent Productions

Lennon has cerebral palsy, but she's determined not to become "the disabled new girl." Instead, she sets herself an ambitious goal: experience every messy teenage milestone before life passes her by—friendship, first kisses, heartbreak... maybe even sex. If she has to adapt to a new town, she's going to do it on her own terms, even if those terms are spectacularly self-destructive.



Did Someone Happen to Mention Me? / THE SEVEN

Once hailed as a legendary actor "known by every Japanese person," Gen Takasegawa returns to Japan only to face the shocking reality that 99% of the country — and even his own family — has completely forgotten who he is. Convinced everyone has some kind of mass amnesia, he's stunned to be written off by officials as a senile old man.

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Vuulr: Licensing Content Is Now Faster and Simpler Than Ever

Vuulr is the leading global online content marketplace for premium Film & TV content rights. Recently transformed into “The Rights Transaction Platform for All Content”, it connects buyers, distributors and creators of Film and TV worldwide, online, 24/7.

In this interview, Ben Flint, Chief Commercial Officer, Vuulr, talks about how the platform has evolved in recent years, reaching around 15.000 customers from across the globe, and setting records like closing deals in just 12 days. At MIPCOM, the company is launching a new white label product, VuulrOS, which will enable sellers to operate their own, fully branded rights website. The integration of AI tools will be also key to revolutionizing content discovery and acquisitions on Vuulr.



With decades of experience building B2B businesses in the Intellectual Property (IP) sector, **Ben Flint** co-founded Vuulr in 2018 with the simple belief that without marketplace technology, the industry was unwittingly missing out on the full potential of great stories. He serves as the company's Chief Commercial Officer.

Ben, Vuulr has been pushing to digitize licensing for years now. How much has the industry actually shifted, and what parts of the rights business are still stubbornly resisting automation?

It's shifted enormously. When we first launched Vuulr, the idea of bringing e-commerce principles to content rights was arguably ahead of its time. Today, nobody questions whether the industry needs to become more digital – the pressure is actually on to do it faster.

Buyers are looking across a much bigger universe of content, sellers need to monetize more of their catalogues, and everyone is being asked to do more with less. What hasn't changed is that rights are complicated and this is still a relationship business. There are avails, windows, holdbacks, pricing, approvals and contracts – often managed across multiple systems and spreadsheets.

We're not trying to automate the human judgement out of licensing. We're trying to automate the friction around it. Let technology handle the repetitive work, sitting alongside buyers and sellers as an asset to support them while they can concentrate on the deal.

You now call Vuulr a “Rights Transaction Platform” rather than just a marketplace. What does that mean in practice, and where is the biggest growth coming from?

The distinction is important. A marketplace helps buyers and sellers find each other. A Rights Transaction Platform supports the whole journey.

So, we're moving beyond our old “discovery-to-the-deal-memo” workflow, into an end-to-end environment that can support targeted search and recommendations, screening, rights and avails, negotiation, transactions, localization and ultimately delivery – with established technical partners supporting some facets. And increasingly, AI can help at multiple points in that process – from matching buyers with relevant content – and vice versa – to enabling highly localized delivery.

The growth opportunity is also much bigger because content itself has changed. We're not just talking about traditional TV and film anymore. Creator content, microdramas and new forms of professionally produced content are becoming part of the international rights economy. The market has expanded, but the infrastructure

hasn't kept pace. That's the gap we're addressing.

Closing deals in 12 days instead of months is a big leap. What specific bottlenecks did you cut out, and what's still keeping deals from closing even faster?

A lot of the time traditionally spent “doing a deal” isn't actually spent negotiating. It's the drudgery of finding the right person, checking availability, requesting screeners, exchanging information, chasing emails and working out which version of a spreadsheet is current.

Put discovery, rights information, screening, communication and negotiation into one workflow, and you remove a huge amount of dead time. “No more spreadsheets” is one of our mantras!

But there are things we don't want to eliminate. Buyers still need to make editorial and commercial decisions. Companies have approval processes. Some deals require complex negotiation or legal input. The aim isn't to make every deal instantaneous. It's to make sure the technology is never the reason a good deal takes months instead of days.

With thousands of users across 120+ territories, how do you prevent Vuulr from becoming an overwhelming warehouse where good content gets lost?

That's exactly where technology – and particularly AI – becomes interesting.

The answer to having more content isn't giving buyers a bigger search box. It's understanding what they're actually looking for and surfacing the most relevant opportunities. Vuulr already has a network of around 15.000 customers – both buyers and sellers – and we're reconnecting that community and refreshing catalogue information as we relaunch.

Our job is to make that scale useful. Better metadata, better search, smarter matching and ultimately more personalized discovery mean a buyer doesn't have to wade through thousands of titles.

The future of content discovery isn't about seeing more. It's about finding that hidden gem faster.

Are you replacing traditional distributors or complementing them? How is their role changing as buyers get comfortable dealing directly online?

Absolutely complementing them. Technology doesn't replace a great salesperson or distributor. It makes them more productive.

Distributors understand markets, buyers, pricing and positioning. They know when to pick up the phone and when there's a deal to be pushed over the line. What they shouldn't have to spend their time doing is repeatedly sending screeners, checking basic availability, or manually maintaining information that technology can manage.

I don't think a digital platform removes the middleman. I think it removes the manual work. That frees distributors to concentrate on what they are genuinely good at: relationships, judgement and maximizing the value of IP.

With your white-label tech and data tools, is the ultimate goal to become the underlying infrastructure for the entire rights industry?

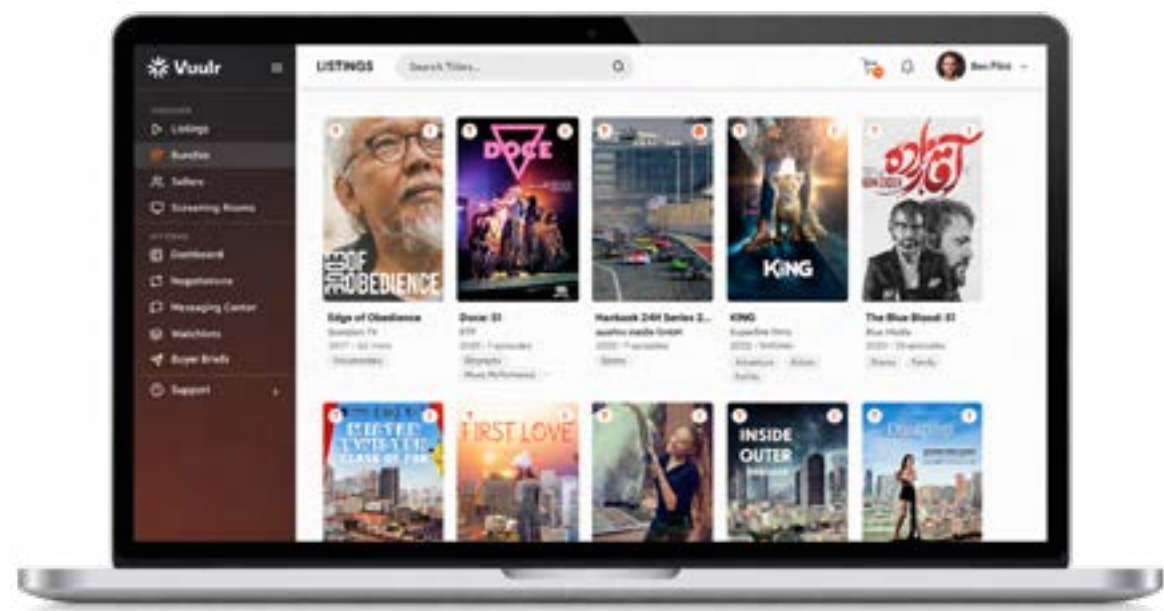
This is our game-changing opportunity: to become the Shopify that helps this industry transact more efficiently – but we're not trying to take over everybody's business.

The original Vuulr essentially said: here's a marketplace where you can buy and sell content. What we're building now is much broader. We're creating technology that can support different parts of the transaction, wherever the customer wants to operate.

That's why we describe Vuulr today as a Rights Transaction Platform for All Content.

If we can become part of the plumbing that makes global content licensing simpler, faster and more efficient, that's what gets us out of bed every morning.

We are now launching a new white label product at MIPCOM – VuulrOS – which will enable sellers of all sizes – and across every type of content – to operate their own, always-on, fully-branded rights website, and handle business with their regular customers. VuulrOS websites can work alongside any existing website – powered by Vuulr's latest platform technology and infrastructure – and require no maintenance! Importantly, a modest subscription fee removes the commission from any transactions with their customers. Again, a sign that we don't want to interfere with a client's existing business; just help optimize it.



The opportunity for the customer is so much bigger than putting an online screening room: their website will have all the functionality of the Vuulr.com marketplace - the sophisticated offer/RFP module, advanced discovery tools, sales controls, bundle curation etc. - but also customized branding, live avails, live chat and automated notifications - such as contract expiry alerts. And behind all of that, there is dedicated support from the Vuulr team.

How is AI changing how buyers evaluate acquisitions, and what role does Vuulr play in that workflow?

AI becomes really powerful when you think about the sheer volume of content buyers now have to navigate.

A buyer might know the audience they're targeting, the territories, genre, budget, rights and platform requirements - but finding the titles that fit can still involve an enormous amount of manual work. AI can help interrogate that universe much more intelligently, match clients with relevant content and share opportunities a buyer might otherwise never see.

We're also looking beyond discovery. AI can help across workflows, avails, promotion, communication and localization. That's one reason the opportunity for Vuulr today is so much greater than it was the first time around.

But I don't see AI deciding what gets commissioned or acquired. AI can get you to the shortlist: Human taste, instinct and knowledge of an audience will still make the final decision on our platforms.

Rights, windows, and holdbacks remain a messy web. How close are we to a truly standardized, machine-readable rights ecosystem?

Technically, we're closer than the industry sometimes behaves.

The challenge isn't simply creating standards; it's getting consistent data into systems and keeping it current. Rights can vary by territory, language, platform, window and business model, and historically a huge amount of that information has lived in spreadsheets, emails or people's heads.

But once rights information becomes structured and machine-readable, everything changes. A buyer should be able to know what is actually available rather than discovering three conversations later that it isn't. We have always followed the MDDF (Movielabs Digital Data Framework) - endorsed by the Majors and Google, Amazon, etc. - in order to try and put everyone working with Vuulr on the same page.

That's when digital licensing becomes genuinely powerful: not when we put the old process online, but when the underlying rights data itself becomes usable by machines.

If licensing happens 24/7 online, what is the real job of physical markets like MIPCOM today, and how should online and face-to-face dealmaking work together?

MIPCOM matters enormously - we're relaunching Vuulr there, so clearly, we believe in it!

But I think we need to separate the market from the transaction. Markets are brilliant at relationships, serendip-

ity, discovering what's coming, understanding what buyers need and having the conversation you didn't know you needed to have.

What makes less sense is believing that the entire business of international licensing needs to be squeezed into three or four days in Cannes.

Meet in Cannes, transact in Singapore, continue the conversation in LA - our platforms keep the market open long after everyone has gone home!

So, I don't see online replacing physical markets at all. Done properly, each makes the other more valuable.

What will international content acquisition look like if Vuulr's vision succeeds? What will a buyer or distributor be doing differently from today?

It should feel dramatically simpler.

A buyer should be able to say: I need this kind of content, for this audience, in these territories, with these rights, at roughly this price - and quickly get a list of what's genuinely relevant and available, screenable right there and then, talk to the seller and start a transaction without spending days simply finding the information.

For sellers, it means every piece of content has the opportunity to be monetized harder. A title shouldn't become invisible because nobody happens to be actively selling it that week. And we want ALL content ideas to be surfaced, hence our positioning, including indie gems, microdramas, creator-led content - and whatever comes next - just as much as mainstream hits. ■



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Inter Medya CEO Can Okan: We Are Ensuring the Right IP Finds Its Optimal Monetization Model

Inter Medya is coming to Cannes with its most diverse content slate ever which now also includes the hottest trend of the year – microdramas. CEO Can Okan talks to Stanislav Kimchev about the latest developments in the business strategy of the company: from simply selling finished programs to becoming consultants in helping clients to best monetize the content, while also continuing to bet on international co-productions and strategic alliances to create new revenue streams.

Can, Inter Medya has had a particularly active 2026, with new deals across CEE, Latin America and other international markets. What have been the biggest drivers behind this recent momentum?

Our active momentum in 2026 is rooted in a deliberate strategy combining content diversification, aggressive territorial expansion, and early adaptation to changing viewer habits. Key drivers include our robust catalog strength and high production value paired with

our ability to unlock new windows in Central and Eastern Europe, expand deeper into Latin America, and make significant strides in Western Europe, notably Italy. Furthermore, expanding beyond finished content sales into microdramas, strategic co-productions, and targeted format licensing has allowed us to capture fresh revenue streams across both linear and digital platforms.

Halef has emerged as one of the key titles in your current catalog,

Can Okan established Inter Medya in 1992, initially as a domestic film distribution company in Turkey before steering its expansion into a major international content provider. Under his leadership, the company distributes high-end Turkish drama series, miniseries, feature films, formats, and now also microdrama productions to over 160 countries globally. In recent years, Okan transitioned the company from purely a distribution enterprise to an active content producer, launching internal production via Inter Yapım and investing in co-productions, new strategic alliances and vertical content formats.





Heartstrings

securing a series of new sales in Italy, Romania, Hungary, Croatia and Albania, among other markets. What do you believe is behind the show's international appeal, and how important has it become to Inter Medya's current distribution strategy?

Halef has been a powerhouse for us, reaching roughly 15 international markets, from major European windows like Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Albania, and also MENA and Latin America. Its roots in Şanlıurfa

provide an authentic, rich cultural texture and striking visual backdrop, while its core themes of family dynamics, heritage, and intense emotional stakes transcend borders. *Halef* proves that Turkish storytelling can successfully anchor prime-time slots in highly competitive markets while simultaneously performing on digital and pan-regional feeds, serving as a successful title that validates our ability to scale high-end dramas globally following its season-two renewal at home.

MIPCOM Cannes 2026 is placing particular emphasis on new forms of storytelling and business models, including microdrama, AI and digital content. What will Inter Medya's priorities be in Cannes this year, and which titles or areas of the catalog will be at the center of your conversations with international buyers?

At MIPCOM 2026, our focus is squarely on bridging traditional high-end drama excellence with the industry's rapid digital evolution. Our core priorities involve showcasing our expanding, multi-layered catalog—which now spans major flagship series, mini-series, feature films, formats, and a dedicated microdrama slate—while highlighting innovative business models like our microdrama initiatives and strategic production partnerships. Conversations with international buyers are centered around our powerhouse dramas, fresh acquisitions, and new multi-genre slates designed to give our business partners flexibility whether they are programming linear channels or streaming apps.

Your partnership with Rise Studios represents an interesting expansion beyond traditional distribution, with the two companies announcing both a strategic

production partnership and the start of production on *Caged Love*. What was the reasoning behind this collaboration, and could we see more internationally oriented productions developed through this partnership?

Our strategic production partnership with Rise Studios represents a natural evolution, moving from pure international distribution to active, upstream content creation tailored for the global market. By joining forces, we combine Inter Medya's deep global distribution intelligence and curation expertise with Rise Studios' capabilities. *Caged Love* is our first major collaborative milestone under this umbrella, and given the universal appetite for high-concept, globally minded narratives, this partnership is designed to scale, and we fully expect to develop more international-facing co-productions through this pipeline.

Inter Medya has been investing heavily in microdramas, building a dedicated internal team and expanding its catalog through acquisitions and territorial rights deals. After the early digital success of *Boardroom to Bedroom*, what have you learned about the commercial potential of vertical



Boardroom to Bedroom

short-form drama, and how central will microdramas be to your future business?

Our early experiments and investments in microdramas - bolstered by internal team expansions and digital successes like *Boardroom to Bedroom* - have been eye-opening regarding commercial potential. Microdrama operates on a completely different psychological and consumption velocity where viewers demand instant hooks, rapid pacing, and high emotional or comedic payoff optimized for mobile screens. Because of this,

microdramas are no longer just an experimental side-project; they are a permanent pillar of our growth strategy that allows us to capture younger, mobile-first audiences and monetize IP in bite-sized formats across emerging digital distribution ecosystems.

Central and Eastern Europe has clearly become an increasingly important region for Inter Medya. You have recently concluded multi-title and individual deals in Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and Hungary. What are



Last summer



Halef



The trusted

buyers in CEE currently looking for from Turkish drama, and how has the region evolved as a market for Inter Medya?

CEE has matured into an exceptionally sophisticated and dynamic region for Inter Medya, highlighted by recent multi-title and individual deals across Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, and Hungary. Buyers in CEE are looking for high dramatic stakes, strong family conflicts, and premium production values that can reliably anchor their prime-time grids or drive streaming subscriptions. The region has evolved from a secondary market for older catalog titles into a premier, fast-following window where contemporary Turkish dramas are acquired rapidly alongside or shortly after their domestic Turkish broadcasts.

Inter Medya has continued to strengthen its presence in Latin America, most recently with sales including *Deception* in Uruguay, while titles such as *Heartstrings* and *Last Summer* have also expanded their reach in the region. What makes Latin America such a natural market for Turkish storytelling, and how is your strategy there evolving?

Latin America remains one of our most vital and natural markets, reinforced recently by sales of *Eshref Ruya*, *Halef*, alongside ongoing momentum for *Deception*, *Heartstrings*, *The Trusted* and *Last Summer*. There is a profound cultural affinity between Turkish and Latin American storytelling traditions, as both cultures prioritize intense family dynamics, melodrama, emotional authenticity, and sweeping romantic arcs. Our strategy there has evolved beyond traditional television syndication to include multi-platform licensing strategies, working closely with both major free-to-air networks and dominant regional streaming and pay TV platforms to maximize reach.

Your catalog is becoming increasingly diversified, spanning long-running Turkish dramas, miniseries, feature films, formats and microdramas. Is the role of an international distributor changing from simply selling finished programs to helping buyers navigate an increasingly fragmented content landscape?

The role of the international distributor has fundamentally transformed, moving from simply selling finished programs to becoming strategic consultants and navigators. As the content landscape frag-

ments across linear, AVOD, FAST, SVOD, and micro-platform apps, buyers face choice overload, and our value lies in helping clients curate, window, and localize content effectively, ensuring the right IP finds its optimal monetization model in every specific territory.

Turkish drama is now a mature global business, but competition for international buyers has never been stronger. As Inter Medya looks ahead, where do you see the next phase of growth coming from: new territories, new formats and shorter forms of storytelling, international co-productions, or a broader transformation of the traditional distribution model?

As the Turkish drama sector matures globally, sustainable competitive advantage will come from a synthesis of multiple vectors rather than a single silver bullet. The next phase of growth will stem from scaling our shorter forms and new formats like microdramas, deepening international co-productions through structural alliances like our work with Rise Studios, and driving a broader transformation of traditional models by blurring the lines between licensing, equity participation, and platform-agnostic distribution. ■

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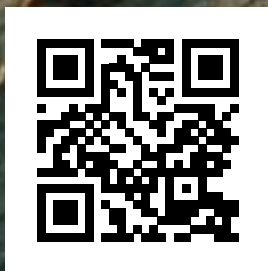
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HALLEF



MediaHub's Kerim Emrah Turna: Diversity Has Always Been Core to Who We Are

Kerim Emrah Turna, Founder and CEO of MediaHub, is looking forward to a dynamic MIPCOM market as the global entertainment industry is changing and evolving fast with his company analyzing and trying to identify the new trends and best business models to produce, distribute and monetize content – from multi-episode drama series to IP rights, and the latest hype – microdramas.

Kerim, MediaHub has evolved from a distribution-focused company into a business covering acquisitions, production, co-production and rights management. What is the next stage of that evolution, and where do you see the biggest growth opportunity for the company over the next two to three years?

MediaHub is a very young company on paper, but it's built on top of twenty plus years of accumulated industry experience — so, on several fronts we started from a position of advantage rather than from scratch. We touch every area this question raises — acquisitions, production, co-production, rights management — we think of ourselves as an independent distributor. That independence is what lets us reshape ourselves quickly, which is probably our defining trait in a media industry currently going through very difficult times.

The next two to three years will be about making the right calls and showing the right governance, because the sector is genuinely at an inflection point. Some things continue as before, but free-to-air is changing fast, classic pay TV is under real pressure, and on the SVOD side only a small handful of giants are making money — some only now turning profitable — while studios are struggling. For a company our size, this is exactly the moment to make smart, disciplined decisions rather than chase every opportunity.

At last year's MIPCOM, you presented *Bitter Justice* as a major new original and said the goal was to develop one new project every year. How has that strategy progressed since then, and what can you reveal about the next originals currently in development?

The strategy is very much alive, though its shape has evolved year by year. We started with *Alaca*, then continued with *Bitter Justice* as our first true international co-production. This year we've taken a somewhat different path: we've made intellectual-property investments in two new drama titles. We'll be launching both at MIPCOM this year, the underlying strategy hasn't changed at all: we remain committed to bringing our own originals to buyers worldwide, we're simply diversifying the ways we get there.

***Alaca* has continued to expand internationally, while *Bitter Justice* has opened another chapter for MediaHub as a producer. What have you learned from taking your own IP to international buyers that has changed the way you develop projects today?**

Honestly, it's been a continuous learning process. We listen closely to our buyers, gather their feedback, and try to genuinely understand their needs, and that shapes how we build new content from the ground up. It informs everything from which audiences we prioritize, to the tone of the stories we tell, to the themes we choose to explore.



MediaHub and Globalsphere are increasingly working with international partners, including the co-production with India's She-maroo Entertainment. Are you now actively looking for more co-production partners outside Turkey, and which territories are currently the most attractive for these partnerships?

Yes, absolutely — and this is an ongoing search rather than a one-off effort. Since we're always working on new productions, we're constantly looking for valuable co-production partners, whether they're based in Turkey or elsewhere, and they can genuinely come from anywhere in the world. What matters most to us is finding a partner who brings real market knowledge and distribution strength to the table, wherever they happen to be based.

Turkish drama remains extremely competitive internationally, with a growing number of distributors fighting for the same buyers. How do you differentiate MediaHub's catalog

today, and what makes a title compelling enough for you to acquire or invest in it?

The first thing I'd say is that we're not only a distributor licensing Turkish drama. We're a globally operating distribution company, reaching buyers and clients in every part of the world, and to serve them properly we carry catalogs sourced from across the globe. That said, given our own origin, Turkish content naturally still occupies a very important place in our catalog, and a large part of that is our own original IP. What sets those titles apart, we believe, is that they speak to a particular sociology in a way that genuinely resonates and creates real differentiation for us in the market. Beyond that, drama is where the large majority of our focus sits overall, because that's where we've built the deepest expertise — and what makes a title compelling to us hasn't changed: a genuinely universal theme, carried by strong, character-driven writing and production values that hold up in any market.

You have previously identified Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Southern Europe as areas with significant potential. Which of these markets has developed most strongly for MediaHub over the past year, and where do you expect the next major breakthrough to come from?

It's fair to say progress across these regions has been mixed. Progress across these markets has been mixed this past year. Some regions remain valuable long-term despite near-term financial pressures, others are still building without a clear breakthrough yet, and one region has quietly become one of the most valuable for us — that's probably where I'd point to real, tangible progress.

MediaHub has been expanding beyond Turkish drama, adding European limited series, documentaries and unscripted titles to its portfolio. How important will diversification by genre and country of origin become to your international sales strategy?

We've defined and positioned ourselves as a global content distributor from day one, so having content from across the world, and content that speaks to different audience groups, has always mattered enormously to us. That's translated into a genuinely wide range of partnerships over the years — we've worked with partners across Western and Eastern Europe, from the Netherlands to Greece, as well as in the United States, Argentina, the Philippines, the Middle East, and several markets in the Far East including Korea. That diversity has always been core to who we are.

The company has also been exploring microdramas and shorter-form storytelling as a complement to traditional long-form series. Have you identified a viable business model for these formats yet, and do you see them becoming a meaningful part of MediaHub's catalog? We've followed the microdrama space closely since it first emerged, trying to analyze how

it's growing and where it's likely to head. Right now, it's genuinely become a large business in markets like China and the US, but for it to grow meaningfully beyond that, it needs different ingredients. My own view is that if it takes off in Western Europe next, that's when it truly goes global — and that's a conversation I don't hear enough people having. What I'd flag is that the number of companies actually making money from it, sustainably, is still quite small, so we're watching closely. It's worth remembering FAST was positioned as the "next big thing" before this — and it did spread significantly and continues to — but it never turned into a business at the scale of free-to-air, pay TV, or AVOD/SVOD.

With streaming platforms increasingly commissioning originals while broadcasters remain highly price-sensitive, what are buyers asking for at MIPCOM 2026 that is noticeably different from what they were looking for two or three years ago? And how

has that changed the way MediaHub packages and sells content?

The timing is genuinely difficult right now — global economic and political pressures have converged at the same moment, and the media is feeling that. At the same time, there's more choice than ever; the number of options in the market has multiplied. On the broadcast side, buyers, especially in emerging markets, have become far more cost-conscious than they were two or three years ago. On the streaming side, several regional players are still in the process of launching or expanding, and they've realized that local content is essential if they want to actually convert and retain subscribers. We're also deeply engaged with streaming platforms ourselves across many different regions, working with both global and local operators on a variety of deals, and from time to time we're able to announce some of those publicly. I expect the broader trend, streamers leaning harder into local content to win subscribers, to keep going. ■

DIFFERENT LIVES

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LAND OF THE SUN

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TIMSBI

ATV Brings Its Most Ambitious Drama Slate to Cannes

ATV has built a name for itself on the international TV market with distinct and proven high-quality Turkish drama series, but this MIPCOM will be extra special for the brand as ATV Distribution is bringing its most ambitious slate to date to buyers in Cannes.

Müge Akar, Head of Global Sales, tells TVBIZZ Magazine more about the latest highlights in the catalog and what makes her team so excited about the 2026 MIPCOM CANNES market.

Müge, ATV Distribution is coming to MIPCOM after generating significant international interest with its latest hits. What will be the main highlights of your MIPCOM 2026 slate, and which titles do you expect to attract the most attention in Cannes?

We are coming to MIPCOM 2026 with one of our strongest and most commercially promising slates to date, featuring titles that have already demonstrated strong audience engagement in Türkiye and generated early interest from international buyers.

One of our key highlights will be *Land of the Sun*, produced by TIMSBI Productions and starring Burak Ozcivit and Beyza Gumulcine. Set between Berlin and Adana, the series combines a powerful love story with family conflict, long-buried secrets and a rich cultural backdrop. The series made a remarkable debut on ATV on September 17, becoming the highest-rated primetime Turkish drama in both the AB and ABC1 demographics on the night of its premiere.

Another major title is *Different Lives*, which quickly became one of the stand-out successes of the summer season. The series launched as the strongest summer premiere and continued to deliver exceptional ratings even after the start of the highly competitive main season, becoming the most-watched series in its time slot. The story follows Emir, a talented young footballer whose pursuit of a better future turns into a quest for justice after a family tragedy, blending family drama, ambition, friendship, romance and the universal appeal of football.

We are also excited to present *Redemption*, a powerful new drama built around themes of second chances, family ties and personal transformation. With its emotionally driven narrative and strong character arcs, we believe it has significant international potential and will attract buyers looking for premium character-driven storytelling.

Another important title in our slate is *A.B.I.: A Broken Inheritance*, which has already been licensed in 68 countries worldwide, including MENA, Sub-Saha-

ran Africa, Albania, Romania and Kazakhstan. As the series enters its second season, audiences will see Berguzar Korel join the cast alongside Kenan Imirzalioglu. Their reunion brings together two of Türkiye's most beloved and internationally recognized stars, adding a fresh dynamic and a new emotional layer to the story. The chemistry between them is immediately apparent on screen and is expected to further strengthen the series' international appeal.

From a sales perspective, this year's slate offers a strong mix of proven ratings success, internationally recognized talent and universally appealing stories. We believe these titles are well positioned to generate new licensing opportunities across multiple regions, strengthen existing partnerships and attract broadcasters and platforms looking for premium Turkish drama with broad audience appeal.

***Different Lives* has already secured its first international deal with Noor Play for MENA, with the series airing simultaneously across 20 countries alongside its Turkish broadcast. What did you see in this title that made you confident it could travel internationally so quickly, and are you actively pursuing more day-and-date launches?**

From the very beginning, we saw strong international potential in *Different Lives*. It has the classic elements audiences expect from Turkish drama; family, love, ambition, conflict and justice but combines them with a very catchy storyline and a number of realistic, relatable details drawn from everyday life.

The young and talented cast is another key strength, with almost every character offering something audiences can identify with. The contrast

Müge Akar is the Head of Global Sales at ATV Distribution. She joined ATV in 2013 when Turkish drama was just beginning to conquer global audiences. Since then, Müge has led the expansion of ATV's catalog to Latin America, Asia and Europe. She holds an MBA in International Marketing from the Swedish University of Mälardalen.

between wealth and poverty creates an additional layer of tension, while the supporting characters actively contribute to the main story rather than simply filling out the narrative.

Its strong performance in Türkiye reinforced our confidence in the title, and the agreement with Noor Play, bringing the series to 20 MENA countries simultaneously with its Turkish broadcast, marked an important first step in its international journey.

We see day-and-date launches as a valuable strategy for titles with strong audience potential, allowing them to build momentum and engage viewers across markets from the very beginning. We will continue to explore similar opportunities where the title and market conditions make it commercially relevant.

***The Nightfall* has expanded into one of Europe's major television markets through its deal with Media-**

set in Italy. What does the show's performance and its journey into Western Europe tell you about the opportunities for ATV's dramas in markets that were once considered more difficult for Turkish content? *The Nightfall's* expansion into Italy is a strong example of how Turkish dramas continue to broaden their reach internationally. What makes this particularly encouraging is that the series has succeeded with a story that remains authentic to its roots while





Villa Coral



The Nightfall



Different Lives

offering themes and emotions that travel naturally across cultures.

Its expansion into major European markets, including Italy through Mediaset, as well as Spain, Romania, Hungary and Bosnia, confirms that audiences continue to respond to compelling storytelling regardless of language or origin.

For ATV Distribution, this is an encouraging sign that opportunities in Western Europe are growing. Buyers are increasingly recognizing the quality, scale and emotional resonance of Turkish dramas, creating new opportunities for both our latest productions and our broader catalog. We see this as part of a wider trend in which Turkish content is reaching increasingly diverse audiences and establishing a stronger presence in markets that were once considered more challenging.

ATV has been particularly successful with dramas built around

strong family conflicts, social issues and emotionally driven characters. Are you seeing any change in what international buyers are asking for now? Are they looking for shorter dramas, more contemporary stories, younger casts or different genres?

We are seeing that buyer expectations can vary significantly from one market to another, so rather than one single trend, we see demand for a broad range of content. Different territories have different audience profiles, and this diversity is reflected in the types of stories buyers are looking for.

This is where the diversity of ATV's catalog becomes particularly important. Alongside our family-driven dramas and emotionally rich stories, our portfolio includes historical and period dramas, youth-oriented series, character-driven dramas, revenge stories, and action titles, offering a wide range of genres and storytelling styles for international audiences.

Our vision at ATV is to create stories that can speak to audiences with different tastes and interests and take these stories to screens around the world. We therefore focus on building a broad slate rather than following a single content trend, allowing us to match the right title with the right market and audience.

A.B.I. was one of the strongest new launches in spring and is returning for a second season, while Different Lives has also started strongly domestically. How closely do international buyers follow Turkish ratings today, and how much does a show's performance at home influence your international sales strategy?

International buyers closely follow ratings in Türkiye, particularly during the September launch period, when they are evaluating the new season's titles. Strong early performance gives buyers an important indication of a series' audience appeal and can generate immediate international interest.

We have seen this with titles such as *Land of the Sun*, *A.B.I.: A Broken Inheritance* and *Different Lives*, whose strong domestic performances have supported our international sales conversations and helped demonstrate their audience potential.

That said, ratings are only one part of the equation. Buyers also look closely at the story, cast, production quality and overall fit with their local audience. Our role is to bring these elements together and identify the right positioning and markets for each title.

ATV Distribution has continued to close deals across very different

territories, from MENA to Western and Eastern Europe. Which markets are currently showing the strongest growth for your content, and where do you still see significant untapped potential?

We continue to see strong demand across MENA, Eastern Europe and Latin America, with opportunities both for new launches and for expanding our established catalogue. In these regions, we are seeing room to work with additional broadcasters and platforms, as well as to introduce more titles to partners who already know and follow Turkish drama.

Looking ahead, we see further potential in territories where Turkish content has a more limited presence, particularly through new broadcaster and platform relationships. We also see opportunities to extend the reach of our catalog, including established titles that can find new audiences as Turkish drama continues to travel internationally.

The Turkish drama market is becoming increasingly competitive, with distributors launching more and more titles internationally every season. What is ATV Distribution doing to differentiate its slate beyond the strength of the ATV brand, and how important are exclusive premieres, simultaneous launches and marketing support in winning deals?

The Turkish drama market is highly competitive, and we believe differentiation comes from more than the strength of the ATV brand. Our focus is on building a slate that combines

strong stories, proven audience performance, internationally recognized talent and a clear proposition for each market.

We also take a flexible approach to launching our titles internationally. Depending on the series and the territory, exclusive premieres and simultaneous launches can create valuable momentum and allow our partners to position a title as a key new release. *Different Lives*, for example, premiered simultaneously in 20 MENA countries alongside its Turkish broadcast, creating an immediate connection between the domestic and international audiences.

Marketing support is another important part of our strategy. We work closely with our partners from the launch stage, providing tailored promotional materials and digital assets to help maximize visibility and audience engagement. For us, the objective is not simply to license a title, but to build the right launch strategy around it and create the strongest possible opportunity in each territory.

Looking at the business side, are you seeing a change in the balance between free TV broadcasters, pay TV channels and streaming platforms among your international clients? Are platforms becoming more willing to take Turkish dramas earlier, sometimes even before their Turkish ratings trajectory is fully established?

We are seeing a broader mix of buyers across our international business. Traditional broadcasters and

pay TV channels remain important partners, while streaming platforms have become increasingly active in acquiring Turkish dramas and are often more open to evaluating titles at an earlier stage.

We do see platforms showing interest before a series has built a long ratings trajectory in Türkiye, particularly when the title has a strong cast, distinctive story and clear international potential. However, domestic performance remains an important reference point, especially for broadcasters, as it provides valuable insight into audience response.

What would make MIPCOM 2026 a successful market for ATV Distribution? Beyond selling individual series, are you looking to establish new long-term partnerships, expand into new territories, develop co-production opportunities or explore new business models for ATV's very large content library?

For us, a successful MIPCOM 2026 would be measured by concrete business outcomes: new licensing agreements for our latest titles, entry into new territories, and the number of new clients and long-term partnerships we establish.

A key priority will be converting meetings around our new season slate into deals for titles such as *Land of the Sun*, *Different Lives*, *A.B.I.: A Broken Inheritance* and *Redemption*. At the same time, we want to generate new opportunities for our established catalogue and expand its reach into additional markets. ■



Land of the Sun

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Kanal D All Set for a Strong MIPCOM Market

Kanal D International is looking forward to a fruitful MIPCOM market this year's relying on fresh premieres, classic titles and new sales strategies aimed at maximizing the rich content catalog of the distributor. Elif Tatoğlu, Distribution Strategy & Sales Director, talks to TVBIZZ Magazine about her expectations for the market, their latest deals, the new trends among buyers and how Kanal D adjusts to the constantly evolving rights industry.

Kanal D International enters MIPCOM with a strong combination of new dramas, established hits and a growing formats business. What are the key titles and strategic priorities you will be putting in the spotlight in Cannes this year?

This year, we are coming to MIPCOM with a very strong slate and a clear focus on where we see the greatest potential. *Dignity* will be one of our major new launches in Cannes, while *Torn Apart* arrives at the market with very strong momentum, having launched successfully over the summer and carried that performance into the new season. *Sins & Roses*, meanwhile, is entering an important new phase with its second season, building on the strong international journey it has already established.

But our MIPCOM offering goes well beyond the new season. Our evergreen catalog remains a very important part of our business, and we continue to see strong demand for these titles through traditional ready-made sales, as well as new windows and audiences on digital platforms.

Another important priority for us is scripted formats. We are increasingly looking at our catalog not only in terms of finished-content sales, but also as a strong library of IP that can be adapted for different markets. We are already seeing growing interest in both our recent and established titles for local adaptations.

So, our strategy in Cannes is really about maximizing the value of the entire catalog: launching our strongest new stories, continuing to build the international life of successful titles, and creating new opportunities for our IP to travel across

different platforms, windows and through local adaptations.

***Sins & Roses* has become one of your strongest recent international performers, with sales across multiple territories and its first Latin American deal in Panama. What do you believe is driving the series' appeal internationally, and what have you learned from its journey so far?**

I think what we have seen with *Sins & Roses* is that a strong emotional story can connect with audiences in very different markets. The series has a very clear emotional core: love, family, secrets and difficult choices. But at the same time, it feels contemporary, and the chemistry of the cast has been a very important part of that connection.

What has been particularly encouraging is seeing the series continue to open new doors internationally. Panama marked its first step into Latin America, and we expect to announce further sales in the region soon. Its journey so far also shows us that the series can travel successfully not only across territories, but across different types of platforms and audiences.

For us, the biggest learning has been that audiences may be very different from one market to another, but they still respond to the same fundamental emotions when the story feels authentic. *Sins & Roses* has demonstrated that very clearly, and with its second season now underway, we believe there is still a lot of international potential ahead.

Can you confirm the adaptation of the show in Greece and reveal more details about the deal? What

is the potential of this drama as a format?

Yes, we can confirm that *Sins & Roses* has been licensed for local adaptations in both Greece and Portugal, which is a very exciting development for us. Seeing the story being reinterpreted in two different markets is also a strong indication of its potential as a format.

I think what makes it work particularly well as a format is the story itself. Love, betrayal, family relationships, secrets and second chances are themes that can resonate anywhere, while the relationships and conflicts between the characters leave enough room for each market to make the story its own.

These adaptations also come at an important time for Kanal D International, as we are steadily growing our formats business and, year by year, it is becoming a bigger priority for us. We have many proven stories in our catalog that we believe can find new lives through local adaptations, so this is definitely an area where we see significant room for growth.

***Sins & Roses* also recently won the Bronze Tower Award at the New York Festivals TV & Film Awards. How important are international awards and industry recognition in strengthening the positioning of a Turkish drama in global markets?**

Awards are certainly valuable because they bring another level of visibility and credibility to a title. Buyers are exposed to an enormous amount of content today, so recognition from a respected international institution can help a series stand out and attract attention.

Of course, an award alone does not drive international sales. The story still has to connect with audiences and make sense for the needs of each broadcaster or platform. But it can reinforce the positioning of a series and show that its creative qualities are being recognized beyond its home market.

For *Sins & Roses*, the Bronze Tower Award at the New York Festivals TV & Film Awards was particularly meaningful because it came at a time when the series was already building a strong international journey. For us, it was another confirmation that the story is connecting not only with audiences and buyers, but also with the wider international industry.

Your current catalog includes *Torn Apart* as a 2026 premium drama alongside *Sins & Roses*, *The Family Burden* and *Secret of Pearls*. What are buyers looking for today, and how has the profile of a “globally exportable” Turkish drama changed compared with a few years ago?

I think buyers have become much more selective, but at the same time their needs have also become much more diverse. There is no longer one definition of what an internationally successful Turkish drama should look like.

Of course, the emotional storytelling that Turkish drama is known for is still at the heart of what buyers respond to. But today, we have clients looking for very different things. Some are looking for a big family drama for a broad free-TV audience, some want younger-skewing stories, some are looking for shorter or faster-moving narratives for digital platforms, while others come to us specifically for proven catalog titles. So for us, it is increasingly about understanding what each buyer actually needs rather than trying to define one type of “exportable” drama.

Torn Apart is a very good example. It has a young cast, a beautiful setting and a fresh energy, which immediately gives it a different profile. But when you go deeper into the story, you also have all the elements that international audiences traditionally respond to in Turkish drama: a

powerful family story, secrets, revenge, impossible love and mystery. So it can attract a younger audience without losing the broader emotional appeal.

And when you look at *Sins & Roses*, *The Family Burden* or *Secret of Pearls*, they are all quite different from one another. I

think that is actually the strength of our catalog. We don't believe there is one formula that travels everywhere. Our job is to understand the market, the platform and the audience, and then identify which story from our catalog has the strongest potential for that particular buyer.



In your recent interviews, you have repeatedly highlighted the strength of family-driven and emotionally grounded stories. At a time when many Turkish productions are moving toward darker, action-oriented and crime-focused narratives, is there a renewed international opportunity for family drama and romance?

I am not sure I would call it a renewed opportunity because I don't think family drama and romance ever really went away. Trends change, of course and in recent years we have seen more crime, action and darker stories coming out of Türkiye. Part of this has been driven by the changing profile of the domestic audience but also by the increasing pressure on linear TV revenues and the need to attract broader audiences to television

As Kanal D, however, we have preferred to stay true to our DNA. Family, relationships and emotionally driven storytelling have always been at the heart of what we do. And internationally there has consistently been a strong audience for exactly these kinds of stories.

If you look at the Turkish dramas that have travelled for many years and continue to find new audiences today, emotion is usually at the center of them. It can be a love story, a family conflict, a story about betrayal, sacrifice or belonging. The genre can change but audiences still need characters and relationships they can become emotionally invested in.

We can see this very clearly in our own catalog. Some of our evergreen titles are still travelling many years after their original broadcast, while newer titles such as *Sins & Roses* are connecting with audiences across very different markets. For me, that shows that these themes are not a trend; they are one of the fundamental strengths of Turkish drama.

What changes is how we tell these stories. They need new characters, new worlds and a contemporary perspective. But family, love and human relationships will always have the ability to cross borders.

Kanal D International has been particularly successful in giving older titles a new international life. *Fatmagül* is now joining Netflix across Latin America, while *Time Goes By* continues to find new audiences in Europe. How do you approach the rediscovery and repositioning of library titles in today's streaming market?

I think one of the biggest changes streaming has brought is the way we look at the age of content. For the audience, especially on a streaming platform, what matters is not necessarily when a series was originally produced, but whether the story still works and whether they are discovering it for the first time.

Fatmagül is probably one of the best examples of this. It has been licensed in more than 150 countries, adapted locally and watched by audienc-

es around the world, and now it is finding another generation of viewers on Netflix across Latin America. For us, that is not simply bringing back an older title, it shows the long-term value of a proven story.

This is why we don't really look at our library as something from the past. It is a very active part of our business. Of course, not every title is right for every platform or every market, so the key is to understand where there is still an audience, where a title has not been fully exploited, or where a new platform can introduce it to a different generation of viewers.

And I think this is becoming increasingly important in today's market. There is enormous value in strong, proven IP, and our catalog gives us the opportunity to keep creating new windows for stories that have already demonstrated their ability to travel. A good story does not become less relevant simply because it was produced ten or fifteen years ago.

Format sales are becoming an increasingly important part of Kanal D International's business, with *Three Sisters* adapted in Kazakhstan and *Ruthless City* successfully adapted by Portugal's SIC. What makes a Turkish drama suitable for adaptation, and do you expect formats to become a significantly larger part of your international strategy?

Formats are definitely becoming a more important part of our international strategy. We have been growing this side of the business steadily and we are now seeing interest across a much broader range of our IP.

For me, what makes a drama suitable for adaptation is not simply that the original was successful. The story needs to have a strong core that can survive localization. The central relationships, conflicts and motivations need to make sense in another culture, while still giving the local producer enough flexibility to change the setting, the rhythm and certain elements of the story for their own audience.

We also don't see formats and ready-made sales as competing businesses. The same IP can have very different journeys in different markets. In one



territory, the original Turkish series may be the right product, in another, the story may have much greater potential as a local adaptation. That gives us more ways to develop and extend the international value of our catalog.

We have a large library of proven IP, so yes, we expect formats to become a bigger part of our business. It is a natural area of growth for us and one where we see considerable potential in the coming years.

You have previously spoken about the need to diversify beyond traditional broadcast sales, particularly through AVOD, SVOD, YouTube and FAST. How far has Kanal D International progressed with this strategy, and what new digital opportunities are you looking at now? How about the growing popularity of microdramas?

Digital is no longer an additional window for us; it has become an important part of how we develop our business internationally. Kanal D International continues to expand across SVOD, AVOD, YouTube and FAST, in multiple languages and across different territories. This allows us not only to reach new audiences, but also to extend the life of our content and create new opportunities across our catalog.

Microdrama is also an interesting area for us, and we have actually started experimenting with it locally through Kanal D's digital assets. As part of this, we took some of our classic titles and re-edited them into a vertical, short-form format to see

how audiences would respond. The initial results were encouraging and gave us an opportunity to understand the format and audience behaviour first-hand.

We are now taking that experience to the international market and offering these vertical versions to clients who are exploring microdrama and short-form content. I think there is an interesting opportunity here, particularly because these are already known and proven titles. It allows us to experiment with a new form of consumption while building on IP that audiences already recognize.

Turkish drama has become one of the world's most successful non-English content exports, but the volume of Turkish productions has also increased dramatically. Does the growing supply make international distribution more difficult, and how do you decide which titles deserve the biggest global push?

There is definitely much more content coming out of Türkiye today, so naturally buyers have more choice and competition is stronger. But I don't necessarily see that as a negative. It also means there are more stories, more creative voices and potentially more opportunities for us internationally.

At the same time, not every successful Turkish series will automatically become an international success, and domestic ratings alone don't tell you whether a title will travel.

For us, deciding which titles to push is therefore a combination of

many things. We look at the story and cast, of course, but also at what we are hearing from our clients, which markets we can see it working in and whether there is something that makes the title distinctive internationally.

And I think this is where knowing your catalog and knowing your clients really matters. With the amount of content available today, our role is not simply to bring more titles to the market. It is to understand where each title has the best chance of travelling and build the international strategy around that.

Looking ahead to 2027, which territories do you see offering the biggest growth opportunities for Kanal D International, and what would you like the company's international business to look like by the next MIPCOM?

We want to continue strengthening our position in established markets such as MENA, Latin America, CEE and the CIS, while we still see significant room to grow further in Europe and across Asia. But for us, growth is not simply about adding new territories to the map. There is still a lot more we can do within the markets where we are already present through new broadcasters and platforms, different rights and windows, local adaptations and digital opportunities.

By the next MIPCOM, I would like to see an even more diversified international business. Ready-made sales will remain at the heart of what we do, but I expect formats to represent a bigger part of our business, digital distribution to continue expanding and our library to keep creating new opportunities alongside our newest productions.

Kanal D International was there at the beginning of Turkish drama's international journey, with stories that helped introduce Turkish series to audiences around the world. As the industry and the way people consume content continue to evolve, we want to be part of its next chapter as well, not only by bringing new stories to the international market, but by finding new forms, new platforms and new ways for our IP to reach audiences around the world. ■



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Sins and Roses

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OGM UNIVERSE Moves Forward With Its Expansion Strategy at MIPCOM

Ekin Koyuncu, Global Distribution & Partnership Director, talks about the recent hits from their catalog and the next stage in the distributor's development – from expanding into new markets to finding long-term international partners to create new alliances and deliver content that is relevant to the audiences in the respective markets across the globe.

Ekin, OGM UNIVERSE has enjoyed a year with a much broader international footprint and a growing number of multi-territory deals. How would you describe the company's evolution from a young Turkish distributor into a global content brand, and what are the next milestones you want to achieve?

OGM UNIVERSE is an independent content distribution company powered by OGM Pictures. Our close connection with OGM Pictures gives us a strong creative foundation, while our independent structure allows us to represent titles from other producers and distributors. Our purpose is to connect compelling stories with the right partners and audiences around the world. Our catalog is now licensed in more than 110 countries, but our evolution goes beyond geographical reach. Increasingly, buyers approach us with a specific audience, a programming need and an expectation that we understand their market. Those conversations have become more collaborative, allowing us to contribute to how a title is selected, positioned and introduced to viewers. For us, that is an important part of becoming a global content brand: developing a clear editorial identity and being a trusted partner in the decisions surrounding our content.

Our next milestones build on that foundation. We want to deepen our presence in Western Europe and Asia through a more focused, long-term approach, while continuing to offer a catalog that includes both long-running television drama and more compact digital productions. Finished-content licensing remains central to our business, but we also want to explore adaptations and

creative partnerships that can begin earlier in a project's life. OGM Pictures remains a key creative partner, while the "UNIVERSE" in our name reflects our ambition to bring compelling stories from a broader range of partners to audiences around the world.

Looking at MIPCOM 2026, what will be the key titles and priorities OGM UNIVERSE brings to Cannes?

Our two flagship priorities in Cannes are the international launch of *Ferda* (*Karakuyu*) and the presentation of the second season of *Deep in Love* (*Taşacak Bu Deniz*).

Ferda is the title buyers will be meeting for the first time. Starring Özge Törer as Ferda and Onur Tuna as Kahraman, it follows a woman who was forced to flee her hometown as a teenager and rebuilt her life under a different identity. Twelve years later, an unexpected inheritance brings her back to Karakuyu, where everyone believes she is dead. The land she inherits unsettles the local balance of power, and when she discovers that her sisters remain trapped within the system she escaped, a brief return becomes a decision to stay and fight. Set in Tokat, it is a female-driven story of freedom, justice and confronting the past, with a complex romance at its center.

Deep in Love returns following a record-breaking first season that ranked No. 1 across all ratings groups for 31 consecutive weeks. Its second season asks whether Adil, Esme and the family they finally brought together can protect what they fought for as old rivalries and new threats emerge.

Alongside these two flagship titles, we will update buyers on the continued international progress of *Six of Us*, *The Fall of the King*, *Lost in Love*, *Reborn* and

Broken Destiny. These conversations also give us an opportunity to understand our partners' upcoming programming needs and explore how we can work together over the longer term. We see MIPCOM as a place to turn the momentum of our slate into lasting partnerships.

***Six of Us* has become one of your most widely traveled titles, with sales now spanning Europe, Asia, MENA, Africa and other territories. What do you believe makes the series so universally appealing, and how important is it for OGM UNIVERSE to have a title that can travel across such culturally diverse markets?**

Six of Us has become one of the most widely travelled titles in our catalog, and I believe its appeal begins with something very simple: the need to belong. It is a story about family, loyalty and how far people will go to protect those they love. Audiences recognize those emotions immediately, even when the world on screen is different from their own. The series retains its Turkish identity, while giving viewers everywhere a personal way into the story.

That emotional connection is what allows it to cross cultural boundaries. Viewers can see something of their own relationships, fears and hopes in the characters. As the story develops, those characters become part of their lives, and their struggles become a reason to return to the next episode.

For OGM UNIVERSE, the importance of that reach extends beyond the sales of one series. When a title connects with audiences around the world, it gives partners confidence to explore what else our catalog can offer. It demonstrates that a story rooted in





The Gentleman

Türkiye can build lasting audience relationships across very different cultures. That is central to our international ambition, and Six of Us is a powerful example of it.

The Fall of the King, Reborn, Lost in Love and Broken Destiny have all continued to generate new international sales. Are you seeing buyers increasingly interested in acquiring several OGM titles at once, and has the strength of your library changed the way you approach negotiations with major broadcasters and platforms?

Yes, we increasingly see opportunities to discuss several titles within the same partnership. Buyers come with a broader programming strategy in mind, and the range within our catalog allows us to respond with titles that serve different audiences and scheduling needs. That gives the

negotiation a longer-term perspective: alongside the potential of an individual series, we can discuss how several titles might contribute to a partner's programming over time.

It also makes our preparation more specific. We look at which story suits which audience, where it belongs in the schedule and how its rights and release windows should be structured. With fewer available slots and more content competing for them, the fit between a title and its broadcaster or platform becomes even more important. Our catalog gives us more options, while our knowledge of each market helps us make the right selection.

Six of Us, The Fall of the King, Lost in Love, Reborn and Broken Destiny help open the conversation; the work that follows is still title by title and territory by territory. The strength of the library

gives partners confidence to explore a broader relationship with us, but each acquisition needs a clear purpose within their own strategy.

Deep in Love has emerged as one of the major Turkish drama successes of the 2025-26 season, with strong domestic ratings and significant digital engagement. How has its international performance compared with your initial expectations, and what markets have responded particularly strongly to the series?

Deep in Love's first season gave us a powerful foundation for its international journey. In Türkiye, it became one of the defining drama successes of the 2025-26 season, breaking ratings records and ranking #1 across Total, AB and ABC1 for 31 consecutive weeks. Maintaining that position throughout its first season run demonstrated an

exceptional level of audience loyalty.

Its appeal also crossed generations. Viewers connected with Adil and Esme's long and painful love story, while Eleni and Oruç brought a younger generation into the drama. Beyond television, related content generated billions of views on YouTube, extending the series' visibility and keeping audiences engaged with its characters, music and memorable scenes between episodes. Together, those elements gave international buyers compelling evidence of its ability to build and sustain an audience.

We recognized its international potential early, and the buyer interest and sales across numerous territories have reinforced that confidence. Its Romeo and Juliet-like premise offers a timeless emotional connection, while the family mystery and distinctive Black Sea setting give it an identity of its own.

Latin America, the US and Iberia, Central and Eastern Europe, and the CIS, the Baltics and MENA remain key markets in our strategy for the series. We also see strong potential in Western Europe, Asia and Africa. Returning to MIPCOM with a second season allows us to build on the first season's success and offer partners a new chapter in a story that has already established a powerful connection with audiences.

The Gentleman represents another important addition to your portfolio, combining a strong local identity with a more contemporary crime and revenge-driven story. What does this title tell us about the direction OGM Pictures is taking creatively, and are international buyers becoming more receptive to genres beyond the traditional Turkish family melodrama?

The Gentleman (Delikanlı) illustrates how OGM Pictures is exploring different dramatic territory while retaining its strength in emotional storytelling. Love, family, class and betrayal remain central, but they unfold within a darker, contemporary story driven by revenge. Mert Ramazan Demir plays Yusuf, a young man from the outskirts of Istanbul whose hopes of building a life with his first love, Hazan, are shattered when he becomes entangled with the powerful Kızılhan family. Years later, he returns under a new identity, torn between the woman he once loved and his desire for revenge.

Yusuf's transformation gives the series its momentum. Viewers follow both what he plans to do and what those choices will cost him. That allows the story to explore morally complicated territory while preserving the emotional connection that audiences value in Turkish drama. For us, it demonstrates how romance and family conflict can support a wider range of genres and appeal to viewers looking for a different tone.

Although the series had a shorter run in Türkiye, it concluded with a powerful finale. We have licensed it in the CIS and MENA, and discussions are ongoing in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa. Those sales provide an encouraging indication of its international potential.

We increasingly find that conversa-

tions with buyers focus on the individual story, its tone and the audience it can reach. There is room for distinctive, well-made drama that happens to be Turkish, and that creates opportunities for more contemporary, morally complex stories within our portfolio.

CEE and the Balkans have been long-term strategic markets for Turkish content. How do you see the region evolving today, particularly as broadcasters face increasing competition from global streamers and local platforms?

Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans are established core markets for OGM UNIVERSE, alongside the Baltics. These are relationships we want to deepen, supported by audiences who already have a strong connection with Turkish drama. What is changing is the competition for their attention. With more content available and limited programming slots, buyers need to be increasingly precise about what they acquire.

That makes sustained audience engagement particularly valuable. Long-running, emotionally driven drama gives broadcasters the opportunity to build viewing habits around characters audiences grow attached to over time. Alongside that, carefully structured linear and streaming windows can help a series reach different audience groups. We assess those possibilities with each partner, defining rights, timing and positioning according to the title and the market.

We also approach the region country by country. Audience preferences, localization requirements and programming priorities differ, and success in one territory does not automatically translate into success in another. Our established relationships help us understand those differences and make more informed decisions about where each title belongs.

Western Europe has also become an important area of expansion for OGM UNIVERSE. What have you learned from entering markets where Turkish drama has historically faced more competition, and what does a successful launch strategy look like in countries such as Spain, France, Germany or Italy? Western Europe requires a particularly



these opportunities selectively, with the quality of the partnership guiding our decisions.

Turkish drama is now competing globally not only with other Turkish distributors but also with Korean, Latino, European and US content. What do you think will define the next phase of Turkish drama's international growth, and where do you see OGM UNIVERSE playing the biggest role in that expansion?

I believe the next phase of Turkish drama's international growth will be defined by differentiation. Buyers and audiences have an extraordinary range of choices, so every series needs to make a compelling case for itself through its story, performances and production quality. The international reputation of Turkish drama gives us a strong foundation, but each new title must earn its own audience.

Cultural specificity will remain a strength. A distinctive setting, a particular family dynamic or a locally rooted conflict can give a story the identity that makes it memorable internationally. *Deep in Love's* Black Sea world and *Ferda's* story of a woman confronting the forces that shaped her past offer different examples of how that identity can connect with universal emotions.

We also need flexibility in storytelling and distribution. Long-running drama series continue to offer emotional depth and sustained engagement, while more compact digital productions create space for different genres and viewing habits. Each requires an approach suited to its audience and platform.

As an independent company powered by OGM Pictures, OGM UNIVERSE's role is to connect compelling stories that change the international landscape. Our close relationship with OGM Pictures is a strong foundation for this work, alongside our ability to represent titles from other producers and distributors. We want to help each story find the right partners, build a lasting audience and realize its potential across territories and, where appropriate, through adaptations. That close connection between creation and distribution is where we believe we can make our strongest contribution. ■

longer-term creative and strategic partnerships. Are co-productions, adaptations and development partnerships becoming a bigger part of OGM UNIVERSE's business, and what kinds of international partners are you looking to work with now?

Finished-content licensing remains the foundation of our business, and we want to build on those relationships by exploring format sales, local adaptations and, where the right opportunity exists, development or co-production partnerships. We see potential in conversations that begin earlier in a project's life and allow both sides to contribute to its direction.

Our close relationship with OGM Pictures gives us a valuable connection to the creative process behind many of the titles in our catalog. It allows us to bring an understanding of the original story into discussions about how it might take a new form for another audience. Any collaboration would need a clear creative purpose and a structure that works for everyone involved.

We are interested in producers, broadcasters and platforms with strong local knowledge and a clear vision for the project. For an adaptation, that means understanding which emotional elements should be preserved and where the story needs to change to feel authentic in its new setting. For a project developed together, it means establishing that shared understanding from the beginning. We are open to exploring

considered approach because familiarity with Turkish drama varies considerably from one country to another. Spain, France, Germany and Italy each have their own audience expectations and programming dynamics. The program has to stand on its own, with a story that gives viewers a clear reason to watch.

For us, that means building the launch around the individual title. We lead with its emotional premise, characters and distinctive qualities. *Deep in Love*, for example, offers a timeless story of forbidden love alongside a family mystery and a striking Black Sea setting, making it a compelling introduction for audiences less familiar with Turkish drama.

Localization and marketing are integral to that process. The local-language presentation, title, artwork and promotional campaign should work together to communicate what makes the series appealing. Just as importantly, we need a partner who understands where it belongs within their offering and how to introduce it to their viewers.

Our ambition is to build a lasting presence through successful individual launches. That takes close collaboration and patience, with each series helping establish audience trust and creating opportunities for the titles that follow.

You have spoken about moving beyond traditional licensing toward



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Creators' Hits

From YouTube challenges and viral interviews to animation, reality and streaming franchises, creators are no longer simply supplying talent to television — they are building the shows themselves.

Beast Games/ MrBeast
MrBeast took the mechanics and spectacle of his YouTube videos into a full-scale television competition with *Beast Games*. The Prime Video series became the platform's most-watched unscripted show, reaching 50 million viewers in its first 25 days, and has already been renewed through Season 3.



Inside/Sidemen

The *Sidemen* turned their enormous YouTube following into a full-scale reality format with *Inside*, putting creators and influencers through increasingly extreme challenges for a £1 million prize. Season 3 is now on Netflix, with the *Sidemen* serving as executive producers and expanding their creator-led format into a genuine television franchise.

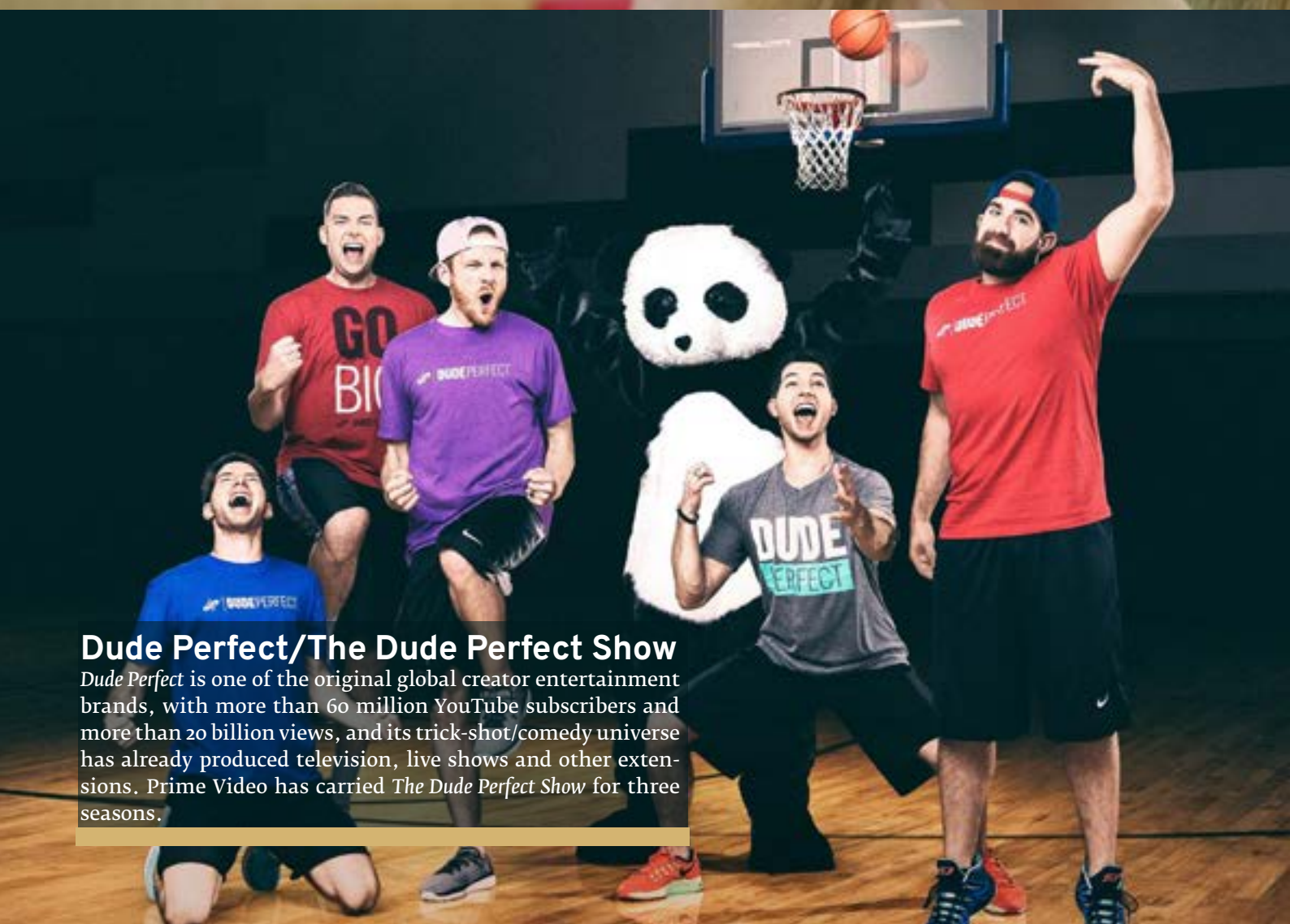


Chicken Shop Date/Amelia Dimoldenberg

Amelia Dimoldenberg built *Chicken Shop Date* from a tiny, deliberately awkward YouTube concept into a global celebrity-interview phenomenon, with guests ranging from Andrew Garfield and Billie Eilish to Cher and Paul McCartney. After 12 years and more than 100 episodes, Dimoldenberg announced in September that the series is coming to an end.

Hot Ones/Sean Evans

What began as a simple First We Feast YouTube format — celebrities answering questions while eating increasingly hot wings — has become one of the internet’s most recognizable interview franchises. In 2026, *Hot Ones* moved even further into mainstream streaming with *Hot Ones: Extra Heat* specials on Netflix, hosted by Sean Evans.



Dude Perfect/The Dude Perfect Show

Dude Perfect is one of the original global creator entertainment brands, with more than 60 million YouTube subscribers and more than 20 billion views, and its trick-shot/comedy universe has already produced television, live shows and other extensions. Prime Video has carried *The Dude Perfect Show* for three seasons.



Good Mythical Morning/Rhett & Link

Rhett & Link have spent two decades proving that a creator show can develop the longevity and scale of traditional television without losing its internet identity. *Good Mythical Morning*, launched in 2012, is now celebrating its 30th season while also expanding onto Netflix.



The Amazing Digital Circus/Gooseworx / GLITCH

Gooseworx's *The Amazing Digital Circus* is a textbook example of creator-native animation becoming major entertainment IP: the series originated online through GLITCH and rapidly developed a huge global audience and fandom. Its distinctive characters and visual universe make it one of the strongest examples of internet animation moving beyond the conventional TV development pipeline.



The Legend of Vox Machina/ Critical Role

Critical Role transformed a streamed tabletop role-playing campaign into *The Legend of Vox Machina*, turning a community-driven creator phenomenon into a major animated series. It remains one of the clearest examples of a creator audience becoming the foundation for a much larger entertainment franchise.



Hazbin Hotel/ Vivienne Medrano

Vivienne Medrano created *Hazbin Hotel* as an independently produced animated pilot that became a huge online phenomenon before being developed into a major Prime Video series. It is a particularly powerful creator story because the original internet audience was instrumental in proving the value of the property before mainstream television came calling.



The Grand Tour/Throttle House / Francis Bourgeois

The current version of *The Grand Tour* has brought YouTube automotive creators Throttle House and TikTok/Instagram personality Francis Bourgeois into the traditional global motoring format. It is a great example of the reverse journey: television taking creator talent and putting it into an established international franchise.



Obsession/Curry Barker

Curry Barker turned his viral YouTube horror channel into a historic theatrical sensation with *Obsession*. Made on a micro-budget, the film grossed over \$500 million worldwide, becoming one of the biggest independent box office hits of the year. However, its massive theatrical wind-fall has raised industry questions about how YouTube’s ecosystem seemingly failed to monetize Barker’s massive online audience before he took the property to the big screen.



Backrooms/Kane Parsons

What began as an unsettling found-footage YouTube series by Kane Parsons was transformed into an A24 feature film that shattered records, pulling in nearly \$400 million globally to become the studio’s highest-grossing release. Like *Obsession*, *Backrooms* represents a staggering theatrical success that highlights a missed opportunity for YouTube, which incubated the massive fandom but failed to capture and monetize its true commercial value at scale.

Ziad Kebbi:

AI Will Not Distinguish Companies. What They Choose to Build with It Will

In mid-September, Ziad Kebbi, one of the most-prolific producers in the MENA region, joined the Dubai-based prodco MFORMEDIA as Managing Director with the goal to lead the company into its next stage of transformation driven by the introduction of AI tools into the production process.

In this interview with Yako Molhov, Kebbi reveals more details on MFORMEDIA's new AI facility which allows clients to see ideas taking shape well before they commit to them. Besides making the production process much more efficient, the company is now also able to test new ideas in the microdrama genre on a weekly basis directly with the audience and then quickly upscale them to larger projects.

Ziad, AI is rapidly moving from experimentation into the production workflow. Where do you see the biggest opportunities for AI to transform content production in the MENA region over the next two to three years?

The obvious answer is efficiency, but the interesting answer is leapfrog. This region never built the heavy legacy infrastructure of the older production markets, which means we can build AI-native pipelines from scratch rather than retrofitting them. In the next two to three years, I see the biggest transformation in development: the ability to visualize a format, a world, a character before a single day of shooting, which changes how we pitch, how broadcasters commission, and how much risk sits in every greenlight. Add to that the maturing of Arabic-language models, and for the first time the tools are beginning to serve our language rather than translate into it. That combination, AI-native infrastructure plus Arabic-capable tools, is a genuine regional advantage.

Your company is preparing to launch a new AI facility. What will this facility actually enable producers and clients to do that was not previously possible, and where in the production process do you expect AI to have the greatest impact?

What makes our facility different is where it lives: inside a production company that delivers premium television at scale, not in a lab adjacent to one. Every tool we deploy is tested against real deadlines, real budgets, and real broadcaster standards. In practical

terms it lets producers and clients see ideas before they commit to them: visualized formats, previsualized scripted worlds, pilot material at a fraction of traditional cost. It makes categories of content that were previously out of reach for regional budgets – heavy visual effects, animation, large-scale world building – suddenly affordable.

There is a lot of discussion about AI reducing production costs and timelines. In your experience, where can AI deliver genuine efficiencies today, and where does human creative expertise remain indispensable?

Genuine and available today: research, versioning and subtitling, rough assembly, previsualization, pitch materials, and much of the administrative machinery of production. These are real savings, not projections; we see them on working shows. What remains indispensable is judgment. AI compresses the distance from idea to screen, but it does not know which ideas deserve the journey. It cannot tell you why a joke lands in Riyadh and dies in Beirut, it cannot direct a performance, and it cannot sit with a broadcaster at midnight and fix a format that is not working. Taste, cultural instinct, and trust are still entirely human, and in an era of infinite content they become more valuable, not less.

How do you expect the rise of AI-generated and AI-assisted content to change the role of producers, directors, writers and other creative professionals in the MENA market? Everyone moves up the value chain.

Producers become editors-in-chief of far more options than they have ever had; the scarce skill becomes choosing, not generating. Writers concentrate on what the tools cannot supply: premise, voice, structure, cultural truth. Directors gain previsualization power that used to belong only to the biggest budgets. And new roles appear between creative and technical that did not exist two years ago.

I will be honest about the challenge: the traditional training ladder is being automated away. The junior jobs where people learned the craft by doing the grunt work are exactly what AI absorbs first. Companies like ours have a responsibility to rebuild that ladder deliberately, because the next generation of showrunners must come from somewhere.

Your company is also expanding into vertical and microdrama. How do you see AI and these new short-form storytelling formats coming together, and could this create new opportunities for MENA stories to reach international audiences?

Microdrama is a format expanding exponentially in the AI era, and the two fit naturally: speed, volume, and iteration are what the format demands and what the tools provide. We treat vertical drama as a development laboratory. The unit economics let us test stories weekly and let audiences vote with their attention, and the winners earn their way to bigger formats.

For MENA specifically, this is a door to the world that premium drama never offered: the cost barrier is low,



With over 18 years of experience, Lebanese-born

Ziad Kebbi is one of the most seasoned content business managers in the MENA region. His senior leadership roles have included Managing Director of Endemol Middle East, President of Sony Pictures Television Arabia, and CEO of Talpa Middle East. His credits include nine seasons of The Voice Arabia, one of the most successful international format adaptations in the history of Arab television, alongside numerous other hit format adaptations for the region as well as original content across various genres. He was recently appointed MD of MFORMEDIA, a Dubai-based media production company, which is currently deploying new AI-enabled production models across the MENA region.

AI-driven subtitling and dubbing remove the language wall, and a story from Beirut or Riyadh can find an audience in Warsaw or Seoul within days of being made. It is also where a new generation of Arab storytellers will emerge, working at a pace the traditional industry never allowed.

What are the biggest concerns you hear from broadcasters, streamers and production partners in the region when it comes to AI, particularly around copyright, talent, authenticity and the protection of creative work?

Four concerns come up in almost every conversation. Provenance: what the tools were trained on, and whether the chain of title on AI-assisted material is clean. Talent rights: likeness and voice, where our position is simple, nothing without consent and contract. Authenticity: audiences detect synthetic content faster than executives think, and a brand that floods its schedule with it, breaks down trust it took years to build. And protection of creative work: when copying becomes trivial, format protection matters more than ever.

My honest view is that the deepest protection is originality. The more distinctive your IP, the harder it is to commoditize. Generic content was always vulnerable; AI just accelerated the verdict.

Looking ahead to MIPCOM and the next stage of your company's development, what do you believe will distinguish the companies that successfully embrace AI from those that simply add AI tools to their existing production workflows?

The difference is between adopting tools and re-engineering the company. Adding AI to an unchanged workflow gives you the same output slightly cheaper, and everyone will have that; it is a discount, not a strategy. The companies that win will rebuild their operating model around what AI makes possible: how they develop, how they greenlight, how they structure teams, and above all what they do with the time and money the tools free up. Our answer is to reinvest it in original IP, because ownership is the only position that compounds. AI will not distinguish companies. What they choose to build with it will. ■

The Rise of Microdramas in CEE

Microdramas are now rising rapidly in popularity across the globe. The appeal is straightforward: the episodes are short, the stories are designed for vertical screens and mobile consumption, and production costs are substantially lower than for conventional scripted drama, while the audience response can be measured almost immediately.

For CEE, this is particularly relevant because fragmentation has traditionally been both an obstacle and a source of opportunity. A conventional drama may require substantial investment to justify production for a small language market. A microdrama can be tested with a much smaller initial commitment. A successful concept can then be localized, adapted or developed into a larger production.

Łukasz Wysocki, Founder & Managing Director of MediaSpurs, has been closely following the development of the genre. With nearly 20 years of experience across television, streaming, media-tech and digital entertainment, and having worked with companies including NBCUniversal, Sky, Hayu and Polsat Plus Group, Wysocki is now focused through MediaSpurs on international media representation, market entry, distribution and strategic partnerships across CEE, with particular attention to the creator economy, vertical content and microdramas.

For Wysocki, the key question is no longer whether the audience exists. It is how the television industry builds the commercial ecosystem around it.

Łukasz, microdramas have exploded in markets such as China and are now attracting major global investment. What do you see as the real potential for microdramas in CEE, and which markets in the region are best positioned to adopt the format?

Microdramas are already in CEE. They simply arrived through social advertising and Asian D2C apps, before the local media industry started paying attention.

Poland is the clearest example. Almost 10 million people have encountered the format and 10% have used or tested dedicated apps. That is significant engagement for a category with almost no local originals or distribution partnerships.

This is also why MediaSpurs recently became COL Group International's Official Partner. We see an opportunity to take microdrama beyond direct-to-consumer apps and connect it with the local media, telecom and brand ecosystem.

Poland is the strongest entry market because of its scale and developed digital-video sector. Romania is another market I would watch. Across smaller CEE countries, growth may depend

more on local partnerships than on launching another standalone app.

The audience is already here. What is still missing is the ecosystem around it.

CEE is a relatively fragmented region with different languages, audience behaviors and levels of digital maturity. Could microdramas actually benefit from this fragmentation by allowing producers and platforms to create highly localized content at lower costs?

Yes, definitely. Microdramas are much cheaper to produce than traditional drama, so they lower both the entry cost and the cost of failure. This makes local adaptations or originals more realistic, even in smaller markets.

But I would still separate localized content from locally produced content. Creating an original series for every country will not always make sense. A platform can start with a proven title or format, localize it, test the audience response and then decide whether a local remake or original production is justified. AI makes this process faster and cheaper, but language is only one part of localization. A technically perfect dub will not help if the story, characters



that is the clearest gap and the most interesting commercial opportunity for us at MediaSpurs.

How do you see AI changing the CEE television and streaming business over the next few years and where do you see are the biggest commercial opportunities?

For me, the biggest change will be speed. CEE is a very fragmented region, with many languages and relatively small individual markets. That is not necessarily a problem, but it has always made launches more complicated and expensive.

AI can change this quite quickly. A series could launch in Poland, Romania or Czechia on the same day as in the US, rather than several weeks later, when many viewers have already seen spoilers or found a pirated version. Localisation is only one part of it. AI can also help companies work with large content libraries, prepare trailers and social clips, improve recommendations and make advertising more relevant.

I do not think the opportunity is about replacing people. It is about making more content commercially viable in more markets and doing it much faster.

AI is developing at different speeds across CEE markets. Which applications of AI do you believe will have the most immediate and commercially meaningful impact on the region's TV and streaming businesses?

As mentioned, localization will have the most immediate commercial impact. Faster dubbing, subtitles, metadata and promotional materials mean that more content can launch across several CEE markets at the same time. ElevenLabs is a particularly relevant example because it is a Polish-founded company solving a challenge that has always been important in this region. The second area is library monetization. AI can help broadcasters and distributors search, tag and repackage thousands of hours of existing content for VOD, FAST and social media.

It will also improve advertising by creating local campaign versions faster and enabling better contextual targeting.

These applications may be less visible than AI-generated productions, but they can already reduce costs, accelerate launches and create new revenue. ■

or social context feel distant from the local audience.

CEE is also not simply importing the format. HOLYWATER, now one of the major global vertical-content players, was founded in Ukraine. It shows that innovation in this category can come from the region as well.

The opportunity is to experiment country by country. That matters in CEE precisely because it is not one market and cannot be approached as one.

Which distribution and partnership models could drive the next phase of microdrama growth in CEE?

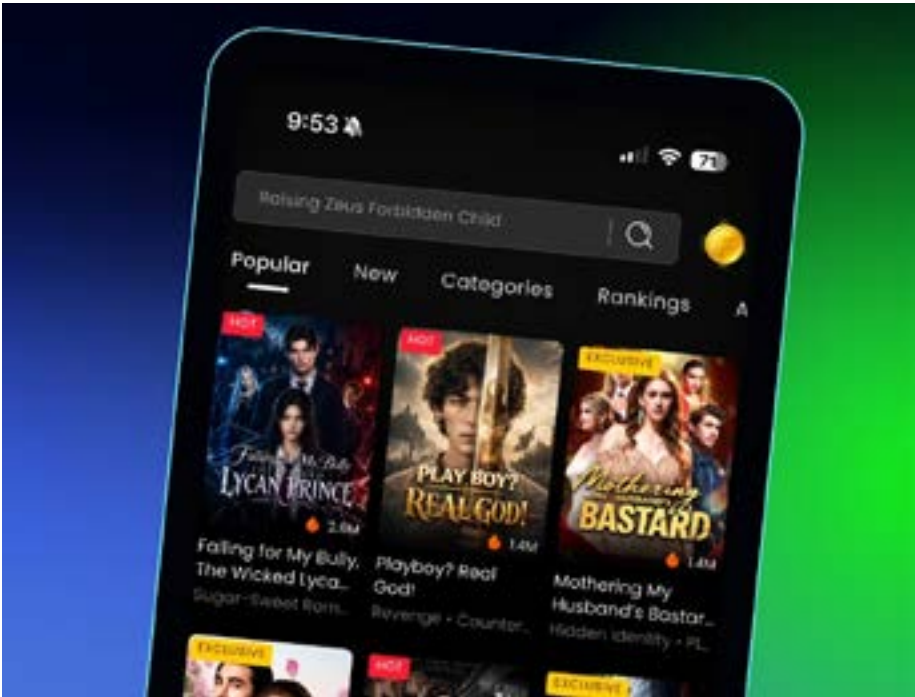
The next phase cannot rely only on dedicated apps acquiring users through social-media advertising. That model has built the category, but it can be

expensive and difficult to scale across many smaller markets.

I see the biggest opportunity in B2B2C partnerships with telecom and pay-TV operators, broadcasters and established streaming platforms. Microdrama services could be included in entertainment bundles, sold as add-ons or offered through operator billing. Broadcasters and streaming platforms could also license selected titles or introduce dedicated microdrama sections without building a new service from scratch.

There is also strong potential for ad-supported distribution and branded microdramas. Social media will remain important for discovery, but it does not have to be the final destination.

We have not yet seen these models implemented at scale in CEE. For me,





Regional Streaming Platforms Find Their Own Path to Scale

by Yako Molhov

For years, the story of streaming was written primarily by Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video, and a handful of other global platforms. Their main ambition was clear: to build the largest possible subscriber base across as many territories as possible and spread content investment over global infrastructure. For a long time, people spoke of “streaming wars,” but there is hardly a consensus on whether there was ever a true winner or whether these wars are now over. As the streaming market enters a more mature phase, another group of players is emerging ever more clearly: regional platforms that know their markets better than global competitors ever could. From Voyo and Oneplay in Central and Eastern Europe to MBC SHAHID in the Middle East, Globoplay in Brazil, RTL+ and Joyn in Germany, Crave in Canada, Stan in Australia, and TVING, Wavve, and Coupang Play in South Korea, successful local and regional streaming platforms show that scale does not

necessarily mean hundreds of millions of subscribers.

In many markets, the winning formula is a combination of local originals, live TV, sports, strong television brands, advertising, and well-designed bundled offers. What’s more, some of these platforms are increasingly creating content that reaches far beyond the borders of their home markets.

Bell’s Canadian Crave is one of the clearest recent examples. The success of *Heated Rivalry* helped drive a 26% year-over-year increase in total subscriptions to 4.6 million at the end of 2025, while direct-to-consumer streaming subscriptions grew by 65%. In the second quarter of 2026, Crave’s total subscriptions reached 5.07 million, representing a 23% year-over-year growth. Bell stated that the quarter was the most-watched in Crave’s history. *Heated Rivalry* also became an unusually strong international breakout for a Canadian production. The series

was produced for Crave before being licensed to international markets, showing how a regional platform can leverage local production funding and a relatively focused market strategy to create content with global potential. Crave subsequently used this success to position Canadian stories as a source of international IP, rather than just content to satisfy domestic programming requirements. For the international content business, the success of regional streaming platforms is becoming one of the most important trends to watch at MIPCOM 2026.

Czechia: From Voyo to Oneplay

Central and Eastern Europe offers one of the clearest examples of how a streaming service built around a broadcaster can transform into a much broader entertainment proposition. CME’s Voyo had already become one of

the strongest local streaming services in the region, reaching 950,000 paid subscribers in Czechia and Slovakia at the end of 2024, while its total subscriber base across CME markets approached 1.4 million. Voyo was among the top three SVOD services in most of its markets and the #1 local service in several of them.

However, CME decided that the next phase required something bigger than a standalone SVOD service. In March 2025, Voyo and O2 TV were replaced in Czechia by Oneplay, which combines streaming and traditional pay-TV into a single offering. The platform brings together live TV channels, Czech and international entertainment content, movies, kids programming, documentaries, and, crucial to its strategy, sports.

The strategy appears to be working. After its first year, Oneplay reported nearly three billion video views and 1.6 billion hours of viewing time. In April, Didier Stoessel, co-CEO of PPF Group (which owns CME), stated that Oneplay had taken a leading position in the Czech market, estimating the platform to be approximately 1.5 times larger than Netflix locally, four to five times larger than Disney+, and three to four times larger than HBO Max. The significance of this development goes beyond the numbers themselves. Oneplay effectively converts a traditional pay-TV relationship into a streaming relationship without requiring consumers to abandon the TV offering they already know. This



hybrid model could prove particularly important in markets where pay-TV penetration remains significant and consumers are unwilling to maintain multiple standalone streaming subscriptions.

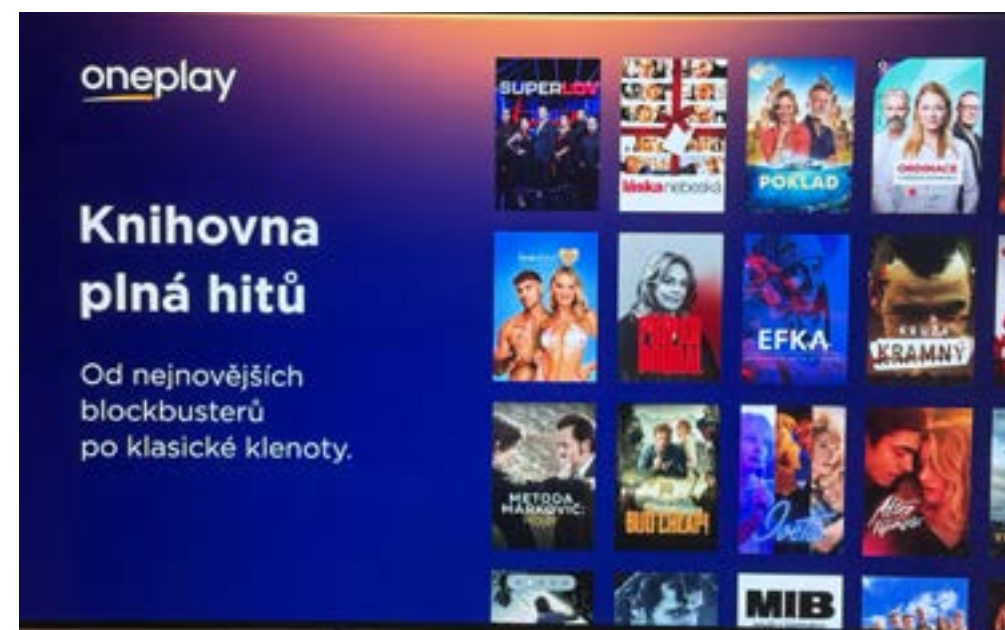
Poland Shows the Power of the Local Ecosystem

Poland is an equally interesting market because it demonstrates that several local platforms can coexist alongside global giants. Netflix remains the market leader, but Mediapanel data for August 2026 shows significant audiences for local services. Canal+ reached 2.83 million users, TVP reached 1.99 million, Player reached 1.69 million, and Polsat Box

Go reached 1.41 million during the month. Player’s audience grew by 9% compared to the previous month, while Polsat Box Go increased its audience by nearly 10%.

According to Mediapanel data for May 2026, Netflix accounted for 39.8% of total time spent on video streaming platforms across PCs, smartphones, and tablets. Although the service remains the undisputed market leader, the metric highlights a significant shift in viewing habits as local and regional platforms continue to attract audiences and grow engagement. Netflix reached 9.58 million users during the month, up 4.3% compared to April. However, average viewing time per user decreased by more than seven minutes to 5 hours and 47 minutes, limiting the platform’s ability to regain the market share it once held. The May result followed a 39.37% share in April and represented the second consecutive month in which Netflix failed to cross the 40% threshold.

The strongest growth came from local services. Canal+ recorded one of the market’s largest gains, increasing its share by 1.13 percentage points to 6.76%. The platform benefited from both a larger audience and longer viewing sessions, showing that local content and sports offerings continue to draw Polish viewers. Polsat Box Go also strengthened its position, increasing its share from 4.55% to 5.14%, while Pilot WP reached 3.2%. The performance of these services underscores the growing competitiveness of the Polish streaming market, where local and regional operators increasingly compete with interna-



Canal+ combines premium international content with an increasingly significant Polish production arm. Polsat has also aggressively targeted aggregation. In March 2026, it expanded its Plus and Polsat Box offerings to include Amazon Prime and Apple TV alongside Disney+, HBO Max, and SkyShowtime, turning its telecom and pay-TV infrastructure

Its recent financial results are particularly telling. In the first half of 2026, MBC SHAHID generated reve-

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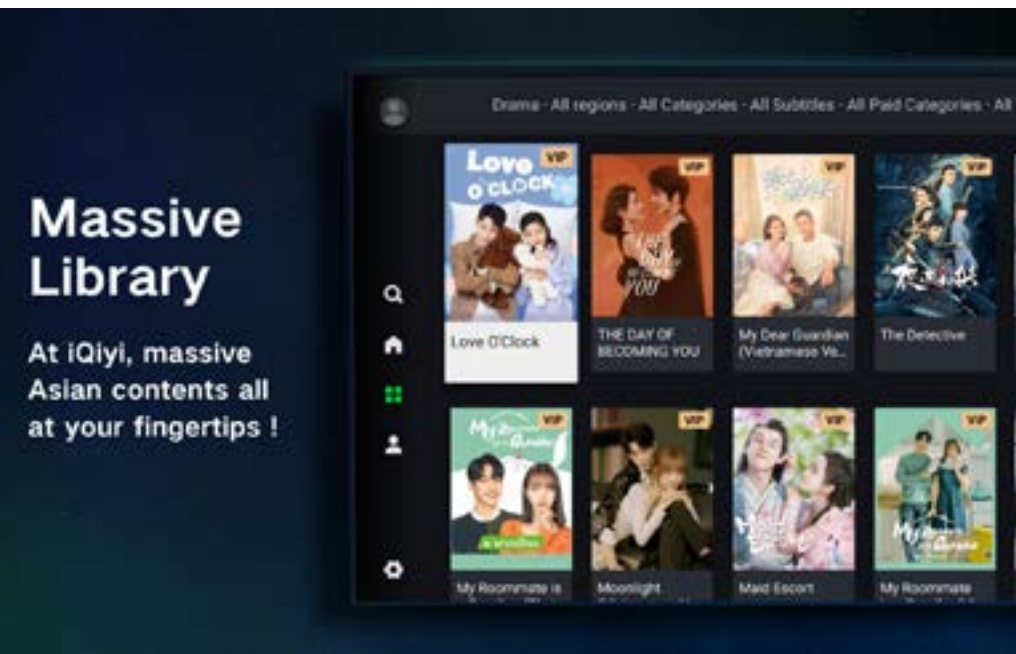
Meanwhile, a partnership with Ooredoo in Tunisia helped triple SHAHID's subscriber base in that market. Content strategy sits at the core of this growth. MBC SHAHID released six original productions in the first half of 2026, with Hofrat Jahannam, the second season of Forsan Greih, and Mercato each attracting over one million viewers. Around nine more original productions are planned for the second half of the year. Perhaps most importantly, SHAHID shows that a regional service does not have to choose between a subscription and an ad-supported model. It is building both SVOD and AVOD businesses simultaneously, with subscription revenue now serving as the main driver while advertising remains an important secondary source. This combination is becoming increasingly attractive as the streaming economy matures.

Brazil offers another compelling example of a broadcaster turning its local content advantage into a powerful streaming business. Globo's Globoplay evolved from a catch-up service into one of the most important local streaming platforms in Latin America, combining Globo's massive television ecosystem with original productions, live channels, sports, news, international content, and a

Globoplay demonstrates that a broadcaster does not necessarily have to abandon its traditional TV ecosystem to build a successful streaming business. On the contrary, the two can reinforce each other. Brazil is also a reminder that the opportunity for regional streaming platforms is not limited to relatively small markets. With a population of over 200 million and a massive domestic TV industry, Brazil offers sufficient scale for a locally focused platform to build a significant business while creating content with international potential. In this sense, Globoplay sits somewhere between the European broadcaster-led streaming model and the much larger Asian streaming ecosystems. Its competitive advantage is not just the size of its subscriber base, but access to one of the strongest produc-

However, data also highlights the scale of local competitors: Coupang Play had 8.53 million daily active users, TVING had 5.25 million, and Wavve had 2.35 million. The subscription picture is equally revealing. According to market analysis, TVING held about 23% of SVOD subscriptions in South Korea in 2026, compared to 12.7% for Wavve, while Coupang Play has built a significant position thanks to its integration with the broader Coupang ecosystem and an aggressive sports strategy. TVING is noteworthy because it combines the content engines of CJ ENM and other Korean broadcasters with original productions, entertainment content, and sports. Wavve has a different offering built around the country's terrestrial broadcasters. Coupang Play demonstrates how streaming can be embedded into a broader consumer ecosystem rather than existing solely as a standalone entertainment subscription. The result is a market where local services do not simply offer a Korean alternative to Netflix. They are becoming powerful businesses in their own right, with distinct content and distribution strategies. Korea also illustrates another increasingly important trend: local streaming platforms can simultaneously serve as domestic services and exporters of culture. The same Korean dramas, entertainment





formats, and sports programs that strengthen the domestic offer can become valuable assets for international licensing.

China: Scale Without the Hollywood Model

Unlike most markets where global platforms compete with a handful of local services, China's long-form streaming market is dominated by domestic platforms such as Tencent Video, iQIYI, and Youku, with Mango TV and Bilibili also playing major roles, creating a highly specific regional streaming ecosystem. Tencent Video alone reported 114 million video subscribers in the second quarter of 2025, maintaining its leading position in the Chinese long-form video market. iQIYI remains another major player. The company generated revenues of 27.29 billion yuan in 2025 and continues to build its business around subscriptions, advertising, and content distribution. In the first half of 2026, iQIYI stated that it was behind 10 of the 16 newly released long-form dramas rated S+ by Enlightent, with three of its titles exceeding a popularity index of 10,000.

The Chinese market is particularly significant because it shows that regional streaming does not necessarily have to be built around a traditional broadcaster. These are tech and entertainment ecosystems with vast domestic audiences, sophisticated

ad businesses, subscription models, massive IP catalogs, and growing international ambitions. The scale is also fundamentally different. Industry data for the second half of 2025 indicates that Tencent Video and iQIYI had approximately 35 million and 32.5 million monthly active users respectively, while Youku had around 17.4 million, though methodologies vary across different platforms and sources. China therefore presents a different version of the regional streaming thesis: local services can achieve massive scale without becoming global platforms on the Netflix model. Their competitive advantage comes from deep knowledge of a huge domestic market, control over local IP ecosystems, and the increasingly active export of selected content to international markets. For the international content business, this makes China both a massive mar-

ket and an increasingly vital source of formats, dramas, and IP.

Germany: Local Platforms Become Serious Contenders

Germany provides another strong example of a broadcaster-backed streaming service reaching significant scale. RTL+ surpassed the seven million paid subscriber mark around the turn of the year and averaged over 10 million monthly users in 2025. At the end of March 2026, paid subscriptions in Germany reached 7.3 million, representing a 16.1% year-over-year growth, while viewing hours rose by 3% to 188 million in the first quarter. By the end of June, the German subscriber base for RTL+ increased to 7.603 million.

Together with RTL+ operations in Germany and Hungary and M6+ in France, RTL Group reached 8.728 million paid subscriptions, an increase of 20.7% year-over-year. Streaming service revenues rose by 27.2%. RTL+ does not rely solely on scripted originals. The platform combines local entertainment and reality formats, sports, news, live TV, and international content, while distribution partnerships expand its reach. The January 2026 launch of a bundled RTL+ and HBO Max offer via Deutsche Telekom's MagentaTV illustrates this strategy: the local platform retains its identity while using aggregation to increase value for consumers.

Joyn, meanwhile, shows that a free, ad-supported model can also achieve substantial scale. ProSiebenSat.1's service reached over 22 million viewers in the second quarter of 2026, up 7.3%,



while total viewing time increased by 25%. Local hits such as *Germany's Next Topmodel*, the Joyn original *Match My Ex*, *The Race*, and *Die Landarztpraxis* were among its top performers. In July, AGF data showed that RTL+ generated 39.2 million streaming viewing hours among the 14-49 demographic compared to 19.5 million for Joyn, placing both platforms ahead of many specialized streaming services in that key group.

Stan Shows How Sports Can Transform Economics

Australia's Stan offers another key lesson: regional streaming platforms can use sports to transform the economics of their entire business. Stan finished fiscal year 2026 with approximately 2.3 million paid subscribers, while revenue grew by 16% to 569 million Australian dollars and EBITDA increased by 34% to a record 81 million Australian dollars. The average number of subscribers grew by 4% year-over-year. Sports served as the main engine. The average subscriber base for Stan Sport grew by nearly 50% year-over-year, largely driven by Premier League rights acquired in 2025. However, recent figures also highlight the risks. Stan's overall subscriber base was subsequently

reported at around 2.3 million, down from 2.5 million, while Stan Sport dropped from 800,000 subscribers in September 2025 to approximately 730,000. The Premier League remains strategically crucial, but the cost of premium sports rights can place intense pressure on regional platforms. This makes Stan a compelling case study not only for the potential of sports, but also for the increasingly difficult question of how much regional streaming platforms should pay for sports rights.

The New Streaming Equation

A successful regional streaming platform in 2026 is rarely just a catalog of movies and series behind a paywall. It is increasingly evolving into a broader entertainment ecosystem. Live TV matters. Sports matter. Local reality formats matter. News, advertising, and telecom distribution matter. And local originals matter immensely. Yet the new regional model is not identical everywhere. In CEE, the opportunity often lies in combining an established pay-TV or broadcaster relationship with streaming, as Oneplay is doing in Czechia. In Germany and Poland, broadcaster-owned platforms can

leverage major TV brands, local content production, and advertising relationships. In MENA, SHAHID combines Arabic originals with international content, subscriptions, and advertising across a geographically diverse region. Globoplay benefits from one of the most powerful TV production and distribution ecosystems in Latin America, transforming Globo's telenovelas, reality formats, sports, news, and entertainment into a streaming offering with global potential. Crave in Canada demonstrates how a platform serving a relatively small domestic market can use a breakout original production to create international IP. In Korea, several local platforms compete simultaneously with Netflix using local content, sports, linear TV, and broader consumer ecosystems. And in China, the sheer size of the domestic market means platforms like Tencent Video and iQIYI can achieve immense scale without needing to replicate Netflix's global blueprint.

From Global Streaming Wars to Regional Ecosystems

The first decade of streaming was dominated by scale: who could attract the most subscribers and spend the most money on originals. Today, competitive advantage is defined less by absolute size and more by proximity to the audience.

The next decade will likely be about efficiency and control. Netflix can spend billions internationally, but it cannot be the local TV network, the sports platform, the news operator, the telecom bundle, and the cultural brand in every single territory. Regional players can.

At MIPCOM 2026, the most compelling streaming developments may not come from the largest global platforms. They are just as likely to originate from companies that have figured out how to convert a national broadcaster, a local content archive, a sports portfolio, and a deep consumer connection into a profitable digital business. The streaming market is growing ever more global in terms of distribution, but in many territories, its true value is becoming increasingly local. ■

Reykjavik Noir: The Challenge of Turning a Bestseller into a TV Hit

An interview with writer Lilja Sigurðardóttir

Icelandic writer Lilja Sigurðardóttir has joined forces with prodco Glassriver to turn her trilogy *Snare, Trap and Cage* into the crime drama series *Reykjavik Noir*. In this interview with Yako Molhov, she discusses the dual nature of book-to-screen adaptations, and balancing artistic interpretation with the commercial realities of TV shows, and whether the adaptation should exactly mirror the original works.

The demand for pre-existing IP has become one of the defining trends in the global television business. From your perspective as an author, why have books and novels become such valuable development assets for producers and broadcasters?

A novel gives a television project a world that has already been built and tested. The characters have relationships and motivations ready, so the screenwriters aren't starting from a blank sheet of paper. There may also be an existing readership, which gives the project a natural audience from the beginning. As a viewer I am always happy to see that a TV show is based on a novel because then I know it comes with a certain depth. Even when an adaptation changes the plot considerably, it has this reservoir of characters, atmosphere, themes and backstory to draw from.

Do you think having an established literary IP genuinely reduces the commercial risk of a television project, or does a well-known book create equally high expectations among audiences?

Both. An established book can certainly help because there is already awareness of the title and in many cases, there's an existing group of readers who are emotionally invested in the story. But those readers of course have expectations as they have built an image of the characters in their mind, imagined the locations and even the way a particular scene feels.

I don't think an adaptation should try to reproduce the novel exactly, because television is a different form of storytelling. The challenge is to create some-

thing that feels recognizably connected to the book while also being confident enough to become its own thing. That is where the excitement lies! A TV series can add something to the story - giving the audience a new experience with the characters they love.

From your perspective how can writers best protect their IP when discussing adaptations for the screen and later once the real production starts?

I think the relationship with the production team is the most important thing. Of course, contracts are important to secure the rights of the author regarding sequels and spin-offs etc. But it is crucial to have people involved who respect the source material and understand what made it work in the first place. At the same time, if an author agrees to an adaptation, they also must accept that collaboration and reinterpretation are part of the process. I experienced this while writing for theater: the real magic that can happen in a collaborative team.

Reykjavik Noir is being developed by Glassriver from your own trilogy, *Snare, Trap and Cage*. What is it like to see characters and stories that originated in your imagination being reinterpreted for television?

It's incredibly exciting. Sonja and Agla have lived in my imagination for such a long time, so the thought of actually seeing them on screen is wonderful. What makes the process particularly interesting is that I'm not doing it alone. I'm writing the television adaptation together with Hrafnkell Stefánsson and Loki Rúnarsson, so the story is already being born again and

Lilja Sigurðardóttir is an Icelandic crime-writer born in the town of Akranes in 1972 and raised in countries like Mexico, Sweden, Spain and Iceland. An award-winning playwright and screenwriter, Lilja has written eleven crime novels, many of which have been translated into multiple languages and hitting bestseller lists worldwide. She lives in Reykjavík, Iceland, with her partner but also spends considerable time in Scotland. Her latest, 12th book, *VLFA* was published in 2025.

becoming something new through that collaboration. And we have Glassriver producing, which gives me enormous confidence in the project as they are Iceland's most prolific producer.

When adapting a novel for the screen, what do you believe is most important to preserve: the plot, the characters, the tone, or the author's voice?

For me, it is the characters and the emotional core of the story. I know this goes for my readers, and it goes for most television viewers: they come back to series because of the characters. They want to know what happens to these people they have bonded with. Plots can change because television has a completely different rhythm and structure from a novel. But if Sonja no longer feels like Sonja, or the complicated relationship between Sonja and Agla loses its emotional truth,



then something fundamental has been lost. If we preserve those things, we can be quite adventurous with the mechanics of the plot.

One of the challenges of adaptation is translating a character's inner thoughts and narrative voice into a visual medium. How are you approaching that challenge with Reykjavik Noir?

This is the most interesting part of screenwriting for me as I am first and foremost a novel writer. In a novel I can simply enter Sonja's head and tell the reader what she is afraid of, what she is hiding and what she desperately wants. Television doesn't give you that luxury. Instead, you have to externalize those things through behavior, dialogue and choices. Sometimes a look between two characters can do the work of several pages of prose. It forces you to find the dramatic version of an internal thought.

How involved have you been in the development of Reykjavik Noir, and where have you found it most valuable to step back and allow the production team to reinterpret your material?

I've been very involved because I'm one of the three writers adapting the books, together with Hrafnkell Stefánsson and Loki Rúnarsson. We do the storyline together in a writer's room and then I will be writing the pilot episode. So, I'm part of that transformation. At the same time, one of the joys of the collaboration is discovering ideas I would never have come up with myself. I already had my chance to tell this story alone when I wrote the novels. Television is collaborative by nature, and I think you must make room for other writers, producers, directors and eventually actors to bring something new to it. I don't find it threatening, I am just insanely excited about it.

Glassriver has played a key role in bringing Icelandic stories and talent to international audiences. How important is it for smaller territories such as Iceland to have producers willing to take local literary IP into the global market?

It is enormously important. Iceland has a very strong storytelling culture but a very small domestic market, so international partnerships are essential if



ambitious projects are going to reach their full potential. I already know this as a novelist. The fact that my books are published all over the world is what enables me to be a full-time writer and a part of what keeps my passion going as it is just magical to connect with readers in faraway countries. Glassriver understands the Icelandic environment and creative community while also thinking internationally.

Looking at the international market, what would you like buyers and platforms to understand about Reykjavik Noir and about the potential of Icelandic literary IP more broadly?

I would like them to see that Snare and the Reykjavik Noir Trilogy is much more than a traditional Nordic crime story. At its heart it is about a woman trapped between motherhood, crime, money and love, trying to find a way out of circumstances that keep closing in around her. Sonja is smuggling cocaine because she is desperate to regain custody of her son, while her relationship with Agla pulls her into another dangerous world. That emo-

tional engine is universal and therefore is a story that can travel extremely well. More broadly, Iceland can offer something distinctive: a rather small and innocent society combined with strange, dramatic and intriguing landscapes.

Are you working on new stories? And now that you have this experience with TV, how does that affect your writing? Do you also write with a perspective to one day put that work on the screen?

I'm always working on new stories, and I have always found myself to be a very visual writer. I see the story in my head just like watching a television show. I spent part of my childhood in Mexico, so I am raised on telenovelas, and television certainly has influenced me in my life. But a novel has extraordinary freedoms that I would never want to give up: you can enter someone's thoughts, change pace completely or spend time on something that would be difficult to justify on screen. That said I would be thrilled if another of my stories eventually finds its way to the screen. ■

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Making the NEM Events More Relevant and Valuable

An Interview with Ivan Ljubičić

This year, NEM Dubrovnik celebrated its biggest ever edition, marking a major milestone in the nearly 15-year history of the industry event focusing on the media business in Central and Eastern Europe. Stanislav Kimchev asked Ivan Ljubičić, Managing Director of Mediavision, about the success of the NEM brand thru the years and the plans to make NEM Dubrovnik and NEM Zagreb even more relevant and valuable to the local players and the international partners.

Ivan, NEM Dubrovnik 2026 was the biggest edition in the event's history, with market growth of 50% year on year and more than 300 companies attending. What do you believe was the main driver behind that exceptional growth, and was there a moment when you realized Dubrovnik had outgrown its previous format? Growth wasn't driven by a single factor, but by years of building trust and relevance within the industry. Interest from international distributors in CEE buyers and markets has been growing, and NEM has become a place where people come with clear business objectives - meetings, content acquisition, sales and partnerships. It became clear that the previous format was no longer

enough once demand surged after NEM Dubrovnik 2025.

You completely sold out the Sunset and Mare Areas and had to introduce the new Adriatic Area to accommodate additional exhibitors and meetings. How much further can NEM Dubrovnik realistically grow before you have to rethink the event's format altogether?

The goal isn't to grow simply for the sake of bigger numbers. The venue naturally sets certain physical limits, but so does the need to maintain a high-quality experience. The key question isn't how many more people can fit into the event, but how to preserve the quality of meetings, access to buyers, and the networking experience.

This year's Dubrovnik agenda put considerable emphasis on consolidation, new partnerships between broadcasters and global streamers, investment in European originals, YouTube as a distribution opportunity and AI-driven content discovery. Which of these trends do you think will have the most profound impact on the CEE TV business in the next few years?

AI will have a major impact, particularly as an enabler of business efficiency. There's also consolidation happening in the industry, and the question of who is becoming who.

NEM Dubrovnik has traditionally been a market built around television, but the boundaries between broadcasters, streamers, platforms, creators and digital distributors are becoming increasingly blurred. Are you deliberately repositioning NEM as a broader content and media market rather than a traditional TV market?

Of course, broadcasters, streamers, platforms, creators and distributors increasingly operate within the same ecosystem. The goal isn't to move away from television, but to broaden the conversation around content, IP and the business models shaping the industry.

Dubrovnik has become a major meeting point for international distributors and CEE buyers, while Zagreb has a somewhat different character. What is the strategic role of NEM Zagreb within the

Ivan Ljubičić

is the Managing Director of Mediavision, the organizer of the key TV industry events NEM Dubrovnik and NEM Zagreb. He also manages the Pickbox TV channels and streaming service which were launched in 2013.





overall NEM portfolio, and what do you want participants to get in Zagreb that they cannot get in Dubrovnik?

Zagreb is a more creator-focused event, with greater emphasis on ideas, talent and development - it's actually about the broader content and media market. It connects traditional creatives with new content creators, and it's the place where we'll try to inspire all video creators.

NEM Zagreb is increasingly focused on creators and IP development, with the Best Pre-Development TV Series competition alongside the established Best Finished TV Series in the CEE category. Is the ambition for Zagreb to become more of a development and discovery market, where projects can be identified before they reach production?

The ambition is to connect creators and projects with people who can help them develop, finance, and eventually bring them to international audiences. Long term, Zagreb could become a place where projects are discovered before they eventually make it to the screen.

The NEM Awards for Best Finished TV Series in the CEE now evaluate projects not only on creative elements but also on monetization, alongside cast, screenplay and audiovisual presentation. Why was monetization included as a judg-

ing criterion, and does this reflect a fundamental change in how successful CEE drama should be evaluated?

Ultimately, both NEM events are business-oriented, which is why we encourage writers and creators to consider the commercial potential of their projects alongside their creative quality. Today, an excellent series is not automatically a sustainable or internationally viable product.

Including monetization as a criterion acknowledges that a successful series also needs a clear understanding of its audience, positioning, distribution potential and ability to generate long-term value. This does not represent a fundamental shift away from creativity. Rather, it broadens the definition of success by recognizing that strong CEE drama should combine creative excellence with the potential to reach audiences and succeed in the international market.

CEE producers increasingly want international recognition, financing and distribution for their local IP, but many still operate in relatively small domestic markets. What are you seeing at NEM that suggests CEE is becoming more attractive to international buyers and investors—and where do you think the region still has to improve?

We all need to dream bigger. Many still develop projects primarily for

their home country, without considering neighbouring markets or major European territories. In my opinion, that is the first mistake. International audiences, partnerships, financing and distribution should be considered from the very beginning.

Looking at the two NEM editions together, do you see Dubrovnik and Zagreb becoming complementary events with clearly different identities, or could the rapid growth of Dubrovnik eventually overshadow Zagreb? How do you balance expansion with maintaining the distinctive character of each market?

The two events are complementary, not competing. NEM Dubrovnik covers the broader TV industry, with a strong focus on distribution, technology and business, while NEM Zagreb is dedicated to content creation and inspiring video creators.

Dubrovnik's growth does not overshadow Zagreb - it strengthens the NEM platform as a whole. We preserve their distinct identities through different topics, formats and target audiences, while creating connections between the business and creative sides of the industry.

After the record Dubrovnik edition, what is the next ambition for NEM? Is the goal primarily to make Dubrovnik and Zagreb bigger, or do you see opportunities to expand the NEM concept into new markets, new formats or new areas of the content business?

Our ambition is not simply to make both events bigger, but to make them more relevant and valuable. NEM Zagreb underwent a major transformation in 2025, and we want to continue developing this fresh strategy focused on inspiring video creators and new areas of content creation.

For NEM Dubrovnik, our priority is the participant experience. After a record edition, the challenge is to maintain the same high level of quality, networking and service with a growing number of attendees. We remain open to new formats and markets, but growth should result from relevance, not become a goal in itself. ■

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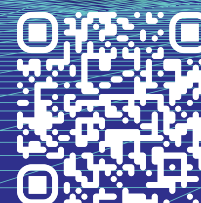
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PROGRAMMING



Love is Blind: Sweden paused for now

Expressen reports that Netflix has decided to pause the production of a new season of *Love is Blind: Sweden*. “It is true that we are not making a Swedish version right now as we are making Love is Blind: Denmark, which has been planned for a long time. When we have information to share about a possible upcoming Swedish season, we will do it,” the streaming service told the Swedish tabloid.



M6 plans interactive formats and cult show revivals

M6 will bet on interactive formats and iconic show revivals for the fall season, according to its Program Director Florence Duhayot. On September 29, the channel launched the interactive escape show *Most Wanted*. Other highlights include *Destination X* and a courtroom program hosted by Anne-Sophie Lapix. To celebrate its 40th anniversary, the channel is bringing back cult formats *The Money Drop* and *That'll Teach'Em*. These strategic investments are backed by the streaming platform M6+, which has reached 32.5M monthly users to date.



CBS announces Taylor Sheridan's The Run for a Million

CBS announces *Taylor Sheridan's The Run for a Million*, an elite horse-reining competition, on the CBS Television Network and streaming on Paramount+. Sheridan, who also executive produces, will call the action of the adrenaline-fueled *The Run for a Million*, the fast-paced equestrian competition where 16 riders guide horses through a precise pattern of circles, spins and stops in pursuit of reining's highest honor - and \$1 million prize.

RATINGS



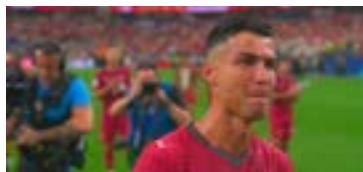
England's dramatic World Cup knockout win delivers BBC's biggest live TV audience of 2026

England's dramatic FIFA World Cup victory over DR Congo delivered the BBC's biggest live audience of 2026, with a peak audience of 16.3 million watching Harry Kane's late winner on BBC One and BBC iPlayer to send England into the Round of 16. The match also averaged 14 million viewers and was the most-watched moment on the BBC this year, underlining the nation's appetite for England's World Cup campaign. The knockout victory also fuelled huge digital engagement generating 10.4 million streams across BBC iPlayer, the BBC Sport website and the BBC Sport app as audiences followed every moment of the team's journey to the last 16.



Telecinco's audience drops to historic lows amid major content flops

Telecinco has seen its worst season ever, closing the month of June with a record low monthly audience share of 8.3%. Hampered by the heavy competition, Mediaset Spain's flagship channel consolidated a historic low season average of 8.9% share, failing to reverse the downward trend despite strategic content renewals. Aside from isolated reality hits like the *Survivor* finale, which hit an impressive 18.3% share, the network suffered major prime-time failures including the quick cancellation of its major bet *El Tiempo Justo*. Informativos Telecinco also permanently dropped to third place with shares averaging 7% - 9%.



4 million saw Ronaldo wave goodbye to the World Cup

Another football legend ended his international career last night as Portugal lost 1-0 to Spain in the Round of 16. Ronaldo and his colleague were watched by an average of 3.774.700 viewers on RTP1 resulting in 38.0% rating and 67.7% share. At its peak, practically at the end of the commercial break, approximately 4.094.000 viewers tuned in, with 41.3/71.9% share. In the daily ratings, RTP1 closed Monday with a 26.1% share.

M&A/FINANCIALS



Netflix gains over 3% as report refutes NBCUniversal acquisition speculation

Netflix Inc shares are trading up 3.8% at \$74.14 on Wednesday, rebounding from near their 52-week low after The Wall Street Journal walked back speculation that the streaming giant was lining up a bid for NBCUniversal following Comcast Corp's announced spinoff. The relief rally reflects fading fears that the company would pursue another costly megadeal so soon after losing a bidding war for Warner Bros. Discovery.



ITV stock gains 1%

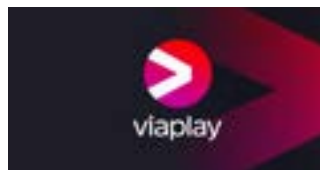
ITV stock gained 0.9% to trade at 82.5p after the company announced a transformative deal in which Comcast's Sky agreed to acquire ITV's Media & Entertainment division for up to £1.6 billion. The transaction comprises £1.2 billion in cash payable at completion, plus a contingent earn-out of up to £200 million tied to the division meeting 2027 advertising revenue targets. The agreement, which covers ITV's family of free-to-air broadcast channels and the ITVX streaming platform, would leave ITV restructured as a standalone, London-listed pure-play content production business through ITV Studios.



SABC sounds the alarm

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has highlighted that the lack of a finalised funding model has left it with persistent liquidity constraints and going-concern risks. Presenting before Parliament on Friday, June 26, the broadcaster warned that it would struggle to secure short-term liquidity or invest in the content needed to attract more viewers. “Our going-concern is primarily impacted by two key areas: the funding bill and the funding model remains unresolved,” SABC CEO Nomsa Chabeli said.

APPOINTMENTS



Viaplay hires TV 2 commercial director

Viaplay has hired Kenneth Brenøe as Head of Advertising Platforms. He is leaving TV 2 Denmark where he spent the last 7.5 years in the advertising department where he was appointed Director - Head of Ad Strategy & Business Development in September last year.



Mediaset changes its management structure

As part of the changes at MFE, Mediaset in Italy has also changed its management structure. Pier Silvio Berlusconi remains Chairman and CEO, with Niccolò Querci as Vice Chairman, while Mauro Crippa is confirmed as Director General of Information and Communications. The most important changes concern the transfer of Giancarlo Scheri, current director of Canale 5, to Deputy Director General of Networks, Programming and Promotion, while Sebastiano Lombardi takes over as head of the flagship channel, with Laura Casarotto at Italia 1, Giorgio Grignaffini at Rete4 and Marco Costa (thematic networks) also reporting to this area.



France Télévisions hires former Fox executive Nathalie Wogue

France Televisions has appointed veteran unscripted executive Nathalie Wogue as deputy director in charge of content creation. She will support the French public broadcaster's development of new streaming projects and formats. Wogue most recently served as SVP of Global Formats at Fox Entertainment Global, overseeing format sales and acquisitions. She previously held senior roles at Fremantle France, IMG Entertainment and Endemol France, and worked on international formats including *Beat My Mini-Mes*, *Celebrity Masterpiece*, *Marriage Market* and *The Big Deal*.

DISTRIBUTION



MTV, Elisa reach agreement to resolve months-long dispute

Finnish commercial broadcaster MTV Oy and telecoms provider Elisa have reached a settlement in their long-running contract dispute over channel distribution and compensation. The agreement means that MTV channels — MTV3, MTV Sub and MTV Ava — were restored to the Elisa Viihde platform and Elisa's TV cable offerings from 12pm on Friday 3 July. The channels should appear automatically, MTV said in a statement, so customers do not need to do anything themselves.

Netflix, e.tv look to fill the gap Showmax left behind

eMedia has struck a content licensing deal with Netflix that will put e.tv programming on the global streaming platform across Africa — a first for the free-to-air broadcaster, and a move that plants Netflix squarely in the local soapie territory vacated by Showmax's shutdown in April. The partnership launches with *The Four of Us*, e.tv's new primetime daily drama, which premiered on June 29 in the 8pm weeknight slot held for 23 years by *Scandal!*. Each episode airs on e.tv at 8pm and lands on Netflix across the continent at 9am the next morning — the first e.tv telenovela to stream on Netflix.



RTL-commissioned Palaces of Power investigates possible Putin-linked villa in Spain

A Polish documentary team investigating the hidden wealth of modern autocrats may have uncovered a previously little-known Spanish villa linked to Vladimir Putin. The investigation forms part of *Palaces of Power: Private Worlds of Dictators*, a new documentary produced by Warsaw-based Inbornmedia, commissioned by RTL and now entering global distribution through Off the Fence. During filming in southern Spain, the production teamed up with British investigative journalist Jon Clarke to investigate the heavily guarded Roca del Rey estate near Marbella.

ADVERTISING



TV 2, Viaplay and WBD launch joint TV ad sales platform

TV 2 Norway, Viaplay, and Warner Bros. Discovery Norway are launching Glimra, a joint digital advertising platform where advertisers can purchase TV ads. Glimra will serve as a “one-stop shop” for campaigns on platforms including TV 2 Play, HBO Max, and Viaplay, while also aggregating traffic from partners such as Disney, SkyShowtime, and Pluto TV, according to a release. Buyers are provided with an ordering portal where prices are retrieved individually from each media house—without price collusion—Raymond Pettersen, CTO of Knowit (the company behind the solution), explained.

Spanish ad spend grew by 4.7% in H1

According to InfoAdex, ad investments in Spain reached €3.039.9M in the first half of 2026, marking a 4.7% increase compared to 2025. TV led the market with €916.7M, followed by Search at €466.8M and Social Networks at €426.7M. Newspapers remained stable at €344.1M, while Radio and Websites grew to €293M and €260.3M, respectively. By contrast, linear TV advertising dropped by 2.8% to €759.5M. FTA ad investments decreased by 3.1%, leaving Atresmedia with €318.9M and Mediaset Spain with €302.8M. Regional channels also dropped by 3.4% to €40.7M, while pay TV channels grew by 2.5% to €39.1M.



Strong Q2 ad growth in Denmark

For the second quarter, the market continues on the strong trajectory, from the first quarter, growing by 8.3% relative to the second quarter 2025, IRM reports. Growth is broad-based across digital, video, audio and out-of-home, while print continues to lose ground.

DIGITAL



TF1 will develop video games based on top entertainment formats

In an effort to counter the decline of linear TV audiences and to retain younger ones, TF1 is planning to develop small-scale video games inspired by its top entertainment shows. This move aims to boost engagement for popular flagship reality shows that are losing momentum like *Survivor*, *The Masked Singer* and *Secret Story*. According to the channel's CEO, Rodolphe Belmer, the group is actively considering taking its first steps in that area although it has no intention of competing with costly blockbuster titles like *GTA VI*, focusing instead on low-budget projects designed to keep loyal viewers interested.

Play Media bets on the future of vertical storytelling as Play Shorts gains traction

Broadcasters worldwide are experimenting with short-form content strategies, but few have built a dedicated, owned-and-operated destination for vertical storytelling within their own streaming environment. With Play Shorts, Play becomes the first Flemish broadcaster and one of Europe's earliest movers to do exactly that. The vertical video offering from Play Media has found its audience, and not just in Flanders. International interest is picking up, Play Media has signed Belgian content distributor Primitives to handle distribution rights for 20 original microdrama series. The catalog will be presented at upcoming intl markets.

New Spanish DTT channel La Septima launches in November

New Spanish DTT channel La Septima will start broadcasting on November 5. Promoted by the Siete consortium, the urban channel will seek to compete directly with La Sexta and Cuatro. Shareholder José Miguel Contreras confirmed that the four partners (Andrés Varela Entrecanales, Diego Prieto, José Luis Manzano and Adolfo Utor) will invest €6 million each over the next 3 years with the network targeting a turnover of €40 million by 2029. La Septima has signed an infrastructure agreement with Toboggan to support its live news operations.



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