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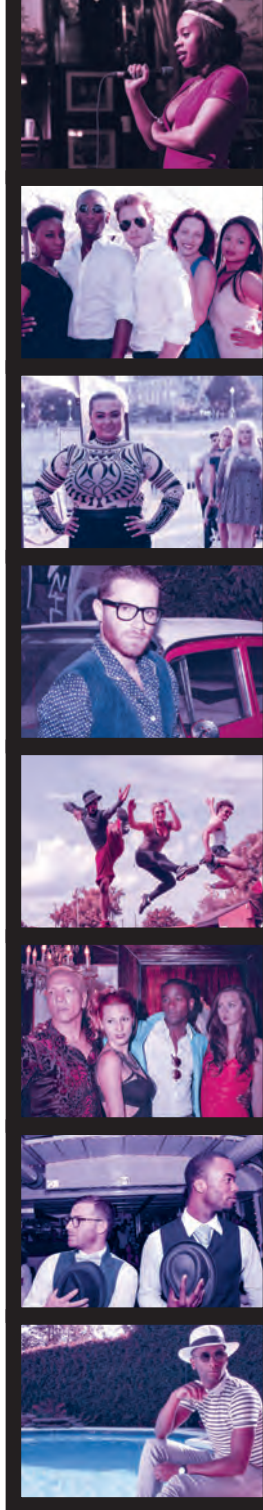
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Propagate's indie power play

Having been agents and then together at Reveille, Ben Silverman and Howard T. Owens went on to run major US networks. Now they are back in the indie game, with broadcast, cable, SVOD and Apple projects underway at Propagate. They talk to Stewart Clarke



Ben Silverman is aiming high. Asked about his ambitions for the next 12 months, the Propagate Content chairman and co-CEO says: “I really would like Propagate to be the most creative company in the world vis-à-vis what we bring to market, what we have on air or on stream, and how we develop, produce, package and finance.

“We are already on our way with [*Planet of the Apps*] for Apple, our first big public commission. My goal is to have a scripted drama, a comedy, an app-driven content initiative, alternative series across cable and broadcast networks, and big international and brand partnerships.”

Propagate was set up by Howard T. Owens and former A&E Network chief Dave McKillop in early 2015, with backing from A+E. The latter then exited, and Silverman came on as chairman and CEO this April. That reunited him with Owens, the pair having been partners in prodco Reveille, and at the William Morris Agency before that.

“We’re at a stage where we’re not the newbie producers taking on the town,” Owens, Propagate’s founder and co-CEO, says. “We are looking for ideas that mean something. Sometimes that will be because they are different, but the other thing we really like – and *Planet of the Apps* is borne out of this – is ideas that are about changing and defining

cultures. We think there are cool ways to shape culture by creating and cultivating ideas that make people think in a different way, celebrate something or look at a trend a little differently.”

The prodco secured a round of backing from Disney and Hearst-owned A+E upon Silverman’s arrival. “They know in shorthand what we’re doing without us ever having to explain it,” Silverman says of Propagate’s backers. “They understand content and programming, while also having a big look to the future with partnerships like ours, and the one they have with Vice.”

THE SLATE

There is no obligation to take ideas to A+E first, but there are several projects in play with its channels. “They can help us because they have relationships and partnerships that are of tremendous value to the business,” Silverman says. “That is very different to being with an outlier who’s not able to necessarily support the business with any relationship, or platforms or content.”

The A+E connection can be seen with *Evil Genius*, about the ingenious inventions and plans behind successful crimes, which is set up at History, and *My So-Called Simple Life*, a reality show about off-the-grid families, which is at FYI. There is also *My Partner Knows*, which quizzes couples about how well they know each other, and has proved popular in Turkey. Propagate picked it up from Kanal D and has set it up at one of the A+E channels.

Linking Owens to his previous employer, National Geographic Channels, is *Animal ER*, a reality show set in a Texas veterinary surgery, for the Nat Geo Wild net.

Propagate has two shows in development at CBS. There is an adaptation of *In the Country We Love: My Family Divided*, the book written by *Jane the Virgin* star Diane Guerrero. Based on her experiences, it follows a young woman struggling to make it in New York after her parents are deported to Colombia.

Jennie Snyder Urman is on board. She is the writer and showrunner on *Jane the Virgin*, the US version of the Colombian RCTV telenovela that Silverman placed at The CW while at Electus

The second CBS project is an adaptation of *My Lawyer, Mr. Jo*, a legal comedy drama that has been a hit for KBS in South Korea. *Castle* showrunner Alexi Hawley will be the showrunner, with the series following a lawyer wrongfully accused of corruption, who seeks to rebuild his reputation by defending others in the same predicament.

Planet of the Apps is Propagate’s noisiest project, being Apple’s first foray into original programming. Venture capital business Lightspeed has committed US\$10 million to fund development of the apps that come out of the series, which will search for hot new apps and developers. An A-list panel of judges/mentors comprises Jessica Alba, Gwyneth Paltrow, will.i.am and Gary Vaynerchuk.



The project is in pre-production and Silverman says the stakes are high, given Apple’s track record. “They are so good and successful,” he says. “They are used to everything working, so I am putting a lot of pressure on myself to deliver on that. There is a lot of learning on both sides, us learning their culture and how they want to work, and them learning our culture and how we want to work. One thing they are is a culture company, and this is going to be built as ‘culture’. It will make noise and be highly entertaining.”

Another digital project is *Lore*, for Amazon. Propagate has teamed with *The Walking Dead* producer Gale Anne Hurd (interviewed on page 26, TBI Scripted) and her Valhalla Entertainment prodco. It is based on the hit Aaron Mahnke podcast about the real-life origins of legendary horror characters. The series will be part-factual, part-dramatised, and presented anthology style as an original for Amazon’s Prime Video streaming service.

INTERNATIONAL GEMS

The international connections can be seen in several shows on Propagate’s slate, but the world has changed since Silverman plucked *Yo Soy Betty, la Fea* from Colombian TV and *The Office* from the UK, and took them to US broadcast. At Electus he set up *Jane the Virgin* as well as *No Tomorrow*, a new season US version of the TV Globo Brazilian drama, also for The CW.

The Propagate chief says there are still gems out there if you know where to look and how to approach the job of repurposing them.

“There’s so much great material that gets overlooked,” Silverman says. “The other thing is the perspective you have on it. *Jane the Virgin* and *No Tomorrow* were around for a while; it was my creative view of how they could get translated that made them work, and knowing the people directly who could make that happen.”

Silverman has driven the US-Latin American connection with *Jane the Virgin* and *No Tomorrow*, but Owens says the next step will see Propagate mine unscripted from the region. “We’re looking at a couple of unscripted partnerships there,” he says. “There’s an opportunity to further mine, shepherd and work with unscripted [creatives] in Latin America.”

In keeping with the international outlook, Propagate is also scouting the Middle East and looking at opportunities to reach the huge number of young people in the region.

In conversation, Silverman often returns to the theme of being a good partner, in terms of deal making, and having a creative view. These are skills he claims are more important than ever as television and media become increasingly consolidated and corporate.

“You can ask RCN, RCTV or Globo what kind of partner I was, or Ricky Gervais,” he says. “I also found Gina Rodriguez [*Jane the Virgin*] and Steve Carrell [*The Office*], the stars of our shows. No company alone can do that, only a really strong executive producer can. I have always been the executive producer and creative visionary, as well as the executor of the corporate strategy. That’s a great hybrid because of the corporatisation [of media].”

NETWORKS AND NETWORKING

Owens was president of National Geographic Channel for three years, starting in 2011. Silverman was co-chairman of NBC Entertainment between 2007 and 2009, setting up IAC-backed producer and distributor Electus after leaving the broadcast net.

The channels experience means a different take on working with nets, according to Owens. “The fact that we ran networks and network groups gives us a different

perspective,” he says. “We have an understanding that some of the traditional [channels] are in a sensitive area, while still trying to grow audiences. Oftentimes [producers] think they know what is best for a network, and I realise now that can be pretty insulting. There are people working there thinking 24 hours a day, seven days a week about what’s on, and what’s best for them.”

If Silverman often talks about partnership, Owens repeatedly returns to the notion of ‘the idea’, which he says is what underpins Propagate. “After I left National Geographic, and Ben was unwinding his participation in Electus, we spoke and he said, ‘The idea is where you shape culture; at the beginning stage of being part of an idea is where the fun is, and where we thrive’.

“We’re building a modern, independent, alternative studio and looking at ideas, and what an idea needs in today’s world. In a world of apps, a great show also means unleashing and distributing apps in real time along with the show. That means finding people who are creatives, and not just scriptwriters, we’re finding people who are code writers who also have a creative vision.”

DISTRIBUTION

Jay Weisleder and Jimmy McNider have joined the company and will be part of the international division as it takes shape at Propagate. Distribution is a “huge part of the plan”, the Propagate execs say. “It’s a key cornerstone of how I have built my businesses,” Silverman adds. “But we are not just a buyer, and not just a seller, we are a partner. My relationship with Globo, for example, started when they licensed *The Biggest Loser*, and now in turn I am licensing their content for America.”

In June, Propagate brought in Kevin Healey from Entertainment One, and former Relativity exec Brett-Patrick Jenkins. In terms of future hires and expansion, it has a deep-pocketed backer in A+E, and an international chief will join in early 2017.

The emphasis, however, is on growing what’s in place. “There are a lot of things on our wish list as an upstart indie studio, but we have decided to do this for a period of time, and organically feel out what our true needs and strengths are, where we need help, and what the seams and creases are that provide opportunities that no-one else is in,” Owens says. “We are building a business based on where the next opportunities are coming from, as opposed to building it on suppositions about how business has been run for the last 30 years.”

The Propagate chiefs are clearly putting in the hours. “I really want to take what I accomplished at Reveille, furthered at Electus, what Howard and I did at National Geographic and NBC – take all of that learning – and demonstrate by example that we are the best partnership company in the world,” Silverman says. “This is not business for us, this is our lives.” **TBI**





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GLOBAL FORMATS





Weight loss winners

Andy Fry tucks into the the world of weight-loss and fat formats

The story of weight loss as a mainstream entertainment genre began in 2004 with the launch of *The Biggest Loser (TBL)* on NBC. Although there were plenty of sceptics who doubted that such a show could work, it is still in the US net's schedule 13 years and 17 seasons later.

TBL has also developed into a worldwide hit for rights holder Endemol Shine Group. In addition to sales of the US show, it has been adapted in over 30 markets. At time of writing,

TBL has just been on air – or is about to air – in markets including Australia, China, Spain, Germany and Russia. Proof of its scalability and universality is that it has been picked up in territories ranging from Argentina to Vietnam.

Explaining the show's durability, Lisa Perrin, CEO of Endemol Shine Creative Networks, says: "We believe it's due to the great storytelling that goes with each season and the relatability of weight loss. At the same time, our teams in the US, Australia and many other territories have done a great job of keeping the format

fresh. Over the course of its run, our producers have included pairing contestants with loved ones, with entire families, allowing former contestants to come back on to the show and bringing on former professional athletes who have struggled to stay in shape when their careers have come to an end."

A case in point is *TBL Australia*, where Network Ten is giving the show a makeover for 2017 with the title *The Biggest Loser: Transformed*. "The upcoming season in Australia will focus on both contestants' bodies and minds," says



The Biggest Loser

different dietary approaches. “But if the contestant decides the programme is not working for them, they get rid of them and try something new,” says Gamsu. “So there is a kind of double jeopardy: who will lose weight, and which trainers’ programmes will succeed?”

For Gamsu, this approach is a better reflection of people’s lifestyles than the sector’s well-established juggernaut *TBL*. “It’s not in a boot camp – it’s about people trying to lose weight while they live their everyday lives,” he says. “It also reflects the challenge that faces all of us: how do you choose between all the different diets that are available to us? Overall you get to see some very personal and heart-warming stories.”

In terms of the show’s international potential, Gamsu says: “We’ve done well selling the US version, but it’s early days for the format. We introduced it to the market at MIP 2016 and are now developing it for international territories. It takes time to get a show like this right because you need to get the casting right, and find the right experts.”

Another weight-loss show hitting the international market is A+E Networks’ *Fit To Fat to Fit*. First aired on A+E in the US, the show’s USP is that the personal trainers start by gaining weight, so that they can then lose weight alongside their clients. In other words, it’s another show where the trainer is as exposed as the client.

A+E Networks head of formats, international programming and production Hayley Babcock says: “The origin of this idea was a personal trainer who couldn’t work out why so many of his clients reached a plateau and couldn’t get to the point of ultimate success. So he decided to put on weight and go through the weight loss with them. It was a way of trying to understand what they were going through.”

This is the core idea behind the show. “We start by seeing trainers put on weight, which is an emotional journey in itself,” says Babcock. “But then we see real friendships develop as the trainers and their clients lose weight together. Through the show, it becomes evident to trainers there is an emotional and psychological side to achieving weight loss.”

The show is being adapted for season two, says Babcock. “Season one was all about stand-alone episodes – one trainer, one client,” she says. “But season two will be an arced series where the stories overlap. Also, the clients are no longer strangers, they are siblings or friends or people the trainers know from their

Perrin. “It’s imperative that local productions are able to adapt formats to suit broadcasters’ needs and the audiences’ tastes.”

TBL’s shift in emphasis seems to reflect a wider reappraisal in the market. Over at ABC US, for example, the key weight-loss show until 2015 was *Extreme Weight Loss*, an extension of the network’s successful *Extreme* franchise. Launched in 2011, it focused on attempts by contestants to shift massive amounts of weight during the course of one year. In 2016, however, the show was rested and replaced by a

new show, *My Diet is Better Than Yours*.

The latter is marketed internationally by Red Arrow International, whose vice president of format acquisitions and sales, Harry Gamsu, says: “One of the key things that distinguishes this show is that it looks at a range of different ways to lose weight. It takes the view that people have different lives and that, as a result, different weight-loss programmes may be better-suited to their particular situation.”

During the course of the show, contestants are introduced to trainers who each tout



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personal lives. So now we are able to go to the international market with two variations on the same format.”

Babcock has no doubt that shows like this can work across markets. “Everyone can relate to this kind of intimate and emotional journey,” she says. “I think the friendship element gives it a very authentic vein.”

It’s also a life-affirming show, says Babcock. “Everyone has moved a long way from the idea of shows where the contestants are there to be laughed at or humiliated,” she says. “There’s real joy in this show.”

‘Authenticity’ is the watchword for Mike Beale, director of international formats at ITV Studios. “Audiences everywhere are looking for shows that feel real to them,” he says. “They’re not so interested in shows about losing 20

stone in three days; they want shows that can have an impact on and reflect the way they live their lives.”

Beale points to a couple of examples from within the ITV family of companies. “There’s *This Time Next Year*, a Twofour show distributed by Twofour Rights,” he says. “It’s not specifically a weight-loss show, but it is about people who set themselves targets they want to achieve during the course of a year. It’s the kind of show people can relate to.”

Looking more closely at weight loss, there is Little Gem’s show for Channel 4 in the UK, *How To Lose Weight Well*. “This show is all about road testing different diets and seeing which is most appropriate for people with different goals,” says Beale. For example, participants are divided into three groups: crashers, who are on short-

term diets; shape shifters, who are on six-week programmes; and life changers, who are on four-month plans. “Audiences are increasingly cynical these days,” says Beale, “so you need to get them thinking – ‘could I do that?’”

Beale says the show certainly has potential as a format, but acknowledges that it takes time to persuade buyers. “Everyone is looking for shows with a proven track record, and this area is no different,” he adds. “The first run was four episodes and another six have been commissioned, so we’ll look to take it out in the next six months.”

This trend towards linking weight loss with an emotional journey has also led to a lot of activity around romance. US cable net TLC created the series *Fat Chance*, in which eight individuals attempt to lose large amounts of weight in order to gain confidence and find love. UK prodco Renegade Pictures, meanwhile, made *Lose Weight For Love* for the BBC. In this show, couples who are locked in a cycle of overeating separate from each other and have therapy to see if they can change their behaviour.

The growing emphasis on authenticity may explain why some of the current production activity around weight loss would appear to sit more in the factual/observational space than reality/formats. At MIPCOM, for example, Australian-owned, British-based producer 7 Wonder will present two new shows.

In *Make My Body Better*, 7 Wonder looks at some of Britain’s most troublesome health issues, including obesity and poor dietary habits, and challenges them head on. In each episode, experts will help participants on a journey of recovery and discovery. The series will also provide key takeaways and myth-busting practical advice for viewers.

In the same space is a new documentary for BBC Three entitled *Obesity: The Post Mortem*, an autopsy-based production that investigates the devastating impact obesity has on the human body, in a UK autopsy first. Explaining the idea, BBC Three controller Damian Kavanagh says: “Obesity and body image are two issues we know resonate with young people, but the debate is often framed by what’s on the outside. This dissects what happens to our bodies on the inside in unflinching detail.”

The documentary sees pathologist Dr. Mike Osborn perform a televised autopsy on a female donor who weighed nearly 17 stone. Viewers also get to see how the body was transported 5,000 miles from Long Beach, California, to



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Obesity: The Post Mortem



Lose Weight For Love



My Diet is Better Than Yours

the post-mortem table in London. There is also a cast of young contributors who reveal how biology, psychology and food have contributed to making them fat, and what it means to live with obesity.

“It isn’t easy getting people to face up to the severity of a health crisis such as the obesity epidemic,” says Steve Condie, executive producer at 7 Wonder. “Sometimes you need a dramatic spectacle to grab people’s attention. This is an extraordinary visual experience packed with compelling insights into how obesity impacts inside in our bodies.”

The exploration of why people are fat

also appears to be having an impact on the industry’s big hitters. A great example is J.D. Roth, who was co-creator of *The Biggest Loser* and part of the executive production team on *Extreme Weight Loss*. He is about to launch a new show on US cable channel Z Living called *The Big Fat Truth*, based on Roth’s own book of the same name.

In terms of its subject, Roth says: “It is an opportunity to do a deep dive into the reasons certain people are destined to be fat. This show gives me the chance to spread the gospel of healthy living both physically and mentally, while showing the viewer how we

get weight off people.”

Of course, the elephant in the room with all weight-loss shows is whether this is an appropriate subject for entertainment. On several occasions, the health lobby has questioned the impact of such shows, both in terms of the benefit to contestants and the messages such shows send to viewers. In the US, Claire Mysko, interim CEO of the National Eating Disorders Association, took a swipe at both *The Biggest Loser* and *My Diet is Better Than Yours* earlier this year, claiming that the former “promotes unhealthy, disordered eating practices”, while shows like the latter “encourage poor self-esteem and can be triggers to anyone predisposed to an eating disorder”.

A similar debate arose this year in Ireland, when a high-profile female radio presenter accused RTE’s successful weight-loss show *Operation Transformation* of ‘fat-shaming’. RTE rejected the charge, saying: “For the last nine years *OT* has highlighted the importance of long-term health. The series does not promise to transform people’s lives in a few weeks. [Contestants] are not fat-shamed, but rather are praised for the inspirational people they are.”

Endemol Shine’s Perrin also rejects the charge. “When you watch *The Biggest Loser*, you see that our trainers get to know the contestants on a personal basis and our producers work hard to tell each of their stories in a truly positive way,” she says. “In many cases, this is a life-saving mission and not in any way intended to humiliate any one. We’ve got thousands of former contestants around the world that will tell you that *The Biggest Loser* literally saved their lives. We’re proud of that.” **TBI**

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Servant and tax break drive Ukraine's comeback

Kvartal 95 gave the Ukrainian TV business a double boost with recent Fox and Netflix deals. These were followed by more much-needed good news, with TV tax breaks announced. Is Ukraine coming back?

Ukrainian producer Kvartal 95 garnered headlines as a rejuvenated Kiev Media Week (KMW) got underway in September. When drama series *Servant of the People* was optioned by Fox in the US – with Ron Howard and Brian Grazer prodco Imagine Entertainment attached to make an American version – it was a shot in the arm for a local industry that has suffered as the wider country has endured difficult times.

The announcement of a new tax break for TV and film was a further boost to the local industry. In TV it will apply to 50% of budgets (25% for foreign producers), making Ukraine an attractive place to produce and coproduce.

The news was warmly welcomed. The local industry has struggled in the wake of the 2014 revolution that saw Viktor Yanukovich ousted from power, and the conflict with Russia, which saw the trade in television content between the two halted or severely limited.

Victoria Yarmoshchuk organises KMW as CEO of Media Resources Management and is also executive director of the Ukrainian Motion Picture Association. She says distributors returned to the Kiev event this year, with All3Media International, Eccho Rights and Small World IFT among those in attendance.

"Distributors came back because there were no safety issues, and the business has started to recover," Yarmoshchuk says. "There are new productions and a new focus. People had got used to making shows with big budgets, but because the focus has moved away from Russia that's not possible anymore, and Ukrainian companies are looking to the West."

Small World runs a formats-pitching competition in Ukraine: Small World, Big Ideas. The winner gets a partnership deal with Content Media-backed firm, and a trip to MIPTV. Small World has picked up vehicles-themed *Drive This* (fka *Stars in Cars*) from Kiev prodco Selena Films, and entertainment format *Come to Bed*, which has been optioned by Mission Control in the US. It is actually from Israeli news anchor Lital Shemesh, but was pitched at the Small World, Big Ideas competition. The fixed-rig show follows people in their bedrooms, revealing the



funny, intimate and family moments that take place. "It could either be made as a hot and sexy show, or as a family format," says Small World boss Tim Crescenti.

The Ukrainian formats business is now well established, even if the country's TV sector has gone through a challenging period.

Scripted formats from the territory that have sold internationally include Film UA's detective series *Sniffer*, which has been taken by TF1 in France and NHK in Japan. On the unscripted side, Star Media has also had international success, with team dancing format *Go Dance!* travelling well. Kvartal 95 has created unscripted formats including *Crack Them Up!*, which has been optioned in 13 countries, and talent format *Claim to Meladze*, which has sold to China.

But the prodco's *Servant of the People* is the biggest breakout show for some time, possibly ever. Ironically, as Ukrainian authorities step up and back the local TV and film business, the comedy-drama plays on the idea of the public's mistrust of politicians. In the show, an average guy becomes president. "The genre of political comedy is new for Ukrainian TV," says Vladimir Zelenskiy, co-founder and creative producer of Kvartal 95. "Actually it's a mix of genres – it is a comedy, a satire and sometimes very topical social issues arise and then there dramatic elements. The story is very up-to-date,

and reflects the current views of people."

The Ukrainian prodco is now working on a second season for the I+I channel and a *Servant of the People* movie, while Netflix has acquired international rights to the original series.

The Fox and Netflix deals are historic, Zelenskiy says. "It was an unprecedented case that one of the US majors acquired the rights to remake a series created and produced in Ukraine," he says. "Although there already have been several films from our country on [Netflix], it is the first time that a hit Ukrainian TV series will be available to its more than 80 million viewers worldwide. We can definitely call these deals a breakthrough for the whole Ukrainian television industry."

The agreements were struck by Eccho Rights, which sells the format and finished show. "They demonstrate to the world that Ukraine can produce good content for a worldwide distribution, and they open new opportunities for Ukrainian productions," Zelenskiy says.

With those major deals in hand, and the new tax break coming soon, Zelenskiy is cautiously optimistic. "Recent trends suggest that a recovery is underway," he says. "Local content production with potential for international distribution is rising, which means that Ukraine is steadily becoming an active player in the world market." **TBI**

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THE BROADCASTER: SBS6 (Netherlands)
THE CONCEPT: A talent show in which two record labels compete to find the new great girl band or boy band

A new talent competition from Talpa (creator of *The Voice*), *The Next Boy/Girls Band*, sees two top record labels take each other on to create a new boy or girl band. Starting off with the looks and moves, aspiring stars must prove they have the right image to become the next pop phenomenon. "But that's not enough," says Maarten Meijs, managing director of Talpa Global. "In the next challenge they have to prove they can really sing, because they'll need the full package to secure a spot."

The show launched on SBS6 in the Netherlands and "has secured strong ratings in the young target demo", says Meijs. "The talent competition has secured a stellar

127.9% market share increase compared to the channel average."

Part of the show's appeal is that it encourages heavy interaction via social media, says Meijs. "By offering a strong multichannel experience, viewers are turned into fans right from the start," he adds. "The talents, bands, vloggers and hosts actively engage with their fans by uploading raw social reality content on Facebook and Instagram, allowing viewers to become part of the conversation."

"Young viewers want full access, never missing out. *The Next Boy/Girl Band* gives offers a unique multichannel experience."

One place it could well play internationally

is ITV. With Talpa now owned by the UK broadcaster there is increasing cooperation between the two, with *The Voice* transferring from BBC to ITV, and *Dance, Dance, Dance* also headed to the commercial net.

In terms of where it might sell, Meijs says: "Talent competitions with a unique twist and original content are always in demand. *The Voice* shows us a strong talent competition can be successful in any territory."

As for whether it represents a trend, he says: "*The Next Boy/Girl Band* isn't part of a trend, it's the answer to one of the biggest challenges our industry faces – namely the need for strong content that appeals to hard-to-reach young viewers."



THE SHOW: *Born To Be a Chef*
THE PRODUCER: Productions Déferlantes
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Armoza Formats
THE BROADCASTER: TVA (Canada)
THE CONCEPT: A cooking show in which two teams of kids battle it out against each other under guidance from chefs

Born To Be a Chef launched on Canadian French-language channel TVA on October 6. Distributor Armoza Formats calls it a “primetime cooking competition that will capture the whole family”.

In the show, two well-known chefs each lead a team of ten young apprentices, with both the kids and mentors competing to prove themselves. “This is one of the things that distinguishes this format from other cooking shows,” says Armoza COO Amos Neumann. “You have two levels of competition, between the kids and between their mentors.”

The show has an obligatory elimination component. Each week, says Neumann, the two chefs challenge their trainees with a range of culinary assignments. The lowest-scoring apprentices then go into a play-off challenge, with two eliminated from the competition.

The climax is a final where the best kid chefs make a five-course meal judged by five chefs.

Given the popularity of cooking shows, Neumann says there’s no question it has the potential to travel, but what about the idea of having 10-to-14-year-old kids as the stars of a primetime show? “People expect to see talented adults – but they get very drawn in emotionally when they see kids with amazing talents. TV is looking for new heroes all the time, and this is part of a positive trend towards celebrating kids’ achievements.”

In terms of the core target audience, Neumann says: “We think it will prove very compelling for families, and that’s attractive to broadcasters. With the trend towards people viewing in separate rooms or on different devices, this is a way to get everyone in the home gathered around ‘the fire’ again.”

THE SHOW: *The Married Game*
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Global Agency
THE BROADCASTER: SBS (Belgium), TV3 (Latvia)
THE CONCEPT: Dating gameshow in which a woman has to correctly identify which of her suitors is married, and which one is single

The international market is well supplied with dating formats, but *The Married Game* seeks to stand out from the crowd by having married men colluding with their wives to fool a woman into thinking they are single.

The somewhat controversial format then tasks the woman with trying to see through the subterfuge and identify which one of her five suitors is genuinely single.

If she correctly picks the single guy, the pair are whisked away on a luxury holiday. If she chooses the wrong guy, he gets to take his wife and family on the all-expenses trip.

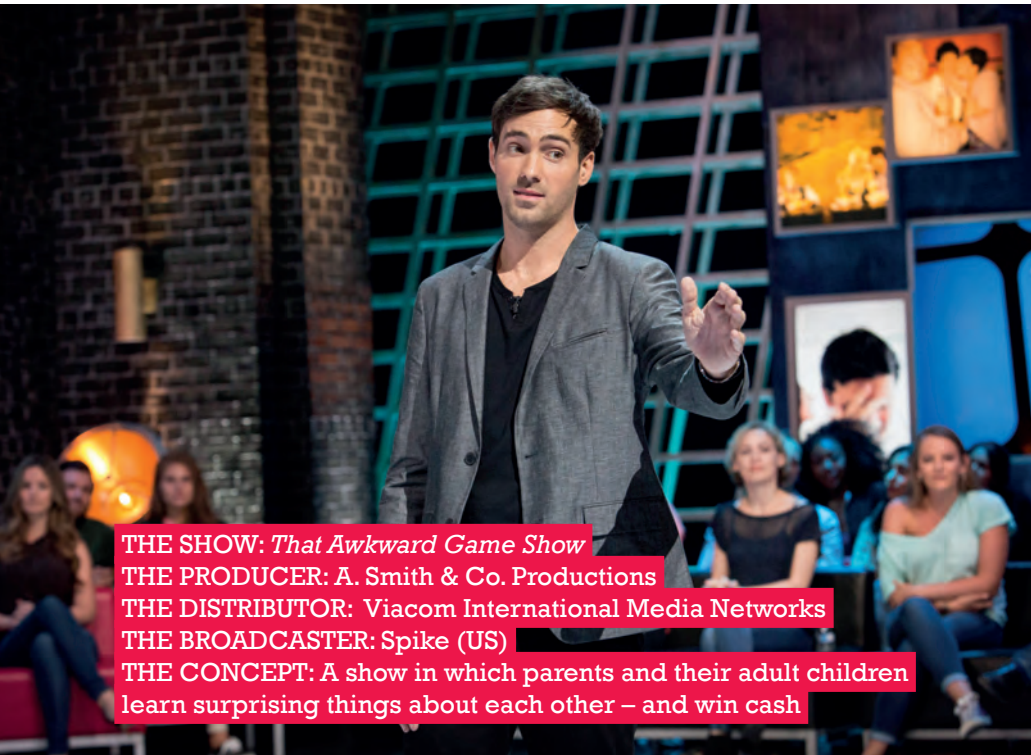
Turkey-based distributor Global Agency has a reputation for picking up paper formats, as it did with this idea, which came out of the Greek programming market.

The Istanbul-headquartered sales house has shopped it to TV3 in Latvia, where Nice, which like the broadcaster is part of the MTG family, produces the show. It has also gone into Belgium, airing on SBS.

A French-Canadian operation has also been greenlit, with Cineflix Productions making a local version for TVA.

“We picked it up a year ago and fell in love with it,” says Global Agency founder Izzet Pinto. “One girl dates five different guys in each episode and must find the single one. Four are married, and we get to see how they try to woo the girl as their wife watches. The wife can also give advice and sometimes gets jealous. There are some really dramatic moments.”





THE SHOW: *That Awkward Game Show*
THE PRODUCER: A. Smith & Co. Productions
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Viacom International Media Networks
THE BROADCASTER: Spike (US)
THE CONCEPT: A show in which parents and their adult children learn surprising things about each other – and win cash

That Awkward Game Show debuted on Spike in the US just a few days ahead of the market. With *The Lip Sync Show* leading it in, distributor Viacom International Media Networks is confident it will launch strongly. A 60-minute format that can also be

adapted for the international market as a half-hour, *That Awkward Game Show* pits parents and their adult children against each other to compete for a cash prize – all while learning shocking truths about each other. Each episode features three parent-adult-

child teams of two as they attempt to figure out the embarrassing, unexpected secrets related to their teammate.

VIMN senior VP, international programme sales Caroline Beaton says: “It’s a very funny show that taps into a couple of key social trends. One is the growing tendency for oversharing thanks to social media. The other is the blurring of lines between parents and their children in terms of behaviour. That opens interesting potential around the things parents reveal about themselves.”

The show, which is Spike’s first in-studio gameshow format, is played out in a visually dynamic set and hosted by a comedian in the US, says Beaton. “This works well because it gives it the feeling of being a hybrid – part game show, part talk show,” she adds.

Beaton has no doubt it can travel “because it’s dealing with a universal subject. Depending on the country or region we license to, we can adapt the questions to ensure there is the right degree of irreverence without it being offensive”.

Besides, she says, “buyers are interested in what Spike has to offer after the success of *The Lip Sync Show*. The show also comes with a good track record, having been made by the team behind brands like *Hell’s Kitchen* and *American Ninja Warrior*”.

THE SHOW: *Locked*
THE PRODUCER: Endemol Shine
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Endemol Shine International
THE BROADCASTER: Reshet (Israel)
THE CONCEPT: A physical gameshow in which contestants win prizes if they can escape from a concentric circle maze

Locked is a physical game show in which two contestants work together to navigate their way through a huge maze of five concentric circles, each larger than the last, and each containing an increasing number of locked doors. Aired first on Endemol-backed broadcaster Reshet in Israel, it has been a big ratings success, says Lisa Perrin, CEO, creative networks, Endemol Shine Group. “There were ten episodes and it averaged 35.7% share in what was a difficult summer slot.”

Each circle in *Locked* represents the next round in the game, and there are 45 locked doors in total across the five rounds. Starting at

the centre of the maze, contestants must unlock doors with their keys, but each key can only be used once. Run out of keys, and the players are trapped, and it’s game over. Different doors offer money, extra keys and access to the next circle. “Contestants always go in as pairs,” says Perrin, “so it creates an emotional attachment and different opinions.”

The show was produced in the Netherlands, with Israeli contestants flown in. “We are setting it up as a hub show,” says Perrin. “We have a lot of experience with hubs, which allow broadcasters to get a big, impressive set and show without having to make a huge investment in the format.”

According to Perrin, the *Locked* format is very scalable – so it can be aired in either primetime or access primetime. “I think successful gameshow formats need that versatility,” she says.

In terms of its potential, she adds: “I think it can go a long way. I did a tour of all our operational companies recently and they felt the gameshow is coming back.”



THE SHOW: *The New Wife*
THE PRODUCER: Pulse
THE DISTRIBUTOR: A+E Networks
THE BROADCASTER: Channel 5 (UK)
THE CONCEPT: A single parent moves into their ex-partner's new household to contrast then improve co-parenting

Another show that reflects the reality of 21st century family life, *The New Wife* explores the increasingly common situation where a couple with children splits up and one of them then remarries. As a result, there are suddenly three people involved in the parenting of the children – across two households.

In each episode, one single parent moves in with his or her ex-partner and the person the partner left them for. They then explore how different parenting styles work under one roof, with the ultimate goal of helping the children. It is billed as a show where “good parenting and failed marriages collide”.

A+E Networks head of formats, international programming and production Hayley Babcock says this is different from formats like *Wife Swap* “because it’s dealing with real people in a real situation. When the cameras have gone, all of these people will still be concerned with the



well-being of the children”.

Although co-parenting can be a difficult dynamic that often causes tension between those involved (who will do the school pick up, how much Coca-Cola can they drink), Babcock stresses that the show is about resolution. “It’s about how to co-parent well,” she says. “The DNA of this show is to bring happiness to those involved. It is not designed to be salacious in any

way. We’re not putting TNT in a room and then watching what happens. This is a high-speed trajectory towards a real help guide.”

This fixing philosophy, Babcock believes, is very much the zeitgeist in TV at the moment and is something she believes will appeal to buyers around the world. “Show me a territory where people don’t have to deal with the fallout from divorce.”



THE SHOW: *Common Sense*
THE PRODUCER: Studio Lambert
THE DISTRIBUTOR: All3Media International
THE BROADCASTER: BBC Two (UK)
THE CONCEPT: Fast-turnaround comedy format in which ordinary people discuss the week’s news and events

Common Sense is a fast-turnaround comedy format in which ordinary people discuss the week’s news and events. If that sounds like a simple idea, then keep in mind it’s being made by Studio Lambert, the hit factory behind *Gogglebox*. “It’s an unscripted comedy that

is set up as though we are eavesdropping on ordinary people’s conversations,” says Studio Lambert founder Stephen Lambert.

“It has a very natural feel to it, which plays into the current emphasis in the television business on authenticity.”

In a nutshell, Studio Lambert films people talking about news stories and cultural trends in their natural surroundings – such as pubs, markets and workplaces. It then edits the funniest sequences together into a half-hour show, exploring the way their opinions and interpretations of what a story means often diverge hilariously from reality. “It’s different from *Gogglebox* in that it is not in front of a TV,” says Lambert. “But it has the same reliance on topicality and skilful editing.”

Authenticity, for Lambert, means avoiding TV wannabes. “The casting for this was critical,” he says. “We sought out people who don’t have any ambition to be on TV, but who are interesting characters. We then persuaded them to get involved.”

In terms of international potential, Lambert says: “*Gogglebox* convinced us that *Common Sense* can work. I didn’t think *Gogglebox* would travel, but it’s now in 32 countries, which shows the stories and skills to make this kind of show exist in a lot of countries.”

THE SHOW: *All Against 1*
THE PRODUCER: Nordisk Film TV
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Zodiak Rights
THE BROADCASTER: DR1 (Denmark)
THE CONCEPT: A primetime studio entertainment show, which pits one contestant against the wisdom of the crowd

All Against 1 is a primetime entertainment format with a core interactive component. It revolves around the basic question – can one smart studio contestant beat the entire nation? Originally produced by Nordisk Film TV for Denmark’s DR1, it performed well in its home market, securing a 44% share for its first season. It also developed a lot of digital engagement.

During the show, the contestant and the viewers are all asked the same questions, based on the outcome of a variety of outlandish experiments, ranging from everyday science to crazy sports dares or spectacular stunts. The show contestant answers alone, while the average of the viewers’ responses via a companion app determines the nation’s collective answer. Whoever’s answer is the closest banks the money at stake, with the



show progressing through to a jackpot prize. At the end, either the contestant takes home the money, or a lucky viewer, picked at random among the app players, wins.

Explaining the show’s appeal, Zodiak Rights VP entertainment Andrew Sime says: “It’s a combination of the fact that it is live and that the interactivity is so engaging. There were some great statistics from the Danish version. For example, the number of people playing the app

doubled over the course of the series. People like the idea that they were helping their team win, and that they might win a prize.”

In addition, says Sime, the show is “very visual, and very viral. Some of the stunts are perfect for use as online clips”.

As for setting the show up, Sime says: “We have the infrastructure in place. We have a plug-and-play solution, which makes it straightforward to localise for different markets.”



THE SHOW: *Welcome to the Wild (Amazon)*
THE PRODUCER: Abot Hameiri Productions
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Keshet International
THE BROADCASTER: Keshet Israel
THE CONCEPT: Three teams of six race across a tough wilderness terrain facing planned challenges along the way

Survival and adventure shows are still in demand, says Keren Shahar, COO and president of distribution at Keshet International. “Broadcasters need tent-pole series to stand out, and adventure shows can do that job very well.”

KI’s contribution to the genre is *Welcome to*

the Wild, a new format that is currently airing on Keshet in Israel. “In season one, the show sees three teams of six involved in a race through the Amazon jungle,” says Shahar. “Along the way they have to reach certain destinations and perform challenges. There is an elimination element to

the game, and if a team is reduced down to two members, it gets absorbed into the other teams.”

The team ethic is an important part of the format, says Shahar, “because you can’t cross the jungle on your own. There are some challenges between teams, but this is not a show about conniving to gain an advantage. Teamwork is part of its DNA.”

Although there are plenty of other shows in the genre, Shahar says KI’s is distinctive because it offers a balance of drama, fierce competition and humour. “It is like a cross between *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*,” she says. “It is not a static show, which heightens the drama. At the same time, contestants are introduced to local tribal cultures and wildlife, which adds to the mystery and exoticism. All of the challenges throughout the show are inspired by their surroundings.”

The emphasis is on regular people, not extreme fitness fanatics. The advantage of this is that “it gives the show a fish-out-of-water dynamic,” says Shahar, adding: “It’s humorous.”

Season one is in the Amazon, but the location will change for every season. “We are just planning season two for Israel,” says Shahar.



THE SHOW: *The Fashion Hero*
THE PRODUCER: Beauty World Search
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Beauty World Search / Looking Glass International
THE CONCEPT: Reality fashion competition that focuses on real people and looks beyond typical fashion industry ideas of beauty and body image

The world of TV is well stocked with fashion series and formats, but where *The Fashion Hero* is different is it looks beyond the usual supermodel faces and figures on show.

"After over 20 years in the fashion and beauty industries, I've learned what was considered the norm, and amongst certain wonderful aspects of these industries, I felt there was something missing," says Caroline Bernier of Beauty World Search, which produces the show.

"I wanted to bring people of all shapes, heights and ethnicity from across the globe in the spotlight who may not have been noticed before and give them a chance to follow their dreams. From rejected to respected, our goal is to challenge fashion while changing lives."

The show is presented by Brooke Hogan, daughter of famous wrestler Hulk Hogan. Would-be models from around the world compete against each other to be the face of a major marketing campaign. They are judged by a panel of fashion designers: Anna Scholz from London, Christopher Bates from Milan, and Johana Hernandez and Ximena Valero from LA.

They are mentored throughout the process by a selection of health and beauty experts and industry faces, including Rico Genest, the Canadian artist also known as Zombie Boy because of the corpse tattoos that cover his entire body.

The initial batch of contestants numbered 40, from 21 countries. The judges then select the most promising and the contestants go through a series of model challenges such as extreme photo shoots, and take part in a Fashion Week style event.

The designers then ultimately choose their 'Fashion Hero', and that model becomes the face of an international advertising campaign promoting their brand.

Having picked up the international rights, distributor Looking Glass International is selling the show and will be pushing the format and 8x60mins finished show at MIPCOM.

The reality competition series sits alongside the worldwide campaign of the same name, which has set out to change perceptions of beauty and body image.

"This is an international movement born in the digital world, and will appeal to many demographics because the participants are normal everyday people that can relate to our message," Bernier says.

"In comparison to other fashion TV shows, this one is accessible to all. It will appeal to people that are passionate about fashion and those who dream of becoming a model but until now felt that goal was impossible because of unrealistic industry standards.

"Parents and a wider audience will also love the entertainment and competitive nature of this reality show."

Brooke Hogan has herself struggled with body image and "not fitting the perfect image of beauty," Bernier adds, making her an ideal host.

"While traditionally programmes in the fashion genre have been broadcast on lifestyle channels, we believe *The Fashion Hero* is different, as there is potential for the programme to appeal to a broader co-viewing audience on general entertainment channels."

THE SHOW: *This Time Next Year*
THE PRODUCERS: Twofour
THE DISTRIBUTOR: Twofour Rights
THE BROADCASTER: ITV (UK)
THE CONCEPT: A primetime studio entertainment series showcasing people's real-life transformations in one year

This Time Next Year is an intriguing concept that focuses on what people have managed to achieve in a year. Contributors leave through the 'this time' door one moment and reappear the next through the 'next year' door. What is a moment for the studio audience is a year in the life of the contributor, who has just completed some kind of life-changing challenge.

Anthony Appell, director of rights at Twofour, calls *This Time Next Year* "a unique show because it focuses on the reveals of people who have pledged to change their lives. The challenges range from becoming a professional bodybuilder, to losing half of their body weight, to having a baby or even finding love after a very long time without it. It's incredibly emotional."

Recently launched in the UK on ITV, the show is a 60-minute format hosted by Davina McCall (*Million Pound Drop*). According to Appell, it picked up interest internationally even before it aired in the UK. "We believe *This Time Next Year* is the fastest selling new format of the year, and it is already in production in nine territories," he says. "Following the UK transmission we are gearing up for more territories to come on board. This proves how a feelgood transformation format has a truly global appeal."

Appell believes the show is benefiting from a trend towards feelgood and self-improvement shows. "We believe audiences no longer want to see people fail on TV or make fools of themselves," he says. "Instead, heart-warming feelgood TV is becoming more popular. It also fits the self-improvement trend. People wanting to improve their lives is at the heart of this format."



LAST WORD



AMOS NEUMANN

Playing it forward - the future of gameshows

It's been a tough period for gameshows until recently. A lot of broadcasters have been steering away from them in an attempt to refresh their content, bringing viewers back to the screens with even crazier, more revealing and extreme content – because as the hotshot producer Quinn in Lifetime's drama *UnReal* so rightly put it: "We have an obligation to our viewers; we have to escalate the tension, up the stakes, complicate the story."

This has been the case for TV shows across all genres, but is it the viewers who demand these changes, or is it the industry that demands it on their behalf? The danger in upping the stakes is losing the beauty of the show and the reason it succeeded in the first place. This is the case with the turn away from gameshows. Sometimes if the premise works, you can make it sleeker, faster, and more beautiful – but you can't forget the basics.

Why do gameshows work in the first place? To put it simply, they're simple: they are the most straightforward form of entertainment there is. We get games. We play them when

alone at home, and in social gatherings with friends. They inherently have all the necessary components for a good TV show – they're fun, revolve around moments of suspense and give broadcasters long-running, shiny-floor content at a low cost.

If this is the case, why did we turn away from them? And why do we now see them back in the spotlight? Well, along with changes in technology, viewing habits and the industry in general, there has been a swing away from the 'old'. This left some gameshows feeling dated, and they ended up with a bit of a bad rep. However, they are still the clearest form of family-viewing programming, and since a broadcaster's dream scenario is gathering the family around the same TV show, they stuck around in this unattractive form.

As with all content, however, there are cycles, and it's looking like gameshows are on their way back to the top, returning with a vengeance because of two opposing trends.

The first views gameshows as an unflinching lifeline with proven results – broadcasters are therefore going retro and capitalising on nostalgia, using the same gameplay as

the gameshows of yesteryear, but with new packaging. The reason for this is partly to do with fear, guarding the fort from the dangers of new platforms, binge viewing and catch-up TV. The nostalgia factor targets the viewers who remember the gameshows from the first time, strengthening the channel's loyal audience base, who are less likely to leave for newer pastures.

The second is what I call the 'amaze me' trend – trying to wow people with a gigantic studio, a flashy set, incredible feats of skill and so on. This trend lends itself more to new technologies, with the easiest and clearest way of integrating technology with TV content being through gameshows. It is clear that the 'amaze me' shows are aimed more at bringing back younger viewers. It is these viewers that we feel we need to constantly surprise and one-up on what they've seen previously, leaning to more extreme solutions as broadcasters all try to stand out from the ever-more-segmented crowd.

With all this posturing and trying to impress, whether with nostalgia or with never-been-done-before ideas, we are losing our way. We don't need to go back to exactly what worked before, nor do we need to change everything: we should be focusing on providing our viewers with entertainment that they will enjoy, because they don't care if it's on-trend, interactive or integrated. It is the industry, and the business of having to prove that your idea is most likely to succeed, that draws attention to these elements. The viewers are just looking to watch enjoyable content.

Gameshows won't be disappearing, so rather than losing our way in trying to reinvent the wheel in this genre – or trying to bring back the wooden, many-spoked wheel – let's focus on improving the elements for the best results. Because it's all about creating fun, entertaining and engaging gameshows. **TBI**

Gameshows are on their way back to the top with a vengeance because of two opposing trends: going retro and capitalising on nostalgia, and what I call the 'amaze me' trend – trying to wow people with a gigantic studio, a flashy set and incredible feats of skill

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