A well-balanced act
Antonia Rados talks about being a crisis reporter in the Middle East

Germany
Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland acquires Gutscheine.de

France
M6 broadcasts popular Paris Première show

United States
American Idol kicks off season 11

France
RTL Radio leading in all indicators
Cover:
Antonia Rados in Afghanistan.
“It was really just a coincidence that I landed in the Middle East,” says Antonia Rados, Chief Reporter at Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland, about the beginning of her career. She had originally planned to be a foreign correspondent, perhaps in Paris, Washington or London. For various reasons, this didn’t work out with her employer at the time, the Austrian public-service broadcaster ORF. Instead, in 1981 the young reporter was sent to Beirut to interview then-PLO chief Yasser Arafat during a crisis. “The surprising thing was that it actually happened,” Rados recalls. “Everyone was very surprised, but I was the most surprised of them all.”

So there she was in Beirut, wearing a light blue linen suit and high heels, facing off against armed militia at an improvised passport control station. “I took my team’s passports and sailed through the checkpoint,” says Rados. “I pretended I was an ‘Austrian TV’ delegation. The people were apparently so impressed they simply let me through.” Even if conventional wisdom has it that the barriers are insurmountable, or that certain regions are simply off-limits, Antonia Rados says: “You just have to try it. If I hadn’t gotten through back then, I wouldn’t be where I am today.”

This frankness is one of the secrets to her success as a reporter. “I’ve always got my mouth going and keep asking: Why do we have to do that? Why can’t we go there?,” says Rados. A colleague at ORF recently told her: “The way you talk with people in the Arab countries, they’ve probably never been talked to like that by a woman in their lives.” As a Western woman, Antonia Rados can get away with a bit more, they say. She may not be treated as well as the local men, but certainly not as badly as the local women. Still, she does feel the disadvantage: “Often you’re not taken seriously,” she says. But she makes up for that with her straightforward personality. “You have to take people at their word.”

Antonia Rados no longer wears high heels and the blue linen suit. Instead, she always packs a torch (flashlight), sturdy shoes, and something to eat. “That’s a lesson you learn when you work in these kinds of situation outside Europe. We don’t know how privileged we are and what it means to be hungry,” notes Antonia Rados. When you travel to crisis regions, “you become part of that world,” she says. “You don’t eat regularly; you don’t have everything at your fingertips; you don’t have showers; and you see a lot of suffering. But – as paradoxical as it sounds – I feel even that is part of the privilege, being able to glimpse this other world.”

In 2011, her travels mainly took her to Egypt and Libya, where she also held one of the last interviews with Muammar Gaddafi. She had already spoken with the dictator once before, in 1982. When the translator told Gaddafi this, he took off his glasses and said: “Long time no see.” Says Rados: “It’s moments like this, when you’re facing an evil man and have to make sure that he doesn’t take control of the interview. It’s a trick, you know. You’re supposed to think: how charming, he remembers me and then you lose your tension. It’s important to be a journalist
through and through and not to let yourself be hoodwinked, no matter by which regime – whether they are rebels or evil dictators. You're not there to accept 'word donations'.

For Antonia Rados, interviewing dictators is always a balancing act. For instance, Iran’s president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had offered to do an interview on condition that it would be broadcast live to Germany. “A nightmare,” says Antonia Rados. “Our team jointly decides what goes on the air and edit the interview accordingly. That gives us control over every interview. That’s the way it is. No matter who the guy happens to be.”

But experience has shown that there is a certain element of delay to dictatorships. “After the interview with Gaddafi, it took a few weeks before the Libyans realised that there’d been an interview that perhaps made their boss look pretty bad,” remembers Rados. Once that happened, her visa was denied several times, up until a time when she really didn’t need one anymore, because the rebels had already taken control of large parts of the country.

Interviews, reports and announcements are increasingly being broadcast via small satellite systems or the Internet. The latter is becoming more and more important especially for crisis reporters. “First off, so that we can even transmit,” explains Rados. “Most countries don’t have satellite stations, or they don’t work. But it’s also very important for content, to be able to ‘smuggle’ information past the regime – without it affecting the reporting.”

At the beginning of the year 2012, Antonia Rados was in Syria. There, too, she relied primarily on the Internet. She had a small satellite system in with her, but it was confiscated at immigration – with the idea that Rados would then have to use Syrian TV’s technical systems to transmit her reports. The regime would have been able to eliminate any unwanted footage. Says Rados: “We went to a small hotel that wasn’t controlled by the secret service and where the Internet worked surprisingly well. And that’s how we sent our reports.”

All new technology aside, one mustn’t forget that the reporter’s job on the ground hasn’t really changed. Although a lot of information is now supplied by bloggers, cam phones and even large agencies, having a reporter on the scene is still important: “Get outside and be an eyewitness,” says Antonia Rados, but is quick to warn people: “If you think you’re going to travel to a war zone, and then you’ll have a cam phone and get some footage, that's not going to work. You have to come prepared, have local contacts, an idea of how certain things work, and know how to interpret what’s happening.”
“The question is: how big a deal is it if 20 people are demonstrating in Egypt, or even 2,000?” explains Rados “Is this something that should be or needs to be on the RTL news?” Reporters have to rely on their instincts for this decision, which is made in coordination with the broadcasting centre in Cologne, and experience can be deceptive: “No matter how experienced you are, you still regularly get it wrong,” says Rados, and recalls that “the Egyptian revolution would have simply passed me by if Peter Kloeppel hadn’t called me and said, ‘Antonia, you’re going to Egypt’.”

Naturally it’s hard on your family if you’re constantly travelling to crisis regions as a reporter. When Rados sets off on another trip, she doesn’t say a big goodbye to her loved ones. “If you did that, you’d probably never leave,” she says, adding: “And when I go somewhere and call home, I’m the kind of person who will almost definitely lie to their family and partner – every war reporter does that, incidentally.” Otherwise, the pressure becomes unbearable, as the family at home would be worried. “You don’t want that at any cost,” says Rados. She tends to tell them that everything is fine and it only looks bad on television. “Then, when you get back and it’s all over, you can still tell them: ‘Actually it was all much worse than you ever knew.’”

And yet Antonia Rados keeps on doing it. She is a reporter through and through. “There are people, you know, who get married, get a divorce, and then they get married again,” she says. “That’s what you call hope triumphing over experience.” It’s similar for her when she returns home exhausted after a reportage trip – and just wants to do nothing at all. Maybe a six-month holiday, but certainly not a warzone, never again. But, says Antonia Rados, “then a few days go by and I’m off again.”
Entering couponing business

Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland has entered the couponing business by acquiring Gutscheine.de, one of Germany’s biggest coupon portals. RTL Interactive will take on the management of Gutscheine.de HSS GmbH as a wholly owned subsidiary.

Gutscheine.de HSS GmbH operates one of the largest coupon portals in Germany. Founded in 2009 and headquartered in Berlin, it offers several thousand online discount vouchers, promotions and local coupons – one of the largest selections on the German Internet – and partners with such noted companies as Otto, Neckermann, Adidas and Amazon. The website’s founder Marcus Seidel will continue to serve as Managing Director even after its sale to Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland.

Marc Schröder, Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland’s board member in charge of strategic business development and Managing Director of RTL Interactive, says: “Our investment in Gutscheine.de strengthens our transaction-driven lines of business and further expands our non-advertising related businesses. We see strong growth opportunities ahead for the couponing segment in Germany. The portal and its excellent team offer a large selection of offers with a lot of use value. The service allows us to participate in the rapidly growing e-commerce sector.”

Marcus Seidel, Managing Director and Founder of Gutscheine.de, says: “RTL Interactive is the best possible partner for the further development of our platform. Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland’s high-reach sites set the course for the future joint expansion of our businesses.”
Since the programme was launched last September, Zemmour & Naulleau, which airs on Groupe M6’s Paris Première pay channel, has never failed to captivate viewers’ attention. Today, the programme presented by the most dreaded polemists on the French audiovisual landscape, Eric Zemmour and Eric Naulleau, achieves a remarkable total audience share of almost 4 per cent.

Viewers’ interest in this programme, which provides a uniquely critical and expert view of current events each week, has not passed unnoticed. Thus, as Groupe M6 CEO Nicolas de Tavernost explained in Le Monde a few weeks ago: “We envisage wider exposure on M6, given the success of this magazine show.” Since 15 January 2012, the programme will be part of the M6 programme schedule, airing Sunday evenings in the 100% Foot time slot.

Zemmour & Naulleau every Friday on Paris Première at 22:45 and rebroadcast on M6 at 0:15 on Sundays.
A much-awaited eleventh season

The eleventh season of FremantleMedia North America produced hit talent show American Idol kicked off, featuring host Ryan Seacrest and judges Randy Jackson, Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler.

North America - 18 January 2012

Beating off competition from America’s Got Talent, Dancing With The Stars, So You Think You Can Dance and The Voice, the talent show American Idol was recently voted America’s “Favourite Competition Show” at the “People’s Choice Awards” – and this for the fifth time since its launch in 2002. On 18 January, it opened season 11, showcasing the nation’s most extraordinary talents.

Cécile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of FremantleMedia North America and Executive Producer of American Idol, says, “When Idol started, there was only one of its kind, and the truth is now there’s a lot of these shows. It’s therefore a more competitive marketplace, but in the end competition is good. It’s good for everybody. It means you have to raise your game. And that’s what we try and do. Every season we come back and we try to be better than the season before.”

As in the previous years, the show’s judges – Jackson, Lopez and Tyler – travelled to Savannah, Aspen, Galveston, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego and St. Louis in search of contestants with the raw talent and potential to become the next American Idol. The audition stages will be broadcast from the end of January until beginning of February. The contestants who impress the judges during their auditions will head to Hollywood and be put to the ultimate test during the “Hollywood Rounds,” airing from 9 February until the 16 February.

Those talented enough to make it through Hollywood must then take the “Performance Challenge,” where they face the judges one last time before the top male and top female semifinalists are revealed on 23 February. As usual, the judges have their say after every performance, but it’s the viewing public that determines who will advance to the next round of the competition and who will go home.

In the milestone 400th episode, airing on a special night (28 February), the first group of semifinalists will take to the stage to sing for America’s votes. The remaining semifinalists will perform the following night. The competition takes an intense turn with the live results show on 1 March, when America’s vote reveals the first set of finalists. Those that remain then have one last chance to perform for the judges who will round out the 2012 American Idol finalists with their wild card picks.

The competition heats up to fever pitch when the finalists perform on 7 March. One finalist’s journey will end as America’s vote is revealed the following day. Each week after that, the hopefuls will continue to give their best in hopes of becoming the next American Idol.

For more information, please visit AmericanIdol.com

Steven Tyler, Ryan Seacrest, Jennifer Lopez and Randy Jackson (from left to right)
Despite a 1.4 per cent decline in cumulative audience (the number of people listening to the station at least once during the day) as compared to November to December 2010, RTL Radio maintained its absolute number one position in all indicators, with an 11.8 per cent cumulative audience (representing 6.179 million listeners per day), an 11.9 per cent market share and a daily listening duration of 2 hours 22 minutes.

“In this wave, it’s true that we saw a drop. But we’re starting from a very high point of reference: one year ago RTL Radio had the highest ratings, all waves and all radio stations included, in 10 years,” said Christopher Baldelli, Chairman of the Board of RTL Group’s French radio stations to media webzine Ozap.com. “This survey is a little special as there are only 36 days of measurement taken into account by Médiamétrie. This wave is considered slightly atypical, especially when one looks at the previous September to October wave when RTL Radio achieved its highest ratings for the start of the new season.” To summarise the 12 previous months, this survey confirms RTL Radio’s status as ‘absolute number one in 2011’, distinguishing itself in every indicator, throughout the entire year.

In the music radio market, Fun Radio ended 2011 in second place behind NRJ with a 7.4 per cent cumulative audience and 3,865,000 listeners per day, thus registering its highest score ever (equal to the year 2010). In full expansion, the station gained 396,000 listeners in three years and 1,026,000 listeners in six years. The morning show Bruno dans la radio, airing weekdays from 6:00 to 9:00, registered a market share of 3.1 per cent, representing an increase of 19 per cent as compared to the previous show that ran in the same period, Manu à la radio. In the evening, Karel libre antenne, airing weeknights from 21:00 to midnight, obtained a 6.4 per cent market share and registered its highest score in nine years.

With a gain of 182,000 listeners in one year and 2,577,000 listeners per day, RTL 2 saw a 0.3 percentage point increase in cumulative audience in one year (as compared to 4.6 per cent in November to December 2010). The station with the ‘pop-rock’ sound thus maintained its leading position ahead of its competitors in the young adult segment and registered its best performance ever in this indicator. With a 2.9 per cent market share, the morning show Le Grand Morning presented by Christophe Nicolas and Agathe Lecaron achieved a new record, increasing its ratings in all audience criteria as compared to 2010.
Jungle, fun and adventure

Germany’s viewers once again crave ‘Ich bin ein Star – Holt mich hier raus!’ Since 13 January, the show regularly attracts more than 35 per cent of the viewers aged 14 to 49. On 17 January, even 41.8 per cent of the viewers in this demographic tuned in. Additionally, the accompanying hashtag (#ibes) on Twitter quickly became the top trending topic in Germany during the broadcasts.
New apps from Berlin radio stations
The radio stations 104.6 RTL and Spreeradio now offer their listeners two new apps. In addition to the radio programmes, the apps offer quite a few extras, like a comedy alarm clock featuring popular comedians of 104.6 RTL or Spreeradio's event calendar.
Germany - 13 January 2012

Olympic year kicks off
Since 12 January, RTL Radio offers a new show devoted to Olympic sports, Destination Londres 2012.
France - 13 January 2012

Seventh season of love on the farm
L'Amour est dans le pré returned for its seventh season. In this first episode, viewers saw the portraits of the first seven farmers who are participating. The second part will be broadcast on 23 January 2012.
France - 16 January 2012

Now accepting applications for Class of 2013/14
The RTL School of Journalism opened the application process for the new class of 2013/14. Interested parties have until 29 February 2012 to register and view details about applying.
Germany - 17 January 2012
Culinary adventure and discovery
On *Le Chef en France*, celebrity chef Cyril Lignac takes viewers on a journey to discover the flavours and secrets of products typical to various regions in France.

Germany - 17 January 2012

Christian Rach opens a new restaurant school
Shooting began in Berlin on the second season of *Rachs Restaurantschule*. Gourmet cook Christian Rach will open another restaurant school in Berlin Mitte, where he gives 12 jobseekers a new chance at employment.

Germany - 17 January 2012

Revamping Sunday discussion shows
RTL-TVI unveiled its new Sunday programming which includes *On refait le monde*, *Controverse* and *L’invité* de Pascal Vrebos. It’s a revamp that’s off to a strong start, judging by the ratings.

Belgium - 17 January 2012

An innovative concept and runaway success
On 12 January 2012, M6 Evénements launched an innovative concept in France, *Le Zapping Amazing !!!*, a show featuring the top humorists on the web. Based on its popularity, similar events will be organised soon.

France - 19 January 2012
Todd Green has joined FremantleMedia’s new media division FMX as Head of Genre Support, FMX and Business Development Manager Gaming.

In his new role, Todd will partner closely with Damien Marchi, VP, Production, FMX, and the rest of the team to continue reinforcing the support and guidance FMX gives throughout FremantleMedia’s network of companies. He will also work with Claire Tavernier, SEVP, FMX and Worldwide Drama, and Ludia to help drive the gaming strategy for the FremantleMedia Group.

Todd joins FMX from Screenpop, where he was involved in a number of innovative projects, most recently Scoreboard and Intuition. A FremantleMedia Graduate Scheme alumni, Todd was part of the Participation Media team and helped launch Quizmania on ITV.

FremantleMedia UK restructures its digital division

FremantleMedia UK’s digital division has been named FremantleMedia UK Interactive. The division, which combines the former Talkback Thames Digital and Screenpop, will be headed by Peter Cassidy.

FME will continue to manage the commercial and sponsorship aspects around the main shows’ digital activities, and will also manage telephony and home viewer competitions. The Screenpop brand will also continue as a sub-label of FremantleMedia UK Interactive as a producer of innovative, lower-cost interactive formats and other concepts or business models outside the focus of FremantleMedia UK labels.

FremantleMedia UK Interactive’s focus in 2012 is on high potential growth areas, such as mobile and second-screen applications, direct-to-consumer transactions, social media and games. Interactivity is about creating a direct relationship with fans of FremantleMedia shows, and enhancing their involvement with FremantleMedia’s brands both on air and beyond the primary TV broadcast.