

## **Showcomotion Children's Media Conference Report**

### **THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S MEDIA**

**Anna Home** welcomed delegates and thanked sponsors.

AH acknowledged that much had happened since last year's event where delegates felt 'shell-shocked' by the shift in policy affecting kids' TV production in the UK. As a result, the 'Save Kids' TV' campaign was launched to ensure kids' TV is high on the political agenda and thanked the volunteers who are involved. Anna was, however, keen to point out that this conference was not to look to the past and that it would explore new partnerships and solutions. She welcomed ideas for the future from everyone in the weeks following the conference before introducing Jana Bennett.

#### **Keynote:**

**Jana Bennett, Director BBC Vision – 'Looking to the Future'**

**N.B: The full speech transcript is available on the Conference website.**

Jana thanked Showcomotion and added that she believed the kids' content industry to be fortunate to have such a forum for creativity and debate, especially at this time. She felt that the creative and financial vigour of the sector had been taken for granted and that the recent 'Children's TV On Trial' series on BBC Four had reminded us of the originality and quality of UK programme-making. Although kids content is the third biggest TV export after drama series and films, the withdrawal of ITV1, the advertising ban and viewing fragmentation had left the sector vulnerable. Funding sources are shrinking and without action an unbalanced market place could result. Overall industry spend on first run UK programming fell by one third between 2002 and 2006 although BBC had increased investment and there was praise for S4C and C5's Milkshake. However, BBC's domination was a cause for concern and the Ofcom review will reflect this anxiety.

First Jana addressed the value of kids' TV and recognised the 'moral panic' perpetuated by the media and supported only by dubious research methodologies. She outlined what she believed to be the positive outcomes of quality TV for kids as being to:

- Stimulate curiosity, exciting new interests and creativity in children
- Grow children's understanding of themselves and their world
- Be fun, silly and bring about laughter
- Impart knowledge and life skills
- Fire the imagination and help children achieve
- Share common childhood experiences and cultural heritage to foster social cohesion
- Encourage children to see themselves as 'heroes', have adventure and overcome fears
- Incite positive action (such as contributing to Blue Peter appeals).

(Jana took this opportunity to express regret that trust in kids' TV – which she felt to be so important - had been damaged after the *Blue Peter* competition controversy).

She highlighted *The Wrong Trainers* as an example of a programme driven by children and enabled by adults as a wonderful way to address issues of child poverty and social inclusion. She praised the way the animated style enabled personal stories to be aired without revealing children's identities.

Jana took the view that kids 'deserve high quality' and to see material about and for them and cited a statistic showing that 80% of parents believe TV is good for the development of children and that two thirds want their children to watch programmes made in the UK (to reflect the English language, British culture and citizenship). She was keen to stress that good content also comes from overseas (e.g. *Lazy Town*) but foreign content should not be allowed to dominate the schedules. Therefore, BBC is committed to increasing spend and TV hours including its terrestrial stations.

As part of this, BBC are 'reprioritising' which includes:

- Extending CBBC's hours to 9pm (to better fit with actual viewing habits of children)
- Plugging the gap that exists for 13-16s
- Finding more good family entertainment such as *Robin Hood* and *Dr Who* to occupy the mass audience Saturday night slots
- Developing education content such as BBC Blast

Jana argued for a plurality of supply because the BBC wants competition in order to keep programmes fresh, lively and engaging. Ofcom will need to find ways of intervening if it is proved that the market cannot address the issue of plurality by itself. She anticipated that Ofcom will be considering all options including more commercial partnerships or 'Top-Slicing' (requiring a proportion of profits of the top producers to contribute to a special fund) but this policy could be too difficult to administrate fairly and may not help children at all. Jana suggested three more options:

- A tax break for kids' production such as that received by the British film industry
- Public commitment from broadcasters via a quota system (which Ofcom has the power to implement)
- Apply a spend commitment to broadcasters serving children and place a levy on profit

She noted that 87% of viewing hours of children are focused on dedicated children's channels. To conclude, Jana reiterated that intervention is needed and that the industry should actively engage policy makers with the message that 'the sector is under threat but the BBC should not have the monopoly as this won't be good for our kids'.

**Kate Bulkey**, Journalist, thanked Jana for her contribution and asked a series of questions.

- KB asked about Jana's views on the role of the BBC with regard to lobbying. JB replied that the BBC must continue to represent 'quality' and benchmark investment. The Autumn BBC budget will commit to an increase in investment in multiplatform, amongst other things, and will not sit on the fence by making its views clear to Ofcom.

- KB then raised the 5% budget cut across the BBC and asked how that may affect kids' content production. JB insisted that the new BBC motto will be 'Fewer, Bigger, Better' and investment will be more focused and, although there are efficiency pressures, kids remain a priority.

- KB noted that the BBC moved Saturday kids provision from BBC1 to BBC2 (implying that it is a lower priority) and also lost *Neighbours* – a family viewing show. She asked what the new 'leads' will be and if afternoon slots will be protected. JB pointed out that *Neighbours* was not in her view a kids' show and explained that BBC are looking at its entire portfolio as well as the migration of viewing to other platforms (digital and web in particular). She emphasised that there are no current plans to alter provision on BBC1 and that children adapted to the change in channels - there was only a 2% drop in viewers on BBC2. She stated that Children's programming hours are secure.

- Finally, KB suggested that kids look for kids' channels, not BBC1 or BBC2 and wondered if it made sense to keep provision on terrestrial channels. JB replied that it is a matter of social inclusion because not everyone has access to digital TV (although penetration is around 91%) and that the BBC needs to provide for the other 9% and those who don't have internet access. JB predicted that digital switchover might make a difference and a change might occur.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION**

**Moderator: Kate Bulkey**

**Panellists: Richard Deverell, Controller BBC Children's; James Thickett, Ofcom; Anna Home, Save Kids' TV, John McVay, PACT.**

**N.B: James Thickett's speech can be downloaded from the Conference website.**

**Kate Buckley** began the session by directing a series of questions to Richard Deverell.

**KB:** How will 5% cut across the BBC affect kids content?

**RD** did not know what the affect might be. He pointed out that, like the rest of the BBC, Children's is required to make efficiency savings of 5%. He surmised that new money may flow in from elsewhere (e.g. through the licence fee or commercial sources) but he was uncertain of the net effect. He highlighted the WOCC (Window of Creative Competition) and explained that the BBC now commissions half of its content in-house, around a quarter from Indies and the last quarter is a competitive process between in-house and indies.

**KB:** Will kids benefit from WOCC?

**RD** believed that the competitive process is making in-house producers 'claw-back' and the pressure is on to propose high quality content.

**KB:** Are BBC re-launching its channels?

**RD** noted that CBeebies launched last February in order to attract 4-6 year olds and more boys. CBBC will launch in Sept with more simple and coherent brand in response to feedback from children who said 'There are great fireworks but no display'.

**KB:** Will there be more 360 commissions?

**RD** replied that the BBC are trying to improve multiplatform presence across the board.

**KB:** What will be the effect of the move to Manchester?

**RD** believed it could be energising for BBC Children's; attract new talent; strike up new relationships e.g. with universities BUT it could also result in the loss of in-house talent. He stated that the transition will need to be managed if talent is to be attracted to Salford.

**James Thickett** recognised that the subject of kids' TV roused intense passion and wanted to outline 3 issues:

1. The market context for the changes
2. Ofcom's powers
3. Update on the Ofcom children's review (but emphasised it is a work in progress)

JT outlined some key statistics:

- Ofcom 'children's tracker' notes that three quarters of 12-15s have mobile phones and two thirds access the internet. Therefore, TV is being watched less, down from 17 hours per week in 2002 to 15.5 hours in 2006. 12-15s spend eight hours per week on the internet (7-12s spend seven).

- There is a 30% increase in children watching children's programmes and a decrease in children watching adult content. Terrestrial channels attract 18% of kids viewing in 2006 (compared to 45% in 2002).

- There are 30 channels that serve kids and two thirds of those are dedicated kids channels (compared to 12 in 1998).

- Since 2003, commercial revenues have fallen by a third and there's an overall reduction in spend on kids content of one fifth which translates to one third in real terms (due in part to ITV1).

- Non-PSB spend on UK originated content is stable at around 10% of the total.

JT then outlined some interventions Ofcom are considering in its research. He noted that in the 2003 Communications Act, broadcasters were required to monitor themselves in respect of original kids content. This content came under 'Tier 3' and this means Ofcom cannot regulate the number of hours and are only able to make recommendations. PSBs must decide for themselves. ITV1 consulted Ofcom but were not obliged to carry out their recommendations.

Ofcom does have control over quality and can assess the delivery across the market as a whole.

JT outlined the 4 purposes and 6 characteristics of PSB for kids (please refer to Ofcom website for list).

JT listed some research findings of parental attitudes to kids content:

80% believed kids' TV helped their children learn and develop; 76% thought quality was important; 75% wanted TV to help their children gain a better understanding of themselves; and 75% believed it was important to have UK originated content.

Next, JT outlined the purpose of the Ofcom review:

1. What is the state of kids' content?
2. What is the role of TV?
3. Options for delivery of PSB for kids
4. Regulation options

The review is being written using information gained from research, a review of the literature, stakeholder (industry) interviews, other business models, international case-studies.

JT recognised it's a complex ecology and differences in children must be respected and that the issues were well understood by Ofcom and parents alike. Ofcom are asking the question 'can BBC and commercial providers guarantee quality PSB quality and plurality amongst themselves? If not, what interventions are necessary?'

**KB:** Noted that research findings seem to point to a problem and asked JT for his view on the causes. JT replied that he recognised a change in consumer behaviour especially in older kids. Viewing is fragmented and the business model has shifted. The solutions are either to leave PSB to BBC or to intervene.

**KB:** Is there a 'crisis'?

**JT:** 'Crisis' is too emotive. There's a long term shift as a result of the digital transition.

**KB:** Does Ofcom believe the PSB values/characteristics are being failed?

**JT:** Not necessarily, the market is diverse.

**KB:** Are parents really aware of the threat?

**JT:** Yes. They value original programmes which reflect UK life.

**KB:** The PSB review will be published in 2009, this is a long way off!

JT: Ofcom don't have the power to fix the problem or move quickly (due to restrictions in the 2003 Act). Fixing the problem will take longer.

KB: Do you need more powers?

JT: Not necessarily.

KB asked Anna Home for her views. Anna replied that she was glad Ofcom were involved and were carrying out such an in depth analysis but disagreed that parents were fully aware. She expressed concern about the timetable and felt that short term action was necessary to save the industry. AH explained that Save Kids' TV (SKTV) was set-up after last year's Showcomotion and thanked volunteers. SKTV is about looking to the future and scenario planning and so Digital Public had been commissioned to explore options, starting from scratch, using the best of what's currently available. The outcome may be a proposal for a new service for kids' content that is: multiplatform, kid-centric, provides role models and is interactive. Funding may be sourced from ethical advertising, for example. AH felt it was an opportunity to do something new and the proposal from SKTV will be announced in the Autumn. She welcomed input from delegates over the next few weeks.

John McVay outlined PACT's role as a trade association and it's attempts to influence the people with power (the politicians, not Ofcom) through:

- An Early Day Motion - which received 75 signatures to support kids' TV.
- Lobbying DCMS select committee to coincide the kids' TV review with PSB review
- Lobbying and educating MPs
- Invested in software to enable letters to be sent direct to MPs (who are required by law to respond)
- Lobbying the Lords – who are shocked by the lack of support in the Communications Act for investment in kids' programmes.
- YouGov research of parents about value of kids' content.

PACT's activity is driven by urgency because it recognises the timescale is too long and the industry will suffer in the short term. PACT believe choice is important and BBC should not be the only provider of PSB content.

JM expressed disdain for the idea of quotas and that the market should be incentivised, not imposed upon and believes that Top-Slicing is too difficult to manage. JM's preferred short term intervention is the tax credit (where there's a film industry precedent).

PACT's next steps are:

- Meet the new government
- Event on 25th July with the Social market Foundation in Parliament
- Select Committee report (pivotal)
- Ofcom report response
- Labour Party Conference
- PSB Review

JM believes that research is the key and arguments will not be won without access to good facts. He has received good feedback from MPs so far.

Ofcom was asked if it endorses the idea of a tax credit and JT responded that all options are being explored via research which includes looking at six countries are being researched and tax credits have been widely used.

The session finished with a screening of the Save Kids' TV campaign film.

### **BROADCASTER FORUM**

As the pressures on commissioning grow, what are the existing networks planning for the year ahead?

**Moderator:** Steve Wynne, Rival Media

**Panellists:** Finn Arnesen, Turner Broadcasting; Michael Carrington, Cbeebies; Boel Ferguson, Jetix; Rob Gilby, Disney UK; Anne Gilchrist, CBBC; Howard Litton, Nickleodeon; Paul Robinson, KidsCo.

Finn Arnesen outlined Cartoon Network's activities. He explained that there was a rebranding and

reshuffle going on and the 6-11 market was now a priority. The network is on its 6th co-production with European and Canadian partners and, most importantly, they had launched a new studio in Soho.

The studio was set up to:

1. Encourage and nurture new UK talent
2. Grow animation expertise
3. Originate shows.

FA explained that Dan Leonard and Suzanne Burton were running the studio with four key creators and it's their job to take ideas through development. The aim is to cut out third party studios.

September 6th is the commissioning deadline when they hope to see two of the three projects go into production.

All pre-production will take place in London and this is a new commitment from the network in UK talent and content. They hope to invest in 4x 26 half hour shows in the next 4 years. The company will expect its investment back through the success of the show.

**Michael Carrington** was invited to share the latest developments at CBeebies. He noted that CBeebies was five years old in February but there's a growing gap for 4-6 year olds who are migrating to other platforms. There is also a need to address the provision for boys. The department is moving and other departments are merging but that CBeebies would become a more effective 'Tri-media' brand i.e. TV, On-line and radio.

MC reported success in obtaining extra funding from the controller and more money would be invested in content production (50% in-house and 50% UK independent and some international co-productions). There is only one commissioning round per year but MC stressed that he is happy to have a conversation about ideas at any time and as early in project development as possible.

**Boel Ferguson** announced that a UK based programme team of six people is being set up and the Jetix European Strategy would be announced soon. Jetix is producing a second series of a popular gaming show this Autumn and is also in a pan-European development deal for *K9* (a *Dr Who* spin off) and is looking for more projects which are: fresh and compelling; for boys 4-9; comedy, comedy, comedy!; sitcoms; magazine-style; live action or animation; and about 'real live' heroes.

**Rob Gilby** gave an update on Disney's activities and the launch of Disney Cinemagic as well as their recent successes including *High School Musical* and *Hannah Montana*. Disney have also been investing in original movies – *HSM* was their 60th – and have recently entered into their first UK production, *As the Bell Rings*, with Talkback Thames. This programme is an Italian format but Disney are keen to roll it out with regional adaptations.

RG put out a call for ideas for short form programmes which Disney like to invest in because there is a lot of potential for spin-offs. He was keen to stress that US programmes can be good for the UK because the countries share common values. He pointed to the success in Britain of *High School Musical* of which there had been around 300 amateur stage performances.

In terms of pre-school, RG highlighted *Playhouse Disney* and that UK talent at Elstree is being employed for *Bunny Town*. There are more pre-school pilots in development but Disney is always keen to hear more ideas as long as they address the possibility for international distribution.

**Anne Gilchrist** has been focussing on the audience in her first year in the job. As a result, some things have been dropped and other projects are being tried. She believed that too much emphasis had been placed on filling the schedules but was determined to follow the new motto of 'Fewer, Bigger, Better' and to avoid spreading the impact too thinly. Anne explained that CBBC would re-launch in the Autumn with more comedy, game shows and successful series. She pointed to the success of *RAW* which is an economical show that worked well across the week and *Animal Park* which successfully engages the audience on TV and online. Anne believes that fantasy and adventure works well e.g. *MI High* and praised *Shaun the Sheep* which showed the quality of British animation.

**Howard Litton** outlined Nickelodeon's current slate. *Genie in the House* has been a great success and a new series of 26 half hour shows has been commissioned. He was keen to point out that there are companies spending more on kids' content and it's not all doom and gloom. He highlighted Nick's piloting scheme and called for scripts to be sent in for consideration. There is

also great interest in short form which is important for mobile and web platforms and can result in series spin-offs (he cited Aardman's *Purple and Brown* as an example).

HL emphasised that Nick is spending more than ever on original productions than ever and that it does public service content by choice because they believe in the importance of such campaigns as their recent anti-bullying and environment seasons. Nick is commissioning factual, issue-based content to contribute to these campaigns. Nick is also looking for sitcoms and animation.

**Paul Robinson** announced that KidsCo will launch on September 7th and explained that KidsCo is a new model partnership of a venture capitalist, DIC Entertainment in LA and Nelvana in Canada. Although it will have fewer resources than other big players, it will benefit from having two content partners which bring a back catalogue of content to the table. The partners bringing cash, and content gets worldwide distribution in return.

PR acknowledged that KidsCo is entering a crowded market but that it would focus on other markets outside the UK (where provision is already good) initially on Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Middle East. By 2009 other territories would be served. PR was not sure when they would enter the UK market.

PR stressed that he did not believe in market interventions and that the way to fund more content was through international sales. All content should be made to travel. He wants to hear from content producers with ideas for programmes for 6-12s.

HL added that Nick is growing commitment to pre-school but that they need the producers to have the rights to ensure maximum exploitation.

FA agreed that it was important to invest in content with good export potential. He pointed to the success of *Scatoozie*, a quiz show originated in the UK but is now to be produced in Hindi.

HL was sceptical that a crisis existed, there is only a gap, and felt that the issue was too complex to be reduced to simple analysis. Although ITV1 pulling out was a problem, there are new roots emerging and he warned about being pre-occupied by being British – all content must be well written and well produced. PR agreed that kids across the world are all interested in the same things: character, story, quality. He agreed with HL that UK kids did not seem to be suffering from bad TV and that producers need to move with the times.

HL pointed to a specific area of under provision being factual which is less exportable. *Nick News* had won accolades but not ratings but they are trying to plug the gap via their campaign content.

A question from the floor asked the panellists to put investment figures against their original commissions but they were reluctant to reveal amounts. HL suggested the growth figure was in the region of 10-12%.

Another question asked the panel for their views on intervention. There was widespread agreement for the idea of tax breaks but scepticism about top-slicing and quotas. France was cited as a country where quotas have had a negative effect.

A third floor question asked the panellists which shows they coveted for their own channels:

HL: Tracy Beaker

MC: Peppa Pig

FA and BF: Sponge Bob

RG: Lazy Town

AG: Uncle Max

PR: Bob the Builder

The panellists were also asked if they would commission more '360' in future. AG replied that on-line content had to be good quality and not merely 'tagged on'. BF believed that 360 wasn't the future, it is the 'now' which MC agreed with but warned that not all programmes were suitable for 360. HL believed it was difficult to plan for a 360 programme because it's not clear from the outset what will work.

Some panellists expressed doubts about the quality of data that suggests that 70% of UK children would choose to watch UK content and called for an interrogation of such statistics.

SW asked AG if Fewer Bigger Better principle would result in fewer voices and stories. AG

suggested this was not currently the case as BBC were commissioning more to find the best programmes but didn't rule out future impact. She felt that quality took priority over quantity because poor quality shows wouldn't be watched.

The BBC representatives were asked if the move to Manchester would be problematic. AG did not feel able to offer a prediction. MC stressed that budgets would be taken to Manchester (£100million) and doesn't see why maintaining relationships with London based producers would be a problem.

Finally, the panel was asked on their view of Download to Own. Overall the panel felt that there wasn't a big enough market yet. Some felt that they would consider it if the timings within distribution windows were right, if revenues could be recouped and there was a balance with commercial concerns.

### **TV ON THE KID'S PC: THE BUSINESS OF IPTV**

New IPTV platforms are signing up shows left and right. But can kids' content make money on PTV and if so, how, how much and when?

**Moderator: Dominic Schreiber**, Journalist

**Speakers: Kate Dean**, BT Vision; **Marco Giusti**, Tiscali UK; **Marc Goodchild**, BBC Children's;

**Imran Hakim**, iTEDDy; **Alex Taylor**, Jalipo

**Produced by: Rachel Murrell**, writer, journalist and scriptwriter

**Dominic Schreiber** introduced the session by pointing to a number of launches of IPTV and asked if it could save the future of kids' TV.

**Kate Dean** explained that BT Vision had a 'gentle' launch in December 2006. It had been important to manage demand and to ensure the service was technically robust and in good shape. The service provides multi-genre content and, in terms of kids, serves 0-12s. Specifically, the focus is on pre-school and older kids. KD confirmed that BT Vision was acquiring content from independents but, as yet, she is not sure how much is needed stating that demand will lead acquisition to avoid flooding an already over crowded market where around 250 hours of kids programming can be available across channels at any one time.

Tiscali is considered BT's closest rival and **Marco Giusti** stated that on-demand programmes are well represented on the service. MG confirmed that pre-school was an important area and it was doing well because there is a gap in the market and pre-school audiences like repeat viewing which lends itself well to on-demand. KD agreed with this point although felt that adults were less amenable. MG believed the attractive interface could be the reason kids responded better than their parents.

**Alex Taylor** addressed the issue of making money. AT did not feel that subscriptions and pay-per-view worked so Jalipo came up with the idea for a viewer credit system which enables the producer to get direct access to the consumer. Viewers only pay for what they watch, topping up credits when they run low and all live and recorded video is priced by content owners at a per-minute rate. AT described the service as the 'e-bay of TV' and explained that syndication has been possible – other websites pay to embed TV content on their own sites provided by Jalipo. DS asked if IPTV could be the new Dot.Com revolution which imploded following a number of launches. AT responded that it's important to have a good idea and to have good people at the company before coming to the market.

**Marc Goodchild** pointed out that *oplayer* was not initially intended to be a children's service as it is pin protected, but a children's model will be developed. They are asking questions such as: do kids have an appetite for download? Are they good at planning their viewing and bookmark a programme for three days time? CBeebies website is designed so that children and parents use the site together and the *oplayer* will need parents to be responsible (because of the issues with using a PC) but these will change when internet will be watched through TV, therefore *oplayer* will be launched incrementally.

**Imran Hakim** explained that his product, *iTeDDy*, was created because he wanted a product for his one year old niece. He constructed a prototype and pitched it in the *Dragon's Den* and launched it at Toy Fair 07. He believes the toy market is heading the direction of electronic functionality. IH explained that his product can link to a PC and uses a very simple interface so that users are never more than three touches away from content. The product is pre-loaded with content and the will be a website for downloading more ([www.iteddy.com](http://www.iteddy.com)). IH confirmed he was looking for content providers.

Finally, panellists were asked if content for IPTV is just video or are they looking for new content. AT believes that Flash has lots of capacity for interactive (cf. *Heavy.com*) and will be part of content programming. MG confirmed that in the last commissioning round there was a lot of video content with the potential for interactivity and to compete with games.

### **SUPPORTING UK INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S FILM**

What support and strategy would ensure that the UK film industry produces more children's and young people's feature films which successfully reach their audience?

**Moderator: Sue Nott**, BBC Children's

**Speakers: Anne Brogan**, Kindle Entertainment; **Harley Cokeliss**, Barzo Productions; **Hans de Weers**, Eyeworks Egmond; **Kate Gerova**, Soda Pictures; **Thomas Hailer**, Kinderfilmfest.

**Producer: Becky Parry**, Sheffield University

**Sue Nott** introduced the session by stating that although the focus was on TV, film is in a much worse position. She posed the questions for the panel to address: Do we need more children's film? We have Harry Potter, so what is the problem? For simplicity, SN explained that the definition of 'children's film' encompassed children, young people and family films.

#### **Q. Does it matter?**

AB felt that the UK produces so few films and it is a sad reflection of the industry. The paradox is that there are big blockbusters with UK input but the reality is that none of these are funded in the UK and, therefore, key decisions are made by another culture. AB called for the industry to take action.

KG responded that it is equally important to access films globally and, in her view, the lack of a proper kids' film industry is shameful. Kids needs are not being met.

PE believed that it is important to have films made in Sweden for Swedish children but there was still discussion about whether the 'right' films are being made. A recent conference of Nordic countries addressed this. PE identified distribution of international films for kids is a problem as very few distributors are interested in distributing films of this genre.

HW recognised he is in a better position than UK producers because there is a special programme where two films are financed a year. He believed that the situation for kids' film production has improved since he began making youth films in 1995 when there was not a good market. The audience has now developed for youth films.

TH added that if children are not educated about film, they cannot be expected to watch national product in adulthood and that the market needs to build up its own audience.

#### **Q. What are the biggest challenges?**

KG identified distribution as the biggest issue because UK film is too risky and money is only made on DVD sales. If they take a risk, they are relying on parents to go with children. TV is passive but cinema is not and more needs to be offered than 'family clubs'.

HW saw funding as the biggest issue and felt that an equity risk position is the way to get a deal. HW believed UK to be behind other countries in understanding teenage films and recalled that

when *Angel for May* toured, other nationality films about sex, drugs, nihilism were coming out of Germany, Holland or Scandinavia. No one understands about the gap between child and adult – it is a no-mans land. He also felt that audiences were restricted and a young protagonist should appeal to all audiences, not just young people.

HC agreed with HW and explained that *Angel for May's* youngest viewer was 4 year old and its eldest was in their 80s. Kids films should not focus on prime demographic (12-35) because 9 out of 10 of the most successful films are family-focused, for example *Shrek*. HC also pointed to *The Golden Compass* costing £250 million which must be recouped, therefore, it cannot restrict its audience. Distributors in the UK could not understand that *Angel for May* would get an adult audience but it has had wide exhibition in rep cinemas.

AB explained that although she has not made a film, she had spent the last year trying to take a film from script to the production. She admitted to being naïve in thinking that a good story would be enough to secure funding but realised that the creative part of getting a film made is tiny proportion of the effort. In her view, 90% of the producer's effort goes into funding – every step of the way. In the case of UK authors, nobody purchased options and so there was no studio backing or money. She felt that if you do not have a blockbuster on your hands there are many obstacles. Furthermore, she highlighted that scripts are expensive, a first draft from the Writers' Guild costs around £30,000 and once there is a script, broadcasters are rarely interested. AB cited *Illustrated Mum* (Channel 4) as a successful film but distributors would not touch it, she felt that there is a real family audience that wants more challenging material but investors are difficult to convince.

TH wondered if the situation described by AB was because UK TV is too healthy and felt that in Germany, it is the other way round: in 2001, there were 8 million admissions for films like *Illustrated Mum* but described German TV as 'stone-age' compared to UK.

AB added that she perceived a lack of support for kids' film from key agencies despite having the talent to be making breakthrough films. In UK, kids' business is seen as second best in contrast to the US where the market is as important as any other genre.

#### **Q. What are the challenges in Germany?**

TH compared Germany to Sweden where there are fewer challenges and wondered why Sweden and Finland seemed to value the child in society more than elsewhere. Historically, Germany has not valued children (in the 1920s childhood was treated as an illness and in post-WW2 Germany the government banned children under 6 from going to the cinema) but in Sweden, it is a violation of the Children's Charter to block a child from development. TH also explained that Germany has local film funds that compete with each other.

#### **Q. What is the Swedish system?**

PE explained that there is a person in charge of money for kids' film with one fifth of the public funds (in Denmark it has a quarter) and that someone has found it interesting enough to create that structure. It is a corporate political decision.

#### **Q. What are the challenges in Holland?**

HW talked about the issue of financing and claimed there is jealousy of England because the language sells globally. He pointed out that producers are often forced to look for money outside of Holland but going to France and Southern Europe is difficult. There is a European fund in Brussels – 12% of budget can be raised if the product sells to 5 countries.

#### **Final comments from the floor included:**

- Education is important for kids to introduce them to national product.
- Political pressure is also important i.e. forming companies of like-minded people (like Save Kids' TV) which will make a difference to kids' film production.
- Going to the cinema is a big investment for a family in the UK.
- Challenging film content often raises the question of 'is it a kids' film?' and has censorship and marketing issues.
- There was a call to lobby the UK Film Council. Becky Parry, session producer, said she would feed all the session comments to them.

- Getting films from other parts of Europe to exhibit is very difficult.
- Distributors only feel they can pick up kids' films to show during school holiday periods and this limits income generation.

### **FORGING BETTER ALLIANCES**

Sponsored and advertiser funded programmes? Is it commercially practicable and feasible from a regulatory point of view to have retail and toy cos support productions? Explore the myths and realities of new potential investment.

**Moderator: Ted Bather**, CEO, Storyland Group PLC

**Contributors: John Deery**, Joella Productions; **Katy Boulton**, Ofcom; **Stewart Mison**, Initiative Sports Futures; **Dr Janine Spencer**, Brunel University.

**Produced by: Ted Bather**

*Sponsored by CITV*

**Ted Bather** introduced the session by raising the issue of how funding partners can be brought on to projects without compromising the integrity of the programme and that it is becoming increasingly difficult to bring retailers on board.

**Stewart Mison** outlined his background as a producer, an international account director and a rights agent before setting up a specialist unit to advise clients on using TV in more creative ways. Both broadcasters and brands are looking for products that can be delivered and need brand profile. Broadcasters are embracing alternative funding relationships and SM highlighted some questions to consider in getting the right advertising partnership:

- What are the cultural overtones?
- Are there religious considerations?
- What are the regulatory issues?

He pointed to the need for broadcasters and advertisers to understand what they want out of the relationship. The Asian market is becoming an important one and could be the funding answer but understanding youth markets is hard – for instance, in China youth are on broadband because other members of the household have control of TV viewing. India, not China, was cited as the most significant market for the future, where they are building an aspirant middleclass who are embracing new TV. SM emphasised that the individual markets must be understood. The US market shares the English language but the same rules apply because they also have to consider, for example, how they serve the large Hispanic population. Bible Belt states also pose cultural differences and US networks work differently with respect to advertising. US parents are more assertive and control kids' viewing. PBS in the US is also considered very 'uncool' so there is huge migration to digital channels and Saturday morning TV for kids is disappearing.

**Katy Boulton** talked about sponsorship in relation to the Ofcom advertising code which, she explained, applied to public service broadcasters excepting BBC (regulated separately). She raised the following points:

- The responsibilities of sponsorship outlined by the code belong to the broadcaster, not the programme producers and apply across genres. The only output that cannot be sponsored is news and current affairs.
- The Communications Act 2003 says broadcasters must comply with the code.
- The regulations about food advertising have changed, this included sponsorship deals.
- The regulation regarding product placement or reference in programmes has become less strict for sponsored content but there must not be undue prominence (unless editorially justified). BUT the Audiovisual Media Service European Directive prevents product placement in children's content. This is not likely to change.

**John Deery** described his recent experience on a commercial kids show *Underground Ernie*. It was funded with £4 million from private sources and went to the BBC in June 2006. He admitted he had never thought about the commerciality of the product and was focused on getting the script

and characters right. He expressed doubt that large budgets could be funded by international sales alone and that commercial partners were needed. The producers had tried to raise the finance themselves and set up the Joella Production Trust for this purpose and it approached Transport for London because they liked the look of its logo and discovered they had never been approached before. It had taken 4 months to get a meeting with the communications department but within 10 minutes it had been licensed. TFL did not have any creative input and the partnership worked well. This year they hope to launch internationally.

JD was asked to outline the programme's finance plan. He explained that it was based on instinct and persistence as well as the ability to pitch the potential to investors. Joella Productions was seed funded by JD and TFL offered 50% match funding if the remainder could be raised. He was successful in doing so and did not guarantee any returns to the commercial investors. JD was unable to confirm that the money had been recouped.

**Dr Janine Spencer** was asked what she felt was key to a successful programme. She stated that the best way to win children's approval of a programme is if they like the product enough to remember it and want it. In order to achieve this, the programme must capture the child's imagination. Children are born with their own personalities, belief system and ideas and simple characters will help them engage.

To conclude, from the floor Greg Childs asked the speakers to name some examples of successful advertising-sponsored programmes. Delegates came up with some:

- Britvic. Art programme pitch. Worked well, could not have been made without it.
  - Barbie. Girl Thing. An extraordinary extravaganza.
  - Emap. Football game with Channel 5. It was a match magazine programme which fell foul of compliance at one point.
  - Splash Camp – sponsored by the British Marine Federation, a charity promoting water sports who wanted to sponsor a programme rather than create its own campaign.
- Advertising sponsorship was recognised as a wonderful opportunity but the broadcasters find it difficult. There was also concern that factual content was missing out in this area.

## **DEVELOP YOUR PROJECT AND YOURSELF**

Information on courses and development labs available to broadcasters and producers to get that idea from concept to pilot.

**Moderator:** Rik Lander, writer/producer/director

**Speakers:** Frank Boyd, Unexpected Media; Geoffrey Brown, Euclid; Dan Wicksman, writer; Lucy Wurstlin, Melt

**Lucy Wurstlin** was first to talk and presented Melt, a South Yorkshire pilot scheme which she hopes to roll-out to other regions in 2008. Melt is supported by, among others: BBC, C4, Arts Council, the regional development and screen agencies. The scheme targets small digital production companies and individual practitioners and offers up to £50,000 for the development of innovative projects that utilise new platforms. The grants are intended to help the projects get to prototype stage.

LW's advice was that grant-seekers should ensure they are choosing the right fund for their project in order to secure its integrity. Melt will sign-post projects to more appropriate funding streams if necessary.

Melt supports 'user-focused' proposals and Lucy outlined some key projects that have received supported including:

'Animoodle' – an animation software product for very young children created by Showcomotion and Soda.

'Call of the Wild' – an interactive sound controlled game for children from Tuna Technologies.

'Earth Heart' – an e-learning product for healthy living which utilises school whiteboard technology. Classes play collaboratively, win credits and compete.

'Genie' – a museum and gallery project to promote children's creative writing (children interact with a genie in an exhibit).

'The Hive' – A consumer tagging system using mobile phones.

All project profiles can be found on [www.lovemelt.com](http://www.lovemelt.com)

**Frank Boyd** explained that his interest lies in the creative process and how access to the process can be facilitated with tools to help a possibility become an idea and then become a product. He recognises that the development process throws up hundreds of questions but that sometimes deadlines do not allow us time to find answers, as a result, the original idea might not reach its full potential. Therefore, FB wanted to help ask those questions earlier in the process and believes that the Lab based approach is most effective. The labs have four elements:

- Interdisciplinary team approach (wide expertise)
- Mentor and expert support
- 'Iterative' pitching (at the heart of the design process)
- Visualisation

FB explained he had worked on early BBC interactive projects and this meant he was involved in Greg Dyke's ambition to make the corporation the most creative in the world and was able to study other creative organisations across the world. He advocated a two-stage process which he saw at SRI technology company in California:

1. *Pitching ('Value Creation Process')*

The formula for pitching is: NABC

N= Need. Who needs the product?

A= Approach. What approach is required to meet the need?

B= Benefit. What are the benefits to the client?

C= Competition. Who are the competitors? Why are you better?

This process puts the user at the centre of the design process and creates a user 'persona'.

2. *The Watering Hole ('Value Proposition')*

Ideas are more fully developed through talking so you should invite contributors together for support and encouragement. In this process, De Bono's Six Hats methodology is useful for evaluating ideas.

FB noted that good design is not linear from an opportunity to 'a thingy' at the other end but rather the process is a complicated route that involves continuous perspective and editing. FB had applied his learning about the design process to the BBC Innovation Labs where 40 companies spent a week in the lab. Over half the companies ended up with a development commission. He wasn't sure if the Labs would continue now that Matt Locke, the Labs process champion, is at C4. FB added that we was also involved in 'Cross-Over Labs' with the Sheffield Documentary Festival and the London Games Festival where they would be developing new ideas from scratch which he had seen successfully done in Australia.

**Dan Wicksman** spoke about the value of the *Pygmalion* scheme for writers which he had attended and, as a result, got an agent and his first animation writing job. *Pygmalion* is the only development scheme for children's content. He felt that writers needed such schemes because they found it hard to be objective about the quality of their work and needed trustworthy feedback. There are 4 strands of the programme: TV Live Action, TV Animation, Features and Interactive. The scheme pairs participants with a mentor who is a practicing, more experience professional. Mentees and their mentors attend two residencies in two European countries but the mentee can call on their mentor at any time in between. DW identified other important elements of the scheme namely the opportunity for peer support, using actors to expose weaknesses in dialogue, focus on pitching technique and the opportunity to produce a valuable script 'calling card'. DW made an appeal to save the scheme which has not secured financial support in 2008 and asked for everyone to write to Skillset. More can be read about the scheme at [www.pygmalionplus.org](http://www.pygmalionplus.org)

Finally, **Geoffrey Brown** from Euclid had the difficult task of outlining European funding in just 10 minutes. He urged those present to find more detailed information in the Euclid leaflets and on the website [www.culture.info](http://www.culture.info) or [www.euclid.org](http://www.euclid.org)

He explained Euclid was contracted by DCMS and the EU to be the contact point for EU cultural programmes. Furthermore it is to be the contact point for the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. Several funds exist, the Transnational and the Structural funds are all relevant to media and culture as article 151 of the Treaty says cultural aspects can be taken in to account for any EU project. The EU is investing according to the so called 'Lisbon Agenda' which aims to make Europe the most competitive knowledge based economy in the world by 2010. Transnational funds require collaboration between countries and cover the following agendas: culture and media; education and training; youth (13-30); and research and development.

About 8% of EU spend addresses the Lisbon Agenda and only 1% addresses culture and media specifically.

GB acknowledged that European grants are challenging but there is money there – there are 1200 or so projects underway spending £400 million.

### **GET REAL ABOUT VIRTUAL**

What are kids really doing online? Socialising, playing, uploading? A **Showcomotion** specially commissioned research study finds out what they're up to.

**Speakers: Gary Pope, Matthew Butterworth, Kids Industries Digital.**

**N.B: The research discussed during this session is available on [www.kidsindustriesdigital.com](http://www.kidsindustriesdigital.com)**

This session focused on key findings of some research into the use of and engagement with online content by children up to 12 and the differences between boys and girls' usage.

To introduce the findings, GP and MB put technology in to context. Predictions about new technologies are often wide of the mark (the railways, mobile phones and the computer all had their critics). The 'digital playground' is nothing more than a mirror of the real life playground and children will always be children – although the critics of the virtual world do not agree and believe the virtual is taking over the actual.

Moving on to the research itself the following is a run-down of the key points: (please refer to the research presentation):

- Boys like 'avatars', choosing their own character to look cool and express their individuality. Status is vital. Avatars reflect aspirations rather than their real life perception of themselves.
- Boys will use the online world to make strategic friendships i.e. peers who will give them stuff!
- The upper age range was interested in fantasy worlds and more human characters (unlike their younger counterparts who seem to favour animals and aliens, for example).
- Girls want to be popstars and will relate to content such as the Bratz brand.
- Children seemed to prefer simple narratives and are deterred by 'big spaces' online such as Nicktropolis.
- Girls at 7 and 8 are interested in on demand and like to choose content and mix active and passive consumption.
- Girls also use the internet to research 'real life' activities such as sleep-over parties.
- MSN chat is very popular, it gives them privacy and a secure environment. Social networking sites are not interesting to the girls. MSN's popularity might be because it's like texting and is instantaneous. MSN claims not to target under 13s but it's widely used in this age range.
- TV websites are used to an extent because the acquisition of knowledge is important for playground status.
- None of the children responded positively to advertising. Very aware of being 'sold to'. This may have something to do with the Media Smart campaign.
- Girls progress through levels of online provision e.g. Barbie to Bratz to Star Dolls as they get older.
- Boys are only interested in games and prefer consoles. Club Penguin is popular up to a certain point and then becomes very uncool. Simply stated, boys love to kill things and when they email or MSN they do so to discuss games.
- Age 7-12 is the period of greatest development because children replace family with peers and social status is increasingly important.
- Children are acutely aware of stranger danger and use closed networks to protect their identities.
- Parents are broadly supportive of email and MSN chat because they perceive it to be beneficial to their children's written communications.
- Children can upload their own material, including photos, to websites and commonly believe this constitutes designing their own website.
- Up to the age of 9, the real world and the virtual world are very separate. After 10, the two become more entwined.
- There did not seem to be much awareness of the difference between legal and illegal downloading – perhaps this distinction is immaterial to children who are used to being able to access content online.

## **NEW CONTENT, NEW PARTNERS, NEW PLACES**

What are the possibilities for international co-production in new genres – factual, entertainment, comedy? And with new potential broadcast partners in new territories?

**Moderator: Louise Lynch**, Joint Managing Director, Libra Television

**Speakers: Steve Aranguren**, Disney Channel Worldwide; **Mahmoud Bouneb**, Al Jazeera Children's Channel; **Jan Willem Bult**, KRO Netherlands; **Catherine Kelly**, KOCCA; **Frank Klasen**, Super RTL; **Annie Miles**, Talent TV; **Alison Warner**, Cookie Jar

**Produced by: Dominic Gardiner**, Director of Programming, Jetix UK

The session began with a look at the definition of co-production. **Alison Warner** responded that every country's definition was unique and that in Canada, for example, it refers to the sharing of production with another country. **Catherine Kelly** referred to the approach by Korean companies who are working with European countries and get access to good animation and comedy through creating partnerships with good storytelling. CK continued that she crossed borders to finance her content and an exchange of programmes may result but sometimes producers in different countries do not meet.

**Mahmoud Bouneb** added that he the situation is 'messy' because of issues of money and rights, particularly in the Arab World where cultural clashes are common. He believed that shared language and goals were important.

**Annie Miles** addressed the issue of protecting cultural identity when international partnerships play a part. She believes that there are certain universal values applicable to all children even if cultures behave differently although admitted it was easier with pre-school and animation while drama and factual were more difficult to share between cultures. **Steve Aranguren** agreed and that kids shared a need to hear stories. He added that he thought comedy was difficult to share too.

Other speakers pointed to the need to trust collaborators and warned about trying too hard to look international and not too country specific which can lead to bland, indistinctive content. The best kind of content contains elements of fantasy and not set in too specific a time or place. It was suggested that formats were better to export and that programmes can be produced locally which has not happened much with kid's TV but is a new opportunity. The need for good writers was emphasised to make a format local and sometimes they are in short supply and MB agreed, stating he had found it difficult to find a good Arab writer to translate English dialogue. JWB cited an example on a Belgian and Dutch project (*Spotlight* – a Prix Jeunesse winner) where writers worked together and played with cultural differences to great effect and it won the prize for best co-production.

AW added that cost of co-productions may not add up and this deters the majority of producers.

JWB highlighted the EBU drama exchange where ideas are presented to 25 broadcasters. In some countries kids' TV would not exist without these exchange programmes.

### **The panelists were asked what support they would like to help facilitate new production relationships.**

AM wanted support with rights issues and stated that it is worth producers thinking closely about rights and profit-sharing. She identified this issue should be the focus of fierce lobbying by independents as there have been some success already but she added that 'super-indies' should keep rights to their content and that small indies should avoid finance from big corporations unless they have a good lawyer.

MB wanted to see a new approach to rights. He explained that the Arab territory is not limited by

geography: the UK has 3 million Arab-speakers, Canada has 6 million. He also identified the importance of internet rights and the need to work with a big producer or distributor who understands the market.

**Q. What are the other pitfalls?**

Issues raised by the panel and the floor included:

- Timing. Programme development can take 2 to 3 years to complete in which time other programmes can attract a broadcaster.
- Development funding for smaller independents to enable the idea to become a production.
- Bureaucracy can hold up the export of a programme.

**Q. Are there any instances of two companies working on a co-development?**

Panellists cited examples such as 'twinning' arrangements in Canada; Disney's collaboration with creatives; and a French project developed in Korea.

**Q. What do you feel is the ideal stage to go for a co-production?**

There were mixed views from the panel. AW and CK felt co-productions should be sought early on as it always increases the programme's values when a broadcaster is interested. But JWB did not feel that the stage was important.

Finally, a question from the floor asked if there is a marketplace for sharing and discussing ideas and taking them forward. AM pointed to the growth of Cartoon Forum to a point where it is a good place to be. She also felt that Cannes remained the best place to meet global contacts but recognised that it is a daunting and tough environment. She added that perhaps Showcomotion might become the right forum. Anna Home referred to the recent world summit in South Africa which was very successful for South Africa but less successful for the world as a whole. There is a need to revisit the basics of the World Summit to ensure it is a more effective marketplace for ideas and co-productions.

**CREATIVE KEYNOTE: INSPIRATION FOR ASPIRATION**

**Miles Bullough, Head of Broadcast and Development, Aardman Animation**

Miles began with an apology that a more 'creative' person, like Nick Park, was not present but joked that as the Executive Producer he would not mind taking undue credit. Miles focused on the development of the hit series *Shaun the Sheep*; a project he joined half way through a four-year development process. He explained that he thought there would be a plan but, in fact, they learned as they went. *Shaun the Sheep* started with *A Close Shave* in which the character makes a four minute appearance and the character outsold the film's other merchandise by 4-1. Because Nick Park believed sheep to be funny, the character was developed.

Discussions about the series had begun 6 years ago and were based on a few drawings from Nick Park. From the outset they wanted the stories to revolve around the rural setting, friendship and mischief but, importantly, to have on the one hand a simple story for kids but classic gags that would appeal to adults.

In the beginning Shaun was a pre-school show but getting the target age right proved to be the biggest problem. David Fine, who was at film school with Nick Park and known for *Bob and Margaret*, was brought on to the project but the original scripts had no real edge. The subsequent scripts were more mature and shows were like mini *Wallace & Gromit* shows so they stuck with their desire for a pre-school focus. MB felt this decision made sense at the time because there was a gap.

Next Richard Golezowski was bought on board and, like Nick, used drawings and animatics as a starting point. He wanted sheep to behave like sheep and was inspired by Gary Larson cartoons. He produced an animatic for the 'Kite' episode which set up all the rules for Shaun's world and this was used to sell the idea and was the best way to pitch. Dick Hansom took the drawings and worked up the scripts for the storyboard artists. MB acknowledged the importance of writers but added that ideas rarely came in script form. Once the shows were pitched, the target audience became 5+ and BBC commissioned it – there was relief that there was now an age group to focus on although they remained committed to making adults laugh.

They continued to ask questions about the boundaries of the show, for example, could they include aliens? (yes!), could they put humans at the centre? (no!), could they ever justify dialogue (don't know!).

The production was difficult and the budget was totally wrong. They made every mistake possible but had the belief in the project to see it through and had total backing at the top. Finally they produced a successful family show and managed to get a 5.15pm Sunday evening slot and two thirds of the audience are adults.