

Malaysia's Prodigee turbocharges Asian content agenda

WebTVAsia drives digital growth

Malaysian media/entertainment group, Prodigee Media, has turbocharged its global content creation and distribution initiatives, aiming, among other things, to drive a billion views a month to its online entertainment platform WebTVAsia by this time next year.

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Keshet boosts Asia biz

Pudney leads regional push out of Hong Kong

Keshet International is turbocharging its Asia business with a new office in Hong Kong and expanded regional ambitions driven on the ground by former Sparks|Echo Group Asia head Gary Pudney.

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Hopster ups Asia rights

Bob the Builder, Thomas & Friends head for Asia

Kids online platform Hopster has acquired India and Southeast Asia rights to kids properties *Bob the Builder* and *Thomas & Friends*. The new rights come as the U.K.-based global platform ramps up its Asia presence, supported on the ground by former BBC/Nickelodeon boss Christine Leo-McKerrow.

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Palia to head Viacom18 youth entertainment



Ferzad Palia

India's Viacom18 has appointed Ferzad Palia as the head of youth entertainment. The role involves MTV as well as indie platform Pepsi MTV Indies. Palia will continue as head of English entertainment, overseeing Vh1, Comedy Central and Colors Infinity. He reports to group chief executive, Sudhanshu Vats.

Grantchester tops ITV Choice Xmas bill

U.K. entertainment service ITV Choice has put period detective series *Grantchester*, starring James Norton and Robson Green as unlikely partners, at the top of its Christmas line up for Asia and the Middle East. The first and exclusive broadcast is on Friday, 18 December.



Robson Green (left) and James Norton

**Hopster ups Asia rights
Bob the Builder, Thomas & Friends head for Asia**

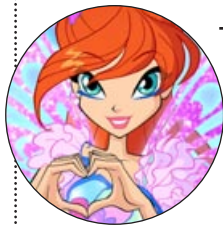
Kids online platform Hopster has acquired India and Southeast Asia rights to classic kids properties *Bob the Builder* and *Thomas & Friends*.

The new rights come as the U.K.-based global platform ramps up its Asia presence, supported on the ground in Asia Pacific by former BBC/Nickelodeon boss Christine Leo-McKerrow.

The two new Hit Entertainment properties join Hopster's Southeast Asia line up of 22 pre-school titles, including *Caspar Babypants*, *64 Zoo Lane*, *Toby's Travelling Circus* and *Babar*.

Backyardigans, *Moshi Monsters*, *Peg + Cat* and *Wonderballs* were added in October and November, joined in December and January 2016 by *Madeline*, *Monster Math Squad*, *Adventures of Paddington*, *SuperWhy*, *In the Night Garden*, *Teletubbies*, *Caillou* and *Franny's Feet*.

Hopster has more than 20,000 downloads in Southeast Asia and India since launching in the region in June this year.



Winx Club arrives in Thailand

Rainbow's *Winx Club* has rolled out across Thailand in a venture with free-TV satellite programmer, JKN Channel. The Thai debut begins with the fourth series of the animated property. *Winx Club*, about a group of young fairies, airs in Malaysia, Vietnam, China and Singapore. The series targets girls from four to 10 years old.



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Bloomberg rolls out Asia biz site

Bloomberg launched the Asia edition of BloombergBusiness.com on 2 November, with a slate of features including breaking news and mobile alerts targeting Asia Pacific users.

The company said the launch represented its commitment "to delivering more localised, relevant content to today's global, mobile business news consumer in international markets".

The site will be driven by a newly formed regional team of editors, headed by Anjali Kapoor, based in Hong Kong. The team will draw content from Bloomberg's 500 journalists across 24 Asia Pacific cities.

Bloomberg data shows 3.6 million unique visitors to its digital properties in September.

Nat Geo green lights 12 hours of archive shows

Nat Geo Wild International has green lit 12 hours of natural history content from factual producer NHNZ's Archive Unit.

The new hours will be created from stock footage from NHNZ Moving Images Archive, combined with footage from a various stock footage libraries around the world.

The slate includes a second season of *Wild 24*, an original series from the Archive Unit following 24 hours in one geographical location per episode, and the first season of an original series *Extreme Animals: Babies (WT)*, which will countdown the most extreme juvenile behaviour in the animal kingdom.

The Archive Unit has had over 30 hours of production greenlit since launching in mid-2014, including one-off specials and original series, in addition to contributing to several archive anthologies.

Wild 24 series two and *Extreme Animals: Babies (WT)* will be distributed by Fox International Channels Content Sales.

StarHub rolls out the red carpet for HK's TVB

Liza Wang, Adam Cheng take home special SG50 awards

Hong Kong TV actors, Adam Cheng and Liza Wang, took home special commemorative SG50: Star of the Stars Awards in this year's sixth annual StarHub TVB Award held in Singapore at the end of October.

StarHub said the awards were in recognition of the two artists "abilities to create strong, lasting bonds with Singaporean audiences throughout the past decades".

Wang was also crowned My Favourite TVB Actress, beating out Linda Chung, Kristal Tin and Tavia Yeung. Her second win was for My Favourite TVB Variety Show Host with co-hosts Adam Cheng and Jerry Lamb in *Sunday Songbird*.

Ruco Chan won My Favourite TVB Actor for the second consecutive year. Sci-fi drama, *Captain of Destiny*, about infamous Chinese Pirate Cheung Po Tsai, was awarded My Favourite TVB Drama.

A total of 33 awards were presented in 17 categories, out of which 14 were open for public voting.



Liza Wang clinched the highly coveted My Favourite TVB Actress award

Korea's SK Telecom goes after cable provider

SK, CJ to focus on their strengths, local observers say

South Korean mobile telco, SK Telecom, is going after a significant stake in major cable channel provider CJ Hellovision.

Weekend reports on the price the telco is said to have offered vary widely, from KRW500 billion/US\$438 million for a 30% stake to KRW2 trillion/US\$1.8 billion, according to different local reports.

Yonhap, quoting a company statement, put the figure at KRW500 billion, and said the initial 30% stake would be followed by an additional 25.3%.

CJ Hellovision, which has more than four million TV subscribers and about 2.4 million high-speed broadband subs, and SK Telecom's SK Broadband Co are expected to merge following the acquisition.

SK Telecom will hold a stake of just more than 75% in the merged entity.

The acquisition is expected to be complete by April 2016.

The Korea Herald said the move was being seen by analysts "as part of an effort from South Korea's two major conglomerates – SK Group and CJ Group – to reshape their business portfolios to focus on their strengths".

CJ's mobile streaming platform, TVing, is said to have been excluded from the deal. JoongAng Daily said TVing was likely to be transferred to CJ's E&M division.

Other weekend reports said this was the first time that a Korean telco has acquired a cable television company.

Malaysia's Prodigee turbocharges Asian content agenda

Online platform WebTVAsia drives digital growth

Malaysian media/entertainment group, Prodigee Media, has turbocharged its global content creation and distribution initiatives, aiming, among other things, to drive a billion views a month to its online entertainment platform, WebTVAsia, by this time next year.

Celebrating Prodigee's 10th anniversary this year, group chief executive, Fred Chong, outlines a plan that will also double WebTV Asia's channels from 500 to 1,000 over the next 12 months, roll out a WebTVAsia-branded mobile video platform, and align resources from across Asia to "help content creators in Asia to reach bigger audiences".

The slate of five MoUs signed in Kuala Lumpur in October pair the 10-year-old Malaysian group with media companies and investors from China, Korea, the U.S. and France.

Partners include Youku Tudou's film unit Heyi Pictures, Stellar Mega Pictures and Wanda Pictures, which are backing Chinese theatrical film, *Teacher's Diary* (*ContentAsia Insider*, 26 October 2015). The film is based on a popular Thai movie. Prodigee Media acquired remake rights for China and brought in the three Chinese co-production partners. Production is scheduled to begin after Chinese New Year in February 2016.

Four of the five agreements announced involve digital content. Prodigee/WebTVAsia will work with multichannel networks, StyleHaul and Dailymotion, as well as Korean multi-channel network CJ E&M's DiTV, to drive digital content creation in Asia as well as global distribution. Among the projects under discussion is the co-creation of a web series for Asia.

The fourth MoU involves a strategic



From left: Fred Chong, CEO, Prodigee Media and WebTVAsia; Liu Kailuo, CEO, Youku Heyi Films; Zhang Fengkui, CEO, Stellar Mega Picture; Kim Tai Sik, Filmline movie director; Penny Jiang, Production Director, Wanda Films

partnership between Prodigee and China Media Capital's Whaley Technologies to source, acquire, co-produce, localise and distribute digital video content globally on Whaley's Smart TV platform as well as on international digital video platforms.

The digital migration is a natural extension of Prodigee's decade in music, movies and artist management. Theatrical titles include Wee Meng Chee's *Nasi Lemak 2.0* (2011), about a young chef who struggles to get his restaurant up and running; horror comedy *Hantu Gangster* (2012), also directed by Wee Meng Chee (better known as Namewee), about a thief who steals a haunted ring during a gangster's memorial ceremony; and drama *Kara King* (2013), about a Hong Kong singer whose wife mysteriously disappears.

Chong says the latest initiatives "com-

bine all the experience we have over the past 10 years. Something interesting is happening and it's a good time for us to go from being a successful Malaysian media entertainment company to becoming a regional company".

Chong has his digital eye on major markets such as China, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam, and plans to use his experience with "Little Apple" to drive multi-platform exposure across the region.

Prodigee has the rights to the "Little Apple" song outside of China, and has created multiple versions for markets such as Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Korea. Chong says fans have created more than 30,000 versions of their own on YouTube.

"We are joining forces to help content creators in Asia reach bigger audiences," Chong says.

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#whatsyourstory



Keshet turbocharges Asia biz

Pudney leads regional push out of Hong Kong

Keshet International is turbocharging its Asia business with a new office in Hong Kong and expanded regional ambitions driven on the ground by former Sparks|Eccho Group Asia head Gary Pudney.



Gary Pudney

Pudney's appointment as head of Asia was officially announced at the end of October by Keshet International chief executive, Alon Shtruzman, during his keynote at this year's Casbaa convention in Hong Kong.

Speaking ahead of Casbaa, Pudney said his immediate remit, from a geographical standpoint, "is to get a foothold in as many markets at possible, including Thailand, Indonesia, India, Vietnam and the Philippines and to expand what's been happening in China, Korea and Cambodia".

Pudney, who made his first appearance in the newly created role at Mipcom in October, reports directly to Shtruzman and will work with Keshet International sales director for Asia and Latin America, Kelly Wright.

Additional hires will be made across Asia, Shtruzman said.

"We're looking to develop a fruitful, two-way exchange of IP into and out of Asia," he added.

Keshet had seven formats on air or commissioned in Asia in the 12 months to the end of August 2015, according to

ContentAsia Formats, published in September for this year's ContentAsia Summit in Singapore.

Titles are *Boom!* (Cambodia), kids' talent show *Masterclass* (Beijing Satellite TV, China), *MICE* (Korea), *Not a Star Yet 5* (China), *Prisoners of War* (Korea, sold in February 2014 but not yet on air), *Rising Star* (CCTV, China) and *Rising Star* (RCTI, Indonesia). *Rising Star* versions in China and Indonesia ended in Q4 last year. The local version of *Prisoners of War* is in production; Wright said she was confident the show would be on air in 2016.

Two of the shows – *Prisoners of War* (Star J Entertainment, Korea) and *MICE* (KBS, Korea) – are drama formats, which puts Keshet in the top three global companies that have been successful with drama formats into Asia.

Telemundo leads, with versions of *Hidden Passion* in the Philippines and Vietnam, and *Missing* in both India and Korea. Sony Pictures Television has local versions of sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond* in India and *Mad About You* in China. Disney has *Ugly Betty* in Thailand, and NBCUniversal has sold rights to a local version of legal drama *Suits* into Korea.

Speaking about the role of content in a fragmented environment, Shtruzman told Casbaa delegates that "content is king".

"Without great shows, all those business

models and outlets are worth nothing. The more outlets the consumer has to watch shows the more opportunity there is for great creators," he said, highlighting Keshet's commitment to great talent.

"Without great talent to develop shows for local markets it's difficult to succeed," he said.

"For us, Asia is a goldmine for content," he said, mentioning China and India, among others. "China for us is a huge horizon," he added.

Keshet formats have aired in six territories and the company has active deals in eight of 15 major Asia markets.

Existing business in Asia includes the recent deal with China's Huace-Croton Media to license Keshet International scripted comedies *Traffic Light* and *Loaded*.

In another recent deal, Keshet Studios, Keshet International's wholly owned U.S. production entity, optioned Huace-Croton scripted property *Dating Hunter* for U.S. audiences. In 2014, Keshet International acquired worldwide rights to Chinese talent show *Not A Star Yet*.

Wright said the taste for talent shows – both local versions and finished tape – was far from waning. She also said celebrity entertainment shows remained popular.

How do you make money? "You produce great content and hope someone will buy it," Shtruzman said in his keynote.

This article was first published online at www.contentasia.tv on 27 October 2015.



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ContentAsia's regular section, ContentAsia Formats, looks at 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.

MasterChef Asia

The finale of A+E Networks Asia's *MasterChef Asia*, airs on Thursday, 10 December, bringing to an end – for now – the Asian network's biggest, boldest bet on local content. There's no confirmation yet on season two.

The first Asia version of the *MasterChef* format airs Thursdays at 9pm on female-focused entertainment channel, Lifetime. The series features 15 aspiring chefs from China, India, Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The series, thought to have cost about US\$3 million, ran for 15 episodes (60 mins/90 mins). Judges are Susur Lee, the "Father of Fusion" from Hong Kong; 3-Michelin starred chef Bruno Ménard; and Singapore-born, Audra Morrice, a *MasterChef Australia* finalist.

Building the set and equipping the kitchen and language difference during casting were among the greatest production challenges, says Michele Schofield, A+E Networks Asia's senior vice president, programming and production.

The local version was modelled after the style and tone of *MasterChef Australia*. "We wanted a sense of aspiration and a passion for cooking," Schofield says, adding: "It was never about contestants aiming to disadvantage their fellow contestants (which you see in the U.S.



MasterChef Asia



Michele Schofield

version). We saw camaraderie develop very quickly among our contestants, which was wonderful to see."

Schofield was surprised to see how many applicants preferred cooking western food to Asian food during casting. "Their styles were rooted in classic French techniques," she says.

She also noticed that the 'younger' generation cooks much more as a hobby and passion than as a necessity to make dinner each night. "This meant they have studied a lot of the great chefs and taught themselves the foundations of French cuisine. I guess I wasn't expecting this, going into casting. Meanwhile, other contestants brought to the *MasterChef* competition, flavours unique to their home country and tried to elevate the dish. It was great to see the diversity of cooks and cuisine," says

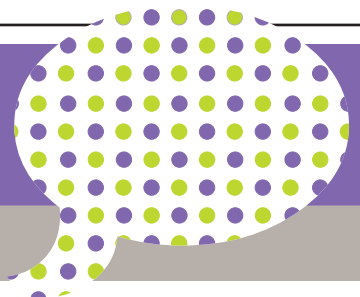
Schofield.

Prizes include the winner's own cookbook, US\$50,000 cash, US\$10,000 worth of leisure experiences in Singapore, US\$15,000 of home appliances and a paid internship.

MasterChef Asia set new Lifetime ratings records for its premiere episode on 3 September. The multi-million dollar bet on original production paid off best in the Philippines, where audiences were 850% higher than the year-to-date prime-time channel average. Audiences in Singapore were 379% up, Malaysia came in at 350% up and Thailand increased 170%.*

MasterChef Asia was executive produced by Endemol Shine Asia's Sharon Pereira and David McDonald (*MasterChef Australia*) with a crew of about 120 people in Singapore.

* Source: Kantar (Urban Philippines, Singapore), Nielsen (Thailand True Panel), Kantar DTAM (Malaysia). Prime time 6pm to midnight, 1 Jan - 3 Sep 2015, C&S 16+ for urban PH, Astro 15+ for MY, Cable 15+ SG).



Keertan Adyanthaya, EVP, Content & Communications, Hong Kong/Southeast Asia, Fox International Channels Asia, speaking at ContentAsia Summit 2015 in Singapore

On the future...

"I think 2016, especially with the way the television world is transforming itself, is going to be an extremely challenging year."

On what he wants to see, content-wise, out of Southeast Asia...

"I also think that there's a lot more fiction content, drama content, scripted content that can be created in our region, not just in the local languages but also in the English language, or even formats that emanate out of Asia and go out to the rest of the world."

"I think we have the capability here, we have the creative brilliance and the minds here who can come up with... out of box concepts which can connect in the rest of the world."

On Korea...

"I think Korea has fantastic formats coming out, that's one market where movies and television content have really undergone a renaissance."

"We are looking at what formats we can create out of Korea. That's one of the key tasks Joon [Lee], who I succeeded, is going to be doing out of Korea, and out of Japan and China as well."

On OTT & rights challenges...

"I think both from the rights sellers' point of view as well as from the buyers' point of view, it's a very, very misunderstood kind of place."

"People almost sometimes seem to forget that there's a long-term impact to the decisions that they're taking today. There seems to be hunger for the fast buck in terms of the way that they're selling those rights, in terms of the way people are buying some of those rights."

On Asia's Next Top Model 4...

"For the fourth season, we asked companies to tell us how they would change, how they would adapt, the format... And FremantleMedia came up with the best possible pitch, so they were chosen."



Keertan Adyanthaya

On contrasts with India, where he was previously based...

"In the pay-TV landscape in India, we have a lot of platforms, a lot of distribution partners, and the importance of affiliates is not as much as it is in Southeast Asia."

"In India, advertising is a huge barometer of success, on whether you get advertising on your show or not, and that is the life and death of the show... That makes shows in India very immediate. If there is a problem where viewers are not latching on to a show it gets yanked off air very quickly, and we don't see much of that happening here, and I think that needs to change."

On goals...

"We need to be much more viewer-conscious really, much more in tune with our viewers and understand what they want, why they want, and how they want it."

"What we are going to be doing is do a lot more viewer research, understand the consumer much better, and create things that resonate with them, create pieces of content that will be iconic, and will stay behind with them."

"We have a lot of channels, and what we need to do is consolidate them better. We need to pump more energy into them really, and refine our content offerings on each of them so that they become stronger channels."

Who was at.... HBO Asia's party in Hong Kong during Casbaa



Jonathan Spink, Yasmin Zahid, HBO Asia; Dominic Leung and Janice Lee, PCCW nowTV



Jonathan Spink, HBO Asia; Zubin Gandevia, Fox International Channels Asia



Joanne Tsai, Fox International Channels; Tham Loke Kheng, PCCW nowTV; Jennifer Seeto



Jessy Tse, NBCUniversal; Magdalene Ew, HBO Asia; Steve Burton, HBO Asia; Malcolm Dudley-Smith, Warner Bros Television; Jeremy Carr, MobiMe Media



Derek Chang, Scripps Networks Interactive; Christine Fellowes, NBCUniversal; Avi Himatsinghani, Rewind Networks; Janine Stein, ContentAsia; Magdalene Ng, Discovery Networks Asia Pacific;



Jude Turcuato, Fox International Channels Asia



Zakiah Malek, HBO Asia



Mamie Leung, PCCW nowTV



Tony McGinn, MCM Entertainment Group/Movideo



Boldkhet, Supervision Mongolia



Peter Yee, Baby Zarate, Evelina Ledesma, Emmylou Vil-lasis, Cable Boss Philippines

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Clement Gosse, Dailymotion; Fred Chong, Prodigee Media/WebTVAsia



China Media Capital BD Director Maggie Zhou; Lee Hua Ling, CEO Prodigee Media China

From page 5: WebTVAsia

These new fan bases open up infinite possibilities, he adds.

"The trend now in China and many parts of the world is that successful IP – web series, animated series, comedy online – builds a fan base that can be turned into a feature film... That's the path that we want to create. They are all interconnected."

His plan for WebTVAsia is a premium platform – "a multi platform business rather than a multi-channel business – that will both create and provide a home for premium content from Asia.



Phil Kitcher, StyleHaul

Much of this will be brand supported. Chong says less than 10% of brands' budgets right now are invested in creators.

"We want to grow that," he says, adding that the only reason brands will invest more is if content quality improves."

"We are content producers, that's what we do best," he says.

"On one hand, we have the web and the online platform producers and on the other we have the biggest movie companies in China and we are come together around interesting content," Chong says.

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