

Cannes Sales

Assessing the MIP-TV Buying and Selling Attitude

Between the military conflict in Iraq and the outbreak of a deadly new virus in the Far East, not to mention the continuing recession, consolidation and perhaps even the Oscars on March 23, just before MIP-TV started, the number of buyers at this year's market was somewhat thinned. Although 2,600 buyers were pre-registered, there were last minute cancellations bringing the number down to 2,336. However, even though the total attendance was reduced by 11 percent from MIP '02 to 9,104 people, the number of



1. BVIT's Fernando Barbosa and Henri Ringel. 2. Paramount TV International's Isis Moussa, Sean Cleary, Monica Garcia, Joe Lucas. 3. Hearst Entertainment's Jennifer Berman, Tom Devlin.

exhibiting companies increased by 3.4 percent to 1,247 and the total number of participating companies was up one percent to 2,705.

The pull-out put a damper on what organizers had once hoped would be the most attended MIP ever, in part because of the 40th anniversary celebration, which included a champagne

MIP-TV Middle East Presence

Despite the war that began just days before MIP-TV got underway, a hefty number of Middle Eastern companies turned up to participate in the market. Among these were two-year-old Egyptian music channel, Melody; Egyptian TV; TV channels from Jordan, Kuwait, Syria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain; and TV channels from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Well-known 24-hour news network al-Jazeera was among those represented.

party outside the Palais and various other festivities. As Janine Coughlin, senior vp, Television Series for Alliance Atlantis, noted: "It seems as if this market [was] quieter than in years past, but it doesn't seem to be from any particular area, more just across the board."

Reported cancellations included buyers from North and Central America and Asia. CABLEready's Gary Lico noted: "We had some cancellations of American buyers who pulled out because of the war and two Mexican buyers. We also had cancellations from Asian buyers who pulled out more because of the SARS virus that's been spreading in that area. However, in the end it was only about 10 percent of all the meetings we had set."

Jens Richter, managing director of BETA Film, told *VideoAge* they also received calls from a few Latin American buyers and several Asian clients informing them they had decided not to attend. "It was more the virus than the war actually, that made them decide to cancel at the last minute." But even with the cancellations, Richter said business was still good. "It's not like everyone canceled. There [were] other major clients here so it has not hurt business at the market. The central and eastern Europeans [were] here." Also, somewhat surprisingly, were buyers from the Middle East, prompting Richter to observe, "It shows you that there's normality in the market, which is good to see."

LedaFilms' Silvia Curutchet was equally upbeat. "We didn't have any cancellations."

While all of the participants expressed understanding at the cancellations, some took a more pragmatic view. CABLEready's Lico stressed the importance of adapting to whatever

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world situation arises. "I will tell you this — and this is a message for every buyer, every seller — if you are waiting for the world to be at peace before you leave your office to do your job, you are never going to leave your office. That is the way of the world now. We have to get used to doing business in this kind of environment. Having said that, perhaps the safest place for an American right now is not in America. Maybe it's France."

For EM.TV's Patrick Elmendorff, this MIP-TV was business as usual. "We scheduled 200 meetings and very few [were] canceled," reported the German TV executive, then continued: "I'm aware that Japanese and Mexicans canceled, but we [had] all our Asian clients, while Mexico is handled by Comarex."

As per Cannes tradition, the ultra-secretive meeting among European public broadcasters took place on March 26 and, this time, was organized and hosted by Austria's ORF.

This get-together is called the

1. The traditional indies breakfast organized by VideoAge in Cannes.
2. Faith & Values Media's Edward Murray and Madeline McEnery picking the winner of their Weekend in Umbria contest: Ramon Colon of Sagrera TV.

Sauna Club because in its early stage it was hosted by the Scandinavians. Traditionally, the meeting is held at the hotel where the organizer is staying, thus this time it took place at the Sofitel. At the upcoming MIPCOM, since the host will be Ireland's RTE, the meeting will take place at the Martinez Hotel.

Even though neither the press nor any person outside the Club is ever invited, *VideoAge* was able to record the main points of the meeting, which centered on two key aspects of the business: the various political pressures that public broadcasters face and the dates of the upcoming MIPCOM, which breaks into two weeks, since it will start in mid-week next October. Surprisingly, no comments were made on this MIP.

In 2004, MIP-TV is scheduled from March 29 to April 2, preceded by MipDoc on March 27 and 28. ●



Documenting MipDoc '03

Held just prior to MIP at the Martinez Hotel, this year's MipDoc celebrated the return of theatrical success for feature-length documentaries. American writer/director Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* has become the most-watched documentary of all time in the U.S., where it has remained in theatrical release for months on end. It is the longest-running commercial movie in current release and the highest-grossing documentary in history, and it is already rejuvenating the industry: co-producer Alliance Atlantis has recently devised a new strategy that will see the company produce two to three feature-length docs per year.

MipDoc's most successful genre — like last year — was current affairs, with 1,790 screenings, and history/ancient civilizations retained its distinction as the second most popular category, boasting 1,332 screenings. But these figures represent a drop in total screenings by 140 and 192 respectively. Current affairs managed 1,930 screenings at last year's market, while history programs were seen 1,524 times at MipDoc '02.

This MipDoc attracted 473 participants and registered a total of 296 buyers from 39 countries. During the event, buyers were able to screen from a selection of 1,157 programs.

Also hot at this year's market was the ever-more-important DVD industry, which is driving new partnerships between the documentary community and Hollywood.

But television broadcast remains the primary outlet for documentaries, and companies continue to be concerned with the increasingly expensive production costs of doc programming. New technologies — like CGI — which help docs conquer sophisticated audiences, also raise their price tags, with top-end series costing as much as \$1.6 million an hour to make. A MipDoc conference called "Financial Support Systems for Documentaries" tried to address this trend, focusing on strategies producers can use to cut costs, including subsidies, tax credits and other public and private financial support available to producers both in their own territory and through co-production.

iTV's Double Personality Exposed at MILIA

Interactive TV market MILIA celebrated its 10th anniversary in Cannes last month, within MIP-TV.

MILIA used to be held in February, but with the strategic move of MIP-TV's dates to mid-March, organizers decided to join the two markets in an attempt to bring content and interactivity closer.

The three-day market tried to emphasize how interactive TV and production-broadcasting are complementary, but it demonstrated how the TV industry is still ambiguous: many interactivity operators opted to exhibit in the Palais side by side with content distributors, instead of working out of the Marina Hall, a pavilion specially reserved for interactive media. Seminars and workshops were also of a 'schizophrenic' nature, with the most important MILIA presentations held at the Palais and all others at the Noga Hilton Hotel, MILIA's headquarters.

Delegates could visit a special 'demo village' area inside the Noga, in addition to hospitality suites for testing new interactive technologies.

Officially, about 100 companies exhibited at MILIA, with 1,450 registered delegates from 53 countries and 100 speakers from 20 countries. 37 panel sessions and case studies were presented, with highlights including keynote addresses from Guy Laurence, Vodafone's CEO of Global Content Services, and Taro Hashimoto, CEO of SOFTBANK Broadmedia Japan.

Three main issues were addressed at MILIA: iTV, broadband and mobile technology; video games also played an important role even with the last-minute cancellation of a conference on interactive gambling. More than 100 separate demos and showcases of leisure software, games, mobile, broadband and interactive content tools, applications and entertainment were featured.

MILIA also played host to the first AFDESI iTV Awards, which recognized the best in recent interactive TV programs and applications.

Quebec's Alliance NumeriQC, a non-profit company, provided information on digital services for the growing Canadian market. Speaker Claudia Marcoux indicated that over 67 percent of the Canadian population has access to interactivity, over 54 percent uses broadband connections and, in Quebec, 24 percent of total households have a digital TV adapter.

In an official "pre-MILIA conference," representatives from several TV networks tried to downplay the interactivity hype, but they also indicated iTV as the key to bringing new viewers to traditional TV, especially the young male audience known as the "PlayStation generation." According to the BBC's Ashley Highfield, in the short term iTV could serve more as an answer to video games and online gambling, than as a device to generate revenues.

Next year's MILIA will be held from March 31 to April 2.