

# NATPE 07 **NATPE Daily**

CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION  
 MONDAY – THURSDAY  
 1.15.07\* – 1.18.07  
 MANDALAY BAY RESORT  
 LAS VEGAS NEVADA  
 \*1.15.07 Featuring Mobile++

## Strike threat looms

The continuing threat of a screen writers' strike hung over several sessions yesterday at NATPE, with *Law & Order* creator Dick Wolf saying "a perfect storm" was brewing over the share of new media revenues.

"Unless a degree of sanity comes into the proceedings pretty quickly there will be another strike," said Wolf (pictured).

"Writers and actors are feeling screwed by management over download revenues. But studios don't want to budge since download revenues could soon be their only off-network business in six or seven years. Downloads will also gut the DVD business.

"But when you actually look at download revenues, a third goes to Steve Jobs for selling his little machines under the strangest deal ever made, a third goes to



the network and the final third goes to the studio. The math is very troubling."

The networks' dependence on cheaper reality shows, he said, was "making the writers crazy," and that NBC Universal chief exec Jeff Zucker "had made a big mistake to announce that the 8 p.m. hour was for cheap programming."

When questioned further by concerned writers from the floor, Wolf added: "The big question is who's going to pay for the huge costs of launching new shows? It's becoming more expensive, and whatever happens in digital, the 93% failure rate for pilots will stay the same."

He concluded that a writers' strike was "virtually a dead cert unless we get our heads screwed on properly. If there's a strike the networks will be airing tiddlywinks competitions," adding that his Wolf Films would stay in production whatever. "I'm not the most popular member of the writers' guild."

The same issue reared its head in a later session, with MGM Studios chief executive Harry Sloan saying: "I'm very worried about the atmosphere in Hollywood as I've never seen the

*Continued on page 29*



**Former Warner Bros distribution chief Dick Robertson will have his Roast in his Roast tonight at 7:30 p.m. Hear his last words on page 16.**

## Product placement to the rescue?

Bonnie Hammer, president of USA Networks and Sci Fi Channel USA, has suggested that a return to product placement could fill the hole left by migration of spot ads out of scheduled television.

As the TV community struggles to find a commercial model to replace the impending move of advertising out of net schedules to new digital alternatives, Hammer told a packed session at NATPE yesterday that working with advertisers to integrate products into programming from an early stage may prove to be an effective commercial solution.

"In many ways we may have to

go backwards before we go forwards," she said. "We have product placement integrated into longer-form programming and movies but we may need to look back to the old sponsorship model, where broadcast and cable actually started. It may be possible to lock single advertisers onto a single product that is targeted at a single audience across platforms.

"Writers, producers and advertisers would need to work together seamlessly from the start to do this effectively."

Hammer also reflected an emerging trend to provide



advertisers with more targeted media solutions when she championed the "niceness" of her channel's brand – a term she used to try to avoid. "Now all of a sudden the fact Sci Fi is 'niche' is a great thing because it makes it 'focused,' which is important for advertisers," she said.

### Today at NATPE

9 am-6 pm EXHIBIT HALL		9-6:45 am Coffee With Ted Harbert	9 am-12:30 pm International Session: Current TV Developments in China and the U.S.
9:30-10:30 am Perspectives From the U.S.	9-10 am Getting to Know GenX-Next	9:30-11 am Who Wants to Be an Online Millionaire?	NOTE: Session Located in Lagoon G
11 am-Noon Online Video: Real and Spectacular	10:30-11:30 am Digital 2.0!		
12:30-1:30 pm Square Off	Noon-1 pm Broadband Video: Making It Real	1-2 pm Telenovelas Around the World	1:30-2:15 pm CHAT WITH Elise Doganieri
3-4 pm Studio Place: Their Site Is It All or Nothing?	2-3 pm Case Study: NextGen Platforms Catch Up With Galaxia	2:30-3:30 pm Is There a Pot of Gold? New Opportunities, New Developments in the U.K.	2:45-3:30 pm CHAT WITH Joe Michaels
4:30-6 pm How We Got Here: The Game Show	3:30-4:30 pm Creating For a Multipatform World	4-5 pm World Round Up of Buyers	3:30-4:30 pm Networking Reception LOCATION: Breakers L
	5-6 pm The Devilish Details of Digital Distribution		

# Venice to Joost

On the day that the billionaire co-founders of Skype unveiled the consumer brand for their new broadband TV venture, telecoms companies and the partners helping them move into television remained unshaken.

Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis have been developing The Venice Project for the past few years, having sold their Internet telephony business to eBay in 2005 for \$2.6 billion.

Yesterday they announced that it was being renamed Joost, ahead of a consumer launch later this year.

But speakers at the NATPE panel session on IPTV, most of which had themselves signed up to take part in Joost beta testing, were unperturbed by the emergence of what's being billed as "the first global TV distribution platform."

"There's still a lot of improvements to be made in the quality," said Benoit Joly, IPTV and mobile TV marketing



L to R: Panel members Bart Becks, Shari Barnett and Benoit Joly

director at Thomson Grass Valley. "I'm not sure we are really at risk in the IPTV field with Joost."

He said TV delivered via telecoms networks using Internet Protocol and TV delivered over the Internet to PCs were distinct propositions. Shari Barnett, director of media services at Microsoft TV, and Bart Becks, CEO of Belgacom Skynet, echoed this sentiment.

"When you're at a PC you're not sitting down on the couch. Your input device is a keyboard, not generally the remote control. There's a huge difference," said Barnett.

Becks said it would be interesting to see how Joost's peer-to-peer model developed. "The more users it has, the more powerful it becomes," he said.

Jonathan Webdale

## Heroic effort hits home

If networks knew a certain formula for creating hit network shows, there would be no such thing as cancellation. But would-be producers can take a lesson from *Heroes* creator Tim Kring.

First, Kring knew his show inside and out long before he pitched it to his producing studio, NBC Universal.

Co-executive producer and writer, Jeph Loeb said: "We went on a walk to talk about Tim's so called 'few ideas,' and everything was carefully mapped out, down to almost every line of dialogue. When it came time to watch the pilot, he put me in a tiny office where I sat watching this thing and I was completely blown away. Exactly what he told me on the walk was up on screen."

Second, he hired the best possible writers he could get. Again, Loeb tells the story: "The studio usually gives you enough



Tim Kring

money for a terrific hitter, a great pitcher, a good second baseman and then hopefully everyone else can at least play baseball. Tim's idea was, 'Why not just buy the Yankees?' He submitted a list on which were five or six A players, people who can run their own TV shows. It

was either going to be the greatest thing that ever happened or the biggest disaster ever. Surprisingly, it's ended up being this utopian situation."

Kring and Loeb also learned from other high-concept serials such as *Lost* and *Alias* that mysteries often need to be solved to hold viewer interest.

"There's this sense that a story is like a tank of gas, and if you use it up it's empty," said Kring. "But we've found that the more twists, turns, reveals and cliffhangers you can generate the more the story generates and spins on itself."

Finally, they lucked out and hired a great cast. Kring said: "Often when you do a pilot you say 'I'd really like to get a certain type of person,' but you cannot just get him. This time we were really able to go with our first choice of every single character."

■ One of the few first-run syndication success stories of this season, *Rachael Ray*, has been renewed through the 2009/10 season.

CBS O&Os in LA, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas-Fort Worth, Boston, Miami and Denver are onboard, as well as Gannett stations WXIA Atlanta, KARE Minneapolis-St. Paul and WKYC Cleveland; Post-Newsweek's KPRC Houston, KPRC Houston, WKMG Orlando and WDIV Detroit; WMAR Baltimore (Scripps Howard); and KGTV San Diego. The show is also cleared through 2010 by McGraw-Hill and Evening Telegram stations. Outside the U.S., *Rachael Ray* has been picked up by Ireland's Channel 6 here at NATPE, launching next month.

■ Jerry Springer's henchman Steve Wilkos is getting his own daily one-hour strip, courtesy of NBC Universal.

The as-yet untitled show, which will feature former Chicago cop Wilkos doling out his own brand of justice in front of a live studio audience, already has been bought by the Tribune and Sinclair station groups for daytime slots.

The show will be taped at NBC's WMAQ-TV Chicago, where *The Jerry Springer Show* has been shot for the past 16 years. Richard Dominick will executive produce this show.

■ MTV Networks Latin America is offering Spanish-language broadcasters eight new series from MTV, Nickelodeon and VH1. The new offerings include MTV's *Laguna Beach* spin-off *The Hills* and *Rob and Big*; Nickelodeon's *El Tigre*, *Mr. Meaty* and *Skimo*; The N's *South of Nowhere* and Nick Jr.'s *The Wonder Pets*.

■ BBC Worldwide is continuing to grow its international production business with the launch of a production office in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Led by Jose Sanchez, VP of Latin America, the office will build on recent productions of *Dancing With The Stars* for TVN in Chile and current productions for Arter in Argentina and SBT Channel Four in Brazil.

# Reality execs divided



The reality panel in a lighter moment

■ Kentucky-based GNF Entertainment has announced here at NATPE two new digital channels: GNF Movie Channel (aimed at 25-54s) and GNF Game & Music Channel (18-34 males). All channels are available to platforms 24/7 on a 50/50 barter or cash basis, while the movie offering switches to kids on weekends. "Broadcasters need to ease into the multichannel universe," said GNF president Gary Hohman.

■ Nickelodeon Latin America, a division of MTV Networks Latin America, has licensed its original live-action series, *Skimo*, to Mexico's Televisa Canal 5 in a multi-year deal.

*Skimo* is the story of a pair of teenaged best friends who opened a snack bar that became the coolest hang-out around. Televisa already airs Nick's *Unfabulous*, *Drake and Josh*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Jimmy Neutron*, *Danny Phantom* and Nick Jr.'s *Go Diego Go*. Televisa reaches 20 million Mexican homes.

■ Florida-based Television Syndication Company (TVS) is at NATPE pushing its new weekly music entertainment show, *Noiselink*.

Aimed at the late-night 18-34 crowd, the live music show is hosted by Lori Moses and Todd Cooper.

Also on the slate is the seventh season of *P. Allen Smith's Gardens* (cleared in 80% of the country), *Real Life 101* (90%), *Junk'd* (season 3), *Ultimate Choice* (season 3), *Kid Guides* (season 2) and, new for 2007, multi-cultural educational series *What's Up! Que Pasa?*

■ California's MonetizeMedia is using NATPE to premiere its technology platform that allows content owners to realize the value of their assets across multiple media.

The company's Media Monetization Platform combines content management, encoding, DRM, interactivity management, e-commerce and tracking, and can be tailored to the content owner's specific needs, whether for broadband, TV or mobile.

Despite no breakout reality hits since *Deal or No Deal* and the emergence of cable and broadband as alternative destinations, a panel of U.S. TV execs were divided yesterday on whether primetime still matters for reality TV.

Embassy Row president and CEO Michael Davies, ABC Entertainment's exec VP of alternative programming Andrea Wong, CAA's head of alternative TV Michael Camacho, former head of Yahoo studios David Katz, Debar-Mercury co-president Mort Marcus and 51 Minds exec producer Chris Abrego all agreed that reality TV had matured, almost to the level of comedy and drama.

"However, we risk a creative slump if we don't continue to innovate," said Wong. "I'm frustrated with the lack of idea circulation. There hasn't been a hit since *Deal*."

Execs were divided on whether cable and broadband were the answer to network primetime's

extended lull. Many reality producers have had success in pioneering reality for broadband, and Katz argued that for "production companies not getting enough bites out of the apple," broadband "could be the new cable."

Abrego, who has a deal with cable network VH1, talked up the advantages of cable. "There are hundreds of channels and this allows production

companies to do niche ideas that you couldn't see on network primetime," he said.

Camacho disagreed: "Primetime still matters. It is where the big hits are, primetime still makes the most money and you can then spin off these hits into syndication. It's still water-cooler talk," he said, claiming that it's best to sell the big idea then the ancillary revenues will come of it.

## MyNetwork wrestles IFL

Fox mini-network MyNetworkTV, Twentieth Television, local sports broadcaster FSN and International Fight League (IFL) unveiled a wide-ranging strategic alliance at NATPE yesterday.

Under the first phase of agreement FSN has multi-year rights to televise 22 one-hour late-night event programs, produced by the IFL, beginning in the second quarter of this year. FSN will also produce related programming, pay-per-view events and video-on-demand product based on the IFL mixed martial arts tournaments.

FSN and IFL will also establish a joint-venture to distribute IFL-related digital media rights, including online, broadband video and mobile, with the potential to leverage Fox's own Web sites.

## Quality video will beat user-generated 'fad'

User-generated content was described as a fad yesterday by NATPE delegates, who maintained that quality, professionally produced video would endure and advertisers would continue to cluster around it.

"UGC is flavor of the month right now but there's going to be a shake-out there and premium product will continue to win the day, no matter what the medium is," said Doug Lee, EVP at MGM's new media division, speaking at the session Content is the Connection.

Stacey Lynn Koerner, president of The Experience Practice at Interpublic, agreed, pointing out that hit TV shows, films and popular music would become more important as online social networking grows.

"In the virtual space all we

know about others is what they tell us. The only way we can decide whether those people are interesting to us is whether or not we share something with them, and most of the things we share are things that exist in mass culture," said Koerner.

She added that it was better to mine the UGC universe to understand consumers' interests and feed this back to clients rather than trying to sell ads around material whose popularity is so unpredictable.

John Garland, COO at JWT New York, underlined the point. "YouTube tends to produce these little pieces that spike and see a tremendous set of eyeball numbers over a very short period of time. For a brand it's very difficult to use that because a brand is an entity that's around for a long time," he said.