

On the MIPTV trail

SEVERAL SOUTH AFRICANS ARE SET TO ATTEND MIPTV FEATURING MILIA, THE PREMIER INTERNATIONAL CONTENT MARKET FOR CREATING, CO-PRODUCING, BUYING, SELLING, FINANCING AND DISTRIBUTING ENTERTAINMENT ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS. THE MARKET RUNS FROM 7 TO 11 APRIL IN CANNES, FRANCE.

Anyone really serious about getting their content to a huge, global market should attend MIPTV even if only to network initially, says **Stanley Edwards** of **Platypus Productions**.

"Attending MIPTV is very stimulating on a number of levels; it gives you a global perspective, offers opportunities and can get the creative juices flowing. We'd like to see more local producers, advertising agencies and even brands attend. But because attending is an expensive process for South Africans, especially with our weak currency, some form of regular financial support will be required, to assist those attending and to be able to give feedback sessions to those who couldn't attend. It can only be good for the industry.

"Platypus Productions regularly attends MIPTV and its sister market in October, MIPCOM, to get a global perspective on content trends, and with the conference sessions, how digital technology and new media platforms are being used for content delivery. All technologies are simply shells that require content which needs to be cross platform with an almost 'campaign' approach. Simply producing a TV series is not enough anymore, it also needs to live across mobile and web. MIPTV offer some great examples and to how content is being pushed to various platforms."

Edwards notes that the trend towards advertiser funded content or branded entertainment is also discussed extensively at MIPTV. "More and more ad agencies and brands are using the MIP markets to see how they can become part of the content by rather being the content than the interruption between it. Ogilvy Interactive has this year issued global content briefs and MIPTV will see the best of these being presented at pitching sessions with the prize being €10 000 development funding.

"Broadcasters are starting to adopt branded entertainment in a big way and often the content has higher production values than can be achieved from commission budgets because it



BUILDING A REALITY - Filming the new South African series *Our House*

is advertiser funded. This trend is also happening locally but the challenge is to satisfy the content commissioners, the air time sales executives and the brand at the same time."

MOVING SERIES

At MIPTV **Chris Roland** of Cape Town-based **ZenHQ** will be premiering his recently completed 13 x 24-minute high definition (HD) reality series, *Our House*, which revolves around the building of 200 houses in seven days for an impoverished community. The series was co-produced with **Cecil Matlou** and **Pieter Lombaard** of emerging company **Binary Film Works**.

Our House packs an emotional punch as it shows Irish volunteers teaming up with shack-dwellers in Freedom Park in Cape Town's Mitchell Plain to build homes, which the latter then move into.

"On the seventh day, when the eight families the series focuses on finished building and were able to move into their new homes, everyone was in tears. Some of these people had been living in shacks for 20 years and now had actual houses with running water," says Roland.

The project falls under the Niall Mellon Township Trust

Building Blitz, a charity which was created in 2002 when Irish businessman and philanthropist Mellon and friends informally built 25 houses in a Cape township.

"In November 2006 I had an appointment with Cape Town Mayor Helen Zille and she arrived straight from the *Building Blitz* site, having herself participated in the construction. I said that I thought the project would make a great reality series; she agreed and approached Niall Mellon on my behalf. A year later we were shooting. Some 1 350 Irish volunteers took part, which makes it the second largest foreign volunteer mission in history," explains Roland.

For the shoot, Roland had to cover four building teams for the seven days of the project. Each team consisted of two Freedom Park families and three Irish volunteers, whom Roland had cast previously during auditions in Ireland. Houses were built in duplex style, with two homes per unit and each team building a unit.

"We shot a day before and a day after the seven-day building period, to make mini-documentaries about our featured families. Each building team was assigned to a camera

crew and we had an extra 'floating' camera. Pre-planning was absolutely essential as we had to know what was happening on site with each of our teams as well as the 200 other houses being built. Furthermore, the Irish contingent arrived the night before the first day of building and left immediately on completion, so we had no extra time with them," notes Roland.

CONTENT HUNT

Since MIPCOM in October last year, **Telkom Media**, one of South Africa's newly licensed pay-TV operators, has been engaged in detailed and concrete content sourcing, both internationally and locally.

According to GM for Entertainment **Hannelie Bekker**, the majority of Telkom Media's third party channels are in place, and the focus in this regard now shifts to fleshing out partnerships with suppliers, and understanding how to optimise the brands in the market.

"As far as international programming is concerned, we will be looking to tie up a number of pending agreements with major distributors. MIPTV will be an important market for Telkom Media as a huge volume of acquired programmes, intended for our launch schedules, will be consolidated. In addition to doing volume deals, we will be looking out for original drama and comedy series in a market where product may be in short supply due to the recent Writers Guild of America strike.

"The current increase in demand for broadcast rights for South Africa, and indeed the whole African continent, is making for a lively and very competitive marketplace and we intend to optimise this opportunity. As always, we'll be searching for rare 'gems' in unusual places while keeping an unwavering focus on acquiring solid, dependable mainstay fare from big and medium sized suppliers of English language programming," explains Bekker.

TOPICALITY

Hans Kuhle's hard-hitting documentary *African Tradition*

- *Circumcision* has been submitted to the MIPDOC (MIPTV's dedicated documentary division) Library. This self-funded film follows the traditional initiation of two rural Xhosa boys. All original footage was shot on high definition (HD) Mini DV.

Says Kuhle: "I think my documentary will appeal particularly to the French and German markets as they are interested in Africa. The subject of traditional African circumcision is very controversial as one frequently hears news stories of teenage boys dying as a result of the procedure. So I decided to look into the matter and spent five weeks in the Eastern Cape filming the experiences of two boys who go through the initiation process. The circumcision is done in rural areas with unsterilised knives and wounds are bandaged with leaves by unwashed hands."

Kuhle stresses that his film takes no stance on whether circumcision is right or wrong. The film is narrated by a Xhosa man who has seen hundreds of circumcisions and who himself went through the process some years back. At the moment the film is 38 minutes in length but can be cut to any desired length as Kuhle still has lots of unedited footage relating to the rural initiation, as well as contrasting township initiation with involvement from township personnel.

Other South African companies attending MIPTV include **Eject Media**, a finalist in the 2006 mobile content competition. Says **Bernadette Kesting**: "Although we haven't work submitted for this year's competition we will be at MIPTV in an exploratory capacity to check things out and possibly share some of our mobile work with distributors."

Also attending MIPTV will be **Vision Africa**, **MultiChoice Africa**, **Rapid Blue**, **Urban Brew**, **Nu Metro**, **Next Video**, **Fairmead Consultancy**, **African Business Channel**, **MI Digital**, **Mindspace** and **e.tv**.

As in past years, the **National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF)** will host a South African stand at MIPTV. 