

NATPE 

07

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

# NATPE Daily

## Brits bash Upfronts

The U.S. television season, which sees one yearly commissioning round at the May Upfronts, is a madness that undermines creativity, according to leading TV bigwigs from across The Pond.

Speaking at NATPE yesterday on the panel 'Perspectives From The U.K.,' RDF super-producer Stephen Lambert said: "The striking thing about American television is how amazingly rigid that cycle is. It is unlike British TV, where there is so much more opportunity for giving creative ideas the opportunity to exist. This extraordinary ability for U.S. TV to marshal itself on an annual cycle in the end undermines creativity."

U.K. commercial network ITV's director of entertainment and comedy Paul Jackson said: "It's crazy that every May people turn up in New York and spend



Lambert and Mandabach talk shop

billions buying airtime for nearly two years hence. And then everyone pitches for writers and directors, spending \$2 million making a pilot that may never be seen. It is the maddest system ever invented."

Caryn Mandabach, who opened a production operation in the U.K. 18 months ago in order to retain rights to her programming in the protected

market, agreed. "The biggest threat to TV in the U.S. is its continued commercialization. If everything is seen as a commodity young people will be turned off. We need to allow for a breath of humanity in the process," she said.

In a separate session, Ted Harbert, president of Comcast Entertainment Group, and formerly ABC entertainment president, added fuel to the fire, saying: "Pilot season is so stupid it's stupid to call it stupid. It upsets me to see the amount of money that went into these shows this fall, when they still come, go and are quickly gone forever. The broadcast network TV business is like putting our fingers on the stove, burning our hands and then coming in the next day and doing it again."

**David Jenkinson & Paige Albinia**



**Joe Michaels, director of MSN business development, spoke yesterday about how downloads of his Golden Globes coverage far exceeded advertisers' estimates and how Brad and Angelina only had time for MSN.**

## Time to catch the digital bus

While primetime TV's top producers have no idea what the financial model reward is for putting ancillary programming on digital platforms, they all know they have to be online, on podcasts and on mobile phones, three of them said during a NATPE panel on Wednesday.

"Right now, there's not a tremendous amount of revenue in ancillary storytelling," said Damon Lindelhof, creator and executive producer of ABC's *Lost*. "How you make money off all



Damon Lindelhof

these expansions is yet to be determined, but you have to put it out there for free right now to see what the demand is."

"We are making TV shows, but the world is cross-platform and we're multi-device people. So we're stepping up and encouraging our talent and our

partners to go that route," says Ben Silverman, CEO of Reveille and executive producer of NBC's *The Office* and ABC's *Ugly Betty*.

That's easier said than done. Hollywood's writers are set to go on strike next year if complicated deals awarding them residuals for ancillary and digital programming cannot be hammered out before their Guild contracts expire in October. And while talent may be amenable to participating in Webisodes and mobisodes, they usually haven't contractually agreed to do the extra work.

"When all the actors signed their deals, they did not sign on for new media," said Lindelhof.

### Today at NATPE

9 am-4 pm EXHIBIT HALL		8-9:45 am Coffee With David Eas
9-10 am Cable Challenges '07	9:30-10:30 am Seeing It Differently	9:30 am-2 pm HD Keynote: Clint Slinchcomb, Discovery Communications
10:30-11:30 am Off Balance Sheet Financing... Honestly!	11 am-noon Need For Speed: U.S. Catching Up to Global Mobile Media	10-10:45 am CHAT WITH Rachelle Zoller
12:30-2 pm Beyond the Box: Strategies For Licensing and Merchandising TV Projects	1:30-2:30 pm Video On Demand: The Now & The Tell	11:30 am-12:15 pm CHAT WITH Kateell D. Isaacs, Warner
2:30-3:30 pm Si Habla English! How To Get Our Eyeballs and Our Money		

# L.A. to get Embassy

■ Virginia-based producer New Dominion Pictures is working with the Television Syndication Company to take two of its shows into syndication for fall 2008.

Half-hour series *The New Detectives* is a weekly strip about forensics case studies while *The FBI Files* is a crime-themed weekly hour. Both shows have had runs on Discovery Channel.

■ Discovery Networks has poached the director of programming acquisitions and strategic planning from HBO Latin American Networks to be director of programming at its People+Arts cabsat channel in the Latin American region. Vicky Zambrano will oversee programming, scheduling and acquisitions for the net, which reaches 14 million homes.

■ Warner Bros. and The CW will bring a short-form animated series based on The CW's veteran series *Smallville* to Sprint TV. The show, *Smallville Legends: The Oliver Queen Chronicles*, tells the backstory of superhero The Green Arrow. The series will premiere on Sprint TV tonight (Thursday), with a new episode premiering each of the next five Thursdays, and afterwards will be available on TheCW.com.

■ L.A.-based animation and telefilm company PorchLight Entertainment is releasing the rights to its kids Egyptian mummy series *Tutenstein* for the first time here at NATPE. It was produced for Discovery Kids and is also slated for NBC's Saturday morning schedule. PorchLight is also racking up interest from France, Germany and the U.K. for animation/live actioners *Monster Warriors* and *My Goldfish is Evil*.

■ NBC on Wednesday picked up four shows for next season: *Heroes*, *The Office*, *My Name is Earl* and *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. In addition, the network is turning game show *Identity*, which aired over five nights in December, into a regular series beginning in March.

U.K. indies Objective Productions' *Balls of Steel* and World's End's *Top Buzzer* are heading for U.S. cable following deals inked with New York producer Embassy Row. The indie has also revealed here at NATPE that it is setting up an office in L.A.

Embassy Row's Michael Davies, executive producer of the U.S. versions of *Wife Swap* and *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, told *NATPE Daily* he is producing a U.S. version of Objective's *Balls of Steel* for A&E.

"Because it's so well done in the U.K. on Channel 4, we'll stick as closely as possible to the original," said Davies adding that it would likely keep the same title. Initially it will be a two-part pilot.

Embassy Row is also making its first foray into scripted formats, with a U.S. version of World's End comedy format *Top Buzzer*, which originally aired on MTV, for Comedy Central. Davies said he was working with an L.A.



Embassy Row's Michael Davies

outfit to adapt the format, which is now at scripting stage.

Embassy Row has also struck a deal with the U.K.'s Passion Pictures, the film and animation indie behind the visual element of animated band Gorillaz, to co-produce documentaries.

The companies are currently raising finance for two documentaries, one a film about

soccer in New York in the era of Studio 54 and the other about men's professional tennis in the '70s.

Davies also talked about the company's plans to expand out of reality with the creation of factual entertainment, comedy, sports, documentary and interactive divisions.

Commenting on his content deal with Yahoo!, Davies said: "This is becoming a bigger and bigger deal with them and it's going to be a much bigger part of our business in 2007."

Finally, Davies said Embassy Row is to set up shop on the West Coast. "This is to build on our deal with Sony and first-look deal with GSN and build on our interactive business," he said. "But from a TV production point of view, the main business will remain in New York."

Embassy Row is currently in discussions with potential candidates to run the new office.

**Jules Grant**

## NATPE noms

NATPE's Rick Feldman has unveiled the 2007 co-chairs and board of directors nominations.

Emerson Coleman, VP programming, Hearst-Argyle TV, is down for a second term as co-chair. Roma Khanna, SVP content, CHUM TV, has been nominated to replace Stephen J. Davis, who has completed his term and is now on the executive committee. The noms are: Kevin Beggs, president, programming and production, Lionsgate TV; Leslie Chesloff, planning, scheduling and acquisitions SVP, Lifetime Entertainment; Michael Davies, president/CEO, Embassy Row; John Ferriter, SVP, worldwide head of non-scripted TV, WMA; Patricia Karpas, VP/general manager, AOL TV Ventures; Jim Packer, MGM's president, worldwide TV distribution; Doug Scott, exec. director of branded content and entertainment, Ogilvy Mather Worldwide and Donna Speciale, president, investment and activation, MediaVest Worldwide.

## Novelas take-off slows

Last NATPE was buzzing about telenovela formats cracking English-language U.S. networks; this time around vendors of the Latin drama form admitted it might take longer than planned.

Acknowledging that ABC hit *Ugly Betty* had lost much of its telenovela flavor, that MyNetworkTV's experiment hadn't gone according to plan and that the major nets had shelved 2006's much-publicised plans to launch their own telenovelas, Celina Amadeo, president of Dori Media Distribution, said: "We have a lot of patience. This is the main market for us, so we're going to show the networks they need telenovelas as well as soaps."

She pointed to the two billion viewers worldwide that watch telenovelas, not only in Latin America but Asia and eastern Europe, which she said, during a NATPE panel yesterday, was now as important a market for these formats as Latin America. "The

local stations groups in America are going through big changes so hopefully they'll want safe and reliable formats."

Gonzalo Cilley, Telefe International's head of formats and international production, added that while *Watch Over Me*, his format on Fox's new telenovela-only channel MyNetworkTV, was faring well, execs had admitted their expectations for the genre hadn't been met. "Our show is getting 700,000 viewers a day but I think the network is looking into other genres now."

But he added: "Ratings for telenovelas on the Spanish-language networks are growing, and the BBC has said it is developing a telenovela. What has changed is the definition of a telenovela."

Outside the U.S., fellow panelist Joanna Szybist of Mediametrie/Eurodata, said telenovelas are now found in all dayparts around the world.

# Rivals scoff at NBCU

Competing studio chiefs scoffed at NBC Universal's plans, announced last November, to program only low-cost scripted or inexpensive reality programming in the 8 p.m. hour, during a panel at NATPE on Wednesday afternoon.

The executives agreed that once a show gets picked up by the broadcast network, even if it was first developed for cable, everyone involved starts vying for more money.

Network executives believe hits are driven by top talent and high production values and it's not long before a one-hour drama such as *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*, *Lost* or *Heroes* costs up to \$3.5 million an episode.

"There isn't a network around that hasn't legitimately attempted to put on low-cost scripted programming," said Gary Newman, president of Twentieth Century Fox Television. "But they just pay lip service to it, and once a show gets into the network development process, it becomes expensive.

"The stakes are so high for success that it's easy to justify



Marc Graboff (second from left) during the NATPE discussion

one more star, one more writer, one more re-shoot, one more explosion, any of those things.

"If you are lucky enough to develop *Lost* or *Desperate Housewives* or *24*, it pays for so many of your mistakes. But the result has been a catastrophic inflation of costs where we are paying talent a crazy amount."

While studios are arguably spending too much on shows for their co-owned networks, they are hesitant to go out on a limb on shows produced for rival networks, with a few exceptions.

"When we put *House* over at Fox, the deficit on that show was bigger than we wanted to take

on a non-affiliated network," said Marc Graboff, president, NBC Universal Television, West Coast. "But when that show became a hit after [*American Idol*], we saw we had an asset on our hands and happily invested in the show."

Still, that's a bet that only the big studios can afford to place: "The cost of programming is so prohibitive that I wish luck to any modern-day Steven Cannell Productions," said Graboff. "If you aren't able to monetize those costs until you rack up \$50 million or \$60 million worth of episodes, that's a tough business." **Paige Albinak**

# Harbert set for G4 makeover

Now that he has had success turning around the brands of E! and Style, Ted Harbert, president of the Comcast Entertainment Group, is taking on former gaming network G4, he said during a morning panel at NATPE on Wednesday.

"Men are bad viewers," said Harbert. "They care only about sports, action or girls. And young men ages 12 to 24 are watching TV 10 to 12 hours per week, but they are on the Internet an average of 27 hours a week. It's crazy how much Internet time they are spending.

"With G4, men love video games, but they want to play video games, they don't want to watch a network about video games. So we know we have to be more things for more men."

Harbert says there's definitely opportunity for programmers



Ted Harbert

with that demographic right now, with Spike TV averaging a median age of 42 and skewing about half female.

Besides rebranding G4, Harbert also is encouraging all his networks to build their

presence in the broadband world.

"I spend a ton of time growing the businesses at E! Online, and we are going to totally change Style.com this year. People all across this business are talking about how much time they are spending on digital businesses. That's because we know we have to."

Perhaps Harbert's biggest success in his three years at Comcast is to turn E! around and quickly. "The agenda for E! was to move it away from all the snarky pissing on Hollywood it was doing. Every day, we were biting the hands that fed us," he said. "It frustrated me deeply that when I would go to a meeting people would say we can't do that because so-and-so isn't talking to us, so I set out to change that."

■ NBC on Wednesday finally gave the official word that its powerhouse morning news program, *The Today Show*, is expanding to four hours, a move that has been rumored for months. The extension will launch next September, and announcements regarding new anchors and reporters are forthcoming, said NBC News President Steve Capus. *Today* expanded to a third hour in fall 2006, and turns in strong daytime ratings for NBC and its owned stations.

■ A real economy is developing for content creators who are forsaking TV in favor of the Internet, NATPE attendees heard and saw yesterday.

"In the next year or two you'll see the emergence of creators who aren't using traditional media platforms, who are using the online environment and staying," said Steven Starr, CEO of Revver.com.

Evidence came in a session where delegates saw *Dancing*, a video by backpacker Matt Harding that became an online hit, attracting sponsorship to fund his adventures.

■ Fox National Cable Sports Networks has a new president. In his new post Bob Thompson will run the FSN national channel, Speed, Fox Soccer Channel, Fox Sports en Español, Fuel TV, three Fox College Sports networks and Fox's interests in the Big Ten Network, launching in August. He will stay president of Fox Sports International.

■ Atlas Worldwide Syndication & Distribution will be bringing its *Eye For an Eye* reality courtroom series back for a fourth season this year, on stations groups Tribune, Lin, Sinclair, Raycom, Viacom, Clear Channel, Belo, Hearst-Argyle, Meredith, Weigel, Winston, Emmis, Hubbard, Entravision, Granite, Scripps, Equity and Acme, among others, with *Judge 'Extreme' Akim* wielding the gavel once again. The company has also picked up distribution on Keller Entertainment action-adventure shows *Acapulco H.E.A.T* and *Tarzan*.

# Brightcove \$60m up

■ NBC has picked up six one-hour episodes of FremantleMedia North America's improvisational comedy series, *Thank God You're Here*, for an undetermined air date. The show tests celebrities' ability to improv their way out of any situation. Fremantle, the producer of Fox's *American Idol*, first launched the format, produced by Australia's Working Dog Productions, at MipTV last year, and it is already produced in 10 territories, including the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Sweden, The U.K., Portugal, Belgium, Norway, Israel, Denmark and Australia.

■ Granada International's recent opening of a sales office in Rio de Janeiro is paying off, with a hefty package deal signed with HBO Latin America. The channel took ITV1 crime drama *Prime Suspect 7*, starring Golden Globe winner Helen Mirren, *Prime Suspect – Behind the Scenes* and *Cracker – Nine Eleven*, starring Robbie Coltrane. Also in the deal were *All in the Game*, set in the soccer industry, and drama *The Impressionists*, plus several telefilms and reality series *49 Up*.

■ Brad Hauter and Bret Skipper, the duo behind America One TV makeover series *Junk'd*, are here at NATPE with their new show, *Off the Streets* (13x30'). Being offered to stations on a 3.5/3.5 barter basis for this fall, the 'inspirational' HD series takes homeless people off the streets and gives them a second chance. "We're planning to do local versions in L.A., Las Vegas, Chicago and even Puerto Rico," said a rep from Make My Yard Productions.

■ Broadcast intelligence specialist Teletrax has extended its contract with the ABC Television Network to monitor usage of promotional content by all of ABC's affiliates. ABC is the first network to sign up for Teletrax tracking and analysis across all 210 U.S. markets. Teletrax monitors short- and long-form programming and airings of TV promotions and advertising spots.

The growth potential of online video was underlined yesterday when Brightcove, a specialist in the space, was able to kick off a panel session at NATPE on the subject boosted by \$60 million of fresh funding.

The Massachusetts-based company, which is helping the likes of Time Life, Discovery and MTV put video online, will use its latest cash injection to scale its online syndication capabilities and help U.S. content owners to take their product overseas.

"It's a very rapidly growing market," said Brightcove CEO Jeremy Allaire.

"For every media company on the planet, every brand marketer on the planet, most Web site publishers that have never been in video, it's at the top of the list for 2007. We want to capture as much of that business as possible."

The fact that Allaire was speaking on a panel at NATPE called Online Video: Real and Spectacular on the same day that



Jeremy Allaire

the company announced the new funding couldn't have been more fitting.

The news took the spotlight off YouTube VP of content Kevin Donahue, who was still unable to say how the site's user-generated content would be monetized.

Allaire said that Brightcove would use its new financing, which takes it to over \$80 million in total so far, to find ways for rights holders to get paid that don't rely on speculative revenue shares.

"Significant investments" in consumer products and services, allowing individuals to create, share and build communities around their own content, are also on the cards, as is international expansion.

"This is a global market and we've mostly been focused on the U.S. to date but we have some interesting existing partnerships in the U.K., Europe and Asia," he said.

"We are looking to expand that considerably and even open the distribution opportunity for folks that have traditionally distributed content in the North American market to do international syndication in a more fluid kind of way, which the Internet will allow for."

Jonathan Webdale

## Cableready goes Latin

Cableready has signed deals with Latin American networks Universal Channel, Infinito and TNT Latin America for a raft of programming at NATPE.

Universal Channel has picked up more than 60 episodes of true-crime series *Medical Detectives*, while Infinito has bought the 22-hour *Mostly True Stories* and 60-minute *The Real Saddam*. The channel also picked up *Searching For The Roots of 9/11* and *Straddling The Fence*.

Cableready arrives in town on the heels of launching its new service with Cynopsis, CableU, a proprietary research, analysis and strategic information service that tracks 25 U.S. cablenets.

TNT Latin America has renewed *Hollywood on Hollywood*, "an inside look at feature films and the celebrities who star in them."

## Lobby regulators, producers urged

American producers should get their act together and lobby regulators on why independent production community is good for the U.S. economy, instead of complaining about issues such as piracy and funding, argued an executive on a panel hosted by U.K. trade body PACT.

In a session titled Is There a Pot of Gold? New opportunities, New Developments in the U.K., a selection of successful U.K. producers and distributors discussed what the U.S. can learn from PACT's recent success in the international marketplace after the U.K.'s Communications Act changed the terms of trade.

"Producers need to get their arses into gear and start creating dialog with the government and regulators on why indies are good for the economy. That's what we did in the U.K.," he said.

"You don't just want three or four producers controlling the screens, you want creative competition. Then you can have the best creative ideas and lots of property that you can export around the world."

Zein also suggested that for U.S. producers the pot of gold may be in coproducing with U.K. partners. "We have around half a dozen American producers that we have dialog with about coproducing shows, so that when these formats go back into the U.S., the rights for these shows will be protected and they can make a lot more money," he said.

C4i's Christina Willoughby agreed on the advantages of this set-up, and said: "When U.K. broadcasters know the company that is pitching to them and that company's reputation, it makes it easier."