Mipcom 2015: Cécile Frot-Coutaz on how FremantleMedia is boosting its creative diversity

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IP NETWORK

BIG PICTURE

KIDS DOING SOMETHING FOR OTHERS

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As Mipcom 2015 draws to a close in Cannes, FremantleMedia is leaving the Côte d’Azur with many successful sales deals. On this occasion, Backstage spoke to Cécile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of FremantleMedia.

“OUR STRENGTH IS OUR NETWORK AND HOW WE CONNECT OUR CREATIVE TALENT AROUND THE WORLD”
To continue bringing buyers exciting content from around the world, FremantleMedia presented a catalogue full of outstanding and diverse programming across all genres at this year’s Mipcom, the global entertainment market in Cannes from 5 to 8 October, where the television industry’s major players gathered.

From top dramas to compelling entertainment shows, programmes with strong ratings and unique ideas – FremantleMedia had an exciting line-up of titles set to grab the attention of worldwide TV buyers. One of the bestsellers was the gripping German language series *Deutschland 83*, originally commissioned by RTL Television. The highly acclaimed spy thriller continues to travel the world, having been acquired by 20 leading broadcasters and on-demand services including Channel 4 in the United Kingdom and Hulu in the United States.

In an exclusive interview, Backstage spoke with Cécile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of FremantleMedia, about the company’s recent acquisitions and partnerships, the creative push into scripted TV, non-scripted formats as well as the digital business.

**Backstage**: There has been a wave of consolidation with large scale acquisitions and mergers in the content production industry recently. FremantleMedia has pursued a different strategy, making a series of investments in regional creative talent, in particular for scripted drama. What is the rationale behind this strategy?

Cécile Frot-Coutaz: We are constantly looking to work with the best creative talent in the business, whether this is through acquisitions or partnerships. A lot of the big acquisitions in the news in the last year have been designed to deliver scale for the parties involved, we already have scale so our focus is on creative talent who are developing projects that will feed into our network. It's important for us to have creative diversity in the group so smaller, regional companies that complement our existing portfolio make sense for us to work with.

**WE ALREADY HAVE SCALE SO OUR FOCUS IS ON CREATIVE TALENT WHO ARE DEVELOPING PROJECTS THAT WILL FEED INTO OUR NETWORK**

Cécile Frot-Coutaz

In the last two years we’ve made a number of acquisitions that illustrate this strategy including scripted companies Miso in Scandinavia, Corona in the UK, Wildside in Italy, Fontaram and Kwai in France; non-scripted specialists No Pictures Please in the Netherlands and Naked Entertainment in the UK; the US cable company 495 Productions; and our European native digital media company Divimove.

**Backstage**: Earlier this year, you said that it is absolutely critical to further strengthen FremantleMedia’s presence in scripted TV. How do you facilitate this creative push into scripted, ultimately developing and creating new shows like *Deutschland 83* or *American Gods*?

Cécile Frot-Coutaz: Through strategic acquisitions and partnerships – see above – and also by organic growth as we have done in the UK with the re-launch of our drama label Euston films. Where we have local success with a scripted title we’ll move...
it around the network to maximise it either through tape sales or format development. A good example of this is Wentworth which was originally launched in Australia as Prisoner H Block, went on to become a cult show in the UK, re-booted in Australia in 2013, then travelled to over 80 territories and then made locally in Germany and the Netherlands. We also continue to have strong relationships with third party talent, like Neil Gaiman who wrote American Gods.

**Backstage:** Nonetheless, non-scripted entertainment formats will remain a key pillar of FremantleMedia as the company has a global network to roll out new hit formats rapidly. How do you foster creativity to create new formats? What have been recent successes in this area?

Cécile Frot-Coutaz: Our strength is our network and how we connect our creative talent around the world. We share a lot of information and case studies, successes and challenges. Sometimes we have the right idea but in the wrong market and our structure allows us to quickly identify alternative routes to success. **Got Talent** is a great example of this: we did a pilot in the UK but the format really found its footing in America before we rolled it out – and now it’s the most successful format in the world.

Recent successes include **La Banda**, a new music reality competition developed by Syco Entertainment, FremantleMedia, Saban Brands and Univision Network. **La Banda**’s recent launch in the US placed Univision as the number four broadcast TV network – 74 per cent above Univision’s regular Sunday audience average.

**The Eureka Moment** is a new game show by Blue Circle that supersizes classroom chemistry into classic prime time entertainment. The series launch on RTL 4 positioned the show number one in its timeslot and above all the number one entertainment launch in the Netherlands in 2015.

**Who Knew?** is a brand new addition to the game show genre by UFA Show and Factual. The celebrity panel series launched on Germany’s Das Erste and was number one in its timeslot as well as landing the highest rated Saturday night game show launch in eight years.

**Backstage:** Turning to digital, where does FremantleMedia stand here – both in terms of getting commissions from digital platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime and in scaling its production of web-original short form content?

Cécile Frot-Coutaz: Digital is a key area for us and we’re well established in the space. In the video-on-demand (VOD) space, recent deals include Deutschland 83 selling to the new foreign language VOD Walter Presents in the UK, STAN in Australia and Lightbox in New Zealand. We did a global deal with Netflix for the new Danger Mouse series; Amazon UK has acquired Wentworth; and we did a package deal with Youku which includes The X Factor UK and Project Runway. In terms of commissions, we continue to work with VODs around the globe as we do with broadcasters and look forward to more opportunities to produce for them.

“**DIGITAL IS A KEY AREA FOR US AND WE’RE WELL ESTABLISHED IN THE SPACE**”

Cécile Frot-Coutaz

In terms of original digital content, in the last two years we have launched regional digital studios in LA with Tiny Riot and the UK with Shotglass Media, adding to existing digital studios in Germany with UFA Lab and Australia with Spring. We continue to produce long and short form content for Munchies, our food joint venture with Vice Media.

In January we increased our stake in Divimove, Europe’s leading native digital media company and number one multi-channel network to 51 per cent and in April this year we won our first International Digital Emmy Award for Dina Foxx, a scripted multi-platform experience from UFA Lab.
Overview of acquisitions and partnerships in 2015

**United Kingdom**
On 12 February 2015, FremantleMedia bought a 25 per cent stake in Corona TV, the newly-created TV production company from the renowned filmmaking duo Richard Johns and Rupert Jermyn.

On 17 September 2015, FremantleMedia acquired a 25 per cent stake in Naked Entertainment, the newly formed production company from multi award-winning producer Simon Andreae. Naked Entertainment will develop original entertainment, factual, and factual entertainment formats, with series and one-off specials.

**Italy**
On 27 August 2015, FremantleMedia acquired a 62.5 per cent majority stake in Wildside, a leading Italian television and feature film producer, to strengthen its prime-time scripted portfolio.

**Denmark**
On 9 September 2015, another creative partnership was announced with newly-formed Danish production company, Skylark. The partnership will establish a creative hub based in Copenhagen, with the purpose of creating new entertainment formats with global appeal.

**France**
On 8 September 2015, FremantleMedia acquired a majority stake in Fontaram, the newly-formed French scripted company from renowned producer/writer partners François Aramburu and Pascal Fontanille.

To have more scripted prowess in France, French scripted producer Kwaï added another prominent creative talent to the global network a month later. The Paris-based fiction company specialises in TV films and series and is headed by writer and producer Thomas Bourguignon.

**The Netherlands**
On 18 September 2015, FremantleMedia acquired a 75 per cent majority stake in Dutch producer No Pictures Please. The controversial factual programming company is owned by popular presenter and producer Ewout Genemans and will sit alongside FremantleMedia’s entertainment and scripted businesses in the Netherlands, Blue Circle and FourOneMedia.
“The must-have European drama series of the year”

Jens Richter, CEO of FremantleMedia International, talks about the strong sales of Deutschland 83:

“Deutschland 83 has become the must-have European drama series of the year. Having attracted critical acclaim in the US and now the attention of an impressive list of buyers, the compelling series is all set to captivate viewers around the world.”

“We are in talks with Asian countries. We have a deal in South Korea. Australia and New Zealand are also covered. But we also want to enter Latin America.”

“The series is mainly sold to channels and platforms with a wide reach. All the big industry players want to meet us. We are on the same level now.”

Spy thriller Deutschland 83 has been acquired by 20 leading broadcasters and on-demand services.
FremantleMedia travelled to Cannes with a diverse new range of formats. Rob Clark, FremantleMedia’s Director of Global Entertainment, told Worldscreen.com the secrets behind the longevity of successful formats and how they can travel to other countries: “There are two specific things that have to do with formats: the first is that they are not associated with either a time or a place – they are culturally neutral. That cultural element is really, really important to the longevity of any format. The second is how they are managed. They are cared for and constantly creatively prodded and poked. You constantly have to refresh.” Asked how and when an existing format is refreshed, Clark said: “You decide from a position of strength. It’s a constant process,” adding that the company has been really lucky to be able to try something in one territory and then roll it out if it works.

Speaking about the elements that enable a show to work in another country, Clark said: “I look for three things, what I call transferability, returnability and scalability. First, the show has to be a format. Not everything is meant to travel. Some things are just good programmes. It needs to have a structure. Then you need to be able to look at it and say, we could make that much bigger in a country like Germany or America or the UK. Or we could make it on a much smaller budget in some Central European territories or some smaller Asian territories. Once you’ve got that degree of scalability, then you know it can roll out and be made in all those different territories. If it’s culturally transferable, then you know there is nothing in it that would stop it from being transferred globally, or even regionally, so it’s not something specific to that one country.”

Clark said that a show also needs the other elements of transferability and returnability, meaning that it can come back season after season, and scalability – they are the big three. He said he also looks at promoteability: “If you are in a market with only two or three channels to choose from, is it that important to be able to promote it? Probably not. But if you are operating in a multi-channel broadcast environment, you need your show to be really promotable. It needs to be very loud very quickly or have something that makes it look very different so that it stands out.”

“IF IT’S CULTURALLY TRANSFERABLE, THEN YOU KNOW THERE IS NOTHING IN IT THAT WOULD STOP IT FROM BEING TRANSFERRED GLOBALLY”  
Rob Clark

Got Talent, the most successful format in the world, has sold to 69 countries
The Board of Directors of IP Network appointed Stéphane Coruble as its new Managing Director, effective 1 January 2016. Stéphane Coruble, currently IPTV and New Business Director of RTL Belgium, will succeed Marc Schorestene who will retire after having led IP Network since 2008. Until the end of the year, Marc Schorestene and the IP Network management team will work closely together with Stéphane Coruble to ensure a smooth transition.

Luxembourg – 2 October 2015

“The ever increasing competition in the digital media world calls for closer co-operation across RTL Group to provide our global advertising clients with the best service,” says Matthias Dang, Chairman of the Board at IP Network.

“With its unique international presence, IP Network is ideally positioned to explore these growth opportunities. Given the tasks ahead, I’m delighted that Stéphane Coruble will take over as the new Managing Director of IP Network. Stéphane is the perfect choice to drive change and further growth at IP Network: he combines international experience, excellent knowledge of RTL Group and its advertising sales houses with strong expertise in digital multiscreen advertising.”

Dang continues: “I would like to thank Marc Schorestene for his achievements at the helm of IP Network. Under his leadership the company has experienced strong growth, increasing its annual revenue by 45 per cent since 2008. I wish him all the best for this new stage in his life.”

Stéphane Coruble adds: “I’m delighted to take on this new challenge of leading IP Network and its team in a world of increasing convergence. I strongly believe that IP Network will be able to leverage all of the assets of the various RTL Group units to offer a global proposition to international advertisers in the various fields of video and digital marketing, branded content and, of course, traditional TV and radio sales.”

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He continues: “I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Marc Schorestene and the IP Network team for the tremendous results achieved so far and I will do my best in taking over and leading the company in its digital transition and further growth.”

Marc Schorestene: “After nine years with IP Network and seven years as Managing Director I’m happy to hand over to Stéphane Coruble. I’m very proud of the IP Network team and what we have achieved together. Today, IP Network is a well-known international sales house which best serves the interests of RTL Group in a large part of the world. I know that Stéphane will lead the team towards new challenges and I wish him lots of success in his new position.”

ABOUT STEPHANE CORUBLE

Stéphane Coruble, born 1970, has been IPTV and New Business Director of RTL Belgium since October 2012. From May 2009 to October 2012, he was New Business Operations Director. Prior to this he worked for IP Belgium and RTL Belgium in several marketing and sales positions. Stéphane Coruble graduated from the Institut d’Administration des Entreprises Aix-en-Provence, France, and has a master’s degree in business administration.
Tirliivi-Planet Kids, the brand new programme for children, celebrated its entry into the daily schedule of RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg on 5 October 2015. The programme airs five recent animated series, all produced by Luxembourgish production companies and supported by Lëtzebuerger Filmfong (The National Film Fund of Luxembourg).

Luxembourg – 5 October 2015

The international renown of the animation studios and producers in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has seen continuous growth in recent years. The number of prizes and nominations they have been awarded bear witness to the quality and level of the animation produced in Luxembourg. Yet, even if the majority of the full-length films of the animation “Made in Luxembourg” are shown in our theatres and often in the Luxembourgish language, the same cannot be said for their television series. Often co-produced by large foreign channels, these children’s series are not, primarily, produced for the Luxembourgish market.

In order to remedy this situation and give the young Luxembourgish audience access to these series, RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg, Lëtzebuerger Filmfong and animation production companies Fabrique d’Images, Melusine Productions and Doghouse Films decided in 2014 to create a daily children’s slot in RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg’s programme schedule. At the same time, the decision has been taken to translate the entirety of the production into the Luxembourgish language. Following a call for tender at the end of 2014, the adaptation and dubbing of the series, over 2,200 minutes in total, have been entrusted to Linster Studios.

The first season of Tirliivi-Planet Kids includes the following series: Solli a Pucki (Son of Wouf) by Doghouse Films, Déi duerchdriwwen Dräi (The Triplets) and Déi grousse Rees vum klengen Marco Polo (The Adventures of Young Marco Polo) by Melusine Productions, De Percy a seng Frënn (Percy and his Friends) and Polo by Fabrique d’Images.

Tirliivi-Planet Kids is broadcast on RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg from Monday to Friday from 18:00 until 18:30, on Saturdays from 09:00 until 11:00 and from 18:00 until 19:00, and on Sundays from 09:00 until 11:00 and from 18:00 until 18:30.
StyleHaul and Legendary Digital Media have announced that they are partnering to produce the second season of Joey Graceffa’s digital series *Storytellers*, set to premiere in 2016. Part of StyleHaul’s network, Joey Graceffa is a popular YouTube creator with over 5.2 million subscribers.

North America – 8 October 2015

The new season of *Storytellers* picks up where the first season left off, this time following Hunter Crowley (Graceffa) and his friends to college, where they have to deal with their expanding personal magical powers, supernatural forces of good and evil, and the threats of parallel universes, in addition to everyday college issues of identity, friendship, and romance. Over six half-hour episodes Season 2 will elevate the drama and supernatural elements to a whole new level of entertainment. Gregg Millman (*Boston Legal*, *Mind Games* pilot for ABC Family) is writing every episode of Season 2. Joey Graceffa stars in the series and is its executive producer together with Lorenzo di Bonaventura (*Transformers* and *Red* movie franchises) who has a first look deal with Legendary Television and Digital Media. Graceffa won a 2014 Streamy Award for Best Actor in the Drama category for the first season of *Storytellers*, which has had almost eight million aggregate views on Graceffa’s YouTube channel.

“Legendary Digital Media is excited to bring back *Storytellers* to Joey’s fans who have been eagerly awaiting a continuation of the first season,” says Greg Siegel, Senior Vice President, Digital Media. He adds: “We look forward to introducing Joey, a YouTube megastar with huge crossover appeal, and his creative ‘storytelling’ to an even bigger audience of new fans.”

“We fell in love with the vibrant and expansive universe Joey created in *Storytellers* and are thrilled to continue supporting him in this next chapter of the hugely successful series,” says Mia Goldwyn, Chief Content Officer at StyleHaul. “We can’t think of better partners to do this with than Legendary and di Bonaventura who constantly set the bar for creating best in class, multi-platform franchises.”

“I’m beyond thrilled to bring back *Storytellers* for a second season and excited to announce this epic partnership with Legendary and StyleHaul,” says Joey Graceffa. “It’s been a passion project since its inception, and I’m so happy to be taking this next season to an entirely new level.”
In a recently published interview in the Luxembourgish financial and economic magazine *Paperjam*, Romain Mannelli, Executive Vice President Human Resources at RTL Group, talks about his 20-year career at the Luxembourg-based media company and shares his experience and insights on HR-related topics and challenges.

Luxembourg – 6 October 2015

A local player which became global

*Interview: Florence Thibaut*

Mr Mannelli, in September you will be celebrating your twentieth year at RTL Group. How did you get started in the company?

I started off as Vice President Human Resources at Compagnie luxembourgeoise de télédiffusion, CLT, in September 1995. At that time, the HR department had four people (editor’s note: today there are 20). When I arrived, the atmosphere was pretty morose. We had to re-establish connections and motivate the team. We got things in order, developed solid workflows, new HR tools and processes taking a project-based approach.

One of the events that marked my start involved the merger between CLT and UFA (Bertelsmann) in 1996/97, in a context where CLT had recently expressed its aim of launching digital pay-TV bouquets in the French and German markets. In late 1996, however, the new shareholders decided to drop that project and focus on the combination of their expertise in commercial free-to-air television and radio, as well as content production, thus putting an end to a competitive ‘war’ between the two partners.

(...)
Today, what are contacts like between the parent company and its subsidiaries?
Our decentralisation approach is reflected in all of our businesses. The local management teams are fully responsible for their business and enjoy plenty of freedom. This is not just cosmetic; it is something we care about enormously. But autonomy does not mean total independence. There are many matters that we have to deal with together. I am thinking of identifying talents and their professional development. We must therefore establish a standardised approach, use common tools up to the level of our majority shareholder Bertelsmann. Accordingly, two years ago, we undertook together a long discussion on talent management in order to come up with a policy and shared methods.

(...) Is it currently possible to move from M6, Fun Radio or RTL Television to RTL Group and vice versa?
At the moment, we have a global presence and we comprise a patchwork of companies. However, implementing and managing transfers of employees to the United States or Asia, or even within Europe, is still a very complex operation, often requiring a lot of time and resources. We are proactively dealing with the topic of internal mobility. In our latest Employee Survey from 2013, we included a question on internal mobility. Following on from the responses given, every HR Manager performed an additional survey at his/her subsidiary and we were able to compile a priority list of more than 65 people wishing to take this opportunity. Since September 2014, there have been only four actual transfers. We are not satisfied with these results; we still have a lot of work to do to make mobility reality.

What specific aspects are holding back this major project?
Many things are taken into account. Tax considerations, social security and labour law specifics to each territory do not ease our task. In addition, it is still difficult for us to share all of our job vacancies. By next year, this will change. Then, we will have the tools in place to do it. Another complex subject is the processing of internal applications. Let’s take a specific example: Imagine that an employee of a US-based profit centre applies for a job in Luxembourg. Many questions arise: Should he take leave to attend the hiring interview? Who pays for the trip? Is he subject to a new trial period if he gets the job? If so, how long should it be? We don’t have all the answers, yet. You have to keep in mind that every transfer must benefit both the employee and the company. It’s not something we do for the sake of it, but because we are looking for a win-win situation.

What are your plans from now until you retire?
In addition to my usual tasks, I would like to push forward the implementation of PeopleNet, a cloud-based HR management platform developed in collaboration with Bertelsmann. It will be accessible to all of our profit centres and their employees. The deployment of this platform will redefine the main HR functions, recruitment, training or compensation. Another key concern: helping general management to find my successor. Preparing the handover carefully is very important to me.
On 1 October 2015, the Dutch video platform RTL XL introduced a new look which aims to bring together viewers, channels, programmes and stars.

The Netherlands – 5 October 2015

After the revamp, the online video platform RTL XL places viewers firmly in the driving seat. In fact, the totally revamped site and app enables viewers to put together their own personal channel. This innovation is also highlighted by a brand new design: a digital style adapted to the respective viewer, channel, programme or RTL star.

RTL Nederland’s Manager Product and Technology Patrick Klink says: “Every user can make the RTL XL app produce exactly the result they want. They can change its design to their favourite colour and even adapt the range of videos offered to their own personal preferences, so that the app provides users with a steady stream of refreshing recommendations, enabling them to put together their ideal viewing experience. And the more intensively viewers use the app, the more personalised the choice of videos proposed to them becomes.”

Using the second screen function in the RTL XL app from the comfort of their living room, viewers can take part in ever more programmes in real time or even have their say about what happens. As Klink explained: “With suitable programmes, like RTL Autovisie and Carlo’s TV Café, we enable viewers to play an interactive role. Anyone using this function can become part of the conversation on television and influence the programme’s content. This makes for a far richer viewing experience than people are used to. What’s more, it combines live consumption of TV with the online viewing of people’s favourite programmes.”

The rebranded RTL XL is livelier and far more personal, featuring a handwritten font and plenty of colour. This reflects the tremendous differences between viewers, channels’ versatility and the wide range of programmes on offer.

The redesigned version of RTL XL is now available to desktop and Apple (iOS) users. The new version for Android users will be published in November. RTL XL Premium customers using iPhones or iPads can use Chromecast to stream videos from the new app on their TV.
KIDS, DOING SOMETHING FOR OTHERS
How De Wensboom on RTL 4 promotes children’s altruism

Click here to read the latest edition of RTL Group’s CR Newsletter

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#RTLGivesBack
The most powerful women in global television
RTL Group

*The Hollywood Report* has chosen Anke Schäferkordt, Co-CEO of RTL Group, to be among the 20 most important female television executives worldwide. Also on the list is the CEO of FremantleMedia, Cécile Frot-Coutaz. Click here to read the article.

Luxembourg – 5 October 2015

New jury members announced
RTL Television

Successful producer Dieter Bohlen will be joined by new jury members for the 13th season of *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*: Shooting-Star Vanessa Mai, songstress Michelle and Scooter-front man HP Baxxter. The show will start airing in January 2016 on RTL Television.

Germany – 6 October 2015

Design relaunch of German pay-TV channels
Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland

As of 12 November, the German channel Passion will be renamed to RTL Passion and receive a more emotional design. The other two pay-TV channels of Mediengruppe RTL Deutschland, RTL Crime and RTL Living, will also shine in a new design.

Germany – 7 October 2015

James Bond library exclusively on Videoland
Videoland

For the first time, all 23 James Bond movies will be available on the Dutch video-on-demand (VOD) platform Videoland. The movies will be available on Videoland Unlimited from 14 October 2015 to 13 November 2015. This initiative is part of Videoland’s enhanced content offering, which also includes titles such as *Zwarte Tulp*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Broadchurch* and *The Blacklist*.

The Netherlands – 8 October 2015
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