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American Idol enters the final phase

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3 March 2011

The world in your living room
How correspondents help viewers understand world events

Cover:
Collage showing RTL Group correspondents Pia Schörs, Jean-Pierre Martin, Antonia Rados and Stéphane Carpentier (from top) and a poster of Gaddafi in Libya.
Putting things in perspective

Correspondents for RTL Group channels are sent to the hotspots to give viewers a better understanding of the changing world. Sometimes, this involves risking their lives.

Luxembourg - 3 March 2011

The Arab world is in a state of upheaval. Reports about revolts in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and Libya currently dominate the world’s headlines. Although the powers that be in the countries concerned try to prevent foreign reporting, numerous journalists travel to the crisis-ridden areas to give detailed reports on current events. For example, Antonia Rados is currently in Libya for Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland. “There’s no lack of enthusiasm,” she says about the rebels, who have given her a warm welcome – unlike the pro-government forces. Things are happening at a breakneck pace in the Arab world. Just last month, Rados was reporting from Egypt, where the situation was also tense.

Jean-Pierre Martin was in Cairo for RTL-TVI. He has worked as a correspondent for the Belgian TV channel for 27 years and has witnessed many difficult situations. “The city was in a state of war”, he says, describing his first impression of Cairo. “But while the protesters meant us no harm, the same could not be said of the secret police, who were on plainclothes duty among the demonstrators.” The situation was difficult on the ground, where the reporters were openly threatened, as Stéphane Carpentier reports, who joined RTL Radio in France in 2001: “The situation became extremely tense for Western journalists: in fact we became targets for supporters of the old regime. And we were easy to find, because all journalists were staying in
the two big hotels overlooking Tahrir Square. Whenever we left the hotel we were set upon, subjected to death threats, sometimes chased and beaten up."

Pro-regime forces in particular were not happy with foreign journalists because the protesters felt encouraged in their demands by the reports. The result was surveillance from the police who even moved onto the roof across the street from the hotel. “I could feel the situation was changing dramatically,” said Jean-Pierre Martin. “And that’s precisely what happened, right in the middle of a live report for the 13:00 news on Sunday, 30 January. Around a dozen police offers stormed into our little studio and broke off our broadcast just like that. They pounced on our camera and manhandled the cameraman out of the studio. Live, on air. So RTL-TVI’s viewers could see just how tense the situation was.” Stéphane Carpentier says: “As the uprising had gone on for eight days, the hotel’s management showed us the door, saying that it could no longer protect us. We were thrown out into the street. In the end, the French Embassy chartered a flight to repatriate 20 or so journalists.”

In her reports from Egypt, Antonia Rados was supported by a 21-year-old Egyptian woman who gave updates via the Internet. “She had an overwhelming desire for freedom”, recalls Rados. But Egypt isn’t the only place where journalists are sometimes unwelcome. Pia Schrörs, a Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland correspondent in China, regularly reports on government obstruction. “The state security services keep a close eye on our every move and it takes a fair amount of ingenuity and courage to produce sensitive stories sometimes,” says Schrörs. In November 2010 she was arrested while working on a report about rare earths. The reason initially given was that her team consisted of spies. The charges were explained further at the police station. “The suspicion of spying was brought about because one of the men thought our camera was in fact a machine gun,” says Schrörs. After five hours she was finally released and able to send out her report – thanks to the pressure the general consul of the province put on local authorities.

That particular situation didn’t lead to serious consequences. Other colleagues were less fortunate. In August 2009 the Dutch cameraman Stan Storimans was killed in Georgia while working for RTL Nieuws. At the time, Storimans was in Gori with his colleague and fellow journalist Jeroen Akkermans to report on the war between Georgia and Russia when a mortar exploded nearby and killed the cameraman. Akkermans told the Algemeen Dagblad: “The explosion wasn’t large, but it was very close. The first thing I saw was that three old men had died instantly. I also saw that an Israeli journalist was
in a bad way. It was only then that I saw Stan lying there.” Akkermans was lightly wounded by shrapnel in his leg. He tried to help his colleague, but his efforts were in vain. RTL Nederland’s correspondent Bart Hettema told the newspaper: “It is a cruel irony that Stan has become part of the world’s sorrows he was reporting on”.

On his flight back to France, Stéphane Carpentier talked with his fellow colleagues about what had just happened in Egypt – and about the risks they had taken: “Even the most experienced veterans said that for the first time they had been really afraid of going out to do their job. Mind you, the photographers had an even tougher time, since they had to get right in amongst the crowd to shoot their photos. Tremendous risks were taken.” But journalists aren’t the only ones who put themselves at risk during their coverage. Pia Schrörs sees her biggest challenge as “protecting Chinese people who make critical statements about their country.”

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Things are a little quieter for Teodoro Andreadis Syggelakis who reports for Alpha TV from Rome. “I can present the reality of Italy – the social, economical and political situation – from an objective point of view, but, at the same time express my personal opinion, sensibility and perception,” he says. In doing so it is especially important not to fall into clichés and describe the land as “pizza, mafia and mandolins.” To keep constantly up to date, he communicates with Italian counterparts and other correspondents, speaks to the press officers of the Italian political parties, to politicians and the people. “You have to understand the country,” says Syggelakis. This is also the key for Pia Schrörs. “‘Guan xi’ is one of the first phrases you should learn if you move to China. It means ‘contacts’,” says Schrörs. “Without guan xi you have little chance in court. Without guan xi you will have a hard time getting filming permits. Without guan xi, you are nothing in China.”

As the Egyptian example shows, foreign correspondents are also very important to the locals. Martin continues: “I think that journalists can help the cause of democracy. People rise up against repressive dictators: these are admirable revolts. Such crowds are also spurred on by our cameras because they know they have the backing of people far away and that thanks to us their fight will spread beyond the borders of their country. The secret police in Egypt were well aware of this, which is why our equipment was confiscated and why we were insulted and molested. But even though it’s dangerous work, I feel very fortunate to be there and have a front-row seat in the theatre of world affairs. That’s the beauty of our profession and the honour of any journalist.” Either way, Antonia Rados underlines that she is a reporter and sees herself not as a fighter for freedom: “Reporting has to keep out of the business of problem-solving. Others are better placed to do that. We are here simply to bring certain matters to wider attention – a task which is already difficult enough.” Teodoro Andreadis Syggelakis, who covered the earthquake in L’Aquila two years ago, says: “I think that all of these dramatic events are a special occasion to demonstrate not only professional ability, but also, human perception and sensibility.”

Recently, however, another factor has come into play: the Internet. The riots in the Arab region, especially in Egypt, were very well organised – using social networks like Twitter and Facebook. In Egypt and Libya, this also meant that access to the Internet was temporarily completely shut down. Jean-Pierre Martin explains: “Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and so on: all these social media complement our work as journalists. I look to see what people are saying there, check out the videos posted, say, by Libyans on Youtube. It’s up to us journalists to organise the information in order of importance and put things in perspective. These social media make what we do even more useful.” Antonia Rados has a similar view and thinks that anyone who provides information must be protected, noting: “The image of press freedom is undergoing a radical change.”
Grupo Antena 3 announces results for 2010

On 24 February, Grupo Antena 3 – in which RTL Group has a 21.5 per cent shareholding – published its full-year results for 2010. The company clearly benefitted from the recovery of the Spanish advertising market.

Spain - 25 February 2011

Grupo Antena 3’s revenue increased by 14.7 per cent to EUR 807.7 million (2009: EUR 703.9 million). Grupo Antena 3’s operating result (EBITDA) increased from EUR 81.2 million in 2009 to EUR 156.9 million in 2010 (plus 93.4 per cent), while the company’s net profit was up 79.7 per cent to EUR 109.1 million (2009: EUR 60.7 million).

Following the economic recovery, the TV channel Antena 3 clearly outperformed the market. While the TV advertising market was up 4.3 per cent over the whole year, Antena 3 was able to increase its TV advertising revenues by 18.5 per cent.

Grupo Antena 3 grew its fourth-quarter revenue, EBITDA and net profit year on year: the company reported an increase of 14.4 per cent in net revenues to EUR 238 million, while EBITDA grew by 32.4 per cent to EUR 60.4 million (Q4/2009: EUR 45.6 million) and net profit was up 11.1 per cent to EUR 46.5 million (Q4/2008: EUR 41.9 million).
The 12 male semifinalists performed Tuesday, 1 March at 20:00, and the 12 female semifinalists performed Wednesday, 2 March at 20:00 on Fox. Viewers can tune in to see who America picks to become a finalist on the season’s first live results show Thursday, 3 March (20:00). Also in the show, platinum-selling recording artist and American Idol judge Jennifer Lopez will world premiere the music video for her new hit single, On The Floor (feat. Pitbull).

At the end of each performance show, the phone lines opened for at least two hours and American Idol viewers were able to vote for their favorite contestants via telephone or by texting. Additionally, fans could cast their votes online at AmericanIdol.com.

To vote online during the voting window, fans could visit AmericanIdol.com and follow the directions. They were required to log in using their Facebook account to access the American Idol voting page, which featured the name and photo of each of the current contestants. To vote, fans simply chose their favorite contestant, completed the security verification and submitted their choice. After each performance show and during the online voting window, fans may cast up to 50 total online votes for that evening’s performances. Only fans with a registered Facebook account in the US, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands are able to cast their votes online.

American Idol has been number one among adults 18 to 49 for the past seven consecutive seasons and currently ranks as the number-one television show of the 2010/11 season. For additional information regarding American Idol voting, as well as exclusive videos, interviews and photos, and special behind-the-scenes information and American Idol news, visit AmericanIdol.com.

The 24 American Idol semifinalists need their fans’ votes to enter the final stage of the competition
Auditions to start in the US

Auditions for the highly anticipated singing competition *The X Factor* are set to begin in March 2011.

United States - 28 February 2011

The exciting new competition series is looking for talent young and old alike – with no upper age limit. *The X Factor* judges will travel the US searching for undiscovered talent 12 years old or over – both solo artists and vocal groups – who are willing to brave the panel for a chance to make their dreams come true.

In a departure from other singing competition series, the first time a contestant auditions for the judges, he/she will do so in front of an audience of thousands – raising the stakes and increasing the pressure to impress not only the judges, but also a potential legion of fans. This will be the ultimate test to prove they have the vocal ability, charisma and stage presence that it takes to become a global superstar and win an unprecedented USD 5 million recording contract with Syco/Sony Music.

The auditions are set to begin on Sunday, 27 March in Los Angeles at the L.A. Sports Arena. The search for the next global superstar will continue in Miami (Florida) on Thursday, 7 April; Newark (New Jersey) on Thursday, 14 April; Seattle (Washington) on Wednesday, 20 April; Chicago (Illinois) on Wednesday, 27 April and Dallas, Texas (date to be announced).

Interested solo artists and vocal groups should sign up now for audition information at Fox.com/theXfactor. Additional audition details, including eligibility requirements, are also available on this website. Hopefuls should check back regularly for updated information, rules and registration forms.
India launched its own version of *X Factor* in February. Auditions for the hit singing competition kicked off in Ahmedabad on 12 February, and the show continued its nationwide search for singing talent in three more cities, all attended by live audiences, before reaching the city of Mumbai on 4 March and 5 March. An audition will also be held in Delhi, but neither the venue nor the date has been confirmed yet.

Actor, singer and television personality Aditya Narayan is the show’s host, with hugely popular singer Sonu Nigam taking star position on the judging panel. He will be accompanied by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Salim Merchant. The three jury members are looking for talent aged 16 and above. Candidates will be grouped into three categories: “Solo artist aged 16 to 24”, “Solo artist aged 25 and above” and “Groups”.

FremantleMedia India’s Managing Director Raj Barua says: “We are very excited to be launching *X Factor* in India and expect the show to be among the biggest and the best the country’s ever seen. Viewers will be thrilled to see some of the innovations and cutting-edge technology integrated into this production and we are excited to collaborate with Sony Entertainment Television, which has been an excellent home for the biggest reality shows. By tapping into the international and creative expertise of FremantleMedia’s global network, we expect this hugely entertaining programme to set new benchmarks for all singing talent shows and become one of India’s most inspiring programmes.”
Dutch video content now available on Hyves.tv

RTL Nederland and Hyves signed an agreement to make RTL Nederland’s video content available on the social television platform Hyves.tv as of 24 February 2011.

Netherlands - 25 February 2011

As of now, Hyvers – as the users of the Dutch social network Hyves are called – will be able to watch videos and excerpts of RTL Nederland flagship programmes such as X-Factor, Goede Tijden Slechte Tijden and RTL Nieuws on Hyves.tv.

The two companies have signed an agreement that will see Netherlands’ most visited website – monthly average: 8.6 million unique visitors – offer its members a varied choice of videos on its TV platform and enable them to share these with their friends.

Arno Otto, Managing Director RTL Digital Media, comments: “RTL Nederland wants to be where the consumer is. The use of social media in combination with television is increasing steeply. By integrating our quality video content into Hyves.tv, RTL is responding to this trend.”

Yme Bosma from Hyves says: “Hyves.tv is watched by nearly 2.5 million unique viewers per month and the collaboration with RTL Nederland is likely to increase this figure. The addition of RTL Nederland content lets us offer Hyvers high-quality videos.”

YouTube content can also be viewed on Hyves.tv. In future, content from other platforms will also become available on the social TV platform.

check out Hyves.nl
“Our editorial department systematically deciphers news, be it in reports or analyses. The profile of our listeners is not easy to define since we target various social groups,” said Jacques Esnous in French daily *Le Monde* on 27 February 2011. “We have a clear editorial line: ‘Make news, even the most high-brow, accessible to everyone’. And the whole editorial team accepts that, from the youngest journalists to the most experienced writers.”

The Information Director of France’s leading radio station also spoke of the size of RTL’s editorial department which boasts 150 journalists. This human and financial investment has been driven and supported by Christopher Baldelli, appointed Chairman of the Executive Board of RTL Group’s French radio activities in August 2009. During the crisis, cuts had to be made, but they never affected the editorial department.

In view of the forthcoming presidential elections, RTL Radio is planning an “escalation in the coverage of French politics, starting with the cantonal elections,” said Jacques Esnous. He went on to announce a new programme (on the 6:30 to 7:00 slot) and a new debate (Tuesdays at 8:30), similar to the one which brings together the station’s two leading editorial writers, Alain Duhamel and Jean-Michel Aphatie (Thursdays at 8:35).
The drama *In A Better World* by Susanne Bier won an Oscar for “Best Non-English-Language Film”. The movie, which opens in German cinemas on 17 March 2011, distributed by Universum Film, is scheduled for DVD and Blu-Ray release in August 2011.

Two Senator Film productions, *The King’s Speech* and *The Fighter*, were among the big winners at this year’s awards. Universum Film is handling distribution for both. The DVD and Blu-Ray editions of the two award-winning films are scheduled for release in the third quarter of 2011.

*The King’s Speech* scored four Oscars: not only did Colin Firth prevail as ‘Best Actor’, the movie also swept the ‘Best Film’, ‘Best Director’ and ‘Best Original Screenplay’ categories. The Oscars for ‘Best Supporting Actor’ and ‘Best Supporting Actress’ went to Christian Bale and Melissa Leo for their roles in the boxing drama *The Fighter*.

*Jane’s Journey*, the feature-length documentary about the legendary primatologist Jane Goodall, also distributed by Universum Film, won the Cinema For Peace Foundation’s ‘International Green Film Award’ at the ‘Berlinale’ Berlin Film Festival. The DVD is now available in stores.

Meanwhile, in France the popular M6 series *Scènes de ménages* won the Audience Award at the ‘Festival des créations télévisuelles de Luchon’. The French series is a big hit on M6, attracting throngs of viewers daily.

Fantasia Barrino, the winner of season three of *American Idol*, won the ‘Best Female R&B Vocal Performance’ award at this year’s Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, for her song *Bittersweet* off the album *Back To Me*. The album was also nominated for a Grammy in the category ‘Best R&B Album’ but didn’t prevail in the end.

Antena 3 Films won two prizes at Spain’s Premios Goyas: The film *Lope* scored awards ‘Best Original Song’ and ‘Costume Design’. The company had entered the running with eleven nominations in all.

**Universum Film celebrates Oscars**

Three films soon to be distributed by Universum Film won an Oscar at this year’s Academy Awards on 27 February. Other RTL Group companies also won a number of awards in February.

Germany / France / United States / Spain - 3 March 2011
In the ‘Bob hilft Kindergärten’ social campaign, Super RTL partners with the Kamps bakery chain to provide EUR 75,000 for renovation work in kindergartens, with the Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk (German Children’s Charity) on board as another partner. The grand prize of 25,000 EUR additionally includes a personal visit by the hands-on builder, who will stop by to wield a trowel himself.
The German TV market in February

Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland's channels came in well ahead of the ProSiebenSat1 channels in February, scoring a market share of 36.3 per cent among 14- to 49-year-olds.

Germany - 2 March 2011

Increasing shares and leading positions

M6 was the only major channel in February 2011 to show increased ratings, scoring a total audience share of 10.5 per cent. W9 was the leading DTT channel with viewers under 50, achieving an audience share of 5.2 per cent.

France - 2 March 2011

Advertising licenses to be marketed to TV customers

IP Deutschland now offers its TV customers the option of buying on-air and online advertising licenses for Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland's popular brands from a single source.

Germany - 25 February 2011

The César awards on RTL

The crème de la crème of French cinema gathered at the Théâtre du Châtelet for the most glamorous of ceremonies – RTL Radio in France was there so listeners will not miss a single moment.

France - 25 February 2011

Culinary fights

The cooking show Top Chef is back for another season on RTL 5, with a new lineup of hopefuls doing whatever it takes to make their dream of becoming a chef in a restaurant come true.

Netherlands - 28 February 2011
Internet users love it – exactly 3,905,000 of them

More than ever the number one radio website, RTL.fr achieves its highest ratings to date with 3,905,000 unique visitors in January 2011.

France - 28 February 2011

Searching for ‘Hidden Champion 2011’

The news channel N-TV will award its first ‘Hidden Champion 2011’ for small and mid-size businesses this year.

Germany - 28 February 2011

Reality in full bloom this spring on RTL 5

This Spring RTL 5 is treating its viewers to a series of new programmes that promise to be adventurous, defiant and funny: five different reality shows to please every taste.

Netherlands - 1 March 2011

Fasten your suitcases

RTL Belgium diversifies and now offers trips at the best prices on RTLvacances.be.

Belgium - 1 March 2011

Big with audio broadcast

On 1 March N-TV was the only German broadcaster to transmit Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg’s resignation speech live – albeit without live video footage. Nevertheless, 9.4 per cent of the country’s 14- to 49-year-old audiences followed the audio broadcast.

Germany - 28 February 2011
Marco Louwerens has been appointed Programming Director at RTL 7 from 1 April 2011. He succeeds Peter Lubbers. Matthias Scholten, Director of Content at RTL Nederland says: “Marco has a good track record in the television business. He has extensive knowledge and experience when it comes to programme development as well as programming. I am pleased that we were able to appoint someone from our own ranks as the right man for the job.”

Marco Louwerens says about his new position: “There is already a solid and successful basis for a renewed RTL 7. I have loads of ideas on how the channel can be further developed and on how we can find new subjects that will reinforce RTL 7’s image as the Netherlands’ men’s channel.”

Frank Klasen (48) is the new Youth Protection Officer at Super RTL. In this capacity he ensures compliance with laws for the protection of minors and serves as an advisor in the conception and production of all the channel’s media offerings. Klasen has been with Super RTL since the channel launched in 1995 and currently works on the Programme Strategy team. He takes on the role of Sammy Wintersohl, who has left to join Bibel TV.

The protection of minors is a priority at Super RTL: The children’s channel feels a special responsibility to its young viewers and exceeds all statutory requirements both in the TV and Internet realm. In the 16 years of the channel’s history, it has not had a single complaint related to youth protection laws. Super RTL has provided staff and funds for numerous festivals and initiatives like Media Smart and Frag Finn and is also a member of the Stiftung Lesen (Reading Foundation) and a founding member of the Prix Jeunesse.