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Editor Stewart Clarke • stewart.clarke@knect365.com • @TBIstewart
Deputy editor Jesse Whittock • jesse.whittock@knect365.com • @TBI_Jesse
Sales manager Kate Roach • kate.roach@knect365.com
Art director Matthew Humberstone • matthew.humberstone@knect365.com

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 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7AD
Tel: +44 (0)20 7017 5000
e-mail: tbi@knect365.com **web:** www.tbivision.com

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NBC's alternative all stars

Amid the golden age of TV drama, NBC has done something remarkable in launching and sustaining unscripted hits that have fuelled the broadcaster's hot streak. Mindful that the likes of *The Voice*, *Got Talent* and *Ninja Warrior* provide great numbers but no back-end, it created an unscripted studio last year. With Paul Telegdy in overall charge of unscripted and Meredith Ahr joining the recently minted unit, the Peacock Network wants to air and own a new wave of reality, gameshow, documentary and shiny-floor hits. They tell Stewart Clarke and the script for unscripted at NBC

NBC's roster of unscripted shows is currently the envy of its broadcast network peers. While *The Voice*, *American Ninja Warrior*, *America's Got Talent* and *The New Celebrity Apprentice* are going strong, recent offerings *Little Big Shots* and *The Wall* have also launched strongly and got second seasons.

This gives Paul Telegdy – upped to president of the Alternative and Reality Group at NBC Entertainment last year – a high-class problem: the company he works for does not own any of the shows.

“We have been buyers waiting for formats,” Telegdy says. “It was a strange situation, waiting for international shows to be developed rather than use our experience in the industry. The fact is the current hits on NBC belong to Fremantle or Talpa.”

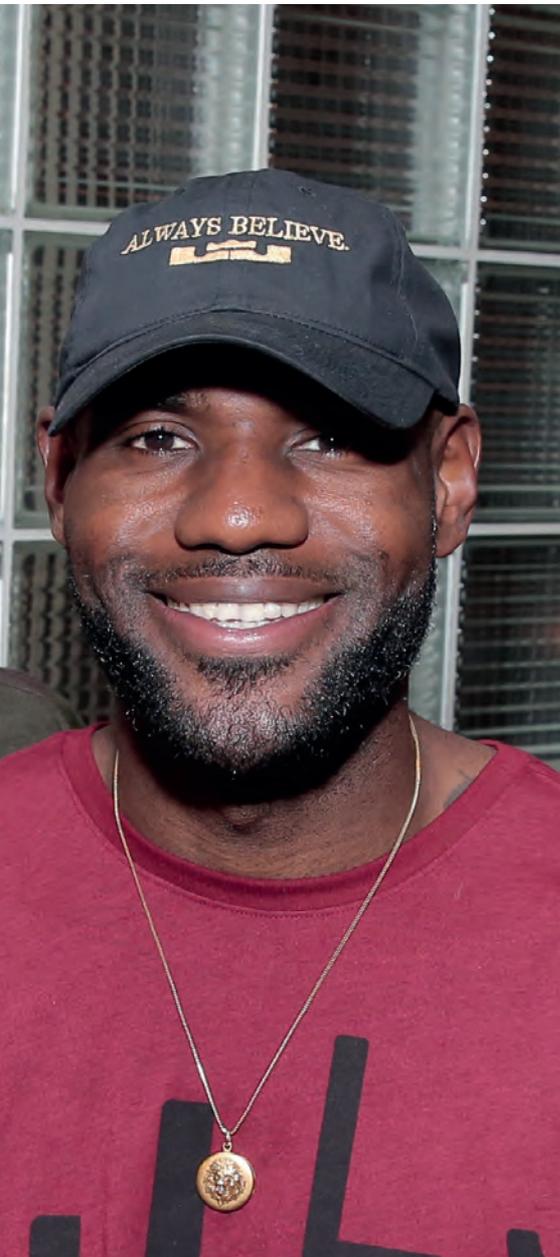
While keen not to kill the golden geese – “I say ‘thank you’ to them, let’s keep on having this success” – the answer for Telegdy and NBC was to create a dedicated unit. His chief lieutenant, Meredith Ahr, was named president of Universal Television Alternative Studio last June.

In the wake of Comcast taking over NBCUniversal there has been a sustained

investment in IP, and when the decision was made to dedicate resources to an unscripted studio, Ahr was the natural choice, Telegdy says. “We said Meredith would be brilliant at running one of these studios – she has the credibility with all of our partners from being at the coal face – and should be supported.”

International was baked into the plan. “It’s not just another vertically-integrated production business; it came from an organic place to grow big franchises,” Telegdy says. “What works on NBC is likely to be a massive global format.”

Ahr’s new studio has got to work quickly and an early hallmark of its shows is talent: it already



has projects with Amy Poehler, Chris Hardwick and Jennifer Lopez, as well as a US remake of UK format *Common Sense* with Studio Lambert.

The Jennifer Lopez project is *World of Dance*, which harks back to Telegdy's time at BBC Worldwide in the US, when he put together deals for *Dancing with the Stars*, a ratings juggernaut for ABC. "Dancing deals got me my job," Telegdy says of his early days in US TV. "Dancing is an international phenomenon and in America has become a blend of creativity, art and performance sport."

A dance competition also cuts into short-form chunks for digital and marketing, he adds.

Lopez is an exec producer and member of a team of judges on *World of Dance* alongside dancer Derek Hough and R&B star Ne-Yo.

The ten-episode talent series will see elite dancers battle for a US\$1 million prize. Universal Television Alternative Studio is making the format with Lopez's Nuyorican and the *World of Dance* lifestyle brand.

Ahr says that dance cuts through barriers and the interest in choreography and dancing is now mainstream.

"You don't need to speak a certain language and this is dance as sport. It shows how far dance shows, and interest in them has evolved," she says.

Leveraging existing relationships is clearly part of the studio blueprint. "We have producers and we have talent, and we wanted to take advantage of that and have that as a trademark of our shows," Telegdy says.

The Handmade Project fits the bill, coming as it did from Amy Poehler, the star of NBC comedy hit *Parks & Recreation*. The show, with Universal Television Alternative Studio and Poehler's Paper Kite prodco, is a serialised competition that puts crafts and skills in the spotlight, with Poehler's *Parks & Rec* co-star Nick Offerman hosting.

"Nick a master craftsmen and woodworker, and Amy pitched us this as a passion project and really wanted to do it," Ahr says. "Some things are very strategic and come from looking at statistics and data, but this is something no-one expects us to do. It's something people didn't know they needed."

In its focus on homegrown skills, the series has some of the elements that have made *Bake Off* such a hit in the UK and abroad, a comparison Telegdy recognises. "*Bake Off* goes back to my BBC DNA," he says. "It's about how to make something tiny massive."

If *Handmade* is something new for US viewers, *The Awesome Show* also has the promise of the future.

Presenter Chris Hardwick is hot at the moment; his AMC talkshow has spread from a *Walking Dead* aftershow to a year-round talkshow franchise, and he also presents *The Wall* on NBC. Telegdy rates the comedian-presenter-sci-fi-geek-podcaster very highly.

"He is the king of Comic-Con, the king of the nerds, a successful stand-up and a world-leading expert on *Star Wars*," he says. "He is as important a broadcaster as I have come across; as Attenborough is to natural history, he is to tech."

The Awesome Show, made with reality impresario Mark Burnett, will be a trip, with Hardwick, into the future. "There have always been shows that have told us about the future, and there is an insatiable appetite for the promise of tomorrow," Telegdy says. "*The Awesome Show* is a global journey around the science and technology of tomorrow, seen through filters we understand: wellness, quality of life, health.

"Hardwick is a trusted guy and can take the American public through decades of change and into where science fiction collides with science fact." Tonally, he adds, it will be more utopian than dystopian. "If *Black Mirror* is the dark side of [the future], this is the light side," he says.

The Hardwick and Poehler shows are for next year and beyond. NBC's latest hit, meanwhile, is *The Wall*, a physical gameshow from NBA star LeBron James and Hardwick (pictured, with Ahr and Telegdy) with Glassman Media and Core Media Group. Endemol Shine Group sells it internationally, and a local version launched strongly on TFI in France, although ratings have since settled. In the US, it was the biggest gameshow of the season, and NBC ordered 20 more eps in January.

The show works because of the human jeopardy, according to Ahr. "It's absolutely sticky," she says. "From the moment you turn on, you know where you are and you stay to the end. What we got from the run-through was how unpredictable it is and how you're watching emotions play out over and over."

Telegdy and Ahr say shows for the NBC are positive, have ingenuity and are human. The new unscripted studio will, however, not restricting its efforts to its parent channel, not least because in success, the number of slots available on NBC are thin on the ground.

"Our tank is nearly full," Telegdy says. "I said the first three or four from the studio will serve some strategic goals we have, but Meredith did that in the first few weeks of the job."

The studio is understood to be looking at other big-scale competitions formats, having tried out with *Spartan Race* and fashion shows, and Telegdy says everything, from magic to variety to comedy is on the radar.

"This is not about filling a slot on the network, it is about creating global formats," he says. "Not everything will be right for NBC, and there will be a surplus of ideas in short order. I'd better get used to Meredith having a different corporate master and her working with rivals." **TBI**

VIEWPOINT



ARABELLE POULIOT-DI CRESCENZO

Capturing the formats zeitgeist

Over the last 20 years we have seen the formats market gradually mature, and in the last couple of years especially this genre of programming has extended into every single territory on a significant global scale.

There is a proliferation of format distributors launching new formats almost on a continuous basis. Nonetheless, it is still a struggle to find great new formats that resonate with audiences on a global or multi-territory scale. This is reflected in part by the trend over the last few years to bring back “feel good” retro formats from the past such as the classic primetime gameshow *To Tell The Truth* or even our format *Who's Who?*, or to simply continue with long running successful formats such as *The Bachelor*, which first aired in 2002 and now is in its 21st season in the US.

In today's competitive, fragmented and sophisticated marketplace, with the proliferation of platforms and broadcasters, everyone is looking for a game-changing format that is “noisy” enough to get noticed and attract international audiences. Unfortunately a “nice” and even a “good” format with some success is just not enough.

So is there a magic formula to create a great format and satiate the appetites of today's viewing audience? And what are the key

challenges facing our business?

I believe that a great format must have a great title: something that sparks our curiosity and at the same time captures the essence of the format in a nutshell. Beyond the great title it must also have a unique structure that builds organically over the course of the episode and series, keeping viewers interested and wanting more. Figuring out this structure is often the trickiest part.

Beyond these two points, however, in its simplest form a format is great and successful when it speaks to us on a deeper level, tapping into the whole spectrum of human desires and emotions such as love and power, through to other driving forces such as greed, voyeurism, envy or competition. And also when it reflects the zeitgeist and is inspired by something real and authentic that is actually happening in the world today.

Without this authentic and emotional foundation, I don't believe a format can be great and truly engaging. These should be the guiding principles when creating new formats.

The Real Housewives is an amazingly successful franchise that, since it first launched in 2005, has evolved to become a huge phenomenon, with nine versions in the US alone and several international versions. This is an example of a great format that is rooted in an existing subculture that at the same time

emotionally connects with its audience.

Times, as we know, are changing, especially in light of the recent political changes in the UK, then the US, and the knock-on effect in Europe. This, I think, will bring about the creation of new content that can ride the zeitgeist.

The proliferation and normalisation of what has been referred to as “fake news”, is an example of something that is very current. Can this be turned into a format, and if so how? This is an interesting question and potentially a subject that could resonate. We could see formats about fake news and hacking surface in the coming months.

Another strand of thought that will affect the evolution of formats is the adaptation and integration of new technologies. The subject of virtual reality is lining up to be a hot topic at MIP TV 2017. One of our the format acquisitions we are taking to this year's market is *Tilt*, a game format that is the first TV format featuring virtual reality and using mixed reality production technique in broadcast TV. We are already seeing interest from our clients in how VR will play a part and take audience interactivity and participation to the next level.

As a distributor, I feel it is also important to get involved in the development stage and help format devisors create formats that meet the demands of our clients. Many devisors work in a vacuum at times, so it is great to collaborate and share with them themes that are of particular interest to broadcasters.

Format creation is much more than just colour by numbers, but the promise is that by working together with new and experienced devisors and taking into account themes circulating in the zeitgeist and our deep-rooted desires, needs and dreams, we as an industry will keep on creating new and exciting must-see content. **TBI**

Recent political changes in the UK, then the US, and the knock-on effect in Europe will bring about the creation of new content that can ride the zeitgeist wave



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Fox looks to revitalise reality

Fox Television Group co-chairman and CEO Dana Walden has backed Fox's new reality chief to bring a new wave of unscripted hits to the network

US broadcaster Fox named Rob Wade president of alternative entertainment and specials earlier this year.

Speaking at the INTV conference in Jerusalem, Walden, who runs both the Fox broadcast network and production studio with Gary Newman, said there is an opportunity to reinvigorate the unscripted genre and backed Wade to deliver.

"He makes me really excited about our reality [programming], because like our success with the [scripted] studio, it starts with our creators, and he's a creator," she said. "He's a showrunner, he's developed shows with the BBC, he's run *Dancing with the Stars* and been on [CBS's] *Big Brother*."

Fox is winding down competition reality series *Idol*, and Walden outlined the opportunity that gives Fox in unscripted. "There hasn't been breakout reality show since *The Voice*," she said. "This is not a condition that is unique to Fox, it's across our industry and it's going to take innovation, and something is going to have to come along that feels new."

A+E boss Nancy Dubuc recently made a similar call for innovation in unscripted on the cable side of the TV business. Walden said that for her, however, reality, is a genre that works best on big networks.

"Like live sports, reality is an opportunity for a type of programming that works best on broadcast, when you're speaking to the broadest possible group of people with a show that has a great idea the centre, telling stories about real people's lives."

Asked about Rupert Murdoch's take on

"Like live sports, reality works best on broadcast, when you're speaking to the broadest possible group of people with a show that has a great idea the centre, telling stories about real people's lives." Dana Walden



Dana Walden and Avi Nir

TV, Walden said the media mogul genuinely believes in broadcast. "As a matter of fact, I think he loves the broadcast business; I think the network is one of the real jewels in his company," she said.

"He's frustrated by changing times and trying to figure out where the business is going," she added. "He's asking the same questions all of us are, but when I sit down and talk to him it's 'where's the next great show?'"

Keshet Broadcasting boss Avi Nir, meanwhile, was asking the questions and took a swipe at

the new entrants in the content space. He said the likes of Apple, Facebook, Google and Netflix were aggregators, and not helping the content business and the companies investing in programming. "These companies are leveraging our content, but are not helping our content," he said.

Fox has licensed shows and movies to SVOD service Netflix, and Walden noted that the streaming service's content chief Ted Sarandos had told her *Prison Break* was one of its best-performing acquisitions.

A rebooted *Prison Break* is about to launch, and the Fox chief said selectively reversioning older projects made sense as they came without the risk of brand new shows. She added that Fox had been able to use new reboots to boost the distribution business.

"We have had the opportunity to sell the library [seasons] because of ten or twelve new episodes of a show," she said. "It's good business." **TBI**



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ITV starts up time machine

ITV's hit *This Time Next Year* has spawned a new genre of factual entertainment format, 'time travel television', execs are claiming. TBI reports from the ITV Studios Formats Festival

Broadcaster ITV had a hit on its hands last year when subsidiary distributor Twofour Rights sold *This Time Next Year* into nine territories before it had even aired the UK.

The studio show has participants outline life goals to the host and then 'reappear' twelve months later, at which point the viewers find out if they were successful. Following a reasonable ratings performance (3.7 million average) for the first season on ITV, two more seasons of the series were commissioned.

In fact, the series has created an entirely new genre, according to TwoFour Group CEO Melanie Leach, who told an assortment of producers, buyers and journalists at the ITV Studios Formats Festival in London that it had "spawned new ideas".

These include *Give it a Year*, which is hosted by Karen Brady and follows the first year of existence for new businesses. There is also property-themed show, *The Home Game*, which uses the time travel conceit to avoid viewers tuning out of property shows. "A lot of people watch the first part of *Grand Designs* before fast-forwarding to part four," Leach said. Both shows are for ITV.

Leach has dubbed this style of factual entertainment programming "time travel television", a genre distributor ITV Studios Global Entertainment hopes will take off and become a staple.

Other shows currently on the ITVS GE slate include Talpa Media's *Cannonball*, also commissioned for the UK broadcaster. ITV management recently singled out the US\$1.17 billion (£930 million) takeover of Talpa as one the best-returning acquisitions it has made.

At the Formats Festival, Talpa Global managing director Maarten Meijis talked up new Talpa shows *Around the World with 80 Year Olds* and *A Whole New Beginning*, while Jo Torgerson of ITV Studios Norway added some heat to the room at the Ham Yard Hotel by introducing reality competition format *Best Firefighter*, which pits professional firemen and women against each other.



This Time Next Year

Michael Kelpie of ITVS-owned UK producer Potato revealed a new spin on long-running gameshow *The Chase* titled *The Family Chase*. His stablemate Ed Taylor outlined the format potential of Channel 5 medical series *Autopsy*, which has already been remade for Reelz in the US.

Louise Ellerbaek from another ITVS prodco, Denmark's United, meanwhile, touted TV2 entertainment show *Music Masters*, and Crook Productions showed off *Derren Brown Presents: Twisted Tales*.

Waddell Media execs were on hand to push *The Commute*, a new fixed-rig doc format that captures people driving to work with friends and family.

Other news from the ITV Studios open day was of new versions of hit ITV Studios-distributed format *Come Dine With Me*, with the stripped dinner party competition show going into Zimbabwe and Mongolia, and

passing the 40-territory mark.

The event also included a first look Second Act-produced stripped talk series *The Nightly Show*, which ITV is using to extend its primetime to 10.30pm.

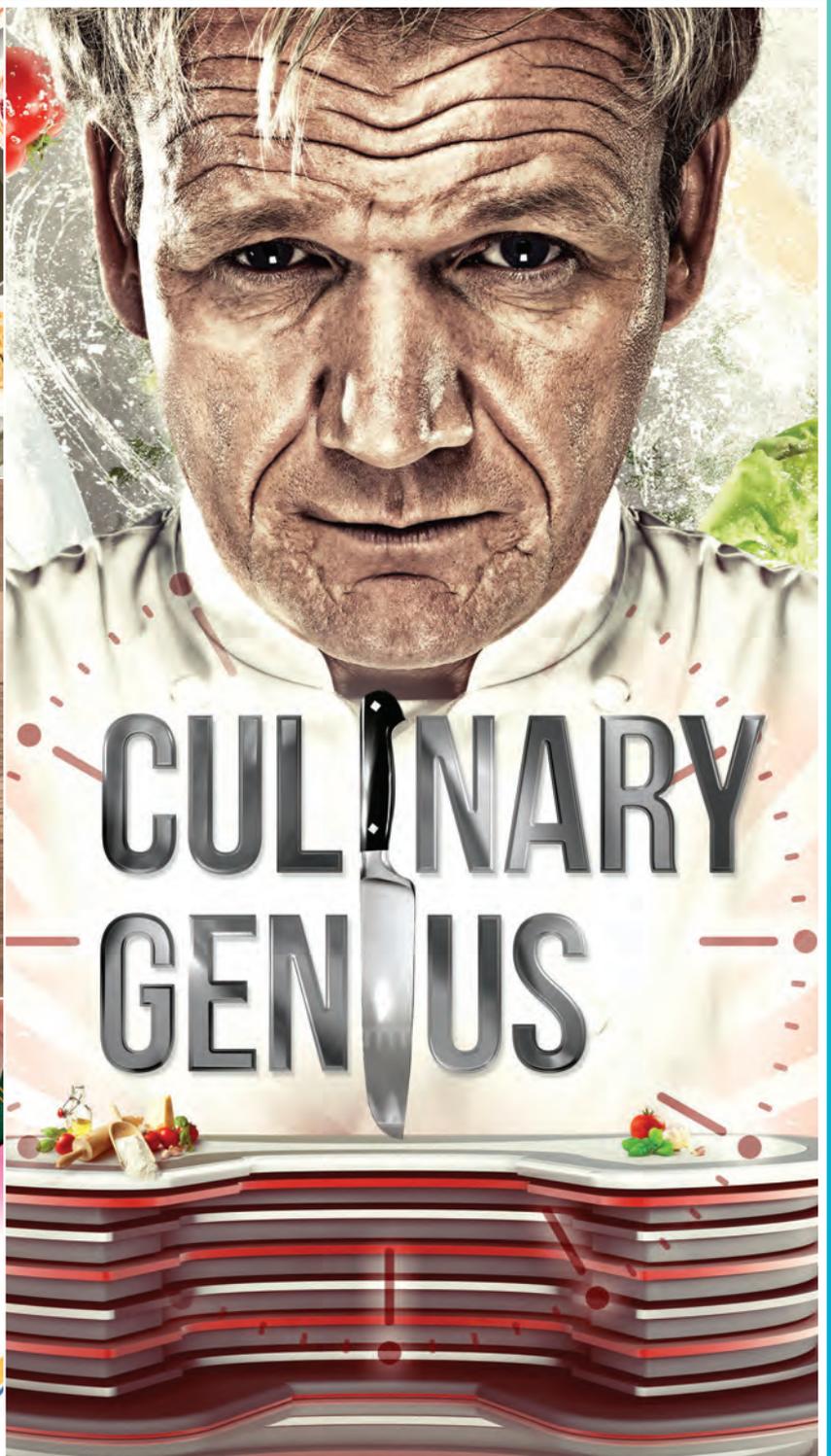
The series has been panned critically, with initially promising ratings falling away, and ITV coming in for criticism for moving its nightly news back to accommodate it.

The series was the latest British attempt to recreate the type of late-night talk show common in the US.

Second Act is hoping segments from the show will spawn their own full formats, as has been the case with series such as *Lip Sync Battle* and *Drop the Mic*, which began life as fragments of talkies. So far, the series has not had the cultural impact for this to happen, but ITV appears to be keen to continue with *The Nightly Show* in its current 10pm slot for its entire 40-episode run. **TBI**



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Gurin evolving unscripted

Tang Media Partners acquired production and distribution business IM Global last year, and in December announced that Phil Gurin would run a new unscripted studio. Veteran formats executive Gurin tells Stewart Clarke about plans to set up shop in London, Beijing and Miami, and to join the premier ranks of global formats companies

Originally a movie production and distribution business, IM Global hired Mark Stern to its ranks in 2014, and the former Syfy boss has since set up a scripted division. Tang Media Partners then took over IM last year and with plans to push the business further into TV, Phil Gurin is now doing the same in unscripted.

“Phil is a very important addition to our fast-evolving television studio,” says IM Global CEO Stuart Ford.

Formats veteran Gurin has set the bar high and wants his new unit to rank alongside the biggest established players, such as FremantleMedia, All3Media, ITV Studios and Talpa Media. “You can add us to the eight or so usual suspects; you can make us the ninth,” he says.

The IM move, although welcome, was not one Gurin was angling for. “I have my international approach to the business,” he says. “My indie was kicking along, and when this opportunity came along it wasn’t something I was looking for, but we had a shared vision for growth. The world has changed, and having the resources of a global company was something I was excited about.”

Through his indie Gurin Company, the new IM Global recruit has made shows including *The Singing Bee*, *Lingo* and *The Weakest Link US*.

IM’s formats push allows Gurin, he says, to play at a higher level, and the blueprint extends across all areas of unscripted and the whole value chain. “I didn’t join to set up a larger production company,” he says. “We want to build a studio, and create and co-create, acquire and sell. We will produce, make and distribute.”

“The brand won’t be as laser-focused as Gurin, which was entertainment and shiny floor,” he adds. “We will do those, but as a studio we want the team to tick all boxes across unscripted.”

That means working across everything from clip shows, crime, comedy, factual entertainment, reality and competition IP – “anything that at its core is format based and has international appeal” – with one exception, ob-docs, partly because they don’t work as formats. “They are very local and don’t travel well,” Gurin says. “Many companies are built on revenues from docu-soaps, but when they are cancelled the revenues disappear.”

If the above covers the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of the new division, the ‘where’ will involve several new international offices, three of which will be set up this year.

“We won’t buy lots of companies,” Gurin says. “We will set up in London, Miami and Beijing this year. The US is our home and where we will have the biggest team. There will be country MDs in the other three locations.”

The regional outposts are necessary to truly reach out to local buyers, he adds. “You have to respect local knowledge and work with people on the ground who know the ground – who know what people eat or snack



on, what childhood shows mean something, and know the culture,” he says. “It means they can execute [local] shows better.”

Gurin says a hit is a show that reaches 20-plus territories, even if one of them is not the US. The Transatlantic trade in formats is well established, however, and a natural early area of focus. With its film heritage, the IM Global approach to formats will involve bringing a “film finance and distribution mentality,” including deficit financing.

Some IP has come over from the Gurin Company, and Gurin says the team are out selling already. Given the lead times, the first formats are unlikely to make it to air for 18 months, but Gurin is clear on the aims for the first twelve months. “Year one will be good if we can identify the expanded team, have a pipeline of format ideas and we’re getting commissions,” he says.

The formats exec sets up the new division as a new era dawns in the industry (see box). “We’re entering a new Darwinian phase: it’s survival of the fittest and survival of the cleverest,” he says. Gurin’s job is to adapt and evolve IM’s formats strategy in that brave new world. **TBI**



INDUSTRY TRENDS: DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY

A shakeout is coming as the industry evolves, and being part of a larger group could prove a key advantage in a world where smaller indies face slimmer pickings.

"Unscripted has reached maturity, and the danger with unscripted is also the opportunity," says Phil Gurin, president of unscripted and alternative content at IM Global. "Platforms pay too little, so the food chain needs to be reinvigorated. People can expect so much development for free, but it has to be efficient for everyone."

In that environment, the independents are challenged, Gurin

says. "A lot of indies will get weeded out and disappear as channels consolidate and distribution mechanisms change," he adds.

An over-reliance on alternative shows with shouty titles and stars as producers also creates an opportunity for well-crafted honest formats, according to Gurin. "There are a lot of noisy titles with celebrities attached as exec producers," he says. "That means you can promote it, but people don't come back to episode two. They will come back if it's well made and treats the audience with respect, if you don't play to the lowest common denominator."

Formats Hot Picks



THE SHOW: *The Pop Game*
THE PRODUCER: Intuitive Entertainment
THE DISTRIBUTOR: A+E Networks International
THE BROADCASTER: Lifetime (US)
THE CONCEPT: Music legend Timbaland prepares five aspiring pop stars for the limelight, with one winning a recording contract

The Pop Game is A+E Networks' latest addition to the ...*Game* franchise that it has been growing since Lifetime's Jermaine Dupri-fronted series *The Rap Game*.

In the hot seat of the new show is R'n'B and hip-hop production legend Tim 'Timbaland' Mosley, who takes on five talented but raw musicians and attempts to shape them into fully-rounded artists, with one winning a recording contract with the Mosley Music Group. "This is a side to Tim you don't get to see," he tells TBI.

"I love to mentor kids. I love taking my talent and showing them how to make music. It's something I always wanted to do, and I don't like to talk about, I like to be about it."

The series comes from Intuition

Entertainment, which was behind *The Rap Game*, whose second-season ratings propelled Lifetime to the top of the Friday night cable charts last year among female demos and drew an audience with a median age of 33.

Each hour-long episode of *The Pop Game* will see Timbaland – who created hits for Missy Elliott, Jay-Z and Justin Timberlake, among others – working with songwriters, stylists and choreographers to set the artists and their manager-parents challenges designed to test their skills and readiness for the big stage.

"These kids are coming from what they think is popular," says Timbaland. "I let them say what they want to say, and then let them realise they are not that person. They are kids. I work with them and get them to become the

best person they can be.

"What I am showing is a new way of doing artist development. I want to show certain processes that I went through."

The Grammy winner says the tone of the format is positive – "It's about showing them the rights and the wrongs" – and that formatting the series locally will require the selected mentor to take that approach.

"You have to find someone who cares like me," he says. "All the kids will tell you that [I'm like a father to them]. I still look out for the kids out of the show."

The Pop Game debuted in the US on Lifetime on February 21 and stablemate A+E Networks International is launching it to buyers in Cannes.



THE SHOW: *Spies*
THE PRODUCER: Minnow Films, GroupM Entertainment
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Passion Distribution
THE BROADCASTER: Channel 4 (UK)
THE CONCEPT: Contestants are put through spying challenges by a team of ex-intelligence officers

Espionage has perhaps never been more relevant than it is in 2017, with fake news on social media, daily headlines linking Russia to the American presidential election result, and stories of backwater channels used by Wikileaks and its founder, Julian Assange, constantly cropping up.

UK broadcaster Channel 4 has been a keen proponent on intelligence- and military-focused formats, with *Hunted* and *SAS: Who Dares Wins* both performing strongly last year. Its latest effort in the genre, *Spies*, paired snooping with reality TV.

The psychologically intense, four-part show saw 14 specially selected contestants living together while competing espionage tasks set by former real-life operatives from MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, based on the Intelligence Officer New Entry Course. These tasks often involved backstabbing the competition and deploying powers of persuasion, and even led to shocking revelations about how far some would go for the mission.

"It is not often you get access to the Secret Services," says Jimmy Humphrey, head of acquisitions at the show's London-based vendor, Passion Distribution. "In the UK version, the characters are great, and in a post-

truth world, it feels right on the zeitgeist"

"*Spies* is one of those shows that doesn't come along that often, which has tape and finished potential," Humphrey says. As producing a local series will be a "slow burn" due to the logistics and negotiations with secret service operatives, Passion expects some buyers to also take the tape.

"The number of episodes a channel would produce depends on the access territories can get around the world," says Humphrey. "The format itself is quite organic: it doesn't follow the same structure each episode, though there are elements that repeat each week"

A winner is crowned, though the prize is pride and not cash, which Passion hopes will tap into the current global trend for self-improvement epitomised by *Iron Man* and *Tough Mudder* competitions.

"It's tapping into a genre that's really appealing at the moment: the concept of challenging yourself to be better," says Humphrey.

Ultimately, *Spies* aims to prod audience curiosity. "Everyone has an impression of how espionage works, and everybody wants to be James Bond, but this shows how different the reality is," Humphrey says.

THE SHOW: *Don't Ask Me*
THE PRODUCER: Chalkboard TV
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Sky Vision
THE BROADCASTER: Rai (Italy), MBC (Middle East), ITV (UK)
THE CONCEPT: Gameshow in which two teams attempt to gauge the temperature of the nation, with viewers voting from home

Sky Vision first took *Don't Ask Me* to market with success two years ago, but is giving the format a major new push after UK broadcaster ITV decided to commission a British version, which debuts in April.

The format sees two regular team captains joined each week by celebrity friends, who attempt to second-guess what the nation thinks about particular subjects and questions, which can vary from banal to risqué to serious. Though there are different ways to produce the show, going live (as ITV is planning) means the questions can be based on up-to-the-minute events and trends.

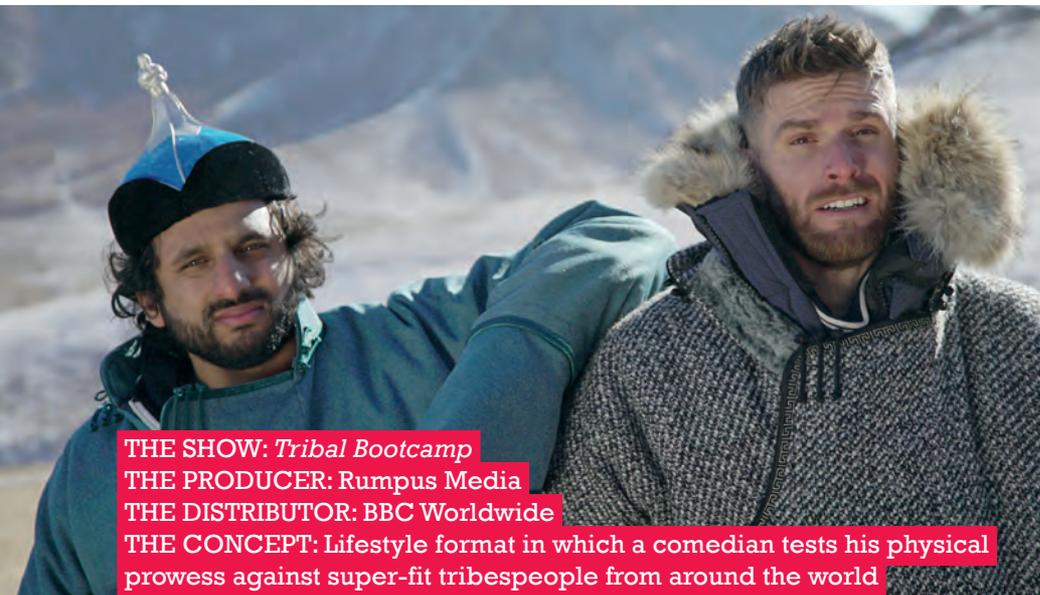
"It's an incredibly flexible show, and is right up to date because it's live," says Sky Vision's director of entertainment and factual, Barnaby Shingleton.

The answers come from the public, who vote on questions through an app, which encourages users to watch live. "There has been a swing back to entertainment, which is a great genre because it's very immediate," says Shingleton.

In the Middle East, where commercial broadcaster MBC ran a version, around 700,000 downloaded the app, while engagement was also high in Italy, where pubcaster Rai commissioned a run.

Noting the difference in the broadcasters that have already aired it, Shingleton says this is because both commercial and public are familiar with live broadcasting. "This is great for linear audiences – you have to be there to watch it and play along, so it responds to broadcaster concerns about SVOD," he says.

The show comes from UK-based indie ChalkboardTV, which has financial backing from France's Elephant, Spain's Zebra Producciones and the Middle East's Imagic. Sky Vision has had an agreement in place with the prodco since 2014, and will host an event for the ITV show at the Gray d'Albion in Cannes during MIPTV. "We won't have footage as it's being broadcast live, but are hopefully bringing talent for a run-through," says Shingleton.



THE SHOW: *Tribal Bootcamp*
THE PRODUCER: Rumpus Media
THE DISTRIBUTOR: BBC Worldwide
THE CONCEPT: Lifestyle format in which a comedian tests his physical prowess against super-fit tribespeople from around the world

Tribal Bootcamp is a hybrid format that sees comedian Joel Dommett and his friend Nish Kumar living with tribes so that Dommett can compete against them in tests of skill, endurance and strength, while Kumar gets under the skin of the tribe and its culture.

It helps that Dommett, who came to public attention in teen drama *Skins*, is a bona fide fitness fanatic.

"He is a health freak but very much in the Western mould," says Iain Wimbush, managing

director of UK indie Rumpus Media, which makes the show. "We wanted to see how fitness fads and trends stack up next to people who have no gyms but have been living fitness every day for generations"

The show was renamed from *Are You Fitter Than a Maasai Warrior?* and in each of the six instalments Dommett takes on challenges against the tribes, which could be running an ultra-marathon, climbing a cliff or some other physical feat.

"There is takeout," says Emily Hudd, co-MD of Rumpus. "The story plays out in an observational way, but there is also a funny, specialist factual layer with infographics over the top telling you what each exercise is doing to Dommett's body, which muscles he is using, whether he will have used them in a Western workout, and why the tribespeople are better than him."

Dommett is accompanied by his friend and fellow comic Nish Kumar. His role, Hudd says, is that of part wing-man and part curious traveller. The six episodes are spread across deliberately diverse landscapes, from jungle to mountain to desert. The show is one of BBC Worldwide's growing roster of originals, and the commercial arm of the UK pubcaster will play it on its international channels and sell the show globally.

Joff Powell, commissioning editor for BBC Worldwide, says the show is eminently formattable. "It's definitely an international format," he says. "The beats are very organic and as a viewer you might not recognise it, but producing-wise it is a format with a bible."

He adds that BBC Worldwide's research showed a need for this type of lifestyle series. "We saw the rise of the wellbeing warrior; people who had made a lifestyle choice to be the best they can be," he says.

THE SHOW: *Denmark vs Eastern Europe*
THE PRODUCER: STV Production
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Lineup Industries
THE BROADCASTER: TV2 (Denmark)
THE CONCEPT: Fixed-rig, social experiment format born out of the European immigration debate

In a short time, Amsterdam's Lineup Industries has developed a reputation as a distribution company with an eye for unusual, thought-provoking formats such as *The Bully Project*. *Denmark vs Eastern Europe* is the latest in that vein, putting prejudices about immigration under the microscope.

"It's a social experiment that taps into all that you read about in the newspapers about Eastern Europeans 'taking local jobs'," says Lineup co-founder Ed Louwse. "It's something quite explosive"

The fixed-rig format first aims to find out whether local or foreign labourers do better building jobs, the twist being that though both sides know they are in a social experiment, they do not know they are competing against another, entirely foreign crew.

On TV2 in Denmark, the teams built a home for a real-life customer, with their skills pushed to the limits by secret obstructions, incorrectly delivered materials and annoying neighbour visits. Fixed cameras caught their natural behaviours and reactions, with cutaway interviews expressing their opinions before and after the build.

Two construction experts then performed "blind" assessments, comparing the workers on efficiency, price, work environment and customer satisfaction. Louwse, who found the format through an relationship with Danish prodco STV Production, says the series caused a national conversation right up until it went to air on January 12. "This is a format that creates debate, exactly like *The Bully Project*," he says.



He adds that while there were only two episodes in Denmark, negotiations to expand the format into cleaning are under way. "Initially, we are looking at selling the construction element, but we have to be flexible because some countries just don't have the budgets to do that," he says.

In Denmark, episode one took a 35% share of 20-60s, and episode two increase that to a record 43%. The TV2 slot average is 25% to 27%.

THE SHOW: *Cash Island*
THE PRODUCER: Ah Production
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Vivendi Entertainment
THE BROADCASTER: C8 (France)
THE CONCEPT: Adventure reality format out of France

Having launched *Guess My Age* on French DTT channel C8 and then several local versions away, Vivendi Entertainment is hoping to repeat the trick with *Cash Island*.

"C8 commissioned it and we co-invested," says Matthieu Porte, executive VP, international and development at Vivendi Entertainment.

The new show will run to 4x90mins in France and is a treasure hunt/survival format. Ten contestants arrive on a paradise island to find a €100,000 (US\$108,000) treasure trove.

They compete in challenges and are given treasure maps based on their performance. Only one, however, is correct.

The contestants seek out the treasure using the maps and return to camp. The one that has successfully located it must then hide that fact and bluff to the rest of the group.

The group as a whole, meanwhile, tries to find out who has the treasure.

"It is a treasure hunt that transforms into a manhunt," Porte says. "Antoine Henriquet came



to us with an idea and is making it"

The distribution boss says it's a big, family primetime show, and his team will be at MIPTV with a trailer, with a full episode following six-to-eight weeks later.

C8 hasn't announced the TX, but will probably launch *Cash Island* in the summer.

"This is a genre that has always worked well in France, and there is an appetite for this kind of programming," Porte says. "There's a good

chance it will perform in France, which will be a boost for international."

Both C8 and Vivendi Entertainment are owned by Vivendi, and the model of getting a show on French screens and then taking it to market worked well with *Guess My Age*.

It is into a second season in France and local versions of the format are now away in Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, with others in the offing.



THE SHOW: *Game of Clones*
THE PRODUCER: Youngest Media
THE DISTRIBUTOR: The StoryLab
THE CHANNEL: E4 (UK)
THE CONCEPT: Reality series in which a singleton lives in a house filled with matches that fit their perfect partner

For Luci Sanan, global formats director at new-kid-on-the-block sales house The Story Lab, picking up sales rights to the provocatively-named *Game of Clones* is a boon for a number of reasons. It is the first series from Youngest Media, the UK indie that

ex-Endemol Shine UK formats chiefs Lucas Church and David Flynn created last year.

Also, she says, "it brings a new twist to a tried-and-tested genre, skewing towards a millennial audience".

Dating is that genre, and the twist is in

the name. The format, which UK channel E4 stripped during its 20x30mins run, sees a singleton asked to create his or her perfect match using avatar technology, designing everything from hair colour to body shape.

The production crew then goes out and finds eight love interests, who are styled and made over to look exactly like that fantasy. The unknowing single is then introduced to the clones, living with and dumping them the way before deciding which one is his or her dream date.

"Casting was easier than you might think," says Sanan. "You can create the hair-do, do a makeover and style the clones"

"It's the next level of pushing boundaries in dating, and also a completely different concept to anything else on the market," says Sanan, who joined the TV distribution arm of ad firm Dentsu Aegis after leaving Content Media Corp. "It has been attracting a lot of interest and getting coverage all over the globe."

THE SHOW: *Sex Tape*
THE PRODUCER: Armoza Formats
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Armoza Formats
THE CONCEPT: Social experiment meets sex, with couples recording their intimate moments and sharing them with other twosomes and a sex therapist

Mosiko Coen says Armoza Formats immediately took *Sex Tape* on for development after seeing sexologist Shelly Varod pitch it at an annual formats competition the company holds (an international jury handed it second place).

“There was some concern it could be too extreme, but in fact they loved the tone of it,” says Coen, Tel Aviv-based Armoza’s senior creative director. “We decided to go ahead and develop it from an interesting concept to a great TV show.”

The result is 60-to-90-minute format in which three couples are separately filmed at home over a week, including when they get intimate in the bedroom. They then head to a luxurious villa to meet the other couples and a sex therapist for the first time, and discuss their problems together while watching the tape.

“We refer to sex as part of something bigger



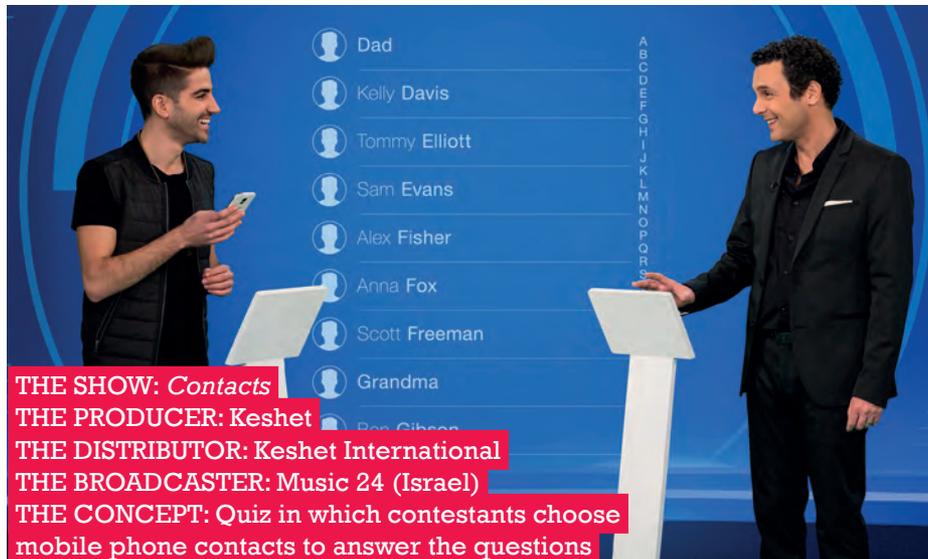
between two people,” says Coen. “We don’t want to go into the technical, physical stuff like expanding orgasms.”

Other shows such as *Sex Box*, which went out on Channel 4 in the UK and Bravo in the US, have struggled to find the right balance and perhaps skew younger than *Sex Tape*. Coen says the format, which has been optioned by TresorTV in Germany, is designed to be relatable, and may skew slightly towards women. “It looks at issues

we all have in married life,” he adds.

However, there are plenty of awkward moments, as the cameras jump from the couples and the tape, though no graphic material is broadcast. “We’re staying out of the porn zone, though some territories might want to go more extreme,” says Coen.

“We are trying to create a fun dynamic between the couples and the partners in the therapy elements,” Coen says.



THE SHOW: *Contacts*
THE PRODUCER: Keshet
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Keshet International
THE BROADCASTER: Music 24 (Israel)
THE CONCEPT: Quiz in which contestants choose mobile phone contacts to answer the questions

Contacts is a deliberately straightforward, fun quizshow. “It has two main ingredients,” says Keshet International president of distribution Keren Sahar. “It’s fun and it’s simple. It’s a clear idea and the gameplay has not been overcomplicated: contestants have four minutes to answer as many

questions as possible, but they don’t answer themselves, they choose contacts from their mobile phone.”

The show came out of formats hotbed Israel, where Keshet developed it in-house for its thematic Music 24 net. The participants can call on friends, family,

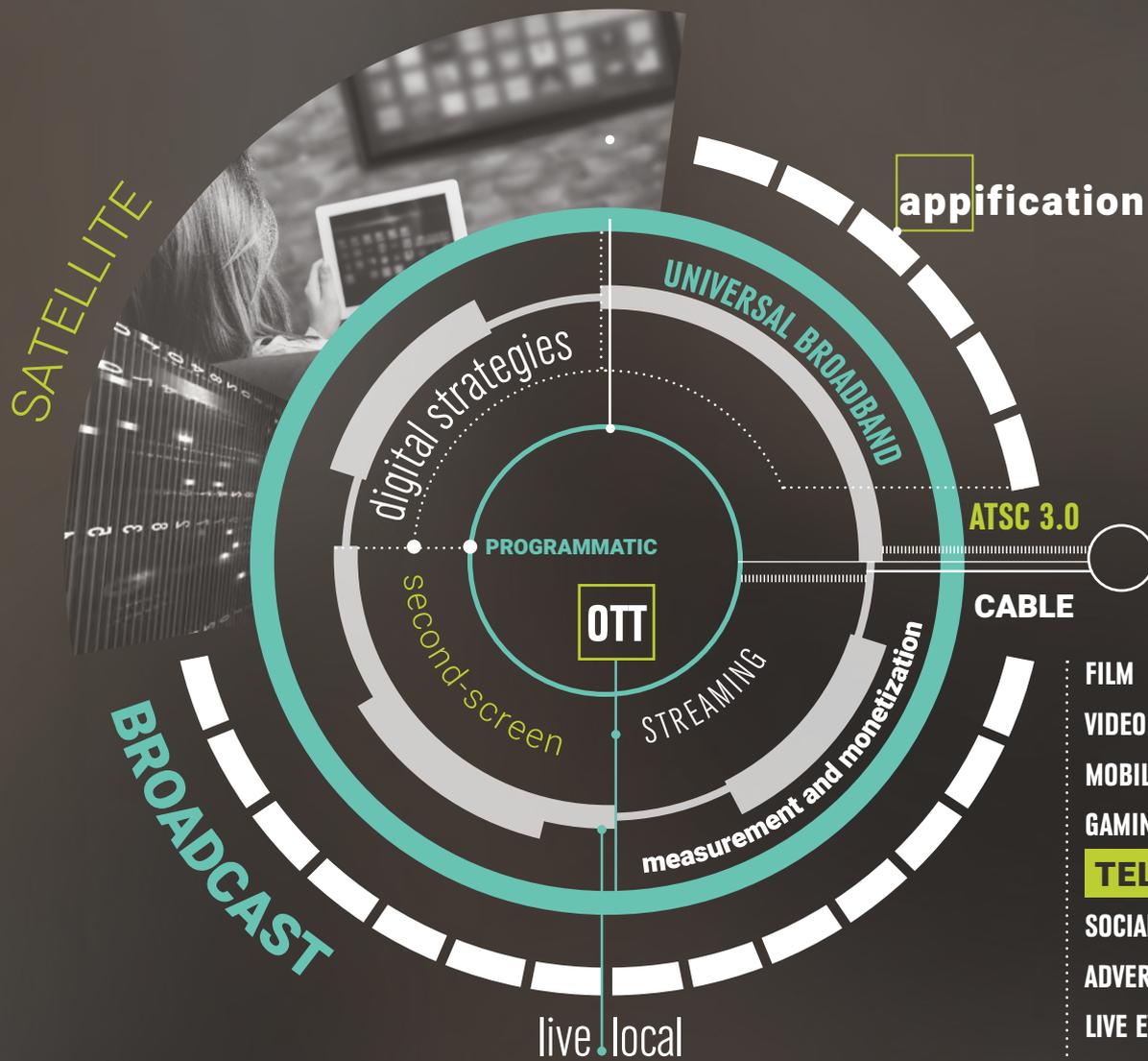
colleagues or distant acquaintances, as long as they have their number, and the host plays up the fun side of delving into someone’s contacts book.

Each question is worth an increasing amount of cash, but there’s a time limit, and a countdown clock starts each time a call is answered. As the questions get progressively harder, the list of people from which the contestant can choose gets smaller.

On *Music 24*, the questions are music themed but could be pop culture or any category, Sahar says, and even work as a segment in a bigger variety show.

Unlike *Rising Star* or other major shiny-floor shows, *Contacts* is not big-budget, which is a selling point for KI as it brings it to market. “It’s a virtual studio, it is green screen, and has low set-up costs,” Sahar says. “It’s plug and play”.

The strapline for the show is “It’s not what you know – it’s who you know”, and at MIPTV KI will be mining its contacts book for buyers looking for a flexible, straightforward and cost-effective format. **TBI**



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LET'S THRIVE.

LAST WORD



CAROLINE BEATON

Why music formats should be amusing

Long before Netflix and chill ever existed, 'X-Factor* and chill' (*insert preferred Saturday night talent show) has been a firm fixture of primetime schedules from here to Timbuktu. Gladiatorial giants *Pop Idol*, *Fame Academy*, *American Idol*, *X Factor*, *Got Talent* and *The Voice* have confidently dominated prime scheduling real estate for the past two decades.

Primetime is still awash with shiny-floor music talent shows – and there's nothing wrong with that. Whether it's *X Factor* or *The Voice* that warms your heart (and your vocal chords) audiences weaned on more than a decade of put-downs are spoilt for choice. But hang on a minute. Didn't Mary Berry just trump Simon Cowell in the popularity stakes, pulling in a sugary-sweet ten million viewers on a Wednesday night? Did I dream seeing Anne Hathaway swinging across our screens on a wrecking ball, thereby amassing more than 20 million views on YouTube on Spike's global hit *Lip Sync Battle*? And in the UK, isn't Gary Barlow currently trying out a more chummier route with BBC series *Let it Shine* – with additional BBC series *Pitch Battle* and *Lets Sing and Dance for Comic Relief* also debuting later this year?

With that evidence and more, has our icy love for a 'cruel talent show and chill' finally thawed? Maybe not entirely, but temperatures are rising; and as audience's tastes start to soften, light entertainment is getting lighter.

It was our love for absurd, pantomime, often callous criticism that catapulted the singing

competition genre overnight. Once upon a time, there was one appointment to view. Now there's an overwhelming array of similar choices in one sitting. But with all their various heroes, villains and skulduggery, one fairy-tale silk thread binds them together: the promise of water cooler, headline-grabbing entertainment served up with more than a sprinkling of brutal honesty.

The truth is that many of us still delight in seeing the obliviously untalented being given a reality check with the world watching. Networks are therefore continuing to breathe new life into 2017 schedules with the BBC's *Let it Shine* and *Pitch Battle*, ITV's *Dance Dance Dance* and Nordic World's *The Stream* set for NBC. However, despite new tastes and ambitions, new formats, new judges, turning chairs and golden buzzers, *The X Factor* and *The Voice* regularly come under attack for losing their mojo.

As competition, ego and cynicism have overtaken this once-loved genre, is the next stage of the journey less about desperately seeking the next big thing, and more about, quite simply less ridicule, more ridiculous? A return to lighter-hearted entertainment with a straight down the line feel-good factor?

Take our very own *Lip Sync Battle*. Championing eccentricity and downright daftness the winner receives the coveted Lip Sync Battle belt. Competitive? Yes. Mean to the point of brutality? Never. It is the warmth and irreverence that has become its superpower. It's a brilliantly entertaining example of the much-coveted entertainment triple-header: age,

gender and platform agnostic entertainment built for the digital era. No strings, no egos, no meanness.

The same warmth and jovial humour is embedded in the DNA of James Corden's *Carpool Karaoke*, Jimmy Fallon's *The Tonight Show*, and increasingly even in *Got Talent* (which celebrated a record-breaking 2016).

In contrast, with shows like *X Factor* and *The Voice* it's not make or break. We watch as contestants plead with the judges to give them their once-in-a-lifetime chance, with even the under tens claiming this is 'all they've ever wanted'.

While there are certainly multiple factors in play impacting whatever our ultimate judges – the viewers – decide is the format dish du jour, one plausible view might be that public mood is changing. Twenty-sixteen was as brutal for many as even the harshest reality show. The first half dominated by the deaths of pop and cultural icons, followed by the shocking summer of Brexit.

All this playing out against a backdrop of increasing global misery and rising economic tension and disarray, with the most powerful global figure none other than a... wait for it... reality star! The need for comfort watching is understandably far greater than it has been in a long while, which means audiences likely want TV with low stakes and kind joviality at its heart. Step forward show like *Pitch Battle*, James Corden's *Drop the Mic* and Spike's newest launch (hot on the heels of *Lip Sync Battle*) *Caraoke Showdown*.

I say there's no better time to sprinkle the music-driven format genre with irreverence, jazz hands and above all the feel-good factor. As networks strive to super-serve their audiences, music-driven formats will keep doing much of the heavy lifting – but they might just need to lighten up. Are we ready for a Saturday night of thrusting, mic-dropping, self-parodying lip-syncing celebrities? It's a yes from me. **TBI**

Is the next stage of the journey less about desperately seeking the next big thing, and more about, quite simply less ridicule, more ridiculous?

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CONTACT Ms. Jungwon Lee

International Marketing Director

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