

## ESPN deal with Outdoor Channel

### *Exclusive agreement for IndyCar and X Games*

ESPN and Asia-based TV network, Outdoor Channel, have sealed an exclusive pan-regional agreement for IndyCar Series and two X Games franchises – X Games Austin and X Games Aspen – in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, India, Mongolia, South Korea and Taiwan, among other markets.

The multi-year agreement involves joint promotion and marketing across Southeast Asia. While exclusive regionally, deal terms allow for specific individual licensing agreements to be negotiated on a country-by-country basis.

The deal, which will be announced this week, could be the first of other linear channel collaborations with Outdoor Channel as ESPN moves further into its post-ESPN Star Sports (ESS) era in Asia.

Gregg Creevey, the managing director of Outdoor Channel operator Multi Channels Asia's (MCA), said both properties were hugely successful in the U.S. and presented "enormous potential for growth in the Asia-Pacific region".

MCA's content agreement with ESPN is part of Outdoor Channel's 2014 push into more mainstream positioning with, among other shows, Ironman Asia Pacific championships, *Australasian Safari*, *World Heli Challenge*, *Wild Spirits* and the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championships.

Since the end of the ESPN Star Sports joint venture in 2012, ESPN operated no ESPN-branded linear television channels in Asia. The company's focus has been digital platforms, including ESPNFC and ESPNcricinfo.

Last year, ESPN Digital Media said it logged almost 145 million views of ESPN videos in Asia Pacific, an 80% increase on the previous year. Asia Pacific traffic was up 18% last year.

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**Who was at... *ContentAsia 8th birthday party in Singapore on 6 March***



Ryan Shiotani, BBC Worldwide Asia; Ling-Sze Gan, A+E Networks Asia; Greg Ho, Turner International Asia Pacific



Donovan Mohlman, AMC/Sundance Channel Global; Jonas Engwall, RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network



Nicole Sinclair, CBS Studios Int'l; Matthew Ashcroft, Jeeyoung Lee, Shine Int'l; Kristan Rivers, Paramount Digital Entertainment Asia Pacific



Vanessa Ching, Snell Group; Theresa Ong, Discovery; Andrea Peterson, The Walt Disney Company (SEA); Laura Wendt, SingTel



Ripa Rashid, The iClif Leadership & Governance Centre; Darby Sanchez, GlobeCast Asia; Michelle Guthrie, Google Asia Pacific



Soo Hui Lee, StarHub; Hui Keng Ang, Sony Pictures Television (SPT) Networks, Asia



Jessy Tse, NBC Universal International TV Distribution Singapore; Karen Lai, Magdalene Ew, HBO Asia



Steve Burton, HBO Asia; Avi Himatsinghani, Rewind Networks



Lee Lih Fen, Disney; Colin Brown, Lucasfilm Animation; Carol Sun, Disney; Carolyn So, Rewind Networks



Yoko Takashima, Allison Hashiba, Nippon TV Japan; Hani Sallim, GlobeCast Asia; Farah Rahman, Discovery Networks Asia Pacific



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## HBO Go launches in the Philippines

*Streaming service signs exclusive deal with SkyCable*

HBO Asia's HBO Go broadband streaming service rolls out in the Philippines on 10 March in an exclusive deal with major pay-TV provider SkyCable. This is HBO Go's second market in Asia after Hong Kong, which launched last year.

The HBO Go platform offers more than 1,000 hours of uncut, award-winning HBO and Cinemax original series on multiple



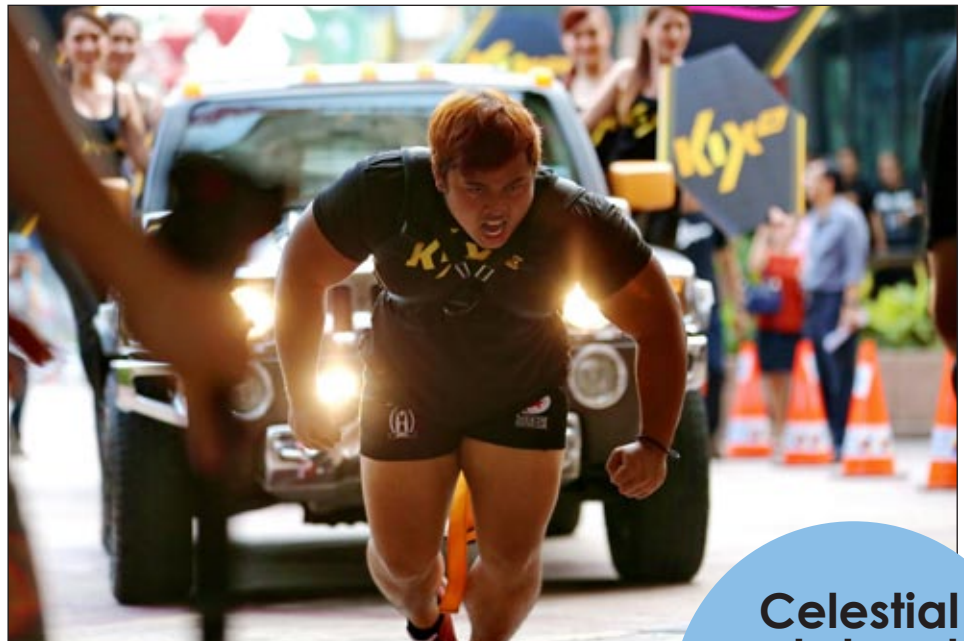
Girls

devices 12 hours after the U.S. premiere and before they air on HBO channels in the region.

Titles include *Game of Thrones*, *True Detective*, *Girls*, *Veep* and *Strike Back*.

The service also offers unlimited access to HBO's library of movies, concerts, documentaries and series, including *Sex and the City* and *The Sopranos*, along with exclusive HBO Go behind-the-scenes content from productions such as *Boardwalk Empire*, *True Blood* and *Banshee*.

HBO Asia chief executive, Jonathan Spink, says the streaming service helps to combat piracy and gives subscribers the chance to watch newest episodes earlier than on the linear channel.



Malaysian strongman Zarul "Baby Ox" Alfiyan

Malaysian pay-TV platform Astro and Asian channels operator Celestial Tiger Entertainment (CTE) kicked off a month-long search for Malaysia's toughest talent this month.

The "Are You Tough Enough?" campaign launched with Malaysian strongman Zarul "Baby Ox" Alfiyan pulling 5,000kg – two Hummers packed with Kix HD's "Tough Troopers" girls – through city streets.

The hunt for the country's 10 toughest people is part of action channel Kix HD's strategy to own the 'tough' space.

On-air, this involves mixed martial arts properties such as BAMMA, which CTE acquired first and exclusive, and *Belator 360*. The action schedule also features reality shows such as *The Great Escape*, as well as series such as *The Incredible*

*Mr Goodwin* with escape artist Jonathan Goodwin; new action adventure series *SAF3* about an elite rescue force; and *Hero*, with Takeshi Kaneshiro in a tale of brothers who flee south to escape drought.

Kix's team of Tough Troopers will front the talent search across the Klang Valley. Contestants will compete in a series of challenges, both physical and mental. The 10 finalists will compete for the title of Malaysia's Toughest and a prize of RM30,000/US\$9,000.

The finale – billed as "the ultimate showdown of toughness" – takes place on 26 April in Kuala Lumpur.

**Celestial gets tough**  
**Strongman stunt kicks off Malaysia search**



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FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

There's a lot the industry is holding its breath about this year – not least the release (or not) of return path data and how the whole information process is going to be managed (or not).

We hear some pretty interesting viewer usage habits are emerging, as platforms in Asia start to get their big data ducks in a row. Word on the street is that delegates at MPA's Asia Pacific Pay-TV Operators Summit (APOS) in Bali next month will be given sneak peaks at some of the innovation and strategies around data and how platforms are thinking about an environment that gives them an unprecedented ability to hyper-target.

If this leap in transparency isn't good news for every channel, it has to be a great leap forward for a multichannel industry that is hamstrung in many markets in Asia by either the absence of a common currency or by the way available research is managed.

Channel bosses, who love the idea of a robust common currency accessible to all, say this has the potential to level the playing field like little else in the history of pay-TV in the region. After all, what's not to love about a system that shows what's working and offers the ability quickly to change the things that aren't.

The big question is how pay-TV platforms in Asia will choose to release the data – and to whom. The best-case scenario is that they make it available to content partners and everyone works together to build a better business. The worst case is that the opportunity is ignored and consumers do what they're doing now – find the content they want wherever it is, legal or not.



**CinemaWorld boosts line up with Zodiac slate**  
*Pay-TV/VOD focus on French prime-time drama*



*Echoes from the Dead*

Zodiak Rights has sold pan-Asia pay-TV and VOD rights for seven titles to Singapore-based Asian movie outfit CinemaWorld.

The shows are from Zodiak production companies Yellow Bird, GTV and Touchpaper Television.

The titles include three-part crime series, *Murderland*, a story told through the eyes of three central characters, and 90-minute thriller *Echoes from the Dead*, based on the book by Swedish author

Johan Theorin, as well as a selection of French prime-time dramas produced by GTV. The French titles include 90-minute drama, *Jury Duty*, about a murderer called up for jury duty in a trial in which he is the real criminal; two-part mini series *Agatha's Double*; *Deadly Hitch*, a 90-minute drama about a journalist covering the death of a child in which he is himself involved; *Who killed Little Red Riding Hood*, a four-part murder mystery; and two-part thriller *Troubled Waters*.

**Soriano to star in GMA's new soap**  
*Eye on local move to limit foreign dramas in prime time*

Philippines' broadcaster GMA has signed up award-winning local actress, Maricel Soriano, to star in new prime-time soap opera, *Ang Dalawang Mrs. Real (The Closer Mistress)*.

Soriano plays Divina Cortez-Real opposite Dingdong Dantes and Lovi Poe. The series is directed by Andoy Ranay.

*Ang Dalawang Mrs. Real* is scheduled to air in May this year on GMA's domestic and international services.

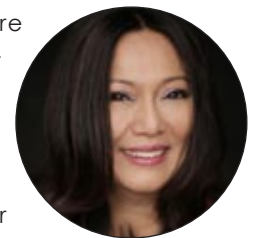
Running alongside ever-powerful local drama production is a move to bar foreign dramas from local prime time.

The Manila Standard quoted congressman Lita Atienza this month as saying that

foreign dramas were unnecessary competition for local TV productions.

"We should help our local TV networks and make sure their actors have work," the paper said, also quoting Atienza as saying that the proliferation of shows from neighbouring countries such as Korea, Japan and Taiwan "lessens the time available for our Philippine-produced shows".

Atienza is also behind the bill that gives the film industry tax breaks.



Maricel Soriano



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## NHK wracked by Momii controversy

Japan's usually staid public broadcaster NHK is in the midst of a real-life headline-grabbing drama as its controversial new boss, Katsuto Momii, implements systems that, among other things, allow him to fire executive directors whenever he wants, and fends off growing calls for his resignation.

The latest reports out of Tokyo have Momii blaming the media for asking the questions that led to his answers.

Momii's reported insistence that directors write undated resignation letters follows an outcry over his defence of "comfort women" during World War II.

Momii, an appointee of conservative prime minister Shinzo Abe, said sex slavery was widely used in times of war and that Japan should not be judged by today's morality. He criticised South Korea's call for compensation, but later conceded that this was his personal opinion.

Momii stirred controversy from his first days in office in January this year with, among other things, his view that NHK should adhere to the government's line on territorial disputes.

NHK's non-partisan position is enshrined in Japan's Broadcast Law, and the public broadcaster usually prides itself on its impartiality. Observers say Momii's approach undermines this reputation.

"Any head of a news organisation should be aware of the detrimental consequences of muzzling its own staff members," the Asahi Shimbun said in an editorial.

"But this is apparently not the case with Katsuto Momii... We suspect Momii has little understanding of the ABCs of journalism," the paper added, saying too that Momii's insistence on unsigned resignation letters was "tantamount to declaring his dictatorial authority over the public broadcaster and warning the directors that should they ever disagree with or stand up to him, he would dismiss them. This is the last thing the head of any news organisation should ever do".



Tim Faulkner

**True tracks  
Tasmanian  
Devil Tim**  
*New series to air  
on in-house factual  
channel*

Thai pay-TV platform TrueVisions has picked up Australian wildlife expert Tim Faulkner's latest series, *The Wild Life of Tim Faulkner*.

Faulkner, best known for animal series *Bondi Vet*, is the operations manager at the Australian Reptile Park and has led the battle to save the Tasmanian Devil from extinction. The 10-part half-hour series will premiere on TrueVisions' in-house

True Explore channel in mid-2014.

*The Wild Life of Tim Faulkner* is produced by Australia's Ziggy Entertainment (a WFTN subsidiary) and distributed by Fred Media.

Series two is in production, and is scheduled for an October 2014 release.

## Khatri wins India's first CEO's Got Talent FremantleMedia initiative benefits Genesis Foundation

The chief executive of India's Kaytek Computer Services, Atul Khatri, has won the first edition of FremantleMedia India's CEO's *Got Talent* competition.

Khatri beat 11 other contestants with his comedy act. In second place was Rankaj Chaturvedi, executive director and chief executive of Rich Graviss Products, followed by David Fischer, chairman of The Xlantic Group.

Contest judges included director Mahesh Bhatt and Colors chief executive Raj Nayak.

The CEO talent hunt airs on Indian business channel CNBC TV18 on 22 and 23 March.

The gala finale included an auction with the proceeds going to Genesis Foundation, which supports critically ill children.



Atul Khatri



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**Jain, Sharma beef up Zee sales team**

Zee Entertainment enterprises has brought in veteran media execs Mona Jain as executive vice president, cluster head, and Rahul Sharma as senior vice president/national sales head.

**Jabiru-2 countdown**

Australian satellite company NewSat is on track with the Jabiru-1 satellite build and has started the countdown to the launch of Jabiru-2's hosted payload on Malaysian satellite operator Measat's Measat-3b satellite, in May. NewSat CTO, David Ball, says Jabiru-1 – another build with Measat – has "reached the level of design maturity required for a thorough analysis of all subsystems before the assembly, integration and test of the complete satellite can take place". With Jabiru-1's critical design review under way, the next step is the preliminary mission analysis review in second half 2014.

**AMC/Sundance ups Gendler, Connolly**

AMC/Sundance Channel Global has promoted Gail Gendler to VP of acquisitions and Patrick Connolly to VP of programming and scheduling. Both con-



Gail Gendler



Patrick Connolly

tinue to report to Harold Gronenthal, EVP, programming and operations. Gendler joined AMC Networks (formerly Rainbow Media) in 2000 and oversees acquisitions for Sundance Channel Global and We tv Asia. Connolly oversees scheduling, promotions and on-air creative for linear/VOD for the two channels.

**Spuul realigns for global expansion Ramchandani shifts to Singapore to head content**

Indian streaming service Spuul is reworking its team, bringing in Rajiv Vaidya as chief executive for India and shifting former India CEO, Prakash Ramchandani, to the platform's Singapore headquarters as chief content officer.

Vaidya joins Spuul from Hughes Networks in the U.S., where he headed sales and marketing for the Americas and Asia Pacific. He has shifted to India to take up the new role, which will focus on brand and advertising sales.

Ramchandani's global content role includes international marketing.

Spuul co-founder and global chief executive, Subin Sugajah, said the restructure would allow the platform to "take the business to its next level of en-

agement within this fast-evolving ecosystem. This will include expanding to new markets, generating access to the ballooning digital ad spends and building mutually beneficial partnerships."



Prakash Ramchandani

Spuul offers a mix of free streaming and pay-per-view specials (US\$0.99 each) as well as a premium monthly subscription service for US\$4.99 a month.

The platform's current premium titles include *One by Two*, *Miss Lovely* and *Singh Saab The Great*. Free movies include *Zila Ahaziabad*, thriller *John Day* and *Kahaani*, among others.

**Docs execs head for China Asia's role in global docs highlighted at ASD 2014**

More than 450 factual execs head for China later this month for the four-day annual Asian Side of the Doc fest (18-21 March).

This year's show opens with a focus on Asia's involvement in global co-productions, and will be followed by a series of pitch sessions over the four days.

A keynote address will be delivered by Vikram Channa, who has been with Discovery Networks for almost two decades. Channa will talk about the state of the Asian documentary sector, how best to reach audiences across borders and what creative collaborations may look like in the future.

A series of case studies looks at Asia-to-Asia co-productions, and the solutions being explored and found between broadcasters and producers within Asia.

Funding models take centre stage on 21 March in a panel led by U.S. executive producer Peter Hamilton, who will analyse the budget required for major successes such as *Flight of the Butterflies*. The discus-

sion will look at major opportunities, trends and pitfalls on the road to the theatrical release of factual content.

One of the practical workshops covers the best ways of developing a project for the international market. This conversation will be led by documentary producer Bjoern Jensen, who will talk about the importance of telling and selling stories, titles and trailers.

Other topics on the agenda include a session with the World Congress of Science and Factual Producers; an in-depth focus on mainland China's science and education channel, CCTV-10, and its documentary production strategy; a look at how producers are adapting for new platforms and technologies; and best ways of working with distributors and sales agents.

The series of special screenings include *I Am Here* by Fan Lixin. The 90-minute film tracks the young entrants of Chinese talent show *Super Boys*, in the summer of 2013, and shows how they cope with their lives as sudden superstars.

# interview W CREATIVE

Chee Nien Lau  
18g Pictures, Singapore

**How did you get into producing?** "I got into producing by chance. I was directing for TV when a former classmate called me to be part of his first feature-length project. When the producer of the project had to relinquish his role, I stepped in to become the producer instead."

**Was there a role model or famous producer that inspired you?** "When most people watch movies, they talk about the directors or the stars. Nobody paid much attention to producers or knew much about what producers did. I have to admit I was like that as a moviegoer."

**What's your biggest learning from the films you have produced?** "On a personal level, the biggest thing producing has taught me is to relax and to take it easy. Problems don't get solved when one spends all the time stressed out. And being a producer means trying to find solutions to problems or obstacles most of the time. It also means trying to come up with ideas to get the project realised."

**What do you think the biggest challenges of being a film producer in Singapore are?** "From a personal point of view, a huge challenge is finding money and resources once a project is decided on."

**Does the performance of your previous films affect funding for new projects?** "Yes. Based on past films that we've produced, people will either approach us or avoid us."

**What obstacles do you think a Singapore film has to overcome on its journey to regional/international commercial screens?** "I think the most important thing for anyone embarking on a film in

**“The biggest thing producing has taught me is to relax and take it easy. Problems don't get solved when one spends all the time stressed out...”**



Singapore is to know who he or she is making that film for. There's always talk that the Singapore market is too small to support the local industry, and that's true to a large extent. The thing is that Hollywood has pretty much dominated the cinematic scene around the world, so when one talks about making a film that will enjoy regional or international success, one is really talking about that small percentage that manages to find success in that foreign territory that may also be dominated by Hollywood or that territory's own homegrown products. So apart from creative challenges, there will also be territorial and logistic challenges to overcome. The creative challenge is of course to create a project that contains a strong universal theme."

**What do you aim to achieve with the films you produce?** "Just to make people laugh, cry and enjoy."

**What would you most like to see happen in Singapore to boost the creative/production industry?** "More investment in talent, research and education. Just as one wants to build any industry that lasts, you'll want to make sure the infrastructure is solid."

**Tell us about your upcoming film, *Rubbers*?**

"*Rubbers* is a sex comedy that comprises three stories that involve condoms in the pursuit of love, desire and reconciliation. In the segment *Balloons*, Ah Niu recalls how he tricked his wife into blowing lots of condoms by telling her they were balloons; In *The Plumber*, Baoling decides to seduce a plumber by hiding lots of condoms around her house; and in *Nightmare*, Adam—who dislikes wearing condoms—gets an unusual punishment. The three stories are written and directed by Han Yew Kwang, and star some of Singapore's brightest talents, including Marcus Chin, Alaric Tay, Chua En-lai, Julian Hee, Oon Shu An, Catherine Sng and Golden Horse Award winning actress Yeo Yann Yann. It's also a low-budget effort like all our past films. The only difference being that we have higher aspirations for it, and have put in a lot more effort into getting it made. We're also trying to finance part of the film via crowd funding for the first time on Indiegogo (<http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/rubbers>).

\* Chee Nien Lau will be speaking at this year's Creative Content Production Conference, which runs in Singapore from 18-19 June alongside BroadcastAsia and CommunicAsia.

ContentAsia's regular section, ContentAsia Formats, is dedicated to formats and format development in Asia, including new seasons, series and trends and what these mean to channels, producers and the overall formats industry in the region.

*The Band*

New local reality show, *The Band*, premieres on Malaysian pay-TV channels Astro Ria and Astro Mustika HD on 31 March.

*The Band* is a competition format created by Malaysian entertainment group Sedania's founder and group CEO, Azrin Mohd Noor, who has plans to format the show internationally. The series is produced by Sedania subsidiary I Like Entertainment.

Auditions for the 40-episode talent hunt for six band members kicked off across Malaysia in September 2013 and ran to January this year.

The 31 March premiere features snippets of the auditions and an introduction to the competition's format. From 4 April, the series will air three times a week (Fridays at 9pm and Saturdays and Sundays at 10pm).

Friday nights feature *Whazzup The Band* rehearsals. Saturdays episodes, *Konsert The Band*, are the format's competition rounds, while *X The Band* episodes on Sundays are the elimination rounds.

Iris Chia, *The Band* producer and chief executive officer of I Like Entertainment, says, "Instead of a group of people choosing whom they want to be with in their band, we let 'The Agents' (the judges) decide". Chia says the aim is to create international superstars.

Show creator Mohd Noor's format credentials include local versions of *Wheel of Fortune* and *Family Feud* as well as



Datuk Azrin Mohd Noor

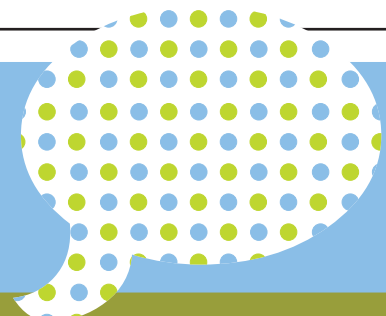
producing *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* for Malaysia. Chia has more than 15 years in production, and has been involved in *Fear Factor*, *Deal and No Deal*, among other reality shows and TV dramas, live reality shows, and awards show for the Malaysian market.

Chia says the biggest challenge is to create a totally new format. "We try to instill a spirit of creativity in everyone involved," she says, adding: "I don't just want to create a show; I want at the same time to challenge the team to think outside of the box. These people have never created something like this, something so different and new from scratch. I hope

that by the end of production, they will feel and think along the same lines I do. I want to empower them and show them that the next level is totally possible. So my biggest challenge to bring everyone's creativity to the next level."

At the conclusion of the show, the six winners will be signed under Astro and nurtured to be international music stars.

The programme is hosted by local celebrity Awal Ashaari. Judges are Aznil Nawawi, Syafinaz Selamat and Yusry Kru. *The Band*'s music and vocal instructor is Damien Mikhail Seet, dance instructor is Alam Wakaka and image consultant is Wahyu Rahman.



# PLATFORM *iWant* TV



In a regular section looking at up-and-coming platforms in Asia, *Malena Amzah* speaks to ABS-CBN's Ralph Menorca, head of iWant TV, digital head for access.

**What is iWant TV?** iWant TV launched in December 2010 as an online video service offering content from ABS-CBN, SkyCable, ABS-CBNmobile and other subsidiaries. Content is streamed on demand and live. SkyCable subscribers have access to channel content. ABS-CBNmobile subscribers have access to content produced exclusively for mobile. The service is geo-blocked for the Philippines.

**What are you hoping to achieve?** "It is all about giving Filipinos the freedom to choose the way they want to enjoy content. Our goal is to provide the best online viewing experience by offering the best lineup of shows, and by providing access in the platforms most relevant to them. We hope that in the near future, iWant TV will become top-of-mind as the primary venue for Filipinos to watch their favourite shows, in the same way as traditional TV is today."

**Available on...** Desktops, smartphones and tablets. The iWant TV Mobile App launched in Google Play Store and Apple's App Store in November 2013.

**Targeting...** iWant TV's free tier was

opened to all online users in December 2012. There are 2.4 million registered users, of which 200,000 are paying subscribers of ABS-CBN's pay-TV and mobile platforms.

**Biz/pricing models...** The free tier carries advertising. SkyCable and ABS-CBNmobile subscribers are provided access to ad-free premium and exclusive content.

**What about paid services?** "iWant TV is constantly evolving... Currently, we feel our content is best made available on a free basis. However, paid services [for iWant TV only] may be considered in the future, when we see that our [online] users have developed the appetite for paid, premium content."

**Who's driving the initiative...** Ralph Menorca, head of iWant TV, digital head for access; Connie Lopez, head of digital partnerships and ecosystem management; Richard Reynante, head of content for access; Tina Rita, platform manager; Joyce Villazor-Villaflor, content manager.

**Live linear streamed channels...** ABS-CBN Channel 2, ABS-CBN News Channel, DZMM TeleRadyo and MOR 101.9 for all

users. SkyCable subscribers have access to Al Jazeera, Asian Food Channel, Basketball TV, The Biography Channel, Bloomberg, Cartoon Network, CNN, Food Network Asia, History Channel, Jack TV, Lifetime Channel, National Geographic Channel, Nick, RTL-CBS Entertainment Channel, Solar Sports, Telenovela Channel and WarnerTV.

**What's offered on demand?** Episodes of all shows from ABS-CBN Channel 2, ANC. Select content from ABS-CBN regional channels, ABS-CBN Sports + Action, E!, Kix/Thrill, Knowledge Channel and Nick, as well as exclusively produced content from ABS-CBNmobile.

**How many new titles added each month?**

"On-demand content is mostly catch-up, so content is updated daily. New, particularly for ABS-CBN content, is in sync with broadcast launches."

**What's the biggest challenge?** "Online video piracy."

**Take up expectations for 2014...** "We hope to double the number of registered users by end of 2014, driven by the growth of mobile internet access and usage."

**What's the average viewing time?** "The typical iWant TV user finishes at least one episode (about 20 mins) per session."

**What are the most-watched titles so far?** "For 2013, the most watched titles were *Be Careful With My Heart*, *Ina Kapatid Anak*, *Gandang Gabi Vice*, *MMK* and, more recently, *Got To Believe*."

**Is there anything surprising about usage?** "One of the surprises is the habit of repeating an episode again and again. Another is our Comment Boards, becoming a venue of fans to converge, discuss, and even create small communities. Both phenomena were most evident among *Be Careful With My Heart* viewers."

**How are you using social media?** "We utilise Facebook and Twitter to keep our users abreast with the latest launches and featured shows. We also use social media to gather feedback and address any issue that our users may have."

## Saturday Night Live Korea debuts on top

### Local adaptation pushes tech, content boundaries



Saturday Night Live Korea

The premiere episode of Korea's local adaptation of long-running U.S. series, *Saturday Night Live*, was the top show in its time slot among the country's pay-TV channels. Korean content company CJ E&M also said this month that the debut on March 1st was the number one programme among female audiences.

Season five of the iconic U.S. show, *Saturday Night Live Korea*, airs on general entertainment channel tvN.

The series' chief producer, Ahn Sang-who, has promised "diverse improvements to entertain and engage viewers even better" this season, which coincides with the show's 40th anniversary in the U.S.

Among others things, producers are planning to leverage Korea's advanced digital environment to enhance interaction with audiences. This includes ac-

cepting questions from fans via social networks.

Other changes for the latest season include a studio redesign that reduces the physical distance between stage and audience and doubles the number of seats; more storylines tailored for female viewers; and more interaction with the host on the Weekend Update segment.

*Saturday Night Live Korea* launched in Korea in December 2011.

The comedy format is part of CJ E&M's growing library of international format adaptations for the South Korean market. Other local adaptation rights acquired for Korea include FremantleMedia's *Project Runway*, CBS Studios' *America's Next Top Model*, Shine International's *MasterChef* and BBC Worldwide format *Top Gear*.

CONTENT ASIA

#### Editorial Director

Janine Stein

#### Assistant Editor

Malena Amzah

malena@contentasia.tv

#### Production Manager

CJ Yong

cj@contentasia.tv

#### Editorial Research

Aqilah Yunus

aqilah@contentasia.tv

#### Research Assistant

Yogeswary Gunasagarar

yoges@contentasia.tv

#### Design

Rae Yong

#### Associate Publisher

(Americas, Europe) and VP,  
International Business Development

Leah Gordon

leah@contentasia.tv

#### Sales and Marketing (Asia)

Maslina Masron

mas@contentasia.tv

To receive your regular free copy of  
*ContentAsia*, please email  
[i\\_want@contentasia.tv](mailto:i_want@contentasia.tv)

Published fortnightly by:

Pencil Media Pte Ltd

730A Geylang Road

Singapore 389641

Tel: +65 6846-5987

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[asiacontentwatch.com](http://asiacontentwatch.com)

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