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North America
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Cover
House of Cards promo board

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“WE ARE CREATING STRONG CONTENT DESTINATIONS FOR ASIAN AUDIENCES”
Setting up and running a new TV channel in a foreign country is probably every TV manager’s ultimate dream. But are such start-up stories still possible in today’s mainstream television world? Absolutely, because that’s exactly what RTL Group executive Jonas Engwall has accomplished. In August 2013, the TV manager and a small team set up RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network in Singapore, a venture between RTL Group and CBS Studios International that now operates two English-language pay-TV channels. Nearly two years later, RTL CBS Entertainment HD and RTL CBS Extreme HD are available in 18 territories in Asia Pacific.

Exploiting existing content in the attractive growth markets of South East Asia was the main motivation for RTL Group starting a business there, while looking to keep risks and costs manageable. Thus the venture with CBS was born, aiming to broadcast in English to cater for the large interest in English-language content in South East Asia, especially that from the United States. And RTL Group and CBS offer precisely this highly attractive content. Jonas Engwall, CEO of RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network, sees the venture as an “unprecedented partnership between two major media companies.” It is a dream combination that brings together some of the world’s most successful programmes and series, ranging from reality and talent shows such as The X Factor and America’s Got Talent to scripted dramas like Under the Dome and Elementary. It then adds third-party content such as House of Cards – making a mouth-watering mix for any programme director, no matter the country. So, with both RTL Group and CBS contributing their strong content, RTL Group, which owns the majority stake in the company, looks after the operational management and handles the play-out technology through its Broadcasting Center Europe (BCE).

Starting with a mere handful of employees, RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network quickly became 21 strong, with headquarters in Singapore, Asia’s largest centre for international TV companies, and opening satellite offices in Hong Kong and Manila. “At first, to appear as a bigger team in Asia, each of us had several roles, and I would sometimes introduce myself on the phone as CEO of the company and sometimes as the Marketing Director – depending on who I was talking to,” explains Engwall. Having FremantleMedia Asia based next door is a very big advantage. The proximity to colleagues has paid off in many ways by sharing office space and resources such as accounting. The TV start-up has
benefited greatly from FremantleMedia’s recognition as one of the world’s largest producers of TV content. “Everyone in the TV world in Asia knows FremantleMedia,” underlines Engwall.

Two channels that complement each other perfectly

In September 2013, they launched RTL CBS Entertainment HD, a pure pay-TV channel for the entire family. RTL CBS Extreme HD followed in March 2014, offering fast-paced action mainly to a male audience. To date, almost all operator partners have incorporated both channels in their offers. The distribution over so many different pay-TV operators is the best possible proof of the two channels’ appeal, as pay-TV operators in Asia pay the TV broadcasters for the right to include their channels in their programme packages. “These fees alone represent more than a billion-dollar market,” says Jonas Engwall, whose company earns almost all its revenues from such fees. The more operators that buy the two RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network channel feeds, the greater their revenue.

Jonas Engwall’s team achieved an important milestone in February 2015, when PCCW Now TV, Hong Kong’s leading pay-TV operator, added RTL CBS Entertainment HD to its programme package. But he points out that for foreign providers, the step to mainland China is extremely difficult due to the tightly regulated market. Another recent success is that the channels have been chosen to be a key part of LeTV’s pay-TV platform expansion out of China into Hong Kong and Macau. LeTV is one of the largest online streaming companies in China and offers a wide range of technology-based products including flat screen TVs, smartphones, and a self-driving car, among others.

“We entered a very crowded market place, so we always keep in mind that we have to try harder, do better than competition and be bolder in making ourselves seen and heard in the region,” the TV manager says. “We focus on quality over quantity. To be successful and stand out, we are laser-focused on being creative, thinking outside the box,” he adds. One example of this is the launch of House of Cards season three which started airing ‘day and date’ with the United States and all episodes back-to-back. It was the first time in the world outside the US this was done on a linear TV channel, and it quickly became the talk-of-the-town and very much appreciated by the operator partners.

Anytime, anywhere and on any screen

From day one, RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network offers its content via linear TV, mobile, and internet simulcast, and then later as catch-up video-on-demand via the set-top box as well as on
mobile devices. “We are creating strong content destinations for Asian audiences with our two channels by using a 360-degree content delivery strategy – making content available on any device at any time. We are still one of the few international channels that offers all content on all platforms,” says Engwall and adds. “We have the right strategy – and we have the right product, one that is well received by viewers and broadcasters alike.”

Jonas Engwall explains the strategy and growth plan of RTL CBS Entertainment: “As a network, we have launched and widened our footprint in record time – 18 territories in 18 months. Our current focus is making the two channels we have, RTL CBS Entertainment HD and RTL CBS Extreme HD, even stronger propositions in the market.” The company is naturally keen to further expand their content offering to the Asian audience, but will only do so while maintaining high quality standards and supplying content that is in high demand. Exploring the few remaining countries and looking to expand their presence even further in Hong Kong and Taiwan is one of their tasks. “We do have a very healthy distribution in Asian markets, often with the biggest operators in each market. After just over one year of operations, we already covered the eight major markets in the region, and now we have established footprints in almost all countries covered by our content rights, most recently in Macau and Cambodia.”

As for content, the focus will remain on English-language programmes and US shows, as they are most preferred by audiences in this region. However, adding certain programmes from the UK, such as The X Factor UK or Britain’s Got Talent, has also worked very well for the channels. The company also looks increasingly to smaller, local productions in English that are cost efficient, advertiser-friendly and of a regional fit.

Jonas Engwall highlights that “RTL Group, with its content production arm FremantleMedia, is of great help in achieving the strategy,” and further explains: “the daily work is very interesting in the sense that it feels like a true start up, but with advantage of having giant and very supportive shareholders behind us.” Without the content pipeline RTL CBS Asia Entertainment Network has, and continues to receive, from FremantleMedia and also from CBS, “it would have been impossible to launch the channels successfully,” Jonas Engwall is certain. In an increasingly competitive environment, having unique access to stellar content remains a key ingredient in maintaining formidable content destinations for Asian audiences. Making the most of the brand equity of FremantleMedia and CBS has also helped to establish credibility quickly with operators and partners in the region.

In addition, RTL CBS Entertainment Network enjoys great support from BCE which handles the play out and manages the content handling and technical needs. Jonas Engwall concludes “This is an excellent example of creating cost efficiencies and economies of scale, keeping margins within the Group and additionally increasing our Group’s know-how particularly in the pay-TV area.”
THE TWO CHANNELS CAN BE RECEIVED IN THESE 18 TERRITORIES ACROSS ASIA:
Starz has given a greenlight to FremantleMedia North America (FMNA) to produce the adaptation of Neil Gaiman’s acclaimed contemporary fantasy novel American Gods.

North America – 18 June 2015

Bryan Fuller (Hannibal, Pushing Daisies, Heroes) and Michael Green (The River, Kings, Heroes), will pen and showrun the series. Gaiman will also executive produce it. Start of production is dependent on casting the lead role of ‘Shadow Moon’.

Craig Cegielski, Co-CEO, FMNA, says: “American Gods has been the passion project for us at FMNA since Stefanie Berk brought this exceptional piece of literature to the company when she joined two years ago. Chris, Carmi and the entire team at Starz are committed partners, sharing the same creative vision and ambition for this series. Neil’s novel is a brilliant work of art, and together with the talented Bryan Fuller and Michael Green, we are committed to delivering a series that is nothing short of extraordinary.”

Chris Albrecht, CEO, Starz, says: “Starz is committed to bring American Gods to its legions of fans. With our partners at FremantleMedia and with Bryan, Michael and Neil guiding the project, we hope to create a series that honours the book and does right by the fans, who have been casting it in their minds for years. The search for Shadow begins today!”

Neil Gaiman says: “I am thrilled, scared, delighted, nervous and a ball of glorious anticipation. The team that is going to bring the world of American Gods to the screen has been assembled like the master criminals in a caper movie: I’m relieved and confident that my baby is in good hands. Now we finally move to the exciting business that fans have been doing for the last dozen years: casting our Shadow, our Wednesday, our Laura…”

Bryan Fuller and Michael Green add: “Almost 15 years ago, Neil Gaiman filled a toy box with gods and magic and we are thrilled to finally crack it open and play. We’re grateful to have Starz above us and FremantleMedia at our backs as we appease the gods, American or otherwise.”

FROM A PAGE TURNER TO A RIVETING PRODUCTION
The 2001 novel has been translated into over 30 languages and earned numerous accolades including Hugo, Nebula and Bram Stoker Awards for Best Novel. The plot posits a war brewing between old and new gods: the traditional gods of biblical and mythological roots from around the world steadily losing believers to an upstart pantheon of gods reflecting society’s modern love of money, technology, media, celebrity and drugs. Its protagonist, ‘Shadow Moon’, is an ex-con who becomes bodyguard and traveling partner to Mr. Wednesday, a conman but in reality one of the older gods, on a cross-country mission to gather his forces in preparation to battle the new deities.

FremantleMedia North America’s Craig Cegielski and Stefanie Berk will executive produce the series along with Bryan Fuller, Michael Green and Neil Gaiman. Starz will retain all network pay TV and SVOD rights to the project, while FremantleMedia International will distribute the series worldwide.
On 11 June 2015, the multi-channel network (MCN) StyleHaul launched Vanity, its first original scripted series, created by Emmy-Award winner Bernie Su and Canvas Media Studios in partnership with Maybelline.

North America – 15 June 2015

Vanity will air on Youtube every Thursday from 11 June 2015 in twelve 11-minute episodes. The series has a Gossip Girl and Devil Wears Prada feel to it and the storyline resonates with millennial audiences. It follows Lily Mackenzie, a young girl who moves to New York City and infiltrates the fast-paced world of fashion to find the truth behind her mother’s disappearance. Lily quickly learns that she must navigate this brave new world of interesting, and sometimes deceitful, characters during her journey.

The cast stars Alex Frnka, Denise Richards and the model Karrueche Tran, and also features StyleHaul network creators
The cast stars Alex Frnka, Denise Richards and the model Karrueche Tran, and also features StyleHaul network creators such as Allie Marie Evans and guest appearances by Raye Boyce, Stephanie Ledda and Sophia Chang. The executive producers are Bernie Su, Stephanie Horbaczewski, Mia Goldwyn and David Tochterman.

Regarding the launch of a second season, in a recent interview with Backstage Mia Goldwyn, Chief Content Officer at StyleHaul, said: “There is a plot twist at the end that sets up the show for future seasons, similar to how TV series often end on what we call cliffhangers.”

Speaking about the idea of launching an original scripted series, Mia Goldwyn said in an interview on videoink.com: “When Stephanie [Horbaczewski, CEO of StyleHaul] brought me over from Paramount, it was definitely in her vision for StyleHaul to enter the creation and production of originals — in the reality and unscripted realm through our partnership with FremantleMedia, and scripted content as well.”

In the same interview she also explained the inclusion of StyleHaul Youtubers in the series: “We spend a lot of time talking to our talent — what the next step is for them. While of course all of them want to continue vlogging and creating the videos that their fans are used to, a lot of them are also interested in expanding into acting, writing, and producing more premium formats. We obviously want to support them in doing that as well.”
After redistributing *X Factor* programming at the beginning of the year, Broadcasting Center Europe (BCE) is taking charge of the global redistribution of the live programming for the ninth season of *Britain’s Got Talent*.

Luxembourg – 12 June 2015

In its search for a solution to redistribute its flagship programme *Britain’s Got Talent* to its media partners located in Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania, whilst within the 24 hours following the live broadcast in the United Kingdom, FremantleMedia UK has sought the services of BCE’s Digital Media Operations. In this role, BCE uses its digital distribution system, Movie2Me ([www.movie2me.com](http://www.movie2me.com)) to receive live programming from FremantleMedia’s production and postproduction houses in the UK, while its cloud-based content management system, called Media CMS, is used for managing the respective files and tasks. The files are then taken charge of by the traffic team, in order to perform quality controls (QC) and remove any additions added during the broadcast (adverts, annotations, transitions). The new versions are transcoded to correspond to the desired format of the destination, and then redistributed using Movie2Me (or another file transfer system as per the client’s requirements), within 24 hours, to media partners in 11 countries.

“With our Digital Media Operations, we are able to deal with international queries in a very short time frame keeping costs as low as possible,” explains Claude Dublin, International Traffic Manager at BCE.

“The Media CMS automates the postproduction workflow from the reception of the files to their distribution to the multiple partners, including all the transcoding tasks and metadata enrichment,” adds Xavier Thillen, Head of Production and Postproduction at BCE.

“Using a file-based delivery system is much more cost-effective than using the existing satellite systems, even if their footprints cover all the regions,” concludes Sascha Quillet, Technology and Project Manager at BCE.
FremantleMedia and Croatian production company Jadran Film Zagreb has announced a strategic partnership in order to bring the literary work of one of Croatia’s most popular writers – Marija Jurić Zagorka – to global TV audiences.

United Kingdom – 15 June 2015

Designated Croatia’s first female journalist, Zagorka is one of the most read writers in Croatia and a best-seller in Central and Eastern Europe, although her novels have never been translated into English. Jadran Film, which has produced over 200 regional and international movies in its 70 year history, will combine its cinematic expertise with FremantleMedia’s production and distribution capabilities to develop scripts based on the novels and look for international investment in order to bring the works to Croatian, as well as global, audiences.

Ana Habajec, Managing Director, FremantleMedia Croatia, says: “We are thrilled to be partnering with Jadran Film in order to bring the work of Marija Jurić Zagorka to international audiences, and that the combination of our skills and passion will see Zagorka recognised, not just as a Croatian heroine, but as a world brand!”

Vinko Grubisic, CEO of Jadran Film, adds: “Jadran Film has long held the ambition to bring Marija Jurić Zagorka’s work to audiences outside Central Europe. By working with the production and distribution expertise of FremantleMedia, there is now a real opportunity to bring audiences around world the brilliant storytelling of one of Croatia’s most-loved authors.”

The partnership kicks off with a joint production of one of Zagorka’s most famous works: Grička vještica (The Witch of Grich), of which more than ten million copies have been sold so far in Eastern Europe. Set in the second half of the 18th century and combining the genres of historical novel, romance and adventure, it tells the story of young countess, Nera Keglević, famed for her beauty and kindness. Nera becomes the jewel of Zagrebian aristocracy, but her popularity among men causes envy among her female peers, who see her as a threat. When Nera tries to save a group of poor women from a witch-hunt her rivals see this as an opportunity to accuse her of witchcraft and seek to have her tried and executed, blocking attempts to have her exonerated at every twist and turn.

FremantleMedia and Jadran Film are already looking at how they might develop subsequent titles such as Kneginja iz Petrinjske ulice, Gordana and Jadranka.
In 2015, RTL Radio in France is once again promoting publisher Éditions Gallimard’s First Children’s Novel Competition (Concours du premier roman jeunesse) in partnership with the TV magazine Télérama.

France – 11 June 2015

The competition allows children’s writers to submit their writing to professional publishers. The prize for the winner: the publication of their novel and its distribution in book shops.

This event puts RTL Radio in France right at the heart of today’s culture. This is the second time that the radio station is supporting the initiative which was launched in 2012 and attracted nearly 1,400 authors. In doing so, the radio station is reaffirming its commitment to promote writing talent and creativity in new children’s literature.

To participate, the authors need to submit their manuscripts to the readers’ committee by 30 September 2015. (The full rules and conditions are available [here](#).) This committee will select three final texts to be presented to a jury of professionals.

Figures for the first competition in 2012:

- 1,362 manuscripts received
- average age of participants was 27
- 70 per cent of the authors were women
- 55 per cent were at secondary school, college or university
- 68 per cent of the manuscripts received were in the fantasy genre

The members of the jury:

- Michel Abescat, Editor in Chief, Télérama
- Christine Baker, Editorial Director, Gallimard Jeunesse (Gallimard’s children’s book publishing division)
- Hugo Ben-Samoun, Children’s Bookseller, Millepages book shop in Vincennes
- Cassandra Chazel, Blogger and Columnist of On lit plus fort
- Christelle Dabos, Author and winner of the first Gallimard Competition for her novel La Passe-Miroir (Through the mirror)
- Véronique Durand, Children’s Bookseller, Mollat book shop in Bordeaux
- Thierry Laroche, Editor, Gallimard Jeunesse
- Tom Lévêque, Blogger and Columnist of On lit plus fort
- Laurent Marsick, Journalist, RTL Radio
- Jean-Claude Mourlevat, Author
- Hedwige Pasquet, President, Gallimard Jeunesse
**KATE AND MIM-MIM WILL BE TRAVELLING FOR A SECOND SEASON**
FremantleMedia Kids and Family Entertainment

FremantleMedia Kids and Family Entertainment (FMKFE) has announced that it has greenlit the second season of the highly-rated preschool series, *Kate and Mim-Mim*. Series two is due to launch on Disney Junior US and will then air globally in late 2015.

United Kingdom – 16 June 2015

The pre-school series is currently in pre-production and will include two themed seasonal specials. Produced by DHX Media, in association with FremantleMedia and launched last year with immediately strong ratings on Cbeebies in the UK, Disney Junior in the US and Super RTL in Germany, *Kate and Mim-Mim* has proved to be a massive hit with young viewers across the world. FMKFE has now sold the series to 80 international territories including Clan in Spain, DR in Denmark, SVT in Sweden, Tiji in France and Okto in Singapore.

A number of key consumer products partners have also signed FMKFE’s expanding new pre-school girls’ property. Leading US-based toy company Just Play is on board as global master toy partner and will initially focus on the development of plush, dolls, figure packs, and role play products. Moreover, Penguin Young Readers has signed as the North American publishing partner for the brand. Its initial line will launch in autumn 2016 and will include storybooks, levelled readers, e-books and doodle, activity and sticker books.

Andrea Brent, Vice President Licensing and Merchandising FremantleMedia North America, says: “We are delighted to be collaborating with Just Play and Penguin Young Readers on *Kate and Mim-Mim*. They are the perfect partners to help translate this fantastically imaginative and highly toyetic series into a range of creative toys and books that will engage and entertain young fans across the globe.”

“*Kate and Mim-Mim*’s colourful cast of characters and awe-inspiring environments will make for an engaging line of toys,” adds Geoffrey Greenberg, Co-President of Just Play. “We are thrilled to be the toy partner who gets to bring this enchanting series to life through products that encourage imaginative play.”
German spy drama flies to US

On 17 June 2015, UFA Fiction production Deutschland 83 premiered on SundanceTV, becoming the first German-language drama to have ever aired on a major US network. The eight part mini-series has been commissioned by RTL Television and is distributed worldwide by FremantleMedia International. Watch the trailer here.
A successful weekend of football
RTL Television / RTL Nitro

The German national team’s goal-fest against Gibraltar on Saturday 13 June ensured excellent ratings for RTL Television: an average 34.5 per cent of the 14- to 59-year-old target followed it on their screens. The kick-off to the broadcasts of the European Qualifiers was a success for RTL Nitro as well: On Sunday 14 June, an average 600,000 viewers (total audience) watched the European Championship qualifying match Slovenia vs. England (2:3) for a 3.3 per cent share of the market, and 3.4 per cent (0.33 million) in the 14- to 59-year-old target group.

Germany – 12 June 2015

I’m a celebrity – let me back in!
RTL Television

As of 31 July, 27 former jungle contestants will battle in the new show on RTL Television to get the chance to move back to the Australian jungle. During nine live-shows, they have to pass exciting challenges, but only one camper can win.

Germany – 15 June 2015

When men go for shopping...
M6

The week of 15 June 2015, it is men who take up the challenge in a special Les rois du shopping on M6 at 17:40. They have three hours to find the outfit that will impress Cristina Cordula with the theme ‘The first romantic date’.

France – 15 June 2015

Welcome back!
RTL Television

TV-chef Christian Rach returns to RTL Television. As of September 2015 the 58-year-old star chef will be on air at the commercial broadcaster. Food is again the main topic of his new series.

Germany – 16 June 2015
Bringing girl power to the girl group
RTL II

*Popstars* – the mother of all German talent shows – is back on RTL II and the judges have now also been announced. Urban music star Miss Platnum and dancer and choreographer Bella Garcia will be joining singer Stefanie Heinzmann on this year’s quest.

Germany – 18 June 2015

Four more years for *GTST*
RTL Nederland

RTL Nederland and producer Endemol Shine Nederland have decided to continue their fruitful collaboration and extend the life of the Netherlands’ most popular and longest-running soap, *Goede Tijden, Slechte Tijden* for another four years.

The Netherlands – 18 June 2015
RTL Television’s *Exclusiv – Das Starmagazin* has a new face: Bella Lesnik is the new Presenter on board and will stand in for the show’s main Anchor Frauke Ludowig.

Bella Lesnik, 32, most recently worked as Presenter and Reporter for the show *WDR – Lokalzeit OWL*, prior to which she was a Presenter for the radio station Einslive, hosting formats like the afternoon show *Bella Lesnik und der Pflug* and the celebrity and lifestyle programme *Einslive Gold*. On television, she presented the Sky sports entertainment show *Samstag live!* alongside Oliver Pocher.

*Bella Lesnik*: “I’ve followed and loved *Exclusiv – das Starmagazin* almost from its launch. I am very much looking forward to the task of actively helping to shape the magazine show with such a great and successful team.”

In her new position, Bella Lesnik takes over from Kena Amoa, who is moving to Berlin where he will be responsible for VIP reporting at RTL’s studio in the German capital.

Sophie Perez has been appointed as Deputy Director of Human Resources, responsible for HR managers.

As a new arrival to Groupe M6, Sophie Perez will report to Christophe Foglio, Director of Human Resources.

A graduate from IGS Paris, she was the Human Resources Director for the Eurosport/Discovery Channel since October 2008. Prior to this, she had served as TF1’s Human Resources Director for their freeview theme channels.
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