

Francis exits WBD, Ratnam leaves iQiyi, Lo quietly upped at Viu

Management in-and-out continues as streaming wars escalate

Mark Francis is exiting his role as Warner Bros Discovery (WBD) group lead for original production in Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan after just less than two years.

Francis' departure follows iQiyi's senior director for international business, Dinesh Ratnam, who has also exited for an as yet-undisclosed role.

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, Lofai Lo has been upped to Viu COO and Felix Pineau joins Viu as the Canal+ era begins.

More on page 2



Japan's Samansa expands in Asia

English-language service, first original film on the way

Japanese short-film platform, Samansa, soft launches in Korea by the end of this month, expanding its domestic footprint for the first time and counting down to the 2024 debut of its freemium tiers.

The platform also has its first original film – *Iron Lung* – in post-production and another in production. *Iron Lung* premieres in December.

The full story is on page 6

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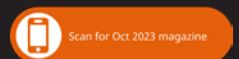


Thailand: High drama

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Cigarette Girl for Netflix

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Scan for Oct 2023 magazine



From left: Mark Francis, Lofai Lo and Dinesh Ratnam

From page 1: Exec movements

Francis, who joined WBD at the beginning of 2022, is shifting to Dubai but has not yet confirmed his next role.

Ratnam has also not disclosed his new role, saying only that he is exiting the Chinese-owned streamer after three and a half years for a "new adventure". He added in his farewell note that the role was "a fresh challenge within the realm of entertainment, at the intersection of technology and culture".

Neither WBD nor iQiyi has announced the departures or replacements.

In a LinkedIn post that followed a personal message to contacts, Ratnam gave iQiyi's Malaysia team a special shoutout, saying iQiyi's user base had grown by 15x, revenue by 40x, and that the platform had achieved operating profitability.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, ViuTV director and Makerville CEO, Lofai Lo, was quietly upped to chief operating officer at the beginning of September.

The move follows Canal+ US\$300-million investment in Viu in June.

Canal+'s Felix Pineau joins Viu as head of synergy and value creation. Pineau has worked for the Canal+ group for about 10 years, most recently as project director, strategy and M&A/CFO, Canal+ Madagascar.

In an internal note, Viu said the appointments strengthened the leadership team and "set the company up for the next phase of accelerated growth".

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L.A.-based TGC Global adds Rosemond Perdue to drive Asia expansion



Phil Gurin's L.A.-based TGC Global Entertainment has tapped Breakthrough New Media's Rosemond Perdue to lead its upsized Asia initiative, the company said ahead of Mipcom 2023, which kicks off in Cannes on Monday (16 Oct).

The APAC slate focuses on studio-based physical entertainment format, *Heavy But Rich*, a co-development between the Gurin Company and Fuji Creative Corporation; family-focused karaoke game show *The Singing Bee*, which is on air on Indonesia's RCTI; and cooking challenge *Fridge Wars*, which is in its second season on Mongolia's NTV.

Perdue founded Breakthrough New Media in Los Angeles in 2019 to bridge the gap between Asian and U.S. content and creators. Before that she worked for Small World IFT as VP of business development.

Korea's One Ent picks up Ochre drama IP MoU for Singapore original signed in Busan

Korean production house, One Entertainment, is acquiring remake rights for Ochre Pictures' original romantic fantasy drama, *Café Verita*.

At the MoU signing on the sidelines of the Busan International Film Festival at the weekend, the companies said this was the first Singapore drama IP acquired by a Korean company.

The agreement also mentions the possibility of further IP acquisitions.

Café Verita, created in house by Ochre Pictures, centres around the mystical *Café Verita*, where patrons are compelled to speak only the truth and which becomes the centre of a tug-of-war between the twin gods of truth and lies.

Prime Video debuts 1st Malaysia original *That Cover Girl* releases across global footprint on 19 Oct

Prime Video premieres its first Malaysian original series, *That Cover Girl*, across its global footprint on 19 October.

The six-episode romantic drama, described as a "progressive Malaysian story", is about a dynamic and ambitious modest-fashion

designer, Sofi Safwan (played by Siti Saleha), who makes a mark at Paris Fashion Week, only to see her business and reputation threatened by a looming scandal.

That Cover Girl is produced by Creative Stew, and created/directed by Abid Hussain.

Making the announcement, David Simonsen, director of Prime Video, Southeast Asia, hinted at more shows "featuring resilient and inspiring female characters".



Behind the scenes of *That Cover Girl*

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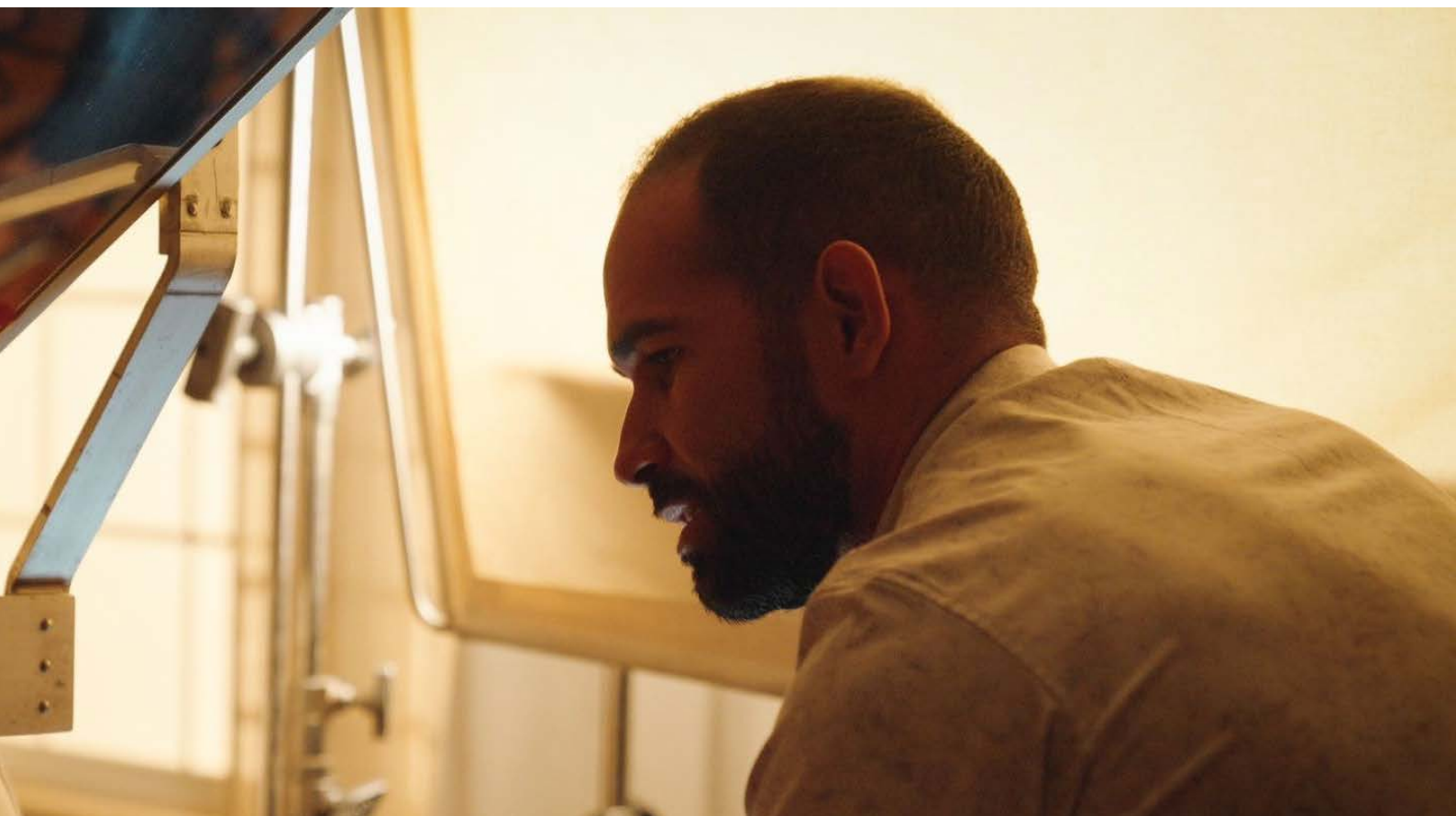
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Yuichi Iwanaga, Takayuki Toyama upsize Samansa

English-language platform for Southeast Asia, first original film on the way

*Iron Lung*

Japanese short-film platform, Samansa, soft launches in Korea by the end of this month, expanding its domestic footprint for the first time and counting down to the 2024 debut of its freemium tiers.

The platform also has its first original film – *Iron Lung* – in post-production and another in production. *Iron Lung* premieres in December.

With Randy McGraw on board as chief content officer, the platform is eyeing rollouts in Thailand and Indonesia and says a default English-language platform will be up and running by Q1 2024.

Set up in 2022 by Japanese co-founders Yuichi Iwanaga and Takayuki Toyama, Samansa currently offers more than 850 short films from around the world on a subscription basis and has about 200,000 monthly active users in Japan.

The company is backed by a mix of in-

ternational and Japanese VCs, including the East Ventures, W Inc, MUFG Innovation Partners and X Tech.

McGraw, who joined this month, says the vision is to build on Samansa's Japanese DNA to create an international company.

The localisation model involves delivering professional-grade subtitling for every short film, in each market's language.

"We don't believe in crowdsourcing subtitles," McGraw says. "We believe in the creative element of subtitles and we spend money on it."

Samansa has its origins in co-founder Takayuki's frustration with the lack of avenues to showcase his short films after their festival runs.

"After using your savings and crowdfunding money from parents, friends and even strangers, there's not much left af-

ter making a short film," he says.

"You submit it to film festivals and win a couple of awards but that's it. The short film just sits there and does nothing."

Samansa gives a second life to short film and enables Takayuki to scout for new filmmakers and develop original short films with them.

The platform currently adds one new film to its library nearly every day, and plans to produce at least four new original short films every quarter.

McGraw says Samansa offers capital and a global platform to directors, producers and writers, as well as the beginnings of a community Samansa plans to build via in-person events.

"It's very early in testing this concept, but the genre of short film lends itself well to this type of activity and so far, so good," McGraw says. – Sara Merican

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Talks to return *Losmen Melati* under way

Theatrical movie+TV series combo worked well, Catchplay/Infinite say

Talks are underway to return Indonesian horror series, *Losmen Melati*, a co-production between Taiwan-based Catchplay and Indonesia/Singapore-based Infinite Studios, to regional screens.

This follows a five-week run on Netflix's Indonesia top 10 films, from the week of 7-13 August, when it debuted on the list at #4, to its fifth and last appearance at #9 for the week of 4-10 September. On Catchplay+ Indonesia, the series was the top title for six consecutive weeks, and continues to be the most watched series on the platform, Catchplay says, adding that the show brought in a lot of new users, and particularly horror fans.

If it's too early for specifics, the partners take with them into season two the season one experience of see-sawing from a 10-part horror series greenlit in 2021 to a feature film (*Motel Melati*) released theatrically across the region from March to June this year, and back again to a seven-episode TV series (*Losmen Melati*) that premiered in August this year – and it sounds like they might just do it again.

"Nowadays, there are so many series introduced by so many platforms every day. This was a way to make sure that *Losmen Melati* had a bigger chance to stand out," says the property's executive producer and Catchplay group chief executive, Daphne Yang.

The partners backed into the movie add-on decision in early post production for the TV series, which tells the story of a remote inn, managed by the mysterious Melati, where unsuspecting visitors are confronted with their worst nightmare.

"We saw the potential of turning the opening of the story into a film, giving the audience a cinematic experience into the world of *Losmen Melati*," Yang says.

"Everyone eventually agreed that having the film in addition to the series



Losmen Melati the Movie

will not only help monetisation through additional box office receipts but also 'grease the runway' – increase awareness of the IP before the series launch," she adds.

The film was edited primarily from the original episodes one, two and six, and the story adjusted to give the feature a complete narrative. There were no re-writes and nothing was reshot.

The series, edited as a standalone, starts from the end of the film.

Audiences do not have to have seen the film to follow the series. "We tried to make the film and the series both capable of standing alone, by themselves," Yang says. "However, the audience would gain a better understanding of the story if they watched the film first," she adds.

"One of our biggest learnings is that a smart release strategy across the two sectors drives bigger success," Yang says.

"Indonesia has a big theatrical release market, which provides not only a great opportunity for revenue but also a terrific channel to build awareness for the IP. For horror fans, this provides double satisfaction... Later on, we licensed the film to other OTT platforms, which helped the IP gain more followers, who then tuned-in to Catchplay+ for the series," she adds.

"The line between films and drama is really blurring. This is not only about the production value or cinematography but also about the audience and how content can be released and marketed."

Catchplay has every intention of growing its regional originals, and following this first Indonesian co-production with more, including an action crime story in a possible second partnership with Infinite Studios, and its own developments.

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“Who would have thought...”

Sony Liv content head, Saugata Mukherjee, on *Rocket Boys* Int'l Emmy nomination

When this year's International Emmy nominations were announced at the end of September, *Rocket Boys* was one of three Indian titles on the list of 56 shows that entered the final race.

“Who would have thought a premium drama about two scientists pursuing a nuclear dream would become one of the biggest shows in India,” Sony Liv's content head, Saugata Mukherjee, says.

The nomination came a few days before Sony Liv announced its adaptation of premium scripted crime drama, *Maggie*, as *Kan Khajura* (working title) in its third drama deal with Israel's yes Studios after Indian versions of *Your Honour* and *Fauda*.

There have, in the three years since Sony Liv launched, been a steady stream of high-profile premium series, including *Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story* and *Scam 2003: The Telgi Story*, in addition to two seasons of *Rocket Boys*, starring Jim Sarbh, who has been nominated for best actor in this year's International Emmys. On the unscripted side, there are local versions of *Shark Tank* and *MasterChef India*, which is being made in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu and Tamil.

For Culver Max Entertainment (formerly Sony Pictures Networks India), and its three-year-old streaming platform Sony Liv, it's “still early days”, for the platform and for original production, Mukherjee said during Media Partners Asia's (MPA) APOS conference in Bali at the end of September.

Having reconstituted production plans that “had to be thrown out the window” because of Covid, Mukherjee says Sony Liv is “very partic-



Jim Sarbh in *Rocket Boys*

ular about telling stories that are deeply rooted ... in the new India” and that reflect broader cultures beyond India's metro centres.

“We had to think very differently at that time,” he says, not least because, as latecomers, they needed every differentiating factor they could muster. “We were mindful of the expense, and careful about the kinds of contained shows that we could make”.

Mukherjee says the platform is now “deeply focused on getting into regional programming... Growth for us will come from these markets”.

“A big part of my programming strategy over the past year and a half has been to over-index in language programming beyond Hindi... Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam and even Marathi,” he says.

Streaming's skew towards thrillers is also being tempered on Sony Liv.

Thrillers, Mukherjee says, are “easy to channel on

streaming... They're binge-worthy... we have refrained from doing too many of those because ... we wanted to tell stories of empowerment, of women... deep rooted, Indian, culturally relevant stories”.

Unscripted, which he describes as a “sweet spot” with subscribers and advertisers, is a “big focus area”.

Mukherjee draws attention to the bigger picture in a country thought to be five years away from the pay-TV disruption elsewhere in the world.

“Sony Liv is a network-led platform,” he says. “There is a plethora of content that is not always available on the SVOD side of the business.”

“But the fact is that we have that feed... It's very important because that's where the subscriber/consumer, the audience, gets to know about the programmes we have on the [streaming] platform”.

Looking ahead, he lists pricing and the ability to grow the premium production ecosystem as the major challenges facing SVOD platforms in India.

“There is always a lot of content available but never enough to quench that thirst,” he says.



Saugata Mukherjee



Yes! Night Market

Three hosts – George Hu, Lotus Wang and Ho-Xi Sia – and celebrities start their own businesses in night markets. What will it take to become a successful stallholder in the face of the newly growing crowds and rising prices? They bring together all their brains, brawn and creativity to make new contacts and old friends, create the best sales in a competitive night market, and find the perfect formula for their stall. Starting with a van, they will set up stalls at local night markets in Taiwan and plan to travel to Japan to experience its night market culture and embark on a night market business. Length: 13x120 mins
Sanlih E-Television Co Ltd
E: conny@mail.sanlih.com.tw

The Irrational

World-renowned behavioural science professor, Alec Mercer, uses his unique expertise in psychology, body language, emotion, and more to help solve difficult, high-stakes cases. He is supported by his research assistants, his tech-savvy sister, and his ex-wife, who also happens to be an FBI agent. Guided by his fierce curiosity about human decision-making, Mercer truly has solved crime down to a science. By asking the right questions, making observations no one else can, and studying every scene in new ways, there's no case too tough for his brilliant mind to crack, except maybe his own mysterious past. Length: 10x60mins

Rock Entertainment Holdings
E: joanne.lim@rockentertainment.com



Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One

Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) and his IMF team embark on their most dangerous mission yet: to track down a terrifying new weapon that threatens all of humanity before it falls into the wrong hands. With the fate of the world at stake, a deadly race around the globe begins. Confronted by a mysterious, all-powerful enemy, Ethan is forced to consider that nothing can matter more than his mission – not even the lives of those he cares about most. Length: Film, 163 mins
Paramount Global Content Distribution
E: GDGSales@viacomcbs.com



The Traitors (format)

An intense psychological adventure in which treachery and deceit are the name of the game. Contestants come together in an atmospheric location – to complete a series of challenges with the objective of earning a cash prize. The catch? A number of the contestants are chosen to be "The Traitors" and meet in secret to devise a plan to eliminate their fellow players called "The Faithful". The Faithful must figure out who is a Traitor and vote them out so they can take the prize money for themselves. If a Traitor makes it to the end, they are in with a chance of taking home the cash prize. Length: 60 mins
All3Media International
E: Sabrina.duguet@all3media.com



The Muscle Door

The Muscle Door is a social experiment reality show about ordinary young men desperate to acquire a strong, muscular physique. The show follows their two-month journey of physical transformation, culminating in a heroic attempt to heave open the three-ton Muscle Door. If they succeed, they receive a huge cash prize. Length: 2x60 mins
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The Doll Factory

Iris paints dolls for a living, but dreams of becoming an artist. Silas is a taxidermist who hopes to find an item so unique he will be catapulted to fame. Louis is a prolific painter searching for his next muse. When fate brings them together, Iris is offered an opportunity to start a new life – and a dark obsession begins to unfold. *The Doll Factory* is a searing story of what happens when a woman dares to take what she wants in a world that would rather kill her than let her have it. Length: 6x60 mins

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The 1% Club

Imagine a game show where an eight-year-old has as much chance of winning as an 80-year-old. Or where intelligence isn't based on how many exams you passed, but is all about how your brain works. *The 1% Club* is a unique, compelling and funny game show that tests the nation's intelligence based on a scientific survey. This primetime entertainment format is not about what you learned at school or your ability to memorise facts – it's about real intelligence. Multi-award winning and already in seven countries and counting, *The 1% Club* is the fastest selling new gameshow format. Length: 60 mins

BBC Studios E: format.sales@bbc.com

Barbie – A Touch of Magic

Barbie and Barbie discover a mysterious baby horse on the beach in Malibu and work to find out where their new four-legged friend came from. The little horse begins fulfilling the most amazing fantasies and they realise she is actually a baby Pegasus! While they try to find out how to get little Peggy home, Barbie and Barbie, with the help of their friends and Malibu's sisters, have to protect her from Rocki the Glyph, a fantastical creature who followed Peggy in hopes that she will grant the biggest wish of all – giving Rocki her own wings.

Length: 26x22 mins **Mattel Inc.** E: grace.chan@mattel.com



The Others

Two neighbouring couples are shocked after their teenage children's fight, with absurd consequences. What could be a common misunderstanding grows and reveals the limits and influence of parents in raising children. A modern series about where lack of dialogue can lead people to. Length: 12x45 mins

Globo E: fabio.fmauro@g.globo

Love of My Life

Love of My Life is a moving new drama that transcends romance and tackles issues like racial discrimination to tell an epic legend of forbidden love. Thus born a classic story of power, betrayals, and revenge. Length: 60x60 mins

Caracol Televisión T: +1 305 960 2018
E: losoriol@caracoltv.com.co



The Ivy

Ezgi's life back then seemed magnificent from afar. She had a marriage that everyone envied, and a husband full of attention and love: Kerem. However, Ezgi was experiencing unresolvable problems in her marriage. Ezgi was tired of dealing with these problems and was on the verge of ending everything, when she started to feel that she was being followed. When the man after her managed to reach Ezgi, he would say something unbelievable to her: Your husband wants to kill you... Was he the man she fell in love with or the psychopath who wanted to kill her? Length: In production

Inter Medya E: info@intermedya.tv,
irem.kucukkutlu@intermedya.tv





Billy the Kid season two (MGM+)

The epic romantic adventure inspired by the life of America's most infamous outlaw continues in season two, as Billy (Tom Blyth) and his allies square off against his oldest friend Jesse Evans (Daniel Webber) and the corrupt powers of the Santa Fe Ring. When shots are fired, the conflict erupts into the bloody Lincoln County War. Amidst the fighting, Billy will struggle to hang onto his soul – and to the love of his life. Length: 4x60 mins (part one) and 4x60 mins (part two) **Amazon MGM Studios Distribution**

E: christina.lee@amazonstudios.com

*Billy the Kid S2: part one will premiere 15 October 2023. Part two will premiere in 2024.



Brothers In Arms

They shot a detective, pulled off a hospital siege and were Singapore's most wanted in 1972. *Brothers in Arms* unravels the case of the Wahab-Hassan brothers and how Singapore's gun laws came to be. Length: 2x60 mins

Mediacorp Pte Ltd

E: gracechia@mediacorp.com.sg,

tracysim@mediacorp.com.sg



Sharks on Wheels

In an all-shark world, teams of racers in hot-rodded (aka "sharkified") vehicles battle it out on the racetrack for the ultimate prize: the Megalodon Cup. It's wacky races meets drive to survive! Length: 11 mins **Sony Pictures Television**
E: Giuliana_Rankin@spe.sony.com

Nature's Hidden Miracles

Charles Darwin raised the Theory of Evolution that argues that in the natural world, only the fittest will survive and have reproductive success. Apparently, life on the Earth is engaging in a fierce competition for survival, but at the same time they are also interacting with other species, intricately interconnecting with and sometimes even giving assistance to each other across species, to survive together. The series explores curious examples of previously unknown mysterious connections among them, such as how plants communicate with each other, and their amazing ecology in three episodes focusing on plants, insects and micro-organisms. Length: 3x52 mins **NHK Enterprises** E: nep_international_sales@nhk-ep.jp



Luke Nguyen's India

Luke Nguyen circumnavigates Southern India, immersing himself in India's spices, ancient traditions, and unique locations. As he discovers the cuisines, sounds, and colours of this captivating region, he takes viewers on a journey of the senses. Along with traditional recipes, Luke cooks dishes that are the culmination of his Indian experience and Vietnamese heritage. Join Luke on an unforgettable expedition, unearthing the hidden gems of cuisine, culture, and community. A symphony of flavours and senses that showcases the heart and soul of India, where exploration and gastronomy intertwine in a celebration of all that India has to offer. Length: 12x30 mins

Parade Media Group E: matthew.ashcroft@parade.media

The Greatest Teacher

In this gripping suspense drama, a teacher is mysteriously pushed off the school balcony after graduation ceremony. The last thing she sees is the sleeve of someone's uniform, but the next minute she suddenly finds herself rebooted back one year ago in her homeroom class on the first day of school – she has time lapsed. With 30 suspects and only a fleeting glimpse of a uniform sleeve, the rebooted and determined teacher embarks on a relentless journey to unveil the truth and make a difference this time, which is sure to keep viewers captivated in this new era suspense drama. Length: 60 mins

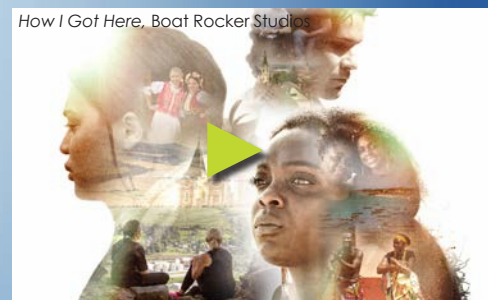
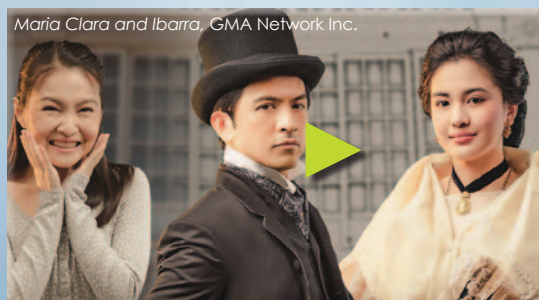
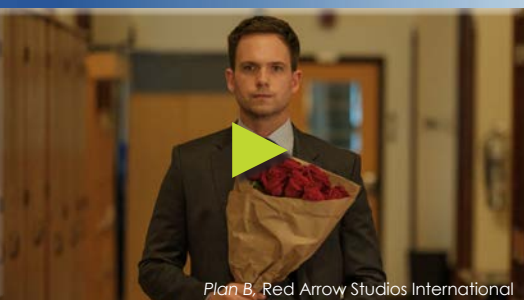
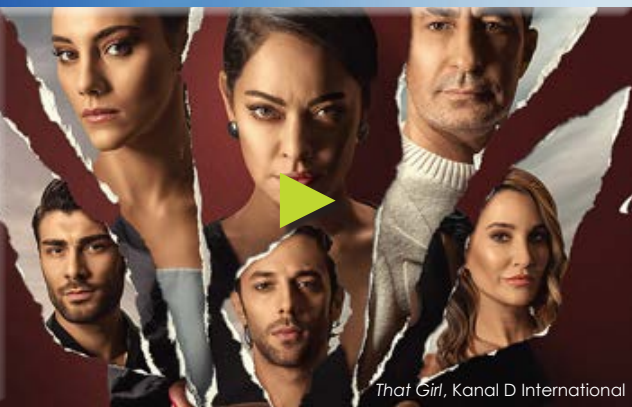
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What's on where...

October 2023	10	AVIA: Thailand in View 2023	Bangkok, Thailand
	13-15	MipJunior 2023	Cannes, France
	16-19	Mipcom 2023	Cannes, France
	25-27	TIFFCOM 2023	Tokyo, Japan
November 2023	7-12	Taiwan Creative Content Fest 2023	Taipei, Taiwan
	22-23	Dubai International Content Market 2023	Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai
December 2023	5	AVIA: OTT Summit 2023	Singapore
	6	AVIA: Piracy Over the Top 2023	Singapore
	6-8	Asia TV Forum & Market (ATF) 2023	Singapore
	6-8	14th Content Tokyo	Tokyo, Japan
March 2024	3-6	Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC)	Melbourne, Australia
	11-14	Hong Kong International Film & TV Market 2024	Hong Kong
	19-21	Series Mania Forum 2024	Lille, France
April 2024	12-17	Canneseries 2024	Cannes, France
	15-17	Mip TV/Mip Formats/Mip Doc/Mip Drama 2024	Cannes, France
May 2024	29-31	BroadcastAsia/CommunicAsia 2024	Singapore
June 2024	6-8	Telefilm Vietnam 2024	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
	17-18	DW Global Media Forum 2024	Bonn, Germany
	24-27	Sunny Side of the Doc 2024	France
July 2024	3-5	15th Content Tokyo	Tokyo, Japan
August 2024	20-21	ContentAsia Summit 2024	
	22	ContentAsia Awards 2024	

One Piece rules Indonesia

Original anime & Netflix's live action sweep charts

One Piece – both Eiichiro Oda's iconic Japanese original and Netflix's blockbuster live action adaptation – won the week of 26 Sept to 2 Oct in Indonesia, taking top spot on both the overall TV list as well as the digital list.

As news spread that Netflix has greenlit a new season of the high-seas adventure, the live action version along with kids show *Bebefinn*, won the streamer the top

two digital spots, beating Disney+ *Ahsoka* into third place, according to data science company Parrot Analytics.

Animation/kids titles have long been a favourite in Indonesia, and the ongoing dominance of the genre comes as little surprise. The latest overall list also features *Jujutsu Kaisen*, *Upin & Ipin*, *Boboiboy: Galaxy*, *Cocomelon* and 3D animated musical cartoon series, *Didi & Friends*.

Top 10 overall TV shows: Indonesia

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average
1	One Piece (ワンピース)	23.3x
2	Magic 5	20.03x
3	Jujutsu Kaisen (呪術廻戦)	19.7x
4	One Piece	17.13x
5	America's Got Talent	16.68x
6	Upin & Ipin	15.57x
7	Boboiboy: Galaxy	14.12x
8	Cocomelon	13.88x
9	The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon	13.57x
10	Didi & Friends	12.79x

Top 10 digital originals: Indonesia

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average
1	One Piece	Netflix	17.13x
2	Bebefinn	Netflix	12.32x
3	Ahsoka	Disney+	11.28x
4	The Seasons: Jay Park's Drive (더 시즌즈-박재범의 드라이브)	KBS2	10.02x
5	Song Of The Bandits (도적: 칼의 소리)	Netflix	8.97x
6	The Worst Evil (최악의 악)	Disney+	7.32x
7	Loki	Disney+	6.67x
8	Secret Invasion	Disney+	6.2x
9	Gen V	Amazon Prime Video	6.15x
10	Moving (무빙)	Disney+	6.11x

Date range: 26 September-2 October 2023

The total audience demand being expressed for a title, within a market. Audience demand reflects the desire, engagement and viewership, weighted by importance; so a stream/download is a higher expression of demand than a 'like'/comment. In this dataset we are comparing the demand that exists for each series in this market, against the average TV show. A difference of 1x represents the market average and 10x means a series is ten times more in demand than the average TV show in this market



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