

Industry gets connected as stars hit MIPTV

CANNES, FRANCE: The new generation of entertainment content consumers, willing and able to watch television while surfing the web, tweeting to their friends and giving their live feedback about shows to the shows themselves, is driving change within the entertainment industry.



That was the message in Cannes as some 11 500 executives (including 4000 buyers) from 4000 companies and 100 countries gathered together at MIPTV. Moreover, in the new world of connected television, the audience, rather than the programmer, is increasingly calling the shots.

Speaking at a MIPTV conference session, Gary Carter, chief operating officer and chief creative officer, FMX FremantleMedia, advised producers not to forget that viewers are making relationships between themselves before, during and after they watch shows. "The audience is taking the power. If we want to do real connected TV, we have to let them be the boss," he said.

Bigger than you might have thought

And that doesn't just mean audiences voting contestants off their favourite talent show, or a peak of 189 000 people using Facebook to play along to Endemol's 'The Million Dollar Drop' in the UK. It also involves a huge UK online fan community advising 'Skins' participants (Channel 4) what they should or should not be doing as the series progresses.

"The development of television, PCs, tablets and mobile technology is changing the relationship between content providers and audiences. If companies can harness the multi-platform audience engagement they will be well positioned to reach audiences," noted Laurine Garaude, Television Division director at MIPTV organiser Reed MIDEM.

Among a plethora of deals to be announced during MIPTV, CBS Studios International closed a string of international sales on period drama 'The Borgias,' starring Jeremy Irons as Rodrigo Borgia. Neil Jordan directed the first two episodes of the nine-part series which was sold across Europe, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa during MIPTV.

ZDF Enterprises posted strong sales at MIPTV with particular demand for their factual series. ZDFE President and CEO, Alexander Coridass reported that Arctic-driller series 'License to Drill,' repo-man saga 'Repossessed' and prison series

'Hard Times,' had been acquired by Australia's ABC, Discovery Channel EMEA, Canwest in Canada as well as selling in Scandinavia.

In Poland, HD and 3D content from National Geographic is on its way to Polish satellite platform 'n'. The platform has formed a partnership with Fox International Channels that adds National Geographic Channel HD to its offering of 26 HD channels, as well as picking up more than 20 hours of National Geographic Channel 3D content.

'Governator' walks 'Camelot' talks

Day one of MIPTV saw a return to Cannes of entertainment icon and former governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, after an eight year absence. Surprising some Hollywood pundits, the 'Terminator' star has decided that his first entertainment project since stepping down from the governorship will be new animation series 'The Governator,' in which his cartoon character is a former governor turned superhero.

Producers Andy and Amy Heyward of A Squared Entertainment, have pulled off a regular coup by teaming Schwarzenegger with legendary comic book artist Stan Lee. The series' lead character, who received France's prestigious Legion of Honour from French Culture Minister Frédéric Mitterrand while at MIPTV, told a packed press conference on April 4 that 'The Governator' will be a comic book, 52-part animation series and 3D film, as well as having games and merchandising interests.

"Obviously it's great to have such a huge name at MIPTV," commented Reed MIDEM's Laurine Garaude. "The fact that A Squared Entertainment chose MIPTV to make the international launch of 'The Governator' is an honour and testimony to MIPTV's international reach."

April 4 also saw MIPTV delegates treated to the first international viewing of GK-tv's Arthurian epic series 'Camelot,' starring Joseph Fiennes as Merlin, Eva Green as Morgan le Fay and Jamie Bower Campbell as King Arthur. The trio attended a full-house World Premiere Television Screening in the Palais des Festival's Grand Auditorium, which will be welcoming Cannes Film Festival competition pictures in May.

'Camelot,' an Irish-Canadian co-production, debuted on Starz in the United States last week and another major series destined for Starz, the BBC's 'Torchwood: Miracle Day,' flew into Cannes with lead actors John Barrowman and Bill Pullman accompanying. They took time out of a busy schedule to walk the MIPTV Opening Night Red Carpet alongside 'InSecurity' talent Richard Yearwood, Natalie Lisinska and Remy Girard, 'Endgame' star Shawn Doyle and former Miss World, Diane Hayden who toplines in new reality show 'Incredible Indian Bride.'

"What was quite clear this week is that there are big shows out there in the market and talented actors prepared to support those shows by attending MIPTV," said Reed MIDEM's Laurine Garaude.

Ambitious drama

In the search for audiences in the fragmented world of entertainment, some broadcasters are pinning their faith in the pulling power of ambitious and star-driven drama. Robert Halmi's RHI Entertainment was closing territories on two such properties, two-part miniseries 'Treasure Island,' starring Donald Sutherland, Elijah Wood and Eddie Izzard and 'Neverland,' the prequel to the story of Peter Pan, which includes Keira Knightly and Bob Hoskins in the cast. Both are currently in post-production and set to air on Sky outlets in the UK.

Two major co-productions were also causing a stir in Cannes.

FremantleMedia brought two-part epic 'The Sinking of the Laconia,' to MIPTV. The WWII naval drama was five years in the making, underling the complexity of co-productions, according to FremantleMedia executives.

And French pay-television powerhouse Canal Plus brought the cast (including John Doman) of its 'Borgia' drama to MIPTV

to support sales of the €25 million* series - the most expensive drama to be financed out of Europe to date.

Canal Plus COO, Rodolphe Belmer, told MIPTV delegates that his company is committed to investing in ambitious drama to satisfy the demands of its audiences. During his keynote address he told delegates "to be strong in a globalising television market, European television groups need world class content." The Canal Plus executive noted, however, that ambitious projects require ambitious budgets. "€1 million an hour is not enough to make world class drama," he said, adding that budgets needed to be nearer the €2.5 million-€3 million an hour mark.

Formats continue to find favour

With the formats business continuing to move from strength to strength, MIPFormats this year was extended to two days and deal-making activity was brisk. ITV Studios France got the ball rolling by signing with leading French national broadcaster TF1 for a Gallic version of reality format 'Four Weddings.' TF1 has also ordered Endemol's 'Million Dollar Drop,' and FremantleMedia's 'Push the Button.'

'Big Brother' fans in the UK can look forward to a return of the show on British screens. Endemol closed a two-year deal to bring the reality favourite to Channel 5.

Meanwhile 'Deal or No Deal' creator and MIPFormats keynote speaker, Dick de Rijk, showcased his new, altruistic gameshow format 'You Deserve It.' Prior to MIPTV, SevenOne International sold the format to ABC in the United States and in Cannes SevenOne completed deals in Germany, Italy and the Middle East. In a break with traditional gameshows, 'You Deserve It' sees contestants trying to win cash for a deserving individual rather than for themselves.

"'You Deserve It' is a great example of the ability of format specialists to evolve and develop the genre, which is one of the reasons that formats are so popular with audiences and trusted by broadcasters," commented Laurine Garaude.

Industry connects

Reflecting the rapid developments in the connected world, MIPTV 2011 launched the inaugural Connected Creativity forum - a combination of conference discussions, start-up presentations, pitching sessions to venture capitalists and a futuristic Experience Hub.

"We launched Connected Creativity this year because the industry faces an interesting learning curve, so we wanted to bring together television and entertainment content creators, technology experts and mobile device specialists," added Laurine Garaude.

According to Connected Creativity keynote speaker, Ericsson president and CEO, Hans Vestberg, such is his company's belief in the connected business, that Ericsson is investing some €3.1 billion per year on research and development. He told his audience that by 2020 the "networked society" will number 50 billion internet-connected devices, eight billion mobile subscribers and that already, 70% of the time on smartphones is used for non-voice activity.

Another communications heavyweight looking to liven up the traditional viewing experience is Orange, which chose MIPTV to unveil its check-in TV App, TV Check. Orange's VP Digital Innovation and Communities, Patrice Slupowski, with the aid of an iPhone, demonstrated how viewers checked into the show they were watching and earned badges and points for doing so. TV Check joins a growing band of companies providing check-in social features for viewers including Foursquare, GetGlue, Miso and IntoNow.

Inside the Connected Creativity Experience Hub, technology giant Intel chose to raise its profile at MIPTV this year as part of what the company's Digital Home Group marketing director, Lance Koenders, described as Intel's aim "to educate the television industry about the technological benefits that are already here and next-generation possibilities. The Digital Home Group is increasingly involved in providing enabling products for the global TV industry."

Intel's Experience Hub neighbour, Vivendi subsidiary zaOza, has been at the forefront of using cloud technology to drive its content-sharing platform which enables subscribers to access such content as games, films and series whenever and wherever they want. "Vivendi is pretty good at all aspects of the media chain," commented Anne-Carole Nourisson, zaOza vice president of Licensing. "It has always believed that that the consumer should be given access to content as easily as possible and the freedom to do so anywhere."

"Connected Creativity is a bit like a start-up. We wanted to bring people together and to support up-and-coming entertainment entrepreneurs, which is why we set up CC Ventures** for start-ups to pitch their projects to a panel of venture capitalists," reported Anne de Kerckhove, Reed MIDEM's Entertainment Division Director. "With some 500 registered Connected Creativity participants, it has been an encouraging debut and we will build on the concept in the future."

Brands meet content creators

MIPTV saw continued convergence between the production and brands communities. American Express has been a front-runner in innovative use of music, sport and entertainment to develop brand awareness and at MIPTV the company received the inaugural Brand of the Year Award on April 5.

As the week progressed, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide CEO, Miles Young, told the audience at his Branded Entertainment keynote speech that branded content campaigns need to be "meticulously and carefully designed." In particular he drew attention to the nuances of brands working with existing content and brands creating their own content.

Generating understanding and business opportunities between brands and content creators is still in the development stage. So at MIPTV, Endemol, Shine, Zodiak and FremantleMedia sat down with IBM, Ikea, Coke Zero and British Airways. Prior to MIPTV, the brands had sent a marketing brief to the content creators so that both sides could discuss proposals at a MIPTV meeting session. "The idea is not to try and strike a deal right here, but it provides a framework and context for proper conversations," noted session organiser Patou Nuytemans, Ogilvy's chief digital officer, EMEA.

**Exchange rate at time of publishing: €1=R9.60.*

** For details of the CC Venture winners [click here](#)

For details of the Content 360 winners [click here](#).

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