

New iWant rolls out as ABS-CBN's iconic tower falls

Global streamer boosts streaming line-up, picks up int'l rights to GMA titles

Philippines' celebrities, creators and industry execs turned out in force to bid farewell to the iconic Millennium Transmitter, which is being demolished as part of ABS-CBN's US\$110-million sale to Ayala :and. But the once-mighty ABS-CBN didn't wait for the tears to dry on its past before it turned its eyes to the future... and the relaunch of global streaming platform iWant.

The full story is on page 5



Black Widows Korea under way

Cassie Yoo's the Soul Creative x All3Media Int'l adaptation follows *Hunter with a Scalpel* success

The Korean script for Scandi thriller *Black Widows* is about to be turned in, with production set to begin in Q2 2026. The script is by Shinho Lee (*The Chaser*). The Korean adaptation of the All3Media format is by the Soul Creative, set up a year ago by A+E Networks Korea's former head of content, Cassie Yoo. *Black Widows* is about three best friends who, after years of unhappiness, make a life-changing decision to get rid of their husbands.

The full story is on page 3

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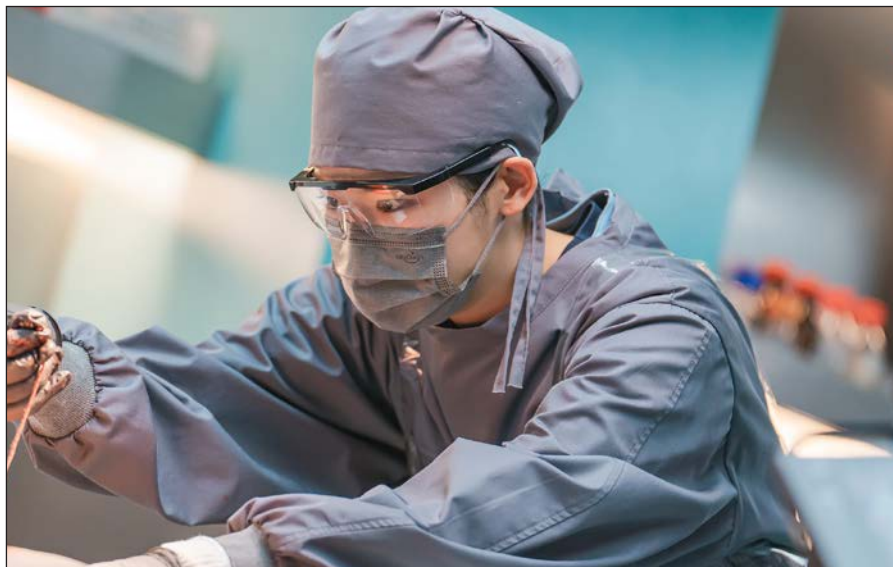


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Black Widows Korea under way

Cassie Yoo's the Soul Creative x All3Media Int'l adaptation follows *Hunter with a Scalpel* success



Hunter with a Scalpel by the Soul Creative

The Korean script for Scandi thriller *Black Widows* is about to be turned in, with production set to begin in Q2 next year. The script adaptation is by Shinho Lee, known for action crime drama *The Chaser* (2008) and director Wayne Wang's *While the Women Were Sleeping* (2016).

The adaptation was announced in December last year in a deal between All3Media International and the Soul Creative, set up about a year ago by A+E Networks Korea's former head of content, Cassie Yoo.

Black Widows is about three best friends who, after years of unhappiness, make a life-changing decision to get rid of their husbands once and for all.

The series was originally produced by Moskito Television Oy for Nelonen in Finland. An Indian version, directed by Birsa Dasgupta for Big Synergy Media, premiered on Zee5 in 2020.


The new scripted drama follows Soul Creative's debut series, psychological thriller *Hunter with a Scalpel* with Studio X+U.

Directed by Lee Jung Hoon (*The Escape of the Seven*), the 16-episode *Hunter with a Scalpel* stars Park

Ju-hyun as a brilliant but emotionally detached forensic pathologist in a story about a twisted father-daughter relationship. During an autopsy, she uncovers evidence that links the murder to her father – a serial killer thought to be dead for 20 years – and embarks on a hunt to erase her past before the police uncover the truth.

Hunter with a Scalpel streamed on U+ platforms from mid-June. Four episodes dropped a week with a same-day release on Disney+ Korea. The show hit number one in its first week, holding onto its lead through to the end of its run on 10 July and beating titles like *Nine Puzzles* and *Ironheart* (source: Flixpatrol).

Black Widows adds to All3Media's growing scripted business in Asia, and is a rare scripted format pick-up for Korea.

The show follows All3Media International's *Kafas*, the Indian adaptation of *The Forge's Dark Money*, which won the 2024 ContentAsia Award for Best TV Format Adaptation; *Marzi*, the Indian version of Two Brothers Pictures' thriller *Liar*; and two seasons of *Mithya*, the Indian version of Two Brothers Pictures thriller *Cheat*. 

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AR upsizes micro-drama in multi-genre expansion strategy

Southeast Asia streaming platforms, telcos add vertical drama to local packs

Hong Kong-based regional production house, AR Asia Productions, has upsized its vertical video rollout, delivering micro-drama titles at scale in Indonesia with streaming platform Vidio and in Thailand with True Corp's TrueVision Now, as well as sealing distribution deals for four of its 10 vertical drama apps with telcos in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The micro-drama push runs alongside production on two long-form scripted series. These expand AR's footprint from vertical and unscripted long-form, and put the three-year-old company on track for its biggest year yet.

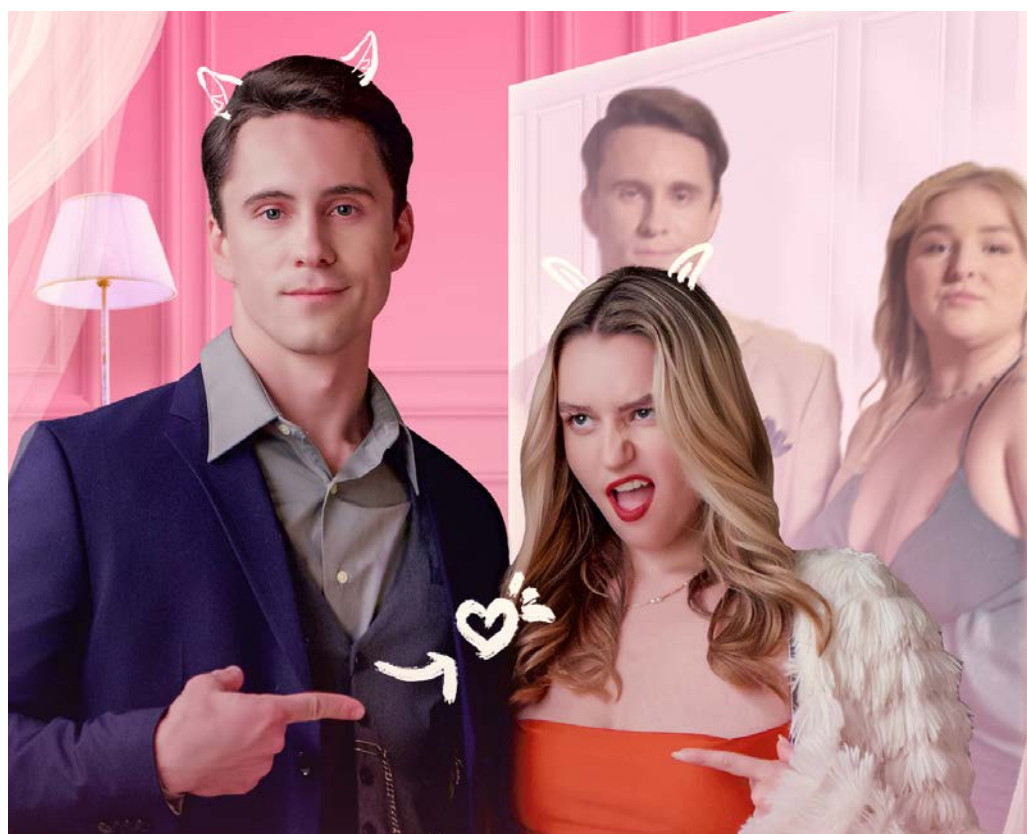
In addition, AR is driving a Taiwan-ese-backed co-production initiative – dubbed "Rocket" – to partner with Korean, Thai and Indonesian producers for a slate of six Chinese-language genre films backed by the Taiwan Creative Content Agency (TAICCA), and involving Korea's Bound Entertainment led by Samuel Ha, Thailand's Transformation Films by Sangar Chatchairungru, and Indonesia's Sinemart Production. The six titles are spearheaded by AR founder Ronan Wong.

AR's micro-drama business rides outside interest in the format. The company delivered more than 150 titles in Southeast Asia in the first six months of this year and has added almost 1,000 titles in Chinese and English to its content catalogue. AR also offers tailored vertical video sales and editing services.

In Indonesia, Telkomsel is offering multiple tier 1 apps, including Flex TV since December 2024, in a deal brokered by AR.

In Malaysia, Celcom Digi has added Playlet, home to global vertical blockbusters such as

Ronan Wong



The Mayor's XXL Wife, Her Stunning Return

The Mayor's XXL Wife, Her Stunning Return. In Thailand, telco AIS has picked up Shortmax, whose lineup includes werewolf romance, *Forbidden desires: Alpha's Love*. Officially launched in June, ShortMax is now a headline feature in AIS' mega entertainment bundle, which also includes the English Premier League and top-tier OTT services.

About 18 months after AR entered the micro-drama space, the company's co-founder and CEO, Anne Chan, is aiming for a presence in five major Southeast Asia markets by the end of this year,

and says additional collaborations are ongoing in Japan and Korea.

The two titles follow AR's first reality show production, *The Maverick Academy*, which debuted on Netflix at the end of 2024 and has been picked up by Singapore's Mediacorp and Thailand's TrueID.

"At AR, we are passionate about international co-production and content distribution," said Chan. "Whether it's long-form, short-form, or micro-drama, we bridge partners and opportunities, working closely with the regional industry. We look forward to building more strategic content partnerships that foster mutual growth and innovation." 🌟



Anne Chan

ABS-CBN rolls out new iWant as broadcast tower comes down

Global streamer boosts streaming line-up with content partners, including rival GMA

Philippines' celebrities, creators and industry execs associated with ABS-CBN over the past 50 years turned out in force this month to bid farewell to the iconic Millennium Transmitter, which transmitted its first signal in 1969.

The tower is being demolished in the once-mighty broadcaster's next shift into its future minus its broadcast franchise.

About 70% of the Quezon City HQ was sold in February this year to Ayala Land for ₱6.2 billion/US\$110 million. ABS-CBN retained a small piece of the property as its HQ.

Next to go are the studios, which will be turned over in March 2026. The full transition is expected to be complete by the end of next year.

Social media feeds were filled with end-of-an-era tributes, most of which

went along the lines of digital creator Patrick Alvarado's "you can take down a tower, but you can't erase what it stood for".

The tears over the tower were barely dry as ABS-CBN celebrated the revamp of its global streaming platform, iWant. The company said the upgrade signalled "a new era of ABS-CBN's digital transformation and viewer engagement".

The new iWant showcase was led by ABS-CBN digital head Jamie Lopez, who said iWant "aspires to be more than just a streaming service".

Echoing ABS-CBN's long-held company-wide purpose, he said the platform was "a place where we welcome all storytellers and all types of storytelling. Somewhere that we can all be proud of, but most importantly, where we will continue to be of service to the Filipino".

Unveiling the new look, iWant head Jolly Estaris showcased faster performance, sharper video previews, and seamless availability across devices.

ABS-CBN flagged upcoming iWant Original series, which feature stars like Shanaia Gomez and Kaori Oinuma, along with its acquisition of select shows and films from one-time rival GMA, which will be available outside the Philippines.

iWant titles also include shows from Regal Entertainment and Viva.

In September, the streamer is adding *BINI World Tour Stories* (aka *BINiverse World Tour Stories*), which tracks the P-pop band on its latest tour, along with ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs documentaries, and titles produced by partners including MavX, The Fat Kid Inside, Project 8Nathan Studios and Kinetek.

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Gen-Z parents redefine China's kids & family content

Focus on English-language animation as a learning tool, Bilibili study shows

Animation has become the top choice for family entertainment in China, with elevated status now being given to English-language animation as a learning tool, according to a new study released by streaming platform Bilibili.

This shift has its roots in Gen Z (born between the late 1990s and early 2010s), which is quickly becoming the core parenting group and is reshaping family content consumption.

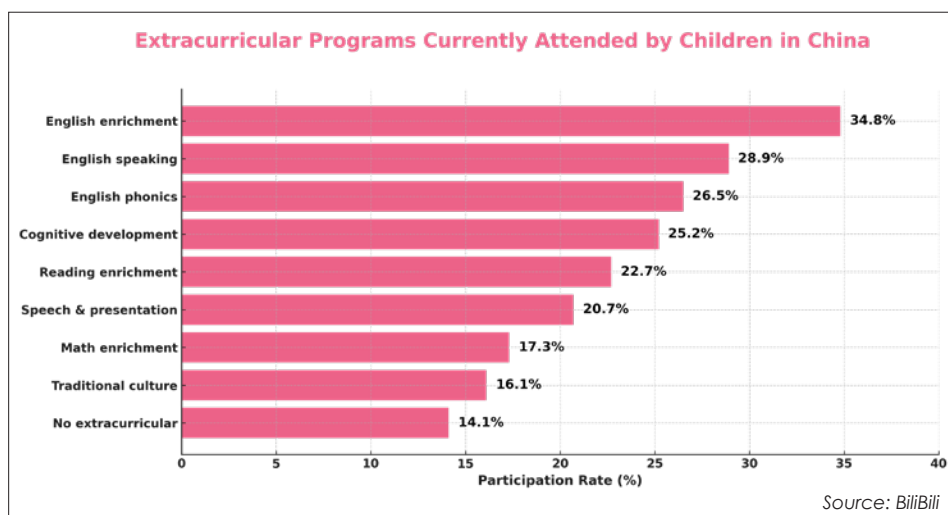
These digital-native parents are setting new expectations for how families engage with kids and family content, and are turning to online platforms for stories that are "fun, interactive and emotionally meaningful," the study says.

"In this evolving landscape, animation has become the top choice for family entertainment, not only because of its visual appeal, but also because of characters that grow with kids and support early learning through repeat viewing," the study says.

Character-driven shows, in particular, are becoming part of daily routines, offering shared moments and an easy way to support early language exposure.

Gen Z now makes up 19% of China's population – around 260 million people – and is behind nearly 40% of national consumer spending, according to the National Bureau of Statistics and the China Innovation Economy Report. By 2035, their annual spending power is expected to reach US\$2.4 trillion.

By 2024, China had 52.4 million children between the ages of 3 and 6. In



2024, China recorded 9.54 million births – an increase of 520,000 compared to 2023. The national birth rate reached 6.77%, marking the first rebound since a steady decline began in 2017. (Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China)

English-language learning has "long been a top priority for Chinese families. While it was traditionally addressed through offline tutoring and exam-oriented classes, today's parents are embracing more natural, play-based approaches that better match young children's daily routines and interests," the report says.

The survey, involving 2,000 households across new first- to third-tier cities, found that 96% of parents support English-language exposure during preschool years; 87% are interested in online course-based content; 66.7% are actively using English-language

animation as part of their child's daily learning, surpassing offline tutoring institutions (61.8%) and other tools such as language learning apps and English-language picture books.

Among the families surveyed, more than 85% of parents were born after 1990. These parents are "bringing a new perspective to what counts as 'good content' – favouring digital access, convenience, and emotional connection over rigid educational outcomes," the study adds.

"This shift is pushing platforms and content creators to rethink how they build stories that can grow with families over time," the report says, adding that platform competition is changing in line with the evolving audience, "from chasing viral hits to building sustainable content ecosystems rooted in compelling characters and consistent storytelling".

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What's Next?

Russia expands focus on Asian screens

Co-productions, development deals drive outreach



Red Silk

Russia is making a play for a bigger piece of Asia's film and TV pie, setting its sights on expanded co-productions and development deals.

The latest direction is led by joint Russian-Chinese adventure detective film, *Red Silk* (Art Pictures Distribution), which releases theatrically in China in September.

The co-production was showcased in Moscow in May as part of a campaign to deepen cultural exchanges between China and Russia. The film was also part of the Russian slate presented during the Shanghai International Film & TV Market in June.

Set in 1927 on the Trans-Siberian Express, *Red Silk* is about a cache of secret documents that determine the future of the USSR and China. As intelligence officers and thugs battle over

the papers, a young Red Army soldier and a former Tsarist agent team up to uncover a common enemy.

Eyes are also on Pan-Atlantic Studios' historical drama *The Princess of Siam*, about a Russian noblewoman and the Crown Prince of Thailand.

Roskino said discussions were being held with the Shanghai Film Group and that preliminary agreements with Thai partners (as yet unnamed) had already been reached.

Roskino, the state organisation presenting the Russian film industry at international festivals and film markets, noted an increased interest in Asia in art house titles, along with content targeting primary school children and bright, unusual characters in what the organisation dubbed the "Labubu effect".

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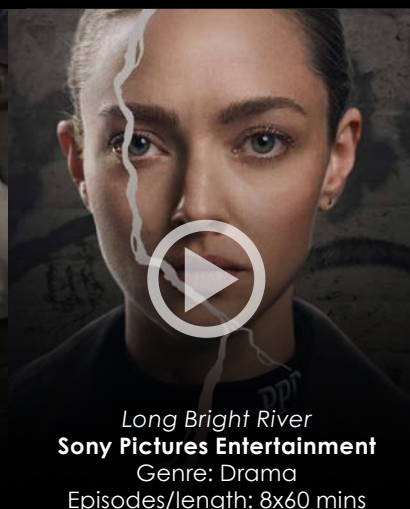
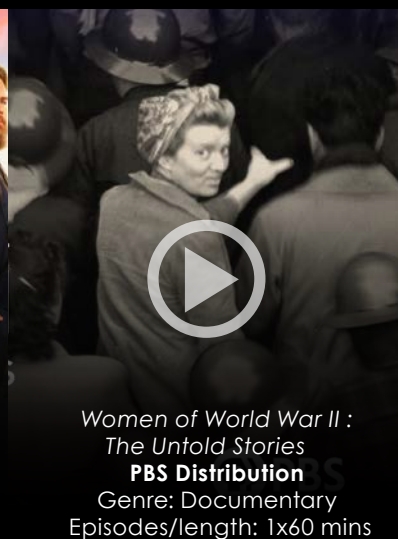
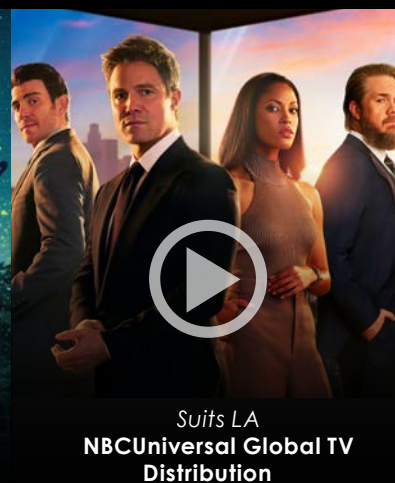
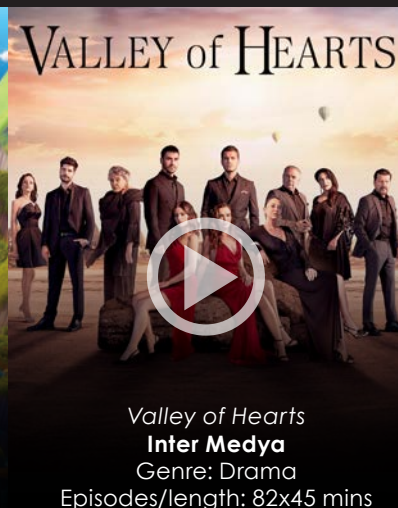
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Country Focus: Malaysia

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ContentAsia's directory, The Big List, returns in 2025 in a new monthly format, highlighting top titles from Asia and the rest of the world, along with a focus on one country and its top players every month.

Click here to access the full directory!



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Astro backs new digital marketing solutions outfit – KULT

“This is more than marketing, it’s a movement,” Malaysian media platform says

Malaysian platform Astro has taken a step further into the ‘creator economy’, investing in “culture-first digital marketing venture” KULT and, using a different approach to content and platform assets, eyeing a bigger share of the space that exists beyond Astro’s current reach.

KULT’s promise is to “help brands move at the speed of culture” with full-funnel digital marketing solutions. That means blending data, content and creators “to drive deeper audience resonance and cultural relevance across today’s most influential platforms”.

Although it sounds like an agency, KULT bosses aren’t keen on the label, preferring to be called a “digital marketing solutions partner”.

“We partner with agencies, we feed into the agency ecosystem,” says Cynthia Seow, Astro’s director of digital and customer experience and KULT director.

The new business, based in the trendy Bangsar area of Kuala Lumpur, operates entirely separately from Astro and its platforms, although it has access to Astro’s full ecosystem and assets, including first-party audience data across traditional/digital/social platforms as well as premium content. KULT is also able to activate campaigns across external (read non-Astro) channels.

The idea is to expand opportunities, not to cannibalise the existing business; Astro used the phrase “incrementality to media

investments” in its investor note, and said the venture “unlocks new revenue streams and strengthens Astro’s position as a holistic media and marketing powerhouse and a strong partner in the ecosystem”.

Seow talks about tapping incremental revenue, experimental budgets and KULT’s value as an IP-agnostic entity.

“Whichever IP I use doesn’t matter to the client, as long as I deliver the eye-balls, outcome, awareness,” she says.

About a dozen people are involved in KULT, which lives in its own office separate from Astro, and is headed by digital/adtech/startup industry veteran René Menezes with Astro’s Seow.

Seow talks about turning “reach and attention into real cultural impact and commercial outcomes” and delivering attention “that truly resonates, not just impressions that disappear”.

Astro’s broad reach across age- and language groups is compelling, and Seow has assembled a seasoned affiliate marketing team to deliver digital conversions for brands.

As of this month, Astro has created about 100,000 pieces of content across all platforms and has more than 130 million unduplicated followers across its 300+ pages. Malaysia’s population is about 36 million. “We have three to four touch points per Malaysian,” she says.

While it gets its feet under the table and its deck to brands, KULT is part of Astro’s new play for a place in the “age of endless scroll”.

“We empower brands to actively move with culture, shape crucial conversations, and drive measurable, real-world impact. This is more than marketing, it’s a movement,” she says.



Cynthia Seow

René Menezes



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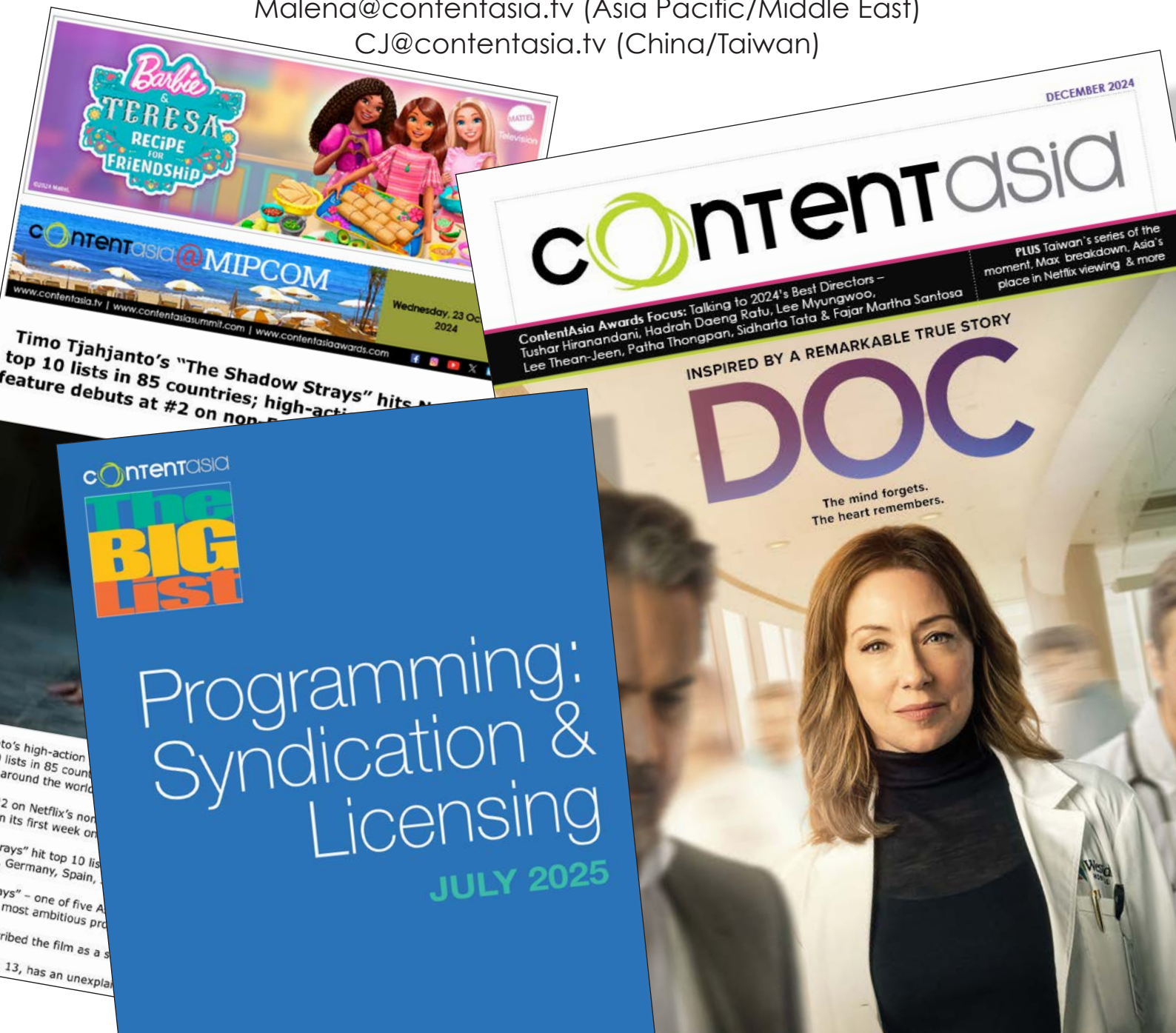
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What's on where...

July 2025	23-26	Beijing International Radio, TV & Film Exhibition 2025	Beijing, China
August 2025	28-31	Gwangju Ace Fair 2025	Gwangju, Korea
September 2025	3-4	ContentAsia Summit ContentAsia Premieres 2025	Taiwan
	4	ContentAsia Awards 2025	Taiwan
	2	AVIA: Archipelago Video Summit 2025	Jakarta, Indonesia
	16-19	BCWW 2025	Seoul, Korea
	17-26	Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) 2025	Busan, Korea
	20-23	Asian Contents & Film Market 2025	Busan, Korea
October 2025	11-12	MipJunior 2025	Cannes, France
	13-16	Mipcom 2025	Cannes, France
	28	AVIA: Northeast Asia Video Summit 2025	Tokyo, Japan
	29-31	TIFFCOM 2025	Tokyo, Japan
November 2025	4-7	Taiwan Creative Content Fest 2025 (TCCF)	Taipei, Taiwan
	4-5	Dubai International Content Market 2025 (DICM)	Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai
	30 Nov-7 Dec	Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival 2025	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
	29 Nov-1 Dec	JAFF Market 2025	Yogyakarta, Indonesia
December 2025	2	Asia TV Forum & Market 2025 (ATF) – ATF Leaders Dialogue	Singapore
	3-5	Asia TV Forum & Market 2025 (ATF) – Market & Conference	Singapore
	3-4	AVIA: Asia Video & OTT Summit 2025	Singapore
February 2026		Mip London 2026	London, U.K.
		The London TV Screenings 2026	London, U.K.
March 2026	17-20	Hong Kong FILMART 2026	Hong Kong
	24-26	Series Mania Forum 2026	Lille, Hauts-de-France
April 2026	23-28	Canneseries 2026	Cannes, France
June 2026	17-19	19th Content Tokyo 2026	Tokyo, Japan
	22-25	Sunny Side of the Doc 2026	La Rochelle, France
	24-26	Telefilm Vietnam 2026	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Love Island USA sweeps Aus demand

Dating reality show soars to 63x demand of average title
– Parrot Analytics



Top 10 overall TV originals: Australia

Rank	Title	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Love Island USA	63.0
2	Ginny & Georgia	42.9
3	Squid Game	39.3
4	Bluey	33.1
5	Saturday Night Live	33.0
6	Stranger Things	32.4
7	Love Island (UK)	32.3
8	The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon	31.5
9	Sesame Street	30.2
10	Last Week Tonight With John Oliver	29.5

Top 10 digital originals: Australia

Rank	Title	Platform	Difference from Market Average (x times)
1	Love Island USA	Peacock	63.0
2	Ginny & Georgia	Netflix	42.9
3	Squid Game	Netflix	39.3
4	Stranger Things	Netflix	32.4
5	The Amazing Digital Circus	YouTube	29.1
6	The Bear	Hulu	28.4
7	The Boys	Amazon Prime Video	24.5
8	Andor	Disney+	24.5
9	The Waterfront	Netflix	23.8
10	Hazbin Hotel	Amazon Prime Video	22.0

Date range: 22-28 June 2025

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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