

Miss Universe secret recording goes viral

Beauty pageant bosses
hit back at fake inclusion
accusations

A new multi-layered scandal is enveloping the Miss Universe Organisation, kicked off with a leaked video recording of an internal meeting and fuelled by fraud allegations, ongoing conflict between new and former leadership, and newly lodged industrial action brought by the former CEO of Miss Universe Mexico. The explosive video laid bare the organisation's approach to inclusion, its thinking on the way forward and its product-led business goals.

The full story is on page 7



Qalbox adds 1st AI original to Ramadan schedule

*Muhammad the Mercy for
the Multiverse* streams
globally from 10 March

Bitsmedia/MuslimPro's Qalbox premieres its first AI production for Ramadan, kicking off a new chapter in the 18-month-old streaming platform's original production ambitions and paving the way for a future with AI as a powerful co-creator. *Muhammad the Mercy for the Multiverse* and *Revelations of the Surahs* were produced in collaboration with Abbas Arslan's Quranscape.

The full story is on page 5

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29 Feb debut for CJ ENM/Paramount+ *Pyramid Game*



Pyramid Game – one of Paramount+'s new Korean dramas with Korea's CJ ENM – premieres on TVing in Korea on 29 February, followed by a special screening at Series Mania festival in the French city of Lille in the second half of March. The drama will stream on Paramount+ globally later this year.

Co-produced by Film Monster and CJ ENM Studios and presented by TVing and Paramount+, *Pyramid Game* is one of seven Korean originals commissioned as part of the global partnership between Paramount+ and CJ ENM.

The series, based on a Naver webtoon, is about a brutal survival game at a girls' high school.

Pyramid Game is one of the final three series of the partnership between CJ ENM and Paramount+ announced in December 2021.

Natural history, docs, drama head to Asia Fremantle kicks off Year of the Dragon



From Left: *Alice & Jack*; *Croc and Hippo Watch* with Steve Backshall and *Sullivan's Crossing*; Kit Yow

British naturalist and explorer, Steve Backshall, heads to free- and pay-TV channels and streaming platforms across China, Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore in a raft of new acquisition deals out of Fremantle's Singapore-based regional office.

Kicking off the Year of the Dragon, Fremantle announced the sale of five Steve Backshall series, including *Shark with Steve Backshall*, which will stream on Bilibili in China, PCCW's Now TV in Hong Kong, KBS in South Korea and Mediacorp in Singapore.

Bilibili has also picked up *Whale with Steve Backshall* for China, as has regional channel BBC Earth.

BBC Earth will broadcast *Croc Watch with Steve Backshall* and *Hippo Watch with Steve Backshall* across the region.

Malaysia's RTM (through Nafalia Corporation) will air Backshall's earlier

series, *Expedition with Steve Backshall*, alongside BBC, Discovery, RTHK, Mediacorp and Thai PBS.

The package, negotiated by Kit Yow, Fremantle's VP Distribution Asia, International, also includes documentary and drama series.

In Hong Kong, PCCW's Now TV will air the six-season *The Decades* collection, executive produced by Tom Hanks and Gary Goetzman, exploring the most important events of each decade.

Drama series include love story *Alice & Jack*, which heads to the BBC across Asia, and to Bilibili for Greater China; and *Sullivan's Crossing*, which premieres across Asia on Rewind Networks' Hits Now, PCCW's ViuTVsix in Hong Kong, and Mediacorp's Channel 5 in Singapore.

All the titles will air in 2024.

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FILMART boosts European alliances with Bridging The Dragon

Dust to Dust, Fly Me to the Moon filmmakers shows up for 2024 #EntertainmentPulse



Co-production is one of spotlights at this year's FILMART, at which a European delegation of film producers, investors and government bodies will be led by Bridging the Dragon.

About 15 European film producers and institutional representatives are part of the initiative, which aims to offer delegates an insight of the growing Asian content industry, matchmaking opportunities and contacts with local institutions.

Exhibiting at FILMART for the first time, Bridging the Dragon and Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) and Hong Kong Film Development Council are co-organising two panel discussions on 12 March to talk about co-production.

Bridging The Dragon's presence in Hong Kong this year follows decades spent connecting film industries in Europe and Mainland China.

Cristiano Bortone, Director, Producer and MD of Bridging The Dragon, highlights the importance of building mutual knowledge, understanding, and trust among industry professionals as key factors for successful co-productions.

Cristiano Bortone

says the Hong Kong Film Development Council's new film incentive, specifically designed for collaboration with Europe, is "of critical importance".

The new grant scheme, launched at the European Film Market in Berlin this month, offers more than US\$1 million per project to Hong Kong film coproductions with Europe.

Bortone underscores the potential for the incentive to "lead to a new season of collaboration between our talents and the introduction of Chinese themed stories to the broader western audience".

Describing FILMART as the "biggest film market in Asia and a natural entry door into the Asian market", Bortone says Asia is still "relatively off the map of most European producers".

"Through a mix of more official events such as panels and institutional meetings, and a more private matchmaking activity our hope is to encourage the development of new and daring collaborations," he adds.

Bridging The Dragon's presence at FILMART comes amid rising ambitions within Asia's production community as well as upgraded incentive plans, location services and facilities.

"The whole of Asia has developed," Bortone says, adding: "The new territories express now a bigger and bigger audience and a new and enthusiastic film community is eager to bring its stories

MEETING OF BRILLIANCE

A Dialogue between Two Generations of Filmmakers on Hong Kong Movies

14 March 11:30am - 12:30pm Moonlight Theatre

Speakers



Soi Cheang
Producer
Dust to Dust



Jonathan Li
Director
Dust to Dust



Stanley Kwan
Producer
Fly Me to the Moon



Sasha Chuk
Director
Fly Me to the Moon

Moderator



Thomas Shin
Hong Kong Film Critics

and expertise to the world".

Other highlights of EntertainmentPulse, the concurrent conference track of FILMART, include a deep dive into Hong Kong's film strengths and opportunities. Entitled "Meeting of Brilliance: A Dialogue between Two Generations of Filmmakers on Hong Kong Movies", it aims to inspire young creative talents and pass on the baton among generations.

Two recently critically acclaimed Hong Kong films exemplify the extraordinary collaboration of emerging directors with industry luminaries.

Esteemed directors Soi Cheang (鄭保瑞) and Stanley Kwan (關錦鵬), who are renowned for their iconic creations like *Limbo* (智齒) (2021) and *Rouge* (胭脂扣) (1987), will share the stage with Jonathan Li (李子俊), who received the Best Director award for *Dust to Dust* (第八個嫌疑人) at the 2023 Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, and Sasha Chuk (祝紫嫣), recognised with the Best Screenplay for her debut film *Fly Me to the Moon* (但願人長久). Together, they will share their unique collaborative work experiences.

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Qalbox adds first AI-produced series to Ramadan schedule

Muhammad The Mercy for the Multiverse streams globally from 10 March



Muhammad the Mercy for the Multiverse

Bitsmedia/MuslimPro's Qalbox premieres its first AI production for Ramadan, kicking off a new chapter in the 18-month-old streaming platform's original production ambitions and paving the way for a future with AI as a powerful co-creator.

The 10 x 10-minute Qalbox Original, *Muhammad the Mercy for the Multiverse*, as well as the 30 x 3-minute *Revelations of the Surahs* were produced in collaboration with Abbas Arslan's Quranscape.

The series explores lessons from the Quran, delving into wisdom and reflection on historical narratives, Qalbox says.

The promo, *The Night Journey by Prophet Muhammad*, started running in early February, and the series premieres globally on Qalbox on 10/11 March.

The series is a pivotal moment for Qalbox, a "true game-changer... a catalyst that transformed our vision into reality," says Qalbox's Singapore-based head, Junaidah Said Khan, who also describes-

the AI production process as "an eye-opening experience" and "stepping into a new world of possibilities".

"AI allowed us to explore these sacred narratives with a freshness and depth that might have been challenging through traditional means," she says.

"For us, it's like having a new member on our creative team who brings a fresh perspective and unparalleled efficiency," Khan adds.

"This partnership between technology and creativity allows our young SVOD platform to dream bigger, pushing the boundaries to produce content that speaks directly to our global audience," she says.

But the approach "isn't just about using new tools; it's about embracing a new way to share stories cherished for generations, making them accessible and relatable to today's audience," Khan says.

Speaking from his base in the U.S., Ar-



Junaidah Said Khan



Abbas Arslan

slan, former executive producer at Coke Studio and Quranscape founder, says his dream was "to tell the story of the entire Quran in a video format".

AI went a long way to solving the conceptual, cost and time barriers. Without AI, the project comes in at a minimum of US\$10 million. With AI, the budget could be somewhere around US\$250,000.

And then there's the time. Without AI, the project could take five to seven years. AI cut that to months.

At the same time, AI demands different storytelling skills, abilities and understanding of the technology, which itself is still developing, Arslan says.

"AI is every good for certain kinds of story telling," he adds. "We wrote what could be executed well."

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New Miss Universe scandal, secret recording goes viral

Beauty pageant bosses hit back at fake inclusion accusations

A new multi-layered scandal is enveloping the Miss Universe Organisation, kicked off with a leaked video recording of an internal meeting and fuelled by fraud allegations, ongoing conflict between new and former leadership, and newly lodged industrial action brought by the former CEO of Miss Universe Mexico, Rodrigo Goytortua Ortega.

The explosive video laid bare the organisation's approach to inclusion, its thinking on the way forward and its product-led business goals.

The leaked video shows Miss Universe owner, Anne Jakrajutatip, talking about opening entries to all women, regardless of gender-origins, marital status, or age.

"They can compete but they cannot win," she says a few minutes before emphasising her commitment to female empowerment.

The meeting also discussed the creation of a reality show, marketing strategy, product sales and launching products on the back of the new inclusivity.

"Give inspiration, give hope...you make them feel empowered. We can launch our products like this," Jakrajutatip is heard saying.

"Remember, platform, pageant, product. In the last 71 years, they just did pageantry," she continues.

The secret video recording went viral on social media last week, bringing out a troupe of influencers and commentators, including American beauty queen Dani Walker.

In a 21-minute YouTube video that was watched 57,000 times in a day, Walker said the contents of the video were "mindblowing" and that she was in "shock and disbelief".

In a statement released on Friday out of Mexico City, the Miss Universe organisation said it "stands strong in upholding values of inclusion, transparency and integrity".

The statement didn't specifically mention the leaked video and did not mention Ortega or anyone else by name.

The damage control mission criticised "misinformation" and smear attempts.



Miss Universe Organisation co-owners Raul Rocha Cantu, Anne Jakrajutatip

The organisation says it will not be "swayed by unfounded allegations" and has slammed malicious attempts by certain individuals to tarnish the reputation of our organisation by spreading false accusations".

"These individuals have engaged in the manipulation of digital content and the distortion of facts for personal gain," Miss Universe said, adding that all legal options would be taken "to address these unethical attempts to besmirch our organisation".

Rodrigo Goytortua Ortega, dubbed the "whistleblower" in social videos, is a key player in the latest scandal.

In addition to his role at Miss Universe Mexico, Ortega became a shareholder in adtech/marketing company, Marketthink, as part of a plan to bring the pageant to Mexico in 2024.

Ortega has now lodged a case with Mexico's labour authorities for unjustified dismissal against Miss Universe co-owner, Raul Rocha Cantu.

Ortega is claiming at least a million pesos and says he hasn't received payment as promised when he was brought

on board.

Both Ortega, who now says he fears for his life, and Cantu were at the secretly recorded meeting, along with others.

The video is the latest in a string of headline-making events and controversy that has surrounded the pageant since Jakrajutatip's JKN Global acquired the property in October 2022.

Earlier this month, Jakrajutatip and former long-time president Paula Shugart were locked in a public catfight involving suggestions of corruption and under-the-table dealing, allegations of defamation, and threats of legal action.

Shugart, who resigned in November last year, said she was breaking her silence because of the "recent false and outrageous comments" made by Jakrajutatip.

Shugart called the assertions "dangerous and reckless" and said they "degrade the Miss Universe brand and its titleholders".

In Thailand, JKN is preparing for its bankruptcy court hearing on 5/6/7 March. The hearing was postponed from end January because the company's legal director fell ill.

The poster features a vibrant orange and yellow background with bokeh light effects. A large, stylized wooden award trophy is positioned in the center-left. Overlaid on the top right are two concentric circles, one blue and one pink, framing the text 'CONTENTASIA AWARDS 2024'. To the right of the trophy, a blue circle contains the text 'Entries close on 4 March'. At the bottom, a group of diverse award winners are shown smiling and holding their trophies. The website 'www.contentasiaawards.com' and contact email 'Contact: awards@contentasia.tv' are at the very bottom.

**CONTENTASIA
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2024**

Entries
close on
4 March

Q2 release for DW's *Sex and the Body* series

Series encourages "healthy relationship with our body and ultimately ourselves"

Germany's DW has started production on a new Tagalog/English series, *Sex and the Body*, about women and their bodies.

The eight seven-minute episodes, targeting a Q2 2024 release, promise to discuss taboo topics in a series of conversations between host Ana Santos and medical expert, Dr Issa Matibag.

The series tackles a key issue: "In the conservative society that we grew up in, talking about sex and understanding our bodies was taboo, vulgar, and impolite," Santos says.

Sex and the Body is opening up conversations "so that we can begin to have a healthy relationship with our body and ultimately, ourselves," she adds.

The series is part of a global movement discovering and embracing the different aspects of female sexuality.

"For me as a Filipino woman, that bold step needs to include a local context to reflect our own cultural beliefs and how we experience sex and the body in everyday life," Santos says.

Questions the magazine programme asks include "Why don't women lose their hy-mens?", kicking off a discussion about the obsession with virginity, hymen reconstruction surgeries and tightening creams.

Other episodes look at the clitoris; menstruation and PMS; the vulva; fertility and infertility; Sex during pregnancy; the female orgasm; and the pelvic floor.

Was it difficult to find women to talk about this?

"There is a growing community online talking about pleasure and female sexuality," she says.

"However, this is more a younger generation. There's less shame talking about sexuality – the biology part of it,

"We normally say the English words for body parts because it is considered more polite. But it made me think of how that is also based on how colonialisation has made us think of our own language as inferior and vulgar."

Ana Santos



like menstruation. But women still giggle and cover their faces with their fans when talking about the emotional and psychological part, like initiating sex to satisfy your sex drive".

Santos says the team has this very act on tape; "a woman covering her face with her fan when I asked her who was going to start the honeymoon".

The production team unearthed more than a few surprises in developing the series.

For instance, Santos says, the discovery that there are standard Filipino words for parts of the anatomy like clitoris, i.e. tinggil.

"We normally say the English words for body parts because it is considered more polite. But it made me think of how that is also based on

how colonialisation has made us think of our own language as inferior and vulgar."

In addition, she adds, "I could not find a model of a clitoris – not even a plushie toy like the ones available in Europe and the U.S."

She eventually found one from a professor friend whose engineering students made one using a 3-D printer.

The third surprise from the development process was how the discovery of the obsession in Asia with skin whitening has extended to whitening the vulva and genitalia in the Philippines.

"That was our first episode where we featured soaps and lotions that whiten and tighten the vulva/hymen," she says, adding: "My god, it's my vulva, not my face!"

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What's on where...

March 2024	3-6	Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC)	Melbourne, Australia
	11-14	Hong Kong International Film & TV Market 2024	Hong Kong
	13-14	AVIA: Asia Video Summit 2024	Hong Kong
	19-21	Series Mania Forum 2024	Lille, France
April 2024	5-10	Canneseries 2024	Cannes, France
	6-7	Mip Formats/Mip Doc 2024	Cannes, France
	7	Mip Drama 2024	Cannes, France
	8-10	Mip TV 2024	Cannes, France
	25	AVIA: Future of Video 2024	Mumbai, India
May 2024	28	AVIA: Satellite Industry Forum 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
September 2024		ContentAsia Summit 2024	Taipei, Taiwan
		ContentAsia Awards 2024	Taipei, Taiwan
	3	AVIA: Korea in View 2024	Seoul, Korea
	5	Japan: Korea in View 2024	Tokyo, Japan
	24-26	APOS 2024	Bali, Indonesia
	26-29	Gwangju Ace Fair 2024	Gwangju, Korea
October 2024	10	AVIA: Vietnam in View 2024	Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
	19-20	MipJunior 2024	Cannes, France
	21-24	Mipcom 2024	Cannes, France
December 2024	3	The ATF Leaders Dialogue 2024	Singapore
	3	AVIA: OTT Summit 2024	Singapore
	4-6	Asia TV Forum & Market /ATF 2024	Singapore

Hazbin Hotel triumphs in Japan

U.S. animated series beats iconic local favourites

U.S. animated series, *Hazbin Hotel*, was Japan's top show by a long way for the week of 11-17 February.

About a month after the comedy series premiered on Amazon Prime Video, the story of princess of Hell, Charlie Morningstar, and her quest to rehabilitate sinners was the only title of the week to cross the 30x demand barrier, according to data science company Parrot Analytics.

Hazbin Hotel was also the only U.S.

production on the top 10, beating Japanese favourites, including *Attack on Titan*, *My Hero Academia* and *Jujutsu Kaisen*.

The other six series on the top 10 overall list were also Japanese originals.

Prime Video took three of the top 10 digital titles of all measured by Parrot in Japan, with a mixed bag of other platforms making up the other seven.

Netflix took one (*The Witcher*) as did Disney+ (*Loki*).

Top 10 overall TV shows: Japan

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average
1	<i>Hazbin Hotel</i>	33.64x
2	<i>Attack On Titan</i> (進撃の巨人)	29.39x
3	<i>My Hero Academia</i>	28.9x
4	<i>Jujutsu Kaisen</i> (呪術廻戦)	26.57x
5	<i>Ossan's Love</i> (おっさんずラブ)	24.33x
6	<i>Pokémon</i>	23.7x
7	<i>Frieren: Beyond Journey's End</i> (葬送のフリーレン)	23.46x
8	<i>Aibou: Tokyo Detective Duo</i> (相棒)	23.1x
9	<i>Spy X Family</i> (スパイファミリー)	22.95x
10	<i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i>	22.5x

Top 10 digital originals: Japan

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average
1	<i>Hazbin Hotel</i>	Amazon Prime Video	33.64x
2	<i>The Apothecary Diaries</i> (薬屋のひとりごと)	Nippon TV	20.66x
3	<i>Delicious In Dungeon</i> (ダンジョン飯)	Tokyo MX	18.89x
4	<i>Fischers And The Lost Treasure</i>	Youtube Premium	18.86x
5	<i>The Silent Service</i> (沈黙の艦隊)	Amazon Prime Video	14.55x
6	<i>The Boys</i>	Amazon Prime Video	9.16x
7	<i>Komi Can't Communicate</i>	TV Tokyo	9.13x
8	<i>Loki</i>	Disney+	9.09x
9	<i>The Witcher</i>	Netflix	9.02x
10	<i>High Card</i> (ハイカード)	AT-X	8.56x

Date range: 11-17 February, 2024

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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