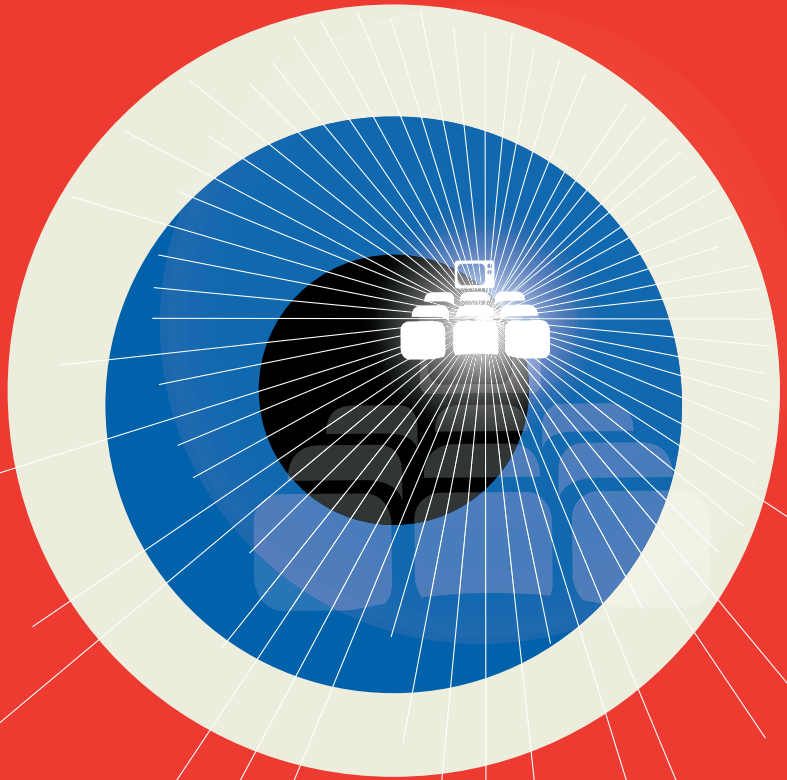


**MINUTES**



**SÉRIE SERIES**

**THE EUROPEAN SERIES SUMMIT  
FONTAINEBLEAU - FRANCE**

**SEASON 8**

**1 > 3  
JULY  
2019**

# CREATION TAKES POWER!

This mantra, also a pillar of Série Series' identity, steered the exciting 8<sup>th</sup> edition which brought together 700 European creators and decision-makers.

During the three days, we invited attendees to question the idea of power. Both in front and behind the camera, power plays are omnipresent and yet are rarely deciphered. Within an industry that is booming, areas of power multiply and collide. But deep down, what is at the heart of power today: is it the talent, the money, the audience? Who is at the helm of series production: the creators, the funders, the viewers? In these Minutes, through our speakers' analyses and stories, we hope to offer you some food for thought, if not an answer.

Creators, producers, broadcasters: this edition's 120 speakers flew the flag for daring and innovative European creativity and are aware of the need for the industry to listen, not only to their audience, but also the society in which they create. Ensuring that drama is a tool for reflection and inclusion, as well as imagination and reinvention is a challenge that is fundamental to us and on which many professionals focus on.

Throughout the three days, we shone a light on people whose outlook and commitment we particularly connected with. Conversations and insight are the DNA of Série Series and this year we are proud to have facilitated particularly rich conversations; to name but one, Sally Wainwright's masterclass where she spoke of her experience and her vision with a fellow heavyweight in British television, Jed Mercurio. Throughout these Minutes, we hope to convey the essence of these conversations, putting them into context and making them available to all.

For the first time, this year, we have also wanted to broaden our horizons and offer a "white paper" as an opening to the reports, focusing on the theme of power, through the points of view that were expressed throughout the 8 editions and the changes that Série Series has welcomed.

We hope that this journey to the heart of European creation will be inspiring and we look forward to seeing you again for the 9<sup>th</sup> season of Série Series, from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 2 July 2020 in Fontainebleau, Île-de-France.

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MARIE BARRACO, Managing director,  
with THE SÉRIE SERIES EDITORIAL COMMITTEE



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# CREATION TAKES POWER

# CREATION TAKES POWER

## SÉRIE SERIES WHITE PAPER 2012-2019

**CREATION TAKES POWER**, which is now *Série Series*' watchword, is also a demand. Let's give the power to creation and creators, so that drama can be the catalyst for a liveable and enjoyable future. It is by ensuring the ecosystem's balance that we will see European drama be powerful, dynamic, diverse, original, inclusive...

For this 8<sup>th</sup> edition of *Série Series*, speakers were encouraged to question the idea of power; a theme that is at the centre of plots for many series, but that is rarely covered when discussing the act of creation itself, despite the fact that power plays are present in each strata of the series realm.

We can have "power on" or "power to". In one, we emphasise a form of authority and domination on one or several individuals; in the other, power is defined as the capacity to make happen, to start something and to create. Clearly, these ideas are intertwined and can fuel one another. Throughout the years and the many discussions, *Série Series* has helped develop a cartography of the "power areas" in the world of series, but also identify the essential ingredients ensuring that talent can blossom and powerful work can emerge.

Since its first edition, *Série Series* has brought together all the stakeholders in creation to Fontainebleau. A true think tank, these three days help deepen the conversations and refine practices, and each year sheds a light on the warning signs, and even predict the trends that will be all the rage tomorrow.

Creating a series is not a singular task, it requires many players to come together and cooperation within a complex system, which relies on the subtle alchemy between the screenwriters, producers, directors, actors, broadcasters, to name a few. *Série Series* sheds a light on, and puts in motion, this ecosystem.

To the question "today, who has the power in creation?", Maria Kyriacou offered up a clear answer during her masterclass: "Power is shared, dispersed. No one has it on their own. And when we ask the different players within creation, none of them feel like they have it".

### "THE SERIES BUBBLE": THE TRIUMPH OF NEW PLAYERS?

The world of series has changed and the cards have been re-dealt due to the recent phenomenon that many call "the series bubble": an abundance of content – with more and more series and an audience that is always hungry for new content – fueled by the arrival of new players that help maintain this frenzy.

The arrival of large streaming platforms changed the game in Europe and in the world. The SVoD players, that were once mere additions to classic linear television, are now also drivers of the industry. Since the first edition of *Série Series*, Netflix has been at the centre of the debates. Year after year, the event has borne witness to the hopes and fears that Netflix and the new platforms have aroused, as these players have always instigated contradictory feelings, swaying from distrust to deference.

In 2014, the year Netflix made its thunderous arrival on the French market, its power, ambitions and methods were alarming. Pascal Rogard, Managing Director of the SACD, condemned, during a round table organised by the APA, Netflix's unfair competition with the platform and its consorts avoiding the numerous regulatory constraints and taxes that national operators are subject to. The battle between traditional channels and platforms was totally disproportionate.

Netflix posed a threat, especially as its arrival on the market, despite being announced since 2008, seemed not to have been anticipated by the professionals and public authorities. "We ignored the future, and we are paying for it dearly!", declared executive producer Bénédicte Lesage. The trend was clearly pessimistic and Netflix, having only produced two series, was not seen as a breeding ground for creative opportunities. Netflix, like



Amazon, initially targeted their strategy on purchasing content, in order to analyse their users' behaviour before starting to produce original content themselves.

Since then, the stakes have changed. SVoD has conquered the world market. A *Médiamétrie* study published in October 2019 stated that 17.3 million French people had watched at least one programme on an SVoD platform during the past year and indicated a high user satisfaction rate with regards to their platform.

Throughout the editions, several voices have highlighted the new opportunities that these platforms offer for creation and its development. In 2016, during a conversation entitled "*Cultural identities and the international market*", head of audiovisual creation at the French CNC, Vincent Leclercq, pointed out that where the new players were seriously shaking up the production model that had been put in place, especially in France, over the last 25 years, it also offered "*new opportunities in producing and therefore in selling, opportunities that are very difficult to turn down in the current context*". The following year, during the first "Café series" discussion, screenwriter Anne Landois recalled that Netflix had "*an atypical view that none of the key French broadcasters have today*". "*Its strategy, she added, consists in developing series that the other channels refuse to produce. Netflix relies solely on the writers and originality.*"

Today, Netflix's influence on creation is widely accepted due to the opportunities that are created by their vast ambitions in terms of original creation. The figures presented this year by Guy Bisson (Ampere Analysis) are bewildering. Netflix has announced the production of over 234 series (3 times the amount planned by large American networks and 4 times the amount of other regional SVoDs). In 2019, the platform announced that they will be dedicating a 15 billion dollar budget for content creation. Its appetite for original content, notably European content, seems insatiable.

This boon for the creators and producers can be explained by several factors. With the arrival on the market of new streaming platforms by key entertainment conglomerates (Warner and Disney), Netflix and Amazon are likely to see a portion of their licensed content removed, and must therefore build their catalogue of original content. Alongside this, European Parliament has voted in favour of new regulations aimed at imposing a 30% quota of "European" content on streaming services; in France, Netflix will therefore have to conform to the new obligations, adding over 3 000 hours of European content to its catalogue.

The power of platforms is changing the series landscape by revolutionising usage and leading to an exponential growth in supply and production budgets. The amount of original content produced is immense, but what about the nature of the series? Could the "series bubble" be too good for its own sake?



### IS MONEY CREATIVITY'S GREATEST FRENEMY?

The industry needs perhaps to be less enthusiastic when looking at series through the prism of culture. The tendency today is for costs to explode; but for Walter Iuzzolino, founder of the Walter Presents platform (specialised in non-English drama), the colossal investments in original content overshadow a sadder reality: a standardisation of series on offer, possibly even lowering of cultural standards.

As Walter Iuzzolino explains, the market, which is carried by the SVoD platforms, is inundated with costly series that are so-called 'premium'. But this term, that is widely overused nowadays, often masks a cruel lack of originality. Paradoxically, the exponential growth of series on the market is not leading to a real diversity on offer, but more a kind of homogenisation of content. As he deciphers the complex relationship between money and creation, Walter Iuzzolino notes that big budgets, which go hand in hand with risk aversion, do not always encourage creativity and innovation, quite the opposite.

During this year's presentation on GAFAN programming strategies (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Netflix), Guy Bisson demonstrated that where the original content offered by Netflix may be very popular, its life cycle is very short. Indeed, the viewers' interest is high for three weeks but then fades quickly and unavoidably (and we do not go back to it). Netflix has effectively invented a kind of luxury fast food, made up of 'premium' series that are consumed quickly (the platform has made binge watching common practice by making all episodes of a season available at once) and quickly forgotten.

It is why Walter Iuzzolino recommends new criteria in evaluating a show's quality: acquired reputation, ability to influence or even change the viewers' tastes and consequences on the market as a whole.

Série Series has helped to prove, since its first edition, that the quality of a series is not proportional to its budget. When the *Real Humans* team came to present the show in 2012 as its first preview, the audience could not believe that the budget for one episode was below 1 million euros! Scandinavian countries have often been able to turn a disadvantage – lack of money – into a winning formula. The constraints due to financing led them to invent new strategies, to collaborate and therefore to... share power. Since the 1990s, Scandinavians have thus developed co-productions between their different markets in order to financially support themselves and create ambitious shows.

### EACH BROADCASTER HAS ITS PLACE... AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In 2018, during Série Series' seventh edition, Walter Iuzzolino rocked the boat by urging European broadcasters to update their programming policy and come up with new strategies where the main objective would no longer be mass audiences, but more a form of cultural relevance. *"The big channels must change their tune and understand, once and for all, that the possibilities offered by digital have shattered the linear broadcasting system. They have to get used to the idea that they will no longer be able to appeal to five million viewers during prime time on a Wednesday evening; they're fighting a losing battle."*

Although they now coexist in the same territories and with the same audiences, the traditional European broadcasters are not on the same playing field as the international platforms both in terms of resources and viewers. Faced with the power of these giants, that are reaching an increasingly large audience, they must differentiate themselves in order to survive.

Throughout the editions, be it with the Broadcasters'

Conclave or the partnership with the European Broadcasting Union, Série Series has become a key gathering for public broadcasters, that utilise this time together in order to collectively reflect on the space they occupy within this ecosystem, but also their accountability towards society as a public service. Because that is the fundamental, and natural, difference between them and their commercial competitors: public broadcasters have great social responsibilities. Each year, during their conversations, the Heads of drama for European channels emphasise that they have a responsibility to represent society in all its diversity and to offer content that is unifying, but also ambitious, capable of creating collective thinking and a genuine dialogue. Tone C. Rønning, Commissioning Editor for NRK (Norway), stated, during her inspiring talk in 2016, that public television must help strengthen democracy. *"Series are a common good and must speak to each part of society."*

This year, during the focus on Danish public broadcaster DR, Christian Rank was of the same mind, emphasising the public service channels' duty in offering unique content, but also the power of series to speak to society. *"The last thing the world needs is another TV series. What the world does need is great stories that fuel and challenge our vision of ourselves and of others. DR's main commitment, as a public broadcaster, is to tell the stories that reflect our society, of others and those next to us, and to see the world through their eyes. And series, when they are high quality, can do this."*

Where public broadcasters have an important role to play with regards to society, they also are tools for the local ecosystem. In this respect, the RTBF is a poignant example. While French-speaking Belgium has traditionally co-produced and broadcast French series, in recent years, the broadcaster and public authorities joined forces to give a new impetus to the sector by favouring the development of original local series, promoting the creation and rise of Belgian talents. Thus, the RTBF-Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles support fund finances a certain number of Belgian works, while the Atelier du fonds offers training and advice to the teams throughout the creative process. This has enabled the creation and success of local series such as *Public Enemy*, *The Break* or *Unité 42* that won over both local and international audiences.

Behind the industry's power plays, there are key challenges in terms of diversity, accessibility and cultural representation.

### SHARING POWER: WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Today's series bubble mainly benefits established creators and writers. The latter take the biggest share of the cake; and the rise of new talents raises questions. The

platforms have embarked on a real hunt for established talent, with the appeal of exclusive four or five year contracts; these include Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*, *Killing Eve*), Ryan Murphy (*American Horror Story*, *Nip/Tuck*, *Glee*), Shonda Rhimes (*Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*) and many more.

The aversion to risk is a real barrier for young talent. Trusting a beginner, or a writer that has not yet acquired notoriety, is in itself a risk that broadcasters prefer to avoid by choosing the most established writers on the market. Creativity is certainly not exclusive to young writers, but they often bring a breath of fresh air and a new form of creativity, if anything a sense of renewal.

The rise of new generations of creators is a major challenge for the sector's sustainability. Some have approached this head on with innovative initiatives. During the seventh edition of Série Series, Anne Edyvean came to present the BBC Writersroom, an internal structure to the BBC whose mission is notably to discover, develop and support novice screenwriters. After a particularly thorough selection process, the successful candidates undergo six months of training, during which they develop their skills, but also their understanding of the industry, and grow their network. In Italy, at the Perugia School of Journalism, the Rai has developed a screenwriting course, in which it is directly involved as it guides the students in the development of a series with the hope of broadcasting it. An ambitious project that stems from this project and is now being co-produced by France Télévisions via the Alliance, was presented during Série Series 2018: *Survivors*. In the Czech Republic, the public channel Czech TV has teamed up with a film school to allow students to create a pilot in real-life conditions; the channel enjoyed one of the projects so much, *The Lynching* (the series was also presented during Série Series 2018), that an entire season was produced.

With these last two initiatives, the novice writers are mentored by experienced screenwriters that bring their experience to the project. Collaborations between different generations, still rare in Europe, have become commonplace in the United States within writers' rooms, acting as an effective training course. Thus, in 2014 in Fontainebleau, two young French screenwriters, that have since become recognised creators, Marie Roussin and Audrey Fouché, described their rich experience within the *Borgia's* writers' room, headed by showrunner Tom Fontana.

**Transmission is one of the key issues for the entire European drama creation chain; an issue that will be at the heart of discussions during the upcoming edition...**

## FEMALE POWER AND VISIBILITY FOR DIVERSITY

Series need new voices, in particular female voices. Power is, beyond just the world of series, too often the business of men. Since 2012, the SACD has published an annual report on the place women have within the cultural sector in France which accounts for the number of works by women in performing arts, television and film. The results are bleak. The television industry is not the most unequal, but the presence of women is still very low. Where the situation for writers is progressing – between 2012 and 2014, 35% of TV drama was written by women –, for directors there has been little improvement. Indeed, female directors are still far below the invisibility threshold of 33% (below this proportion in a profession, women are invisible). And the situation for composers is even more alarming. The situation is no better elsewhere. In Britain, the figures published by the Directors' Guild of Great Britain are as alarming. Female screenwriters or directors are a clear minority.

For its eight edition, *Série Series* was committed to putting women centre stage and had the privilege of hosting in-depth masterclasses by screenwriter and director Sally Wainwright, composer Isobel Waller-Bridge, actress Veerle Baetens as well as Maria Kyriacou, President of International for ITV Studios; all of them internationally recognised artists or experts. Many series lead by women were presented as part of the selection.

During the *Café series* session centering on women in series, Anne Landois recalled that, for decades, “*female leads in television were unnuanced and perfect. The way women were represented left no room for imperfections and ambiguity was banished from series.*” Veerle Baetens makes the same observation today. It is one of the reasons why she decided to start writing. With Malin-Sarah Gozin and Christopher Dirickx, she co-wrote the script for *Tabula Rasa*, a fantasy thriller in which she plays the lead. The women we see on screen are not real; too perfect, they are not like anyone. By taking part, during the writing, in the creation of the characters she embodies and by bringing her female perspective, Veerle Baetens has ensured she can play complex women that have flaws; in other words: normal women. This year, when she presented *Happily Never After*, a series where she has simultaneously been the screenwriter, director, producer and lead actress, Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir explained that she also wanted to create ordinary, real and flawed women; and this, in opposition to both the perfect and submissive characters and the strong and icy female leads that are all over our screens. Her work on breaking down stereotypes not only applied to the main character, Karen, but also all the secondary characters, in particular Karen's husband's mistress, far from the archetypes.

Series have progressed with regards to female representation. For the past decade, they have strived to portray more diverse and realistic characters. We can mention some recent series such as *Fleabag* in the United Kingdom, *Girls* in the United States, *Spiral* in France and *Rita* in Denmark. We salute the work of writer Sally Wainwright who, with *Happy Valley* or *Gentleman Jack*, was able to create incredible female characters, who were also mature women. Because, after 50, female characters have a tendency of disappearing from our screens. The AAFA (*Associated Actresses and Actors in France*) are waging a fierce battle on this subject, rebuking the “actress' over 50 tunnel”. Although one in every two adult French women is over 50 years old, actresses vanish from the screens as soon as they reach this age, despite being in full professional maturity, only to gradually reappear around the age of 65 to play grandmothers. Therefore, half of the adult female population is not represented in television or film!

Perhaps the time has come for television to really look at socio-cultural representation on its screens. In France, the CSA annually publishes a “diversity barometer”, which takes into account diversity in various socio-cultural aspects: socio-professional category, gender, perceived origin, disability, age and income. Scrutinising more than 700 series, the 2018 barometer have some telling figures. In series broadcast in France, the proportion of characters perceived as “non-white” is 20%, and drops to 10% if we only take French series into account and exclude France Ô (overseas channel). Characters over the age of 50 represent only 18% of characters in series, whereas a third of the French population is in fact over 50 years old.

Representing diversity is now a major demand for channels, especially public ones. The BBC has set an example by implementing a 5-year programme which aims to increase both diversity and parity within the teams as well as ensuring that “commissioned content offers relevant representation and a true image of British society”. Gender equality, including people with disabilities, visibility for LGBT+ cultures, ethnic and socio-economic diversity... Through various charters and initiatives, this programme aims to promote representativity and equality in all its aspects.

Elsewhere, other initiatives are flourishing in order to encourage the appearance of different characters and the evolution of representation. In 2016, Marianne Furevold, executive producer for the NRK, presented at *Série Series* for the first time outside of Norway, the series *Skam* (“shame” in Norwegian), whose objective was twofold: to win back “the young 16-year-old women” and offer a representation of what cultural diversity looks like today in Norway. The series has an atypical character, that has up till now been absent from Scandinavian screens:

Sara, a young Muslim girl. While Norwegian media had a tendency of representing Muslim women as mere victims of men's tyranny, Sara is a strong and intelligent young woman. She wears the veil by choice; she believes in herself and her religion. *Skam* has hit the nail on the head and has since become a true international phenomenon, and has now remakes in over 10 countries.

In 2017, producer Barbara Emile reminded attendees during a *One Vision* session on the importance of telling different stories, renewing stories, talking to other audiences and widening horizons; and how, in order to achieve this, it is vital to overcome barriers and welcome new voices, no matter how much risk it entails.

## THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD

According to Jonathan Gottschall, author and researcher, series have the power to remove us from the chaos that surrounds us. The *homo fictus* (a term he prefers over *homo sapiens*) needs stories; he needs to create them and to hear them. But above all he analyses the impact stories can have and how they can create empathy. Jonathan Gottschall suggests integrating storytellers more into society, as they have the power, for better or for worse, to change attitudes and behaviours, show a different way of seeing things and ultimately change the world. Our storytellers are in fact the writers of our future. Jonathan Gottschall advises they should therefore write one that is viable and beautiful.

Stories, especially series, have the power to change our attitudes – how we perceive the world around us and the people that are a part of it – and our behaviours. A sitcom like *Will & Grace* contributed in changing the perception of many viewers in regards to homosexuality (the “*Will & Grace* effect”). At the same time, series are also a

reflection of the society in which they are made and the evolution of attitudes. That is why Sally Wainwright is convinced that she could never have written a series like *Gentleman Jack* had the view on homosexuality not changed. The project had in fact been rejected several years ago, but Sally Wainwright tried again, thinking that it would be more in line with today's mentalities. In telling the story of Anne Lister's life (a wealthy landowner in 19th century England, a ruthless business woman, accomplished sportswoman and an open homosexual) with no filter, she has furthered the representation of homosexuality.

Sally Wainwright went to a good school as part of her career was established within the BBC. Throughout the editions of *Série Series*, many speakers have praised the British public broadcaster and its daring. It is true that the BBC has, continuously and without holding back, spoken out about the failures in the political and social systems in Great Britain, notably thanks to committed screenwriters like Peter Kosminsky, speaker at *Série Series* 2018. Each one of his works is deeply political, rooted in reality and, most often, in geopolitical conflicts that make up the world around us. Based on in-depth research that is carried out “without preconceived ideas”, these works, like *The Promise* on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or *The State* on new Islamic State recruits, take risks and fuel the debate without fearing controversy. Because, as Peter Kosminsky pointed out, drama is the most powerful tool in order to reach a large audience and encourage them to think about difficult questions. A fervent advocate of public media, he has defended the fundamental role the BBC has within the democratic system as a true counter-power.

In 2017, the festival welcomed Ruth Caleb, the prominent producer who has worked for the BBC for many years and



Peter Kosminsky



Anne Edyvan

behind many of the most politically engaged dramas that aired on the BBC. No subject scares her. Twenty years ago, she produced *Care*, a harrowing TV film based on real events. Ruth Caleb read a story about a police officer who sued the local newspapers for libel after being charged with statutory rape. The officer won the case and the court ordered that he received the sum of £500,000. Six months after the verdict, a young man, one of the victims that testified during the trial, killed himself. Inspired by this story, the film, which was set in a religious hospice for children, was watched by 6 million viewers. Ruth Caleb received testimonies from people who were victims of rape in their childhood shortly after the broadcast. Drama helped them find their voice. Sixteen years after the broadcast of *Care* (and in part thanks to the echo the work gave to the case), the police officer was brought to justice for the acts committed 40 years ago. The court found him guilty of statutory rape and he was imprisoned. A drama like *Care* is, in this sense, a work of public service.

Proof, if needed, that creation has the power to change the world.

***Thank you to all the speakers and participants that have yet again fuelled fascinating conversations and taken part in writing the history of European drama. Creation takes power!***

Throughout its seasons, *Série Series* has shown that creation is and has a power, at least the power to entertain, inform, awaken, excite. Drama is an incredible cultural tool. *Series*, now popular with everyone, have won over the world, appearing on every screen with the power to captivate us and make us feel, by coming into our lives, broadening our horizons and our experiences... it changes us.

And if some are unsure about the legitimacy of creation's power – Should we give it power? Should it take power? – it is likely that creation has in fact always been in power, that it has always been the best way to convey a message and emotions, the best way to break free (be it temporarily or forever) the shackles of everyday life, the way to build a community and create a shared future... With television series, creators have found a media with unparalleled power, a wonderful soap box, a new art, a genre that Dov Alfon describes – with reason – as “the art of the 21st century”.

# TALENT TAKE THE FLOOR

# SALLY WAINWRIGHT MASTERCLASS

## WRITING TO KEEP ON PLAYING

**SPEAKER :** SALLY WAINWRIGHT (screenwriter, director and producer)

**CHAired BY :** JED MERCURIO (screenwriter and showrunner)

Sally Wainwright is undoubtedly one of the most admired and respected screenwriters of our generation. She spent her childhood in front of a small screen, so it was very naturally that she offered up her talents to her very first love, television. Inspired by her native Yorkshire, Sally Wainwright is fascinated by the destinies of exceptional women. She takes the time to immerse herself in their rhythm and tone, thereby forging her own and changing ours. The portrayals of these women are just as much portrayals of our society, as Sally Wainwright's drama is never far from reality.

Sally Wainwright is a screenwriter, director, producer and creator of some of the most fascinating television dramas of the last few decades. Series like *Last Tango in Halifax*, *Happy Valley* and *Gentleman Jack*, to name just a few, make up a unique televisual corpus which have known both critical and popular success. Jed Mercurio, multi award-winning showrunner, creator of successful series such as *Bodyguard*, *Line of Duty* and *Critical*, is chairing this masterclass.

### BIRTH OF A WRITER: WRITING TO KEEP ON PLAYING

Sally Wainwright has always written. "I started writing when I was 7 or 8. In junior school, we were asked to be imaginative and create stories. I've always written stories. I just never grew out of that. I think at a certain point you become self conscious that it's a bit silly. Writing is like playing. When you're young, it's normal. You make stuff up, you make stories with your friends. Writers are

people who want to continue playing but they realise you can't do that in public, because that's embarrassing. So you start doing it in your head and writing it all down."

Surprisingly, Sally Wainwright was never a big reader. However, she spent hours in front of the television. "As a child I was a compulsive TV viewer", she admits. "I would watch anything and everything. To the point where your parents are worried about you." Sally Wainwright preferred "seeing stories rather than actually reading them". Above all else, she loves dialogue and those that bring them to life: actors. That's why she first started wanting to write for theatre. "I went to the theatre for the first time at thirteen, and I instantly knew it was my thing!" But despite the richness of the British theatrical scene, opportunities were rare and it was television, her first love, that enabled her to first hone her skills.

Sally Wainwright started her career at the age of 24 on *The Archer*, a very popular radio drama, before joining

Anne Lister consistently and openly challenged the habits and customs of her era with incredible panache. Too free, too ahead of her time, she was left out of history books. Sally Wainwright finally does her story justice in this eight-part series.

"All of my series are personal", explains Sally Wainwright. "They are the fruit of ideas I've carried with me for a long time, sometimes from my childhood." *Gentleman Jack* is no exception. Sally Wainwright and Anne Lister's paths were destined to cross. For a start, they were both born in Halifax. "When I was young, a lot of school outings were organised at Shibden Hall, Anne Lister's property." However, her name was never brought up, almost as if she had been erased from collective memory. "There was a portrait of Anne Lister in Shibden which had always been there, but there was no literature about her." Yet, she was an important figure in the financial and cultural life of the town. "I thought I knew everything about Shibden Hall, but it wasn't until the 1990's that

"ALL OF MY SERIES ARE PERSONAL. THEY ARE THE FRUIT OF IDEAS I'VE CARRIED WITH ME FOR A LONG TIME, SOMETIMES FROM MY CHILDHOOD."

the screenwriters team on *Coronation Street*, the irreplaceable soap broadcast since 1960 on ITV. It's hard to imagine the influence of the series, but Jed Mercurio reminds us that it started many screenwriters' careers. Sally Wainwright is one of them and timidly admits that she had dreamt of writing on *Coronation Street* from the age of thirteen. "I just had to wait until I was thirty to do it."

Following her mentor Kay Mellor's advice, Sally Wainwright decided to go solo. In 2000, ITV broadcast her first creation, *At Home With the Braithwaites*. She then followed up with *Sparkhouse*, *Jane Hall*, *Unforgiven* and *Scott & Bailey*. Although these series were very successful, it was with *Last Tango in Halifax* and *Happy Valley* that she really earned her reputation. Today, Sally Wainwright is conquering the world with *Gentleman Jack*, a historical drama co-produced by the BBC and HBO.

### EXCEPTIONAL AND FLAMBOYANT WOMEN: A MEETING AT THE CROSSROADS

*Gentleman Jack* is the biopic of Anne Lister, one of the most flamboyant English historical figures of the 20th century. A rich land owner, ruthless "businesswoman", accomplished sportswoman and proclaimed homosexual,

I learned that the property had been owned by such and exceptional and transgressive woman. Halifax had scorned her memory."

### THE JOURNEY OF A 4 MILLION WORDS STRONG JOURNAL

Anne Lister's name could have disappeared into the ether. However, in 1983, historian Helena Whitbread asked the Halifax archives for something of interest for her thesis and was given Anne Lister's journals. 27 volumes and over 4 million words, written from the age of 15 until her death at the age of 49, never destined for publication. They tell the detailed day to day story of Anne Lister's life. She explicitly wrote about her numerous female conquests in six distinct volumes, all written in a code that mixes algebra and the Greek alphabet. After painstakingly decoding it all, Helena Whitbread published extracts from the journals in 1988. In 1994, a first biography - *Female Fortune* - was written by Jill Liddington. The world finally discovered Anne Lister.

Sally Wainwright read Anne Lister's biography in 1998. "That was my first big hit of who Anne Lister was, it kind of became my bible. It's taken me 20 years to get this on screen. But I'm glad it's taken so long. I can now read the diaries, I can read the code."





There is no evidence that Anne Lister wanted her code to be deciphered, but there is no evidence to the contrary either! “She died prematurely in 1840. She never tried to destroy the journals and left no notes to the effect that they should be destroyed. So there’s an idea that she didn’t want them to be destroyed after her death. She wrote her journals on very durable, time-resistant paper. She was highly intelligent. You do wonder if she had some sense that one day this would be seen in a very different way.”

The way in which Anne Lister’s journals were discovered sparked almost as much interest as the diaries themselves. John Lister, one of the family’s descendants, was the first to discover the diaries in 1890. Convinced they had historical value, he published certain extracts in the local newspaper. With the help of his friend Arthur Burrell, the code was deciphered, but shocked by the journal’s contents, he quickly hid them where he found them, inside the panelled walls in one of the rooms in Shibden Hall. “It’s important to remember that the laws against male homosexuality were extremely severe at

the time. Female homosexuality was unimaginable”, points out Sally Wainwright. On that note, Jed Mercurio recalls that Queen Victoria, when sanctioning a law forbidding homosexuality, had erased all reference to female homosexuality under the pretext that such a thing couldn’t possibly exist. It seemed inconceivable to her that women could do “that sort of thing”.

For John Lister, the content of his ancestor’s journal was criminal. However, we can be grateful today that he didn’t take his friend’s advice of burning the diaries. In 1933, the journals were rediscovered by Muriel Greene, the daughter of a Halifax librarian, who started transcribing the code. Feeling incapable of talking of her discovery, she hid the journal once again. It was only then found again in 1960 by Phyllis Ramsden, who started the transcribing process again, but was stopped in her process by the Halifax town council. Sally Wainwright thinks that the history of the repeated discovery and burying of Anne Lister’s journal is a fascinating story and could make for its own stand-alone series.



### DIVING INTO INTIMATE HISTORY

The writing process of *Gentleman Jack* was particularly difficult and time-consuming. “I can normally write an episode of a contemporary show in less than four weeks. With this it was taking me two months. Anne Lister’s journal isn’t a novel with a beginning, a middle and an end. It’s a diary, which is often very random and erratic, like a flow of consciousness. So it became a laborious process, although fascinating and enjoyable at the same time.”

The hardest thing was what to leave out. “The journal is so dense, so detailed. I really wanted to create the most authentic portrait of Anne Lister; something in which she would have recognised herself.”

In order to be as close to Anne Lister’s true person, Sally Wainwright took the risk of having her talking to camera, allowing the character to talk directly to the audience.

“For me it was like her reading the journal, like she was speaking directly to you. So it felt justified. We were quite cautious, so I always shot two versions: one where Anne speaks to camera and one where she doesn’t. Then, in the edit, we made the choices as to whether they really landed or not.”

“It was only re-watching the first series, as I’m about to start writing the second, that I realise everything I had to omit and leave out. It’s almost impossible to capture the complexity of a woman as singular as Anne Lister on screen. I think I had a fair crack at it, though. A hundred different dramas could be written about Anne Lister. They would all be accurate.”

The Sally Wainwright version of Anne Lister’s turbulent life seems to have struck the right chord. “I hadn’t anticipated the emotional response to the series from audiences. I’ve never known that, even on *Happy Valley* which was very successful.”

## PORTRAITS OF WOMEN, PORTRAITS OF SOCIETY

Through her series, Sally Wainwright has offered us some of the most beautiful portraits of women that we have had the chance of seeing on television. Before *Gentleman Jack*, we got to know Catherine Cawood, the heroine of *Happy Valley*, a brave and honest uniform police officer. She's the type of character Sally Wainwright loves: a mature, complex, both strong and vulnerable woman, full of flaws and incredible endearing.

Both series - *Gentleman Jack* and *Happy Valley* - are set in Yorkshire, the northern county where Sally Wainwright is from. She had already chosen that setting for *Last Tango in Halifax*. It allows her to write in the language of her childhood, where she knows and controls all the nuances and subtleties. "A few years ago, I was asked to write a series in America. I was terrified. American culture is very different to ours. The American language is far more inventive. I don't know all of its subtleties. That's why I like setting all my stories in Northern England. Then, all the subtleties of the language are at my disposal."

This need to write in her childhood language allows Sally Wainwright to give that extra bit of singularity and authenticity to her characters. In fact, authenticity is one of the main characteristics of her work. In that respect, although Catherine Cawood, unlike Anne Lister, is a fictional character, *Happy Valley* is no less rooted in reality.

## HE WHO SHOWS NOT VIOLENCE IS AN ACCOMPLICE TO IT

For *Happy Valley*, Sally Wainwright found her first inspiration in a documentary - *Shed your tears and walk away* - in which the director, Jez Lewis, explains with infinite sadness the reality of Hedden Bridge, an old Yorkshire mining town ravaged by misery and unemployment where the only viable business is drug trafficking (hence the ironic name chosen for the title of the series).

To build the plot lines of the series, she was fed from experience and anecdotes from her friend Lisa, a police officer. "I decided to start both seasons with two of the most unbelievable stories that Lisa had told me." So, in the opening scene of the second season, Catherine Cawood tells an unlikely story of a wounded sheep she had to bludgeon with a rock to end its suffering. In the unforgettable first scene of the first season, Catherine tries to stop a young man setting himself on fire by telling him about her life. "I would never have been able to come up with those two scenes alone."

In fact, Sally Wainwright didn't create *Happy Valley* as a thriller but as a drama series. A drama, she reminds us, is "when bad things happen to good people". Catherine Cawood has it all sent her way! This desire to be as close to reality as possible forces Sally Wainwright to come face to face with the darkest aspects of human nature. One of the most disturbing scenes in the first season shows Catherine left for dead after being savagely attacked by a psychopath. The last shot of the episode, which shows Catherine's bludgeoned and blood soaked face, traumatised many viewers during its BBC broadcast. The whole series is infused with a latent violence, which is particularly shocking when it blows up. That scene was divisive in the UK, some saying the series might have gone too far. Sally Wainwright has no intention of apologising, quite the contrary.

"Lisa was there on set when that scene was shot. When I asked her if she had ever been beaten up like that she said: only twice". Fictional representation of violence towards women is a constant source of debate. Sally Wainwright agrees that, often, "violence in films is used to show women's bodies". Nothing could be further from the truth in *Happy Valley*. "It was important to show that police officers put their life in danger to protect citizens. It's part of their job." As to the depiction of violence, she is convinced that "those who refuse to show the violence inflicted on women become accomplices to it".

Sally Wainwright is a busy woman. After finalising the screenplay of the second season of *Gentleman Jack*, she started writing a new season of *Last Tango in Halifax*. As for *Happy Valley* fans, no need to fret. The series will have a third season. Unfortunately, it will be its last.

## VEERLE BAETENS MASTERCLASS AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE ARTS

**SPEAKER :** VEERLE BAETENS (actress, writer, singer)

**CHAired BY :** HERVÉ HADMAR (screenwriter, director)

**Veerle Baetens, a star in her native country of Belgium, has set out to conquer the world. As an artist who radiates positivity and a jack-of-all-trades of sorts, she is as comfortable acting as she is dancing, singing or making music. Today, she is adding another string to her bow as she has taken to writing and directing. A portrait of an artist who does not want to be a puppet, driven by an intrinsic desire to create strong and complex female characters.**

### THE RISE OF A 360° ARTIST

Veerle Baetens admits that acting was not a vocation for her. "I had never been drawn to acting. For me, it was just a dull copy of real life. I liked music. I was a fan of Michael Jackson. I would mimic him. I loved to dance." Her vocation as an actress stemmed more from her studies

than say a desire that she had throughout her childhood. After piano studies, Veerle Baetens began at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels in the Musical Theatre section. A more wholistic art where repertoires and disciplines intertwine, from singing to dancing as well as acting. "Acting suddenly hit me. I realised that it was very real."



While Veerle Baetens is mainly known internationally for her role as Elise in *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, in Flemish Belgium, she will always be Sara, the young lead in the Flemish remake of the American series *Ugly Betty* (itself a remake of a Columbian series). "It was madness", admits Veerle. The character is so popular that the city of Ghent organises a "Sara day". "At one point, I ended up surrounded by 25 000 people. I didn't understand what was happening. They set me up on a balcony to wave to the crowds like Eva Perón". From then on, whenever she would be walking down a Flemish street, she would hear people whisper: "That's Sara, that's Sara."

#### NEVER WITHOUT MUSIC

In 2009, Veerle Baetens takes on *Code 37*, where she plays a police officer recently promoted to captain within the Ghent vice squad, who manages an entirely male team. A role that could not be further to that of Sara, which allowed her to establish herself further in Belgium.

Veerle Baetens' career then exploded thanks to *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, a poignant film by Felix Van Groeningen. The world discovered her as Elise, a bluegrass country singer covered in tattoos. This incredible role changed her life. *The Broken Circle Breakdown* was nominated at the Oscars and won best foreign film at the César awards. Veerle Baetens could have easily followed the call to Hollywood (just as her fellow Belgian Matthias Schoenaerts has done) but she preferred to pursue a career in Europe. The actress has played alongside François Damiens in *Des nouvelles de la planète Mars*, by Dominik Moll. She also acted

alongside Manu Payet in Emma Luchini's *Un début prometteur*. She then took on the role of Sylvie in *Les Ardennes*, a film noir by Robin Pront.

While Veerle Baetens has been racking up her roles in both series and feature films, music, her first love, has continued to follow her. After *Alabama Monroe*, she toured Europe with the musicians of *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, playing the film's key songs. With her upcoming project, the series *Ghosts of the Past*, she will play Dani Klein, the singer from the Vaya Con Dios band. Music has been a running theme in her life. "A lot of directors ask me to sing a song in their films. Initially there wasn't a song in *Un début prometteur*, but Emma Luchini asked me to sing for a scene. In *Au nom de la terre*, a film that will come out shortly, the director, Edouard Bergeron, also asked me to sing a song. I said no. I don't see why each character I play should sing."

#### DISCUSSING METHOD AND HOW TO BUILD A CHARACTER

Hervé Hadmar, who had the opportunity to direct Veerle Baetens as the lead in *Beyond the Walls*, a fantasy series produced for Arte, explains that alongside her incredible talent she has an extraordinary work ethic. The actress builds her characters gradually through layers, deep-diving into their psyche to give them depth, sometimes discovering elements that the screenwriters themselves had not thought of. "I find the character's psychology very important. People have a tendency of prioritising action over psychology. But, for me, a character needs to be built



based on their wounds". Veerle Baetens has developed her own method, relying on various publications, notably *Heal your wounds* by Lise Bourbeau. The book identifies the 5 fundamental wounds that are the basis of all our suffering, be it physical, emotional or mental: rejection, abandonment, humiliation, betrayal and injustice. The actress also mentions the Enneagram, a method that focuses on personal development, understanding of the self and of others, which details nine personality

types (or profiles). Veerle Baetens has developed her own method, relying on various publications, notably *Heal your wounds* by Lise Bourbeau. The book identifies the 5 fundamental wounds that are the basis of all our suffering, be it physical, emotional or mental: rejection, abandonment, humiliation, betrayal and injustice. The actress also mentions the Enneagram, a method that focuses on personal development, understanding of the self and of others, which details nine personality

has now, successfully, started writing for the screen. She co-wrote *Tabula Rasa*, a fantasy thriller where she plays the lead, with Malin-Sarah Gozin and Christophe Dirickx. Veerle Baetens finds joy in writing; nowadays she feels the need to do it. "I want to be at the origin of projects. As an actress, I sometimes feel like a puppet." While she does not solely want to play characters she has co-written, she does feel that she can bring a lot to the

### "FOR ME, A CHARACTER NEEDS TO BE BUILT ON THEIR WOUNDS."

creation of a character and, at the very least, her female perspective. "Women are rarely offered interesting parts. I've often played the whore, the mistress or the mother courage. I want to play complex characters like Sylvie in *Les Ardennes*, a strong character who is not just there to further a male character's storyline. She carries a part of the story and female characters should be written in the same way as the male ones. I want to play women who have flaws. In so many films, women are perfect. That's just not interesting."

types (or profiles). "Astrology is also interesting", she adds. "Knowing a character's astrological sign can help to discover other elements which create a more well-rounded character." Veerle Baetens also relies on this method when writing. "The two main elements to a screenplay are the story and the characters. Often, you feel the characters have been 'moulded' around the story, which I find frustrating. As an actress, I think the characters are paramount. The story should be written through the eyes of the characters."

#### A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Recently, Veerle Baetens has taken on a new challenge by going behind the camera, adapting the successful Lize Spit novel *It Melts*. She clearly has many strings to her bow, not only do her talents include acting, music, singing and dancing, she

creation of a character and, at the very least, her female perspective. "Women are rarely offered interesting parts. I've often played the whore, the mistress or the mother courage. I want to play complex characters like Sylvie in *Les Ardennes*, a strong character who is not just there to further a male character's storyline. She carries a part of the story and female characters should be written in the same way as the male ones. I want to play women who have flaws. In so many films, women are perfect. That's just not interesting."

Recently, Veerle Baetens has taken on a new challenge by going behind the camera, adapting the successful Lize Spit novel *It Melts*.



# NICCOLÒ AMMANITI MASTERCLASS

## HOW TO THINK THE UNTHINKABLE

**SPEAKER :** NICCOLÒ AMMANITI (writer and director)

**CHAIRÉD BY :** ANNE LANDOIS (screenwriter and executive producer)

What if writing a series was a cure for depression? Niccolò Ammaniti, a renowned Italian novelist, set aside his solitary work writing a novel to embrace the collective adventure that is writing a series. There, he discovers the power of images. Sometimes, novels are not the best format to tell certain stories; you have to change methods, not just write but also add something visual. To accept that good stories are those that make us question things without necessarily giving us all the answers. And, now more than ever, it is important, in this world where everything is at full speed, to take the time to create and avoid the current tendency of always wanting to “fill the blanks”.

Renowned in Italian writing, Niccolò Ammaniti became known in the 90s, establishing himself, unbeknownst to him, as one of the leaders of the “Cannibale” literary movement (named after the controversial anthology “Gioventù Cannibale” published in 1996). This group brought together a handful of young authors that shared a taste for violence, transgression and Pop Culture.

Although Niccolò Ammaniti always denied his belonging to this movement, it enabled him, whether he likes it or not, to make an incredible step into the transalpine and international literary scene. He published seven novels in 18 years and was lucky enough to see many of his books adapted to the big screen. His best seller, *I'm Not Afraid*, was adapted in 2003 by Gabriele Salvatores, and *Me*

and *You* was Bernardo Bertolucci's last film. His novel, *As God Commands*, which was also adapted by Salvatores, based on a screenplay Ammaniti himself wrote, was rewarded the prestigious Strega award.

Since then, novelist Niccolò Ammaniti has become a series creator with *Il Miracolo* (the miracle), co-produced by Sky Italia and Arte. He has made his first steps into screenwriting and directing with an 8-episode series that is troubling and disturbing, very much in line with his novels. As the title suggests, the series tells the story of a miracle. In the den of a Calabrian mafia leader, a small statue of the Virgin Mary cries tears of human blood. This discovery will turn the protagonists' world upside down.

### THIS IS MY BLOOD, THE POWER OF AN IMAGE

Niccolò Ammaniti had had the idea of a “miracle” for a long time. He originally had imagined a story of two thugs who stole a miraculous statue with the hope of selling it off to the highest bidder. Having hidden it in the boot of their car, they make a pit stop at a gas station. As they are eating, the Virgin starts crying litres of blood, to a point where the red liquid is pouring out of the car and onto the tarmac. Two police officers rush to the car to open the boot, convinced they will find a dead body. They end up face to face with the statue and are bewildered by its grace. “I began writing the story and quickly realised that the novel was not the right format. Literature is unable to fully describe blood. Blood must be seen. Words alone are not enough. Blood is a colour, a light. The image of

blood is shocking. This story therefore needed to be told another way.” Niccolò Ammaniti abandons his project and starts writing his newest novel.

Several years later, an executive producer, with whom he had already worked with on the adaptation of his novel by Bernardo Bertolucci, comes to him to ask to return to his project and write a series pilot. “I had a lot of fun during the two weeks where I wrote the pilot. Then, I went back to working on my novel and did not think of the series.” When the producer informed him that the series was greenlighted, Niccolò Ammaniti was taken by surprise. “I had only written the first episode and had not thought of the rest of the story”. Taken off guard, he decided to develop the pilot's storyline across 8 episodes. “The pilot became the series.”

### TEARS OF ITALY, POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND DIVINE INTERVENTION

Although the main character in *Il Miracolo* is the statue of the Virgin, the series follows the journey of several protagonists, all faced with a mystery that will challenge their certainties: a Prime Minister in the midst of a political and personal crisis; his wife, both unsatisfied and unhappy; a priest addicted to sex and alcohol; a Polish baby sitter part of a strange cult; an uncompromising General; a Biology researcher whose mother is dying. All these protagonists make up the image of the void in spirituality and politics in Italy. Niccolò Ammaniti set the





storyline on the night before a referendum on whether the country would remain in the European community, foreshadowing a possible Italian Brexit.

However, Niccolò Ammaniti denies having written a political series. He wanted to measure the impact a supernatural phenomenon, that visibly defies all the laws of Nature, could have on people directly faced with it. “The fact that an object that weighs only 2.5kg is able to produce hectolitres of blood goes against all the essential laws of existence.” As Niccolò Ammaniti explains, there are several types of miracles. “On one side, miracles that are linked to faith, that of blind people being able to see or those who are able to walk again.” Here, he deals with the other kind of miracle, the stranger one, the more pagan one. The mystery of *Il Miracolo* is even more prodigious as the scientific community verifies it. “It’s as if science confirmed God’s existence.”

The political intrigue is secondary. “I wanted the miracle to be seen by someone extremely important, in this case the Italian Prime Minister”. The series brings up many questions without looking to give any answers. “How would a secular person react when faced with a true miracle? What is its meaning? What is God asking of him? Why has God chosen him as opposed to another minister? Does he have a higher purpose?”

Niccolò Ammaniti recalls that he wrote the story over four years ago. “At the beginning, I had imagined a conflict around euthanasia, but the subject of euthanasia is heavily linked to religion. I realised that it was taking a wrong path.” Niccolò Ammaniti did want the Prime Minister’s character to be faced with a crisis. “I therefore imagined a situation where Italy wanted to leave the European Union. I thought that such a situation would be totally improbable and could only exist within my imagination.” However,

reality has caught up with fiction. “Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, a political party has been promoting Italy leaving the EU. It terrifies me.”

#### THE ORDEAL: SOLITARY WRITING, GROUP WRITING OR “MY THERAPIST GREEN LIT MY PROJECT”

*Il Miracolo* is Niccolò Ammaniti’s first project as screenwriter and director. Naturally, Anne Landois asks him about the passage from solitary novel writing to the group effort that is a series screenplay. Niccolò Ammaniti admits that the solitude of a novelist was starting to wear thin. “I had a tendency of isolating myself. I fell into a depression. I decided to consult a therapist who, after prescribing me some medicine, advised me to stop isolating myself, to face others and therefore to change my job. But I don’t know how to do anything else. All I know is how to write and take care of my fish! Unfortunately, taking care of fish is also a solitary affair. Being with one’s fish is like being alone.”

For a minute, he thought he could become a bricklayer, but quickly gave up the idea and decided to become a director. “My therapist greenlit my project. I became a director and realised that my peers were far less disagreeable than I imagined. I really appreciated the people I worked with.” Maybe too much. Unfortunately, at the end of the shooting, the team went on to other projects and Niccolò Ammaniti once again found himself alone. “I became depressed again. I called them, but they were all busy on other shootings. Sometimes, they didn’t even answer me. I was jealous.” That’s probably why he quickly created a new series. “I did it to reunite with my teams. They were willing to see me, as long as they were paid. Their friendship is a little self-serving. But I like them the way they are.”

Novel writing is defined by freedom. The freedom to write when one wants and at the rhythm one chooses. By becoming a director, Niccolò Ammaniti had to give up that freedom. “The work of a director is exhausting. I’ve never been so tired. When I write, I can write for two or three hours, then I decide to stop and do nothing for the rest of the day. It’s wonderful. The work of a director never stops. Even if you were on your deathbed, you’d be dragged on to set”. However, collaborative work, as a team, has its advantages. “Novel writing is solitary. When one makes a mistake, there’s no one to blame but oneself. Series writing is a team effort. So one can blame others. Sometimes I’m very strict with my teams. I allow myself to be that way as I was also extremely strict on myself when I wrote.”

Nevertheless, Niccolò Ammaniti freely admits to having been given a freedom on the shooting of *Il Miracolo* that

If Niccolò Ammaniti is to have one true influence, it would be Paul Thomas Anderson (*There Will Be Blood*, *Phantom Thread*). “I find him exceptional. I don’t even come close.”

#### THE SPARK IN ITALIAN DRAMA

Europe is a breeding ground for series creation. For the last few years - with *Il Miracolo*, *Gomorra*, *The Young Pope*, *Suburra*, and more recently, *My Brilliant Friend* - we have witnessed a sort of awakening of Italian series creation. The international buzz for series “made in Italy” is constantly growing. Niccolò Ammaniti confirms this awakening. “Italy was lucky to have Sky, a paying channel that started offering sleeker, more upmarket series like *Romanzo Criminale* or *Gomorra*.” The Italian audience became more demanding and “the Rai had no other choice but to improve the quality of its own productions.”

“PLATFORMS NOWADAYS ARE TOO GREEDY. THEY CONSTANTLY DEMAND NEW SERIES. ONE NEEDS TIME TO RESEARCH, TO ESTABLISH THE NECESSITY OF THE PROJECT. TODAY, THE TENDENCY IS TO JUST TRY AND FILL THE SPACE.”

directors only dream of. The series goes through many different styles and is constantly surprising, always alternating between flashback, present tense storytelling and dream sequences. Niccolò Ammaniti didn’t give himself any restrictions. “I was very lucky. Even during the edit, I managed to reshoot some of the scenes.”

#### A SERIES UNDER INFLUENCE

Anne Landois asks Niccolò Ammaniti about his influences and role models. *Il Miracolo* reminds her of *The Young Pope*, Paolo Sorrentino’s series, the main theme of which is faith. Niccolò Ammaniti admires Sorrentino, whom he considers to be an excellent director and who he thinks “has a flair for the grotesque which is missing in my work.”

Niccolò Ammaniti admits to having been influenced by *The Leftovers*, a series which also talks of a mystery seeing as the plot unfolds three years after the sudden and unexplained disappearance of 2% of the world’s population. According to him, good stories are the ones that spawn questions without really answering them. *The Leftovers* asks questions about grief: how do we continue to live after such a traumatic event? And the question isn’t closed. The narration then rests on the feelings and experiences of the characters.

However, he reminds us that the writing of a series must be matured. “Italy has produced some beautiful series, because the creators took the necessary time to create them. Platforms nowadays are too greedy. They constantly demand new series. One needs time to research, to establish the necessity of the project. Today, the tendency is to just try and fill the space. Demand for series is too high in Italy. The risk is wanting to simply ‘do’, which affects quality.”

Nevertheless, Niccolò Ammaniti dove head first into the writing and directing of a second ambitious series, inspired by his last novel *Anna*. Filming is set for autumn, in Sicily. This time, he is exploring a new genre: the post-apocalyptic series. A deadly virus broke out over Europe, decimating the adult population. Children are safe up until puberty. “The series tells the story of the last four years of humanity. Filming will take place in Sicily with lots of children. They will all be painted blue. They’ll be mute. We’ll see...”

# ISOBEL WALLER-BRIDGE MASTERCLASS

## MUSIC, A CHARACTER IN ITS OWN RIGHT

In partnership with 

**SPEAKER :** ISOBEL WALLER-BRIDGE (composer)

**CHAIRED BY :** CATHY VERNEY (screenwriter and director)

**Music is one of the narrative voices, it is not there simply to emphasise or pace what we see on screen, it also says what cannot be said otherwise; the complexity of emotions, of what will never be. Isobel Waller-Bridge is adamant that music must say what cannot be said otherwise and defends the idea that music does not always have to be 'music'.**

### MUSIC STEMS FROM A SENSE OF FAMILIARITY

Isobel Waller-Bridge works a lot with her family, more specifically with her sister, the creator and lead actress of *Fleabag*, Phoebe Waller-Bridge. For her, the main appeal is that she can work without pretence. Disagreeing gives a sense of freedom, and feedback is generally more honest and understandable. Of course, it is not imperative to work amongst family members, but a mutual understanding is essential, and she feels that having a close relationship with the people you work with can have incredible creative results.

For the film *Vita & Virginia*, which Isobel Waller-Bridge created the soundtrack for, she explained that the creative process was similar. She is often onboard from the very start, before the play or script is even fully written. In this instance, she spoke at length with the director Chanya Button, notably on what it meant for Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West to commit to loving one another in a time where it was completely forbidden;

"NEVER REPEAT WITH THE MUSIC  
WHAT IS ALREADY ON SCREEN."

they had to create their own rules, transcending their decade to accept it and live honestly. To reflect this in the music made for a particularly exciting project.

Isobel Waller-Bridge points out that where musical creation is such a solitary job (she makes sure she has the required amount of time, in a dedicated space, where she can devote herself entirely to whatever runs through her mind, to the music that comes to her and must be composed), it is also important to sometimes be part

of the team, sit within its structure. It is vital to be able to work without being disrupted, but co-creation never loses its magical quality.

Cathy Verney asks her about her approach to studio recording. Isobel Waller-Bridge explains that she has profound respect for musicians, and is astonished at how much they give of themselves. She usually works with the same musicians. She tries to make sure that she is neither too overbearing nor too excited. However, she knows she will edit a lot of things post-recording.

### WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO COMPOSE?

Cathy Verney asks whether it is easier to compose before or after having seen the images. Isobel Waller-Bridge answers that she does not really react to the image but more to the emotions, therefore she does not need the images per se even though she needs to initially be "responding" to something. Then, as a next step, the images are required to ensure the rhythm is right, not to

divulge anything too early, not to repeat or be redundant but be in line with what is on screen. Isobel Waller-Bridge therefore always works from the script; she hopes to serve it and, with her music, says what is not necessarily written.

She also suggests that to work this way, confidence in oneself and in others is crucial, as you need to be able to question yourself. She composes knowing that if it does not fit, there would be no issue in modifying the music that was created...

Moreover, if when she is writing music "she writes, she writes, she writes", there is always a stage that follows where "she cuts, she cuts, she cuts, she cuts". She creates silence. She would like for it to be felt as an event when we hear music.

### SILENCE! THERE'S ALREADY SO MUCH TO SEE

Isobel Waller-Bridge writes music for theatre, film and television. Are there any differences? There is certainly a pitfall that should be avoided. Less so in theatre, but when writing music for a series, there is a danger



of going over the top, writing to fill the gaps, which is always a real risk. As far as she is concerned, the key danger in series is useless music, some kind of elevator music. More generally in fact, one of Isobel Waller-Bridge's main concerns is not to write useless music, making it redundant, and repeat with the music what is already on screen.

In a project like that of *Fleabag*, with a story that is particularly well written with little dialogue, Isobel Waller-Bridge emphasises that the pace of the series exists already almost entirely in the screenplay. It is merely a question of bringing it to light. It is however worth saying that writing music for a comedy is not at all the same as composing for a drama series. A comedy's score is very different to that of a drama and these elements must be taken into account from the very start, just like the balance between music and dialogue. She feels that we "know" when there should be music and when there should not. Hence, for example, the more dialogue there is, the less music there should be.

Music also has a very unique part to play, as it is almost a character in its own right: that of the main's character's subconscious. Cathy Verney highlights how incredible *Fleabag's* music is, which is not only there to support the story, it also feels like a kind of encounter, almost as if it opens up a parallel universe, that of the lead character's mind. Thus, music is an intrinsic part of the narrative experience. Isobel Waller-Bridge believes that it is key to remember not to recreate through the music what is happening on screen. She is always looking to create a unique storytelling tool.

### STEPPING IN FOR THE UNTOLD

It is also the opportunity to show that music serves what cannot be said through dialogue... In *Fleabag* for example, although the process may seem surprising, how could we have said more effectively what it is like to become an adult and prepare to face the immense fears of love? Isobel Waller-Bridge decided on choir music, starting by recording with children singing, then teenagers and finally with more mature voices. Prior to the music being recorded, when everyone sat around the table to watch the season's first episode (which had a clear Greek tragedy undertone, revolving around family dynamics, the sense of redemption, etc.) her idea of choir music was not met with any resistance. However, once the music was recorded, sang by 5 or 6 adults, it did not seem quite right. Upon reflection, it was obvious that it should start with something else than older voices. By going back to the music and recording it with youthful voices, everything fell into place, and it enabled them to play with the evolution of voices and ages throughout the season.

In *Vita & Virginia*, the director wanted the music to represent the sense of modernity and freedom in their relationship. While it would seem tempting to match the genre (a historical and intimate drama) and imagine music that would heavily feature, for example, the piano, she ultimately decided to go for a much more electronic score. Here again, the sense of trust allowed for creative freedom. She hopes that the viewers understand the intention.



Isobel Waller-Bridge explains that it is not always necessary to have a lot of music and makes a case for silence. For her, one of the virtues of music is also that it can stop, be interrupted, that we can cut it and therefore, create silence. She also mentions the importance of not feeling the need to resolve everything. Our brains do not work that way. It enjoys complexity and what is unfinished. That is our reality. Music that is too polished, over-worked and too present can prevent pauses to breath, which to her seems absolutely vital.

### MUSIC AT THE HEART OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Cathy Verney finds that music paces the dialogue and contemplates the idea that writers need music to reach the end of their project. From experience, she likes having access to music when she is writing, not necessarily music that will be used in the soundtrack, but that can accompany, bring life to and set the scene. Isobel Waller-Bridge says that she can sometimes initially suggest music in order to give a sense of tempo and tone. She adds that writing prior to filming can also be helpful when the schedule is tight. She stresses that the sooner collaboration starts, the better.

### FROM COMPOSING IN THE STUDIO TO TAKING TO THE STAGE...

When asked about what sparks her interest and what her influences are, Isobel Waller-Bridge explains that when she started, she was very much a classical musician, she played the piano and loved the discipline and skill it required to be a concert pianist. While she was honing in her instrumental skills, she began to write music, short pieces that were not initially for films. She then studied music, exploring different aspects, as she was

passionate about rhythm and convinced that music does not always have to be 'music'. Emotions can sometimes be so abstract...

Cathy Verney asks her at what point did she choose to become a musician, to which Isobel Waller-Bridge replies that she has always been one; but it was at University that she discovered music and film, this dialogue with the writer and unique way of telling stories with music. This enabled her to realise that she could transform music into a rich storytelling tool that could always be reinvented.

She takes the opportunity to announce that she is starting a solo adventure which is both different and quite terrifying, a real challenge: she will perform on stage. This will add a string to her bow. Despite it being extremely creatively fulfilling, working on music for the screen does mean that you are not seeing the audience's direct response, there is no communication, which she is hoping to get in this next venture.

### WHAT IF MUSIC CAN CHANGE THE WORLD?

Cathy Verney asks if she thinks that music can change people. Isobel says it can, obviously! People do what they want, but we know that music can change the way they think. It can create a meditative state, it can motivate or help to go where we'd like to. Cathy Verney believes that music brings us together on another level and Isobel Waller-Bridge agrees: music is a wonderful way to connect people. Despite the possibility of it being utilised in a harsher way which might not have the same positive means. Religion, war songs, pop music... they've all shown that with a few notes, we could change humanity!



# MARIA KYRIACOU MASTERCLASS

## CREATION HAS NO BOUNDARIES

**SPEAKER :** MARIA KYRIACOU (president, International, ITV Studios)

**CHAIRER BY :** ALEXANDRA LEBRET (managing director, European Producers Club)

**For several years, through a worldwide network of production companies, ITV Studios has set up a collective made up of international talent. The company guarantees a considerable amount of freedom (choice of projects, writers and sponsors) based on mutual respect; resulting in ITV Studios currently owning one of the most prestigious content catalogues of the drama market. Could this be proof that talent can only truly express itself fully when it is free to do so?**

Maria Kyriacou is lucky: she works in the entertainment business! "It happened by chance when I was in my 20s and a job came up at Disney. I was very lucky because I hit what I think is the best industry. Because it never stops, it never stays the same, it's always changing. And at the end of the day, you are bringing joy into people's hearts. That's what we do. Whether we're on the business or creative side of it, we are spreading joy and

companies internationally. "We do not set out to buy companies for the sake of buying companies" explains Maria Kyriacou, "we are not an investment banking group or a venture capitalist group. We are a strategic buyer trying to bring the most talented people together". ITV Studios' philosophy is to spot the best talent, trust them and to let them express themselves.

"SPOT THE BEST TALENT, TRUST THEM AND LET THEM EXPRESS THEMSELVES."

connecting with people everywhere." Today, after almost 15 years at Disney, Maria Kyriacou heads up ITV Studios production companies throughout Europe and Australia. She is also in charge of international development of drama formats (including for ITV Studios America) and of the international distribution entity ITV Studios Global Entertainment (ITVS GE), whose prestigious catalogue includes over 40 000 hours of programmes.

### ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS: UNION IS STRENGTH

A recent division of the ITV group, one of the major players in the British television landscape, ITV Studios brings together 55 semi-autonomous and semi-independent production companies. These companies have great creative autonomy as ITV refuses to influence their editorial lines or set any kind of quota (whether it be in terms of format or genre). Seven years ago, determined to make the most of all the opportunities arising from the globalisation of the TV entertainment market, ITV Studios set off on an active strategy of buying production

Thus, in France in 2017, ITV took a majority stake in Tetra Media Studio, one of the largest independent producers of French drama with a catalogue including *Un village français* (*The Line*), *Les Hommes de l'ombre* (*Spin*) and *Profilage*. A similar strategy has been utilised in Italy with the recent acquisition of Cattleya, an Italian production company, notably heading up the *Gomorra* series. Beyond acquisitions, ITV Studios also plays a key role during the build-up, bringing support, specifically financial support, to create new production companies. For example, the company backed the creation of Apple Tree Productions, a new company headed up by Piv Bernth who was Head of Drama at DR and behind some of the biggest Danish series of the last 10 years (*The Killing* and *Follow the Money*, to name a few).

### A COLLECTIVE OF TALENTS, AN ANTHEM FOR INDEPENDENCE

Independence is the basis on which is built the entire strategy and culture at ITV Studios, even with regards

to the ITV group, its mother company. "ITV is two businesses, it's the UK commercial broadcaster and the Studios' business which is the production business. We operate relatively independently with each other. ITV can commission from whoever they like." Likewise, the various production companies that make up ITV Studios can collaborate with partners of their choosing. Thus, the series *Bodyguard*, that was co-financed by ITV Studios, was commissioned by the BBC. Maria Kyriacou points out that *Bodyguard* was created by Jed Mercurio, writer of the just as remarkable *Line of Duty*, which is also broadcast by the British public channel. It was therefore natural that his latest creation would be commissioned by the BBC, despite it being ITV's main competitor in the UK. "We encourage our production companies to work with Channel 4 or the BBC", she adds. "We are very proud to have financed *Bodyguard*. The series smashed viewing records during its broadcast on the BBC."

### THE SERIES BUBBLE WILL CONTINUE TO GROW

Maria Kyriacou partially subscribes to the 'bubble' theory of TV drama. "I can't see the appetite for drama or scripted shows dropping in Europe anytime soon. I can see it increasing. There is a lot of content, if you go to MIPTV in Cannes it's overwhelming how much content there is out there. But I cannot see a reversal of audiences' desire to be entertained. I think scripted has helped the SVoD services and we've only just begun". Today, Netflix has become, as a platform, the most important investor in terms of content in Europe. It is followed by Apple and Amazon. Disney and Warner are also taking their first step in the world of SVoD. However, the platforms only represent a small part of the equation. In the United Kingdom, the vast majority of original content are commissioned by traditional players like ITV and BBC, responding to the audience's expectations, as they spend more and more time in front of screens.

It may well be that this becomes more extreme: what will people do when they are in a driver-less car? They might watch series!





# SIMON CORNWELL MASTERCLASS

## PRODUCING TO GIVE THE POWER TO CREATE

**SPEAKER :** SIMON CORNWELL (executive producer, The Ink Factory)

**CHAired BY :** SYDNEY GALLONDE (executive producer, Make It Happen)

**Sydney Gallonde is optimistic that Simon Cornwell will share his recipe for success. He's got one, that's for sure! One doesn't have that much success without knowing what one is doing...**

Along with his brother Stephen, Simon Cornwell runs The Ink Factory, which has notably produced very successful serial adaptations of their father -John Le Carré-'s books. Books like *The Night Manager* or more recently *The Little Drummer Girl*, directed by Park Chan-wook. Eight or nine years ago, they finally decided to do what they had talked about for so long: they joined forces to produce together at a very particular time for the industry, as everything was changing. Since then, they have lined up one success after the other. How do they do it?

### YOU'RE NOT ALONE, DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR AUDIENCE!

Some see change as something dangerous. However, danger is full of opportunities. So, when Simon Cornwell and his brother started producing, delinearisation was becoming increasingly important in the entertainment industry and Netflix was starting to play to its fullest. The brothers then thought that this was inevitably going to change the way we shoot and interact with the public. They created The Ink Factory and placed storytelling at the very heart of the company (potentially an inherited family trait), as well as insisting that the audience never be underestimated. Indeed, audiences are made up of very sophisticated entertainment consumers. Nowadays, they have far more choice; they've got a broader culture and have seen a lot; they can compare and are very solicited. In that, the brothers saw a golden opportunity to create sophisticated stories, with character and "characters". These allow for strong identification, offering unique and unexplored points of view. All in all, an opportunity to surprise.

### PRODUCING FOR TELEVISION IS NEITHER CHEAPER NOR EASIER THAN CINEMA

Sydney Gallonde asks whether there are fundamental differences in between series and film production. The gap in budgets seems to be getting progressively smaller. Producing a series is becoming increasingly expensive. Simon Cornwell explains that three years ago

he took part in the most expensive TV series of its time, which cost 30 million dollars for six hours of television. Today, hourly budget keeps rising and it seems to him that 10 million dollars per hour is inevitable. This lines up with cinema standards.

A screening of an extract of *The Little Drummer Girl* leads Sydney Gallonde to ask about the complexity of such a project, especially considering diversity of the actors and the nationality of the director, who is Korean. For Simon Cornwell, the common thread is always telling a human story. *The Little Drummer Girl* is the story of a young woman trying to find herself. It's about a real person with weaknesses, contradictions and complex emotions. In order to emphasise the story and its veracity, all the casting was genuine (except for the two lead roles).

### WHAT IF TALENT ATTRACTS TALENT?

Sydney Gallonde asks Simon Cornwell if he can explain how he managed to attract so many talents. Simon Cornwell explains that starting with very strong writing, extraordinary material, one sets off on a virtuous cycle. That's because talent attracts talent. It's important to remember when the development of a project can sometimes last for years and one can easily be tempted to take the easy options. However, to get the best results, one should never cut corners.

Simon Cornwell also suggests taking risks. He loves doing it, but admits it's not always easy. Hence, working with a Korean director was a challenge for the producer, but also for the broadcaster. The team worked in close proximity in order to move forwards with a common vision, one that best serves the story. All in all, results were certainly not lacking, nor was success!

### TO GO FROM BOOK TO SCREEN, FREEDOM AND TRUST ARE ESSENTIAL

Sydney Gallonde asks if it is hard to work from a book. Simon Cornwell jokes that the hardest thing for him

was talking to his father, which he found much harder than talking to any other author. However, going from a book to a series is certainly a challenge, as the subjects and narration cannot be the same. A good book in itself is always a great start, but is only a start in terms of adapting it to a screenplay and putting it on screen. Changes are always necessary, sometimes even down to the main protagonists' personalities. One must therefore dare to follow through with what the story requires.

Another extract of *The Little Drummer Girl* shows the extent to which the choreography is an important element when stories are being directed for the screen. Sometimes it's with no words, no commentary, simply with movement that life appears and that the story takes shape.

Simon Cornwell uses the example of *The Little Drummer Girl* as it is inspired by his father's book, but is considerably different, not only because it is set in another era, but also because the last two episodes differ completely from the end of the novel. However, he asserts that the fundamental meaning comes from the original book.

Sydney Gallonde asks if there were objective reasons for these changes. Simon Cornwell goes back to the idea that things change, sometimes in a very good direction. In this case, an era entirely dominated by men is no longer relevant. In fact, it seems to him that we fundamentally need more female screenwriters, which

would make female characters much more realistic. We need more female directors and simply more women in charge. For Simon Cornwell, this will take some time as the shift in power can only be done in stages.

He notes that *The Little Drummer Girl* was written in 1983; it's a remarkable book, but it was born 35 years ago. The context has evolved. Depicting it as it is on screen, unchanged and faithful, wouldn't make much sense. In addition, the main protagonist -a young and very liberated British actress- is very contemporary. Setting it in a different context seemed only like a good idea that would give the story more strength. In fact, why does it seem that producers and broadcasters are always a bit behind the times in terms of social evolution? This would be a fundamental mistake, because if one thing is certain to Simon Cornwell, one should resolutely be of one's time, if not even ahead of it. In order to never forget that, before starting a project, he always asks himself a first set of questions: why? And why now? Experience has proved that it is very useful to be able to answer these questions all the way through the production process.

It is also suggested that although stories change from book to screen, it could also be that writing itself evolves with the times. John le Carré's books have evolved; his writing has become more graphic, more visual. Perhaps it is a more general movement, which sees the return of the habits that storytellers of the Middle Ages had: in order to get us hooked, to entertain us, to teach us, these versatile artists already knew how set things





in movement, how to create emotion. Maybe writers are becoming these multimedia artists who express themselves in every possible way once again?

#### KNEE DEEP IN CREATION

Simon Cornwell also feels that it is equally important to put the director in the driving seat. They have to have freedom. A producer's mission is to support completely, which of course doesn't exclude moments of dialogue to work towards better understanding. Hence, trust is one of the key words of his "secret" for creation. He also adds the necessity of listening to one another: it's the breeding ground for any truly personal ideas. Without that subtle alchemy, one cannot create a team nor a masterpiece.

Often, a lot of time goes by before the team starts to film, especially seeing as the company often has multiple projects in development. Sydney Gallonde therefore asks Simon Cornwell if he has the time to get involved with each project and about the way he collaborates with his brother. Simon Cornwell explains that his brother has been a director for many years.

## "IT PAYS TO BE BOLD!"

So, on paper, his brother is the "creative guy" and he is the "commercial guy". However, in practice, the work is completely collaborative, a subtle alchemy that allows each one to develop their own talents. More broadly, time has enabled them to build a strong and united team, who know each other and who share tastes and values. This almost leads to a form of ubiquity. Each one can take over from the other and can therefore, without interruptions or the need to re-explain, take part in the different stages of a project.

Simon Cornwell also points out the importance of being up front with what one wants to do. That clarity enables a clearer conversation, when necessary, with

the broadcaster. Above all, however, clarity allows for the freedom necessary to any true creation. If everything is clear and everyone agrees on the objective, then it becomes easy to change one thing or another - with total freedom - and truly get involved in the creative process.

#### "IT PAYS TO BE BOLD"

Sydney Gallonde asks Simon Cornwell how he deals with competition and the answer is quite simple: "it pays to be bold". In the past, the year's success would often be last year's success, with a "little tiny turn of the dial". Today, it's a very different story. Repeating what has been done or what others do bores the audience. From experience, audiences almost always choose creative courage.

Maybe a little patience is also necessary to understand one another, to create a team and because projects are long processes and consume your life for a few years. As La Fontaine said: "patience and time do more than strength or passion", Simon Cornwell suggests simply adding a bit of audacity to the cocktail.

By way of conclusion, Simon Cornwell suggests to those who want to create the series of today and tomorrow that they always bet on their own creative courage, which doesn't mean spending more, but seeing ahead, convincing and spending better. It can't be done without talent, audacity, patience and by never forgetting the reasons why one set off on the adventure in the first place.

## POVERTY IS POWER ONE VISION

MONEY DOESN'T BUY HAPPINESS...  
AND CERTAINLY NOT QUALITY

SPEAKER : WALTER IUZZOLINO (founder and curator, Walter Presents)

CHAired BY : MARIE BARRACO (Série Series director)

**Money makes the world go around, that is a fact. That includes the creative world, especially that of television. The small screen is going through a new golden age, with a constant flow of series that are all as ambitious as the next. The "premium" series, the hidden gem, which was once hard to come upon, is now plentiful, almost becoming the norm. But do these series lack edge? Where budget seems never-ending, this does not seem to benefit creativity. Walter Iuzzolino explores what makes series great and highlights that the lack of resources can sometimes be a drive that leads to innovation and originality.**

Walter Iuzzolino, the creator of the *Walter Presents* platform (an online VOD service, financed by Channel 4, entirely focused on foreign-language drama) was already present during the 2018 edition of *Série Series*. During his notably joyful *One Vision*, he introduced his own philosophy, whereby creativity is always synonymous

with courage and risk taking. When Marie Barraco met up with him in October to discuss the overarching theme of the eighth season, power, Walter Iuzzolino lighted up. This year, he took to the stage to defend a mantra that goes against the current consensus in the world of TV series: "poverty is power!".



### A CERTAIN TASTE FOR CONTROVERSY: PRAISING POVERTY IN A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE

It takes a certain nerve, or at least a certain taste for controversy, to praise “poverty”, when discussing a market as profitable and efficient as that of TV drama. While some speak of a likely fourth golden age of television, the number of series produced and broadcast in the world is booming. And nothing seems to be slowing it down. “When I founded *Walter Presents*, recalls Walter luzzolino, I was looking for great drama produced outside of the United States and the United Kingdom. It was quite difficult to find outstanding pieces in the sense that I had to watch between 15 and 20 series to find one that was really well crafted.” His platform put series such

“WE LIVE IN A BUBBLE AND  
THAT BUBBLE IS DANGEROUS.”

as *Heartless*, *Deutschland 83*, *Les Hommes de l'ombre* and *Valkyrien* into the spotlight. “Today, all the drama series that land on my desk are *premium* series, which is a word I detest.”

Walter luzzolino admits that he did not always hate the word “premium”, quite the contrary. In order to fill his platform, he based his research on a set of criteria. The series had to have been successful in their country of origin – he therefore did not go for niche works that targeted a select audience. He selected popular series that were well written, well acted, well filmed and well produced, in other words “premium” series. Series developed by HBO and Showtime were the baseline upon which he assessed the quality of a series. “I would reject all series that did not seem ‘premium’ enough to me. I wanted to show the consumer that usually goes for American series, that French, Italian or Czech series could be just as good.” However, nowadays, the word “premium” is widely overused and sometimes masks a lack of originality and creativity.

### THE TIME HAS COME TO CHANGE TACTICS AND DOUBLE DOWN ON NEWNESS

Walter luzzolino has since changed tactics. He quickly realised that the majority of series, as “premium” as they may be, were in fact extremely glossy and boring. The word “premium” is no longer a gauge for quality. “Some series have absolutely incredible pilots. The soundtracks are exciting. But then this fizzles out as the episodes go on. You realise that you’ve been had.” Often, the look (always quite flashy and luxurious) is chosen over content. “Many series, adds Walter luzzolino, are created in the same way as luxurious products.” They are overtly expensive. The money put into it must be seen during each frame.

The TV drama market is booming. A constant flow of money, mainly from the US, seems to satisfy the broadcasters, producers and creators. On the other side, the viewer feels like they have an array to choose from. But could this be just an impression?! Walter luzzolino calls out the standardisation of series, based on the American model. All series tend to mimic one another. “What’s the point? If I’m watching an American series, I want it to be American. If I’m watching a French series, I want it to be French.”

The ‘Global vs local’ debate is therefore back on the table - although, Walter luzzolino is convinced that ‘global’ series that are created for the international market, do not work on national channels. Paradoxically,

they can only thrive in the online streaming ecosystem. The European national channels, “the gatekeepers of intellectual, artistic and creative discourse in Europe”, must create stronger relationships with their audience by offering more tailored content. One could dream of a European *Game of Thrones*. Walter luzzolino doubts that would be possible.

### A DANGEROUS BUBBLE: TOO MUCH LUXURY KILLS CREATIVITY

“We are constantly told that we are living in an exceptional time. I don’t think so. We live in a bubble and that bubble is dangerous.” Not only do bubbles have a tendency to burst, but the current situation does not benefit everyone. It is advantageous for creators and screenwriters that are already established within the industry, that are known and renowned. The leading VOD platforms, notably Netflix, are building golden bridges, buying loyalty through four- or five-year exclusivity contracts. Because of this, there is no room left for young talent.

Marie Barraco therefore mentions that the problem might not be the quantity of money as such, but more its distribution within the chain of production. Screenwriters are often the ones to bare the brunt, with the largest part of the budget going to filming and producing. However, some series (often the less expensive ones), focus more on writing. Walter luzzolino agrees, adding that the biggest issue, in his eyes, is that no one is willing to bet on young screenwriters. It is true that novice screenwriters are much less autonomous. They need more guidance and support than seasoned screenwriters.



### IN ORDER TO KILL THE ECOSYSTEM: KEEP BLOCKING OUT YOUNG TALENT!

Hiring an unknown writer, who has not yet proven himself, is in itself risky. “It is difficult to take risks when a series costs 3 million per episode.” Walter luzzolino has taken up Art History studies. He has realised that the greatest painters of the 20th century Parisian art scene – Picasso or Matisse – were, at least when they started off, extremely underfunded. “They were the underfunded guys. They just had funds for their paint and their canvas. And all the big stars of the time who were hugely expensive, well commissioned artists are entirely forgotten.” Walter luzzolino remains convinced that the rise of new talent is not only fundamental, but will benefit the entire ecosystem.

Money is, of course, a motivation. “The artistic endeavour is intrinsically linked to desire - the desire to

express an idea. But also to have money. Artists need money to fully express their vision”. Walter luzzolino is nevertheless convinced that money is not a gauge for quality. As such, he mentions a Scandinavian series (whose name he will not mention) that was produced on less than 250 000 euros per episode, a paltry sum. This series, that he loves, has gone around the world. The end result is astonishing considering the limited budget. Walter luzzolino met with one of the series’ producers to ask him how they managed to produce such a series with little means. The answer was simple: “close ups”. Close ups effectively allow you to save a lot of money, notably on sets. The quality of the series therefore rests, somewhat entirely, on the script and the actors.

To conclude, Walter luzzolino fears that the drama market is in the “onwards and upwards” mind-set, which ultimately leads to forgetting what is important... creation must take power.

## DOV ALFON ONE VISION

## WHEN DRAMA UNRAVELS THE MYSTERIES OF POWER

**SPEAKERS :** DOV ALFON (author, journalist), LEORA KAMENETZKY (screenwriter), DAVID DUSA (screenwriter), SANDRA OUAISS (executive producer, Elephant International)  
**CHAired BY :** CLAIRE LEMARÉCHAL (screenwriter)

**Dov Alfon has led multiple lives. He was a spy, then a journalist and is now an author. His first novel, *A Long Night in Paris*, a worldwide bestseller, takes the reader from Tel-Aviv to Paris in a dangerous universe, governed by lies and duplicity. The novel holds all of the elements of a big series. Thus, the project was launched by Keshet, one of the main Israeli audiovisual groups, that has been at the source of some of the most exciting current series. The series will be co-produced with France, therefore combining the talents of two culturally different, yet complementary screenwriters. We see here the portrait of a happy novelist, who is convinced that series are the art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

Dov Alfon is the author of *A Long Night in Paris*, which he wrote in Hebrew, was translated into 12 languages and will soon be adapted into a TV series. In a previous life, this journalist, author and editor was a member of the intelligence services in the Israeli army. He worked in one of the most sophisticated military intelligence services on the planet, the famous and top-secret Unit 8200 (which insiders pronounce "eight two hundred"), the name of which was used in the novel's original title.

**ONCE A SPY, ALWAYS A SPY**

Nothing about Dov Alfon's life seemed to lead to him becoming an author. "I wrote the first chapter of my novel thirty years ago, after my military service", he explains. Like every Israeli soldier, at the end of his mandatory service, he was posted to a reserve unit. In this case, to Unit 8200. There, he worked as an officer in the intelligence service for a month every year. "After five years, I was put through a lie detector test." He was asked a series of very precise questions ("Do you take drugs?" or "Have you got any Iranian friends?"). One of the questions was: "Do you intend to write a book on your experience in Unit 8200?" The thought had never occurred to Dov Alfon, so he truthfully answered "No", therefore passing the polygraph test. "When I left that bunker, I thought that actually it would be a great idea. So they are the ones who encouraged me to write this novel!". Therefore, Dov Alfon set about writing the first chapter. "I very quickly understood I had nothing to say. So I put it away in a drawer."

After living the life of a secret agent, Dov Alfon moved

into journalism. He was an important reporter, head of investigations and then editor in chief of Israeli newspaper Haaretz (the oldest newspaper written in Hebrew, which is celebrating its 100th year). Today, he is the Haaretz's Paris correspondent. This transition from intelligence to journalism happened "very naturally". "The question is whether one is an ex-spy or if one continues spying for their entire lives, but for other people", he admits. What is the difference between being a journalist - especially an investigative journalist - and a spy? In fact, very little. They both work with the same subject matter: information. Today, they share a major challenge: both journalists and spies work to distinguish truth from lies in a world overwhelmed with fake news, hoaxes and conspiracy theories.

**SHOWING HOW THE WORLD WORKS**

Dov Alfon's work as a journalist led him to meet a large number of leaders and politicians. "I suddenly understood the story I had to tell. I wanted to show how the world works." So, the novelist chose to depict the world and its new governing bodies, in a time of cyberspace and generalised surveillance. Of course, he used his experience in Unit 8200 to feed his drama. The most successful espionage novelists are very often ex-spies. Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond, was an ex intelligence officer for the Royal Navy. John Le Carré worked for MI6.

Dov Alfon then decided to take two sabbatical years. That's when he picked up the first draft he had written many years before and sat down to write a spy thriller.

It was a genre that had slightly fallen out of fashion, but which in our "post-truth" era, made perfect sense. "It's not a coincidence that for the last few years we've been seeing an extraordinary rebirth of the espionage genre, that had been forgotten for almost 20 years. In France, everyone knows the series *The Bureau*. In the USA, *The Americans* is undoubtedly the biggest award-winner of our era. I'm part of this wave, which I in no way started."

The plot of *A Long Night in Paris* is hard to summarise, but... arriving at Roissy airport, a young Israeli startupper is kidnapped by a young blonde woman, with no apparent motive. Zeev Abadi, an officer of Unit 8200, was in the same airport "by coincidence" and offers his help to (more like forces his help on) the French police. The investigation then happens on two levels: in Tel-Aviv, where Lieutenant Oriana Talmor tries to help her superior and in Paris, where Abadi and commissioner Léger investigate together in a taught atmosphere. When the young Israeli's body is found lifeless in a waste reprocessing plant, our three heroes find themselves entangled in the heart of a terrifying conspiracy on an international scale.

With *A Long Night In Paris*, Dov Alfon attempts to dust off the spy thriller. Gone are the days of spies covertly tailing their prey in the dark streets of an Eastern European city. Welcome to the cyber era where enemies never meet face to face and where spying is controlled by algorithms. The subject is grave, but the book isn't. "The tone of my book is very casual. It's far from the Scandi

noir where fear is instilled from the first page". Indeed, *A Long Night In Paris* isn't lacking in humour. Yet we also feel that Dov Alfon isn't here for a laugh. "The story that I have to tell is so terrifying that I thought that detached, almost comical drama would be the only way to keep the reader turning the pages". Once the reader closes the book, however, they can't help but shudder when thinking about a world where anyone can be spied on by someone located thousands of miles away. You'll never look at your smartphone or digital keys in the same way.

**DELIBERATELY CHOOSING TELEVISION OVER CINEMA**

It was the obvious contrast in between a terrifying and significant plot and a deliberately detached and humorous tone that seduced Leora Kamenetzky, who has written on some of the most notable modern series (*Fauda* and *False Flag 2*, to name just two). "I bought the book and read the first ten pages. By the time I got to page 11, I had my phone in my hand and was calling the Head of drama of Keshet to convince him to buy the rights of the novel." Leora Kamenetzky, one of the most in-demand screenwriters in Israel, had no problems convincing the channel. It's not surprising that such a project ended up in the hands of the producers of *Hatufim (Prisoners of War)*, the series that inspired *Homeland*.

Dov Alfon was immediately convinced. Even more so due to the fact that Leora Kamenetzky created *Adumot*, his daughter's favourite series. "I was very flattered that





a screenwriter as talented as Leora Kamenetzky was interested in my book. Then again, my agent wasn't happy at all. Leora had read my book in Hebrew, well before its worldwide success. He reckons he could have got a much better price if I had waited a little bit longer to sell the rights."

The world of cinema was also flirting with the novelist to try and get the rights for his novel, with the view of putting it on the silver screen. However, Dov Alfon prefers television, which he finds more adapted to what

France. This is how Sandra Ouais, head of international projects at Elephant Group, stepped in.

When Sandra Ouais discovered the project, it was 100% Israeli and the book still hadn't been translated into English. Nevertheless, Sandra Ouais seized the opportunity, without having read the novel, basing her decision on the pitch and the first draught written by Leora Kamenetzky. In order to properly establish the French aspect of the the plot (and therefore avoid making Paris just a backdrop), she called on David Dusa,

"IF BALLET WAS THE ART OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY,  
AS NUREYEV SAID, I THINK THAT TELEVISION DRAMA  
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he wanted to be a very contemporary plot. "I wanted to speak about a current problem: the demagogical populism of the media, politicians and the intelligence world, which wasn't a problem 20 years ago. I wanted it to be spoken by a medium of our era. If ballet was the art of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as Nureyev said, I think that television drama is the art of the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

#### A FRENCH-ISRAELI CO-PRODUCTION : COMPOSING A DUET

Leora Kamenetzky wrote the first episode. "I started the adaptation using only the Israeli point of view. Although the plot unfolds mainly in Paris, the story is still an Israeli one." However, the channel realised that this project is the perfect opportunity to set up a co-production with

multilingual and multitalented screenwriter and director. He's worked in all genres, from cinema to photography, as well as contemporary dance. He was also instantly seduced by the tone of the novel: "A magical tone that allows one to step in to a very cynical and extremely dark world without falling into the spiritual and intellectual misery which unfortunately reigns in current politics".

Leora Kamenetzky admits that she wasn't a big fan of being forced to work with another screenwriter. She was the one who had launched this series project. It was "her baby". "When I was told I was going to work with a French screenwriter, I hated it. No one wants to be forced to work with someone they don't know." As the production company was trying to get David Dusa to Tel-Aviv, Leora Kamenetzky tried to delay the meeting, in

the hopes that it would never happen. "But he ended up coming to Tel-Aviv. So, I met him. Not only did I realise he was a very nice man, but we also think the same way. We have the same views on the book. We work in the same way. Neither him, nor I, try to impose our point of view. The dialogue between us is always creative. We also had a lot of fun, which is very important."

Sandra Ouais, who played the matchmaker role, reminds us that although the moment that two writers meet is a very strong moment, it is also very risky. "There is no software. There are no rules. It's like a date. It either works or it doesn't. You can't plan it".

#### NOVELIST AND SCREENWRITER: TWO VERY DIFFERENT JOBS

The screenwriters admitted to having taken a few liberties with the original novel. Firstly, the French commissioner was changed to a woman. Sandra Ouais thought that in the novel, the character was just a stooge whose only role was to highlight the hero. Furthermore, he was "too

archetypal, in the way that the Israelis, and probably the rest of the world, see the French". In other words: a grumpy moaner. The second big change, although the plot had "bad guys" from around the whole world, was to make the main antagonist French.

From the very start, Dov Alfon decided to stay in the background and give the screenwriters complete freedom. "I am at their disposal to answer any of their questions" he assures us. "The intelligence world is quite complex. If they want to make sure not to make any mistakes, I am always there for them. But they need to be able to express their art. TV series writing is a different world. A world I don't belong to. Certain other authors' tendency to claim they understand the world of series seems wrong and almost arrogant to me."

Dov Alfon is all the more comfortable in his role as silent consultant as he doesn't actually have the time to be more involved in the project. Indeed, he has decided to start writing a second novel!



# JONATHAN GOTTSCHALL ONE VISION

## THE STORYTELLING ANIMAL : HOW STORIES MAKE US HUMAN

SPEAKER : JONATHAN GOTTSCHALL (author, researcher)

Jonathan's vision is clear: instead of speaking of a homo sapiens, it seems to him we could speak more of a homo fictus ("fiction man" or the narrative man). Actually, Elie Wiesel has offered a point of view that is in line with this vision. Indeed, to her it seems that "God made man because he loves stories." For Jonathan Gottschall, it's this incessant creation of stories, our taste for and sensibility towards narration that are characteristic of humankind.

### STORIES ARE OUR DNA

Jonathan Gottschall, a researcher at the forefront of art and neurosciences, has written his doctoral thesis in English under the direction of specialist evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson. He is considered a pioneer in the application of scientific methods in terms of Literature and Human Sciences. His research is regularly quoted in the media. He has written seven books, including *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

Jonathan Gottschall shows a short video with moving squares, circles and triangles. He points out that each person creates a "story" using these abstract shapes: some see two beings talking, others a character that is jostled by another and some even see the start of a love story. Simple geometric shapes on a screen, and everyone invents a story. For Jonathan Gottschall, supported by recent advances in neuroscience, there is clear proof that humans are first and foremost interpreters. They naturally create stories.

This is why he suggests we consider homo sapiens (the intelligent, wise and reasonable human) more of a homo fictus, the man of stories or narrative. All it takes is a simple suggestion and a story takes shape, without us being able to help it.

### A STORY IS ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE

Jonathan Gottschall points out one important element: no one is passive in front of a story; it sets us in movement. Indeed, humans create (or co-create) and are never simply following what another is showing them. Nowadays, this is observable thanks to scanners that allow us to read brains while humans read stories and watch brains while they watch stories. We can observe that the brain is never passive. On the contrary, the active zones are exactly the same ones that would be active if the persons were in action and felt the same sensations as the ones described to them.

The combination of neuroscience and imagery therefore shows that brain activity when we are listening to or watching a story is far from passive. Our brain doesn't simply follow what someone is telling us, it is involved and lives the adventures of the person being spoken of.

Jonathan Gottschall also brings up the work of Paul Zak, who invited a few students (quite poor ones) to his laboratory, in exchange for remuneration, to take part in a small neuroscience study. He showed them a story of a very ill child who is on the verge of death and the child's father suffering deeply. He took a small amount of blood from the students before and after reading the story. He noticed a strong increase in their levels of oxytocin - the empathy hormone. He then suggested that they donate some money to help this "cause", which then allows him



to measure their (massive) generosity. He also noticed that the higher the level of oxytocin was, the higher the donation was. On average, it was half the remuneration they received for the study. In parallel, a group was subjected to the same information in a completely different structure, simply given the facts. The latter understood the situation, but hardly donated any money. Here lies the proof that stories very concretely affect behaviour.

### STORYTELLING IS ORGANISING CHAOS

Jonathan Gottschall also suggests that in a world full of information, the story is the structure - at least the best structure - that allows us to get rid of chaos. Nothing has the cognitive power of a story. It allows us to organise our perception and our state of consciousness.

"NOTHING HAS THE COGNITIVE POWER OF A STORY. IT ALLOWS US TO ORGANISE OUR PERCEPTION AND OUR STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS."

It seems to him that we sometimes forget how strange that is. Logically, when faced with fiction, we know that what we're told, in many ways, is untrue. Yet, we treat information transmitted by speech, images or writing as if it were real and as if it were really happening to us right now.

Stories are so powerful that what happens to another happens to me too, even if I know it's not real. We therefore start to perceive the amazing power of stories. In fact, studies show that some series have profoundly

-and durably- changed behaviours and attitudes. *Will and Grace*, *Mom*, *Little Mosque*, have changed points of view on homosexuals (one even talks of the "Will and Grace effect"!), addiction, Muslims...

But not everyone is happy about this power revealing itself. According to Tolstoy, we could perhaps worry about the contagious power of art. As he said, "art is an infection", which points to a different form of transmission than one of pure "logic". This amount of "contamination" of art is actually one of the elements that allow us to judge the "value" of art. The more we are infected by the feelings of the artist, the more powerful they are, according to Tolstoy... Hence, in order to make an idea emerge and for it to spread effectively, to make an idea move quickly in all directions, for it to touch broadly, a story is the best vehicle.

This is because stories change attitudes and behaviours. Plato seemed to already know this and he wanted to banish all those that told stories from the city. They were qualified as (dangerous) professional liars capable of manipulating the soul and spirit of those that listen to them, selling their stories by conjuring emotion...

### WRITING IS ALWAYS WRITING THE FUTURE

Nowadays, it would seem a lot harder to want to banish all those who tell stories and maybe we should actually

include them more, welcome them more and work with them with the awareness of their power. Very often, we are wrong. We still see stories as harmless. We still think that they are “just entertainment”, when in fact stories can be what is both best and worst. A story can be the solution to all one’s problems, but it can also encourage unwanted behaviours. The writers of our stories are actually the writers of our future.

Jonathan Gottschall screened a few images of a shaman telling stories in the heart of his community through rhythm and harmony. In doing this, he creates the community. Nowadays, we have very few shamans and big storytellers in our communities and it rests on others to create that sense of being together, united and not so different...

#### ARE WE STORY ADDICTS?

In this time that some qualify as the “new golden age of television”, notably due to the phenomenal success of TV series, another question arises: are these stories addictive? This could still be an open question. For Jonathan Gottschall, stories in themselves are not actually a drug, even though we notice bulimic, addictive and binge-like consumption habits. We could also compare them to drugs as they change states of consciousness, but... without substance. Each person therefore seems to be able to stay in charge of their consumption. However, Jonathan Gottschall considers that, more than ever, this gives responsibility to writers as they indeed are “influencers”.

#### THE POST-TRUTH SOCIETY

Jonathan Gottschall points out that stories aren’t always fictional. A story is indeed not necessarily a fiction. It is first and foremost a structure of information. It is a form of grammar, the efficiency of which is impressive.

In that regard, he advises keeping an eye on these grammatical elements in order to build powerful stories. Therefore, the narrative layout (situation, problem, solution), the predictability of the outcome or even the depth of a character have an important role because they are what make the story believable. If the structure

is flawed, as interesting as the subject matter is, it will be hard to connect with it. He also suggests not to forget that in order to touch in the deepest way, even in other cultures, simplicity of structure is a big element of success. Hence, sticking with rigorous simplicity in the exposition of the problem followed by the search for a solution and then the resolution of said problem is still one of the most effective solutions.

An audience member brings up the question of *fake news*, which is a story so good that we prefer to believe that rather than checking the facts. Jonathan Gottschall feels that our minds aren’t definitively organised to search for the truth and that they often choose to call their attention to what is simply “the best story”. This is actually what explains why we are sometimes interested in things that hold little importance. Perhaps this proves Plato -who wanted to banish anything that risked diverting us from what is important, from logic and reasoning – was right.

Jonathan Gottschall then simply suggests that we have evolved into a post-truth society. A society where what comes first is no longer the truth, but the story that makes the most sense. This means we must be particularly attentive, conscious and vigilant.

#### YOUR STORY RATHER THAN ALL OF MINE

To conclude, Jonathan Gottschall also offers another point of view on the storyteller: rather than a manipulator, maybe he/she is simply the one who best knows how to help us rest and relax. Our brain constantly produces stories. Those that create a story to focus on calm the chaos as their story takes hold of our concentration and preference. The noise of other stories therefore quietsens. It’s no longer necessary to keep those alive. Our brain calms down.

Backed up by these observations, he suggests we do our very best to include storytellers in our societies, but also to make sure we stay in charge of the situation by developing an antidote, a counter-curse to stories. To him, the only thing that can work against the non-desired effects of stories is reason and vigorous mental health!

# AN EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE

# TELEVISION SERIES, THE BIG BANG OR CONTINUOUS BOOM

## THE AMPERE ANALYSIS MORNINGS

SPEAKERS : GUY BISSON, LÉA CUNAT (Ampere Analysis)

**What does the future of series look like? Across the world, there are more and more series being produced that are more varied and of higher quality. It could be described as a bubble but the trend seems to be lasting. Content calls for content. The 5 key trends in international TV drama are presented by Ampere Analysis: streaming, globalisation, adaptations, feminisation and co-productions. They also decipher the rise in new programming strategies and content production.**

### THE DRAMA SERIES OF TOMORROW: WHAT'S HOT, WHERE & WHY?

Guy Bisson points out that the data presented is exclusively related to series that are in production and have not yet aired. His presentation aims to give a glimpse into the future of international TV drama creation.

These past years have seen a real boom in TV series. As far as Guy Bisson is concerned, it is truly a boom and not the bubble that some seem to think it is. He is convinced that this movement will continue for years to come as nothing will come in its way. The competition between broadcasters has increased, favouring the creation of more and more new content.

Competition has led to a fragmentation of the audience, forcing the broadcasters to produce even more content to build audience loyalty. This increased competition has now hit the major streaming platforms whose market has become increasingly crowded. In this new context, Netflix's domination might soon be put to the test with the arrival of new players that all have clear ambitions. Thus, the big entertainment conglomerates – Disney, Warner and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox – have understood that streaming is the future of television and intend on enjoying their share of the pie. The initial consequence of their arrival on the market will be of gradually emptying Netflix and Amazon's catalogues, who are currently the undisputed industry leaders. Indeed, today these major platforms' catalogues are largely made up of licensed content which is rented from historic Hollywood studios; content which they

could lose, stripped by these new competitors who prefer to retrieve their own content to sell via their own platforms. The threat is real. It is estimated that nearly 20% (in hours) of the content available on Netflix belongs to groups that already have competing platforms or will be launching one in the coming months. Netflix and Amazon are still market leaders and are preparing their defence, creating more original content, therefore favouring a new boom in the amount of series.

Guy Bisson distinguishes five key trends.

### 1) Streaming, to fulfil everyone's desires

Streaming platforms have fuelled the audience's growing desire for more high-end (or premium) content. Netflix started the movement and has established itself as the market leader with 228 original series to its credit. Today, the platform has decided to focus its strategy on quantity and has announced the production of more than 234 new series (3 times the volume of major US networks and 4 times the volume of other SVoD regional platforms, including the major Chinese players). With 79 series currently in development, Amazon is relying on big productions. Apple, which has announced the development of 35 series, has already become one of the major players, and this even before the launch of their platform.

### 2) Globalisation and production spread out across the world

The globalisation of the production of original series

is now mainly driven by the major SVoD platforms. For example, Netflix is relying increasingly on international productions and over 55% of the series in production are based outside of the United States, mainly Latin America but also Europe. Over the past few years, China has become the second largest producer, behind the United States, of TV drama in the world. It is followed by the United Kingdom and India.

### 3) Adaptations, or the multiple exploitations of one same content

Paradoxically, the *boom* in series makes originality harder to come by. Therefore, a third of the new series produced are adaptations from pre-existing content. 49% of series that are in production are adaptations of novels.

### 4) Feminisation, star power is shifting gender

On the American linear channels, 32% have a female protagonist. Although women, in these series, have all kinds of careers, from doctor to lawyer to soldier, most male leads in US dramas are cops.

### 5) Co-productions are more prevalent, collaboration being a sign of the times

Driven by the globalisation of television creation, international co-productions are having their moment. Today, approximately 10% of series in development, both on streaming platforms and linear channels, are co-produced. It is worth saying that public

channels have a tendency of collaborating with their counterparts. Indeed, 28% of current co-productions are the fruit of a partnership between two national public channels. 52% of co-productions are European, far ahead of the American networks. Data shows that the number of co-productions is inversely proportional to the size of the country. The "smaller" countries (Scandinavian countries, for example) do not have an internal market that is large enough, therefore, due to this, they have a tendency of gravitating towards co-productions, whereas bigger markets – such as Turkey and the United States – have not shown an interest in them. In terms of genre, the majority of drama that was co-produced in the 6 last months of 2018 were either crime series or youth series. The number of science fiction series that were co-produced has substantially reduced, despite it being such a popular genre over the last few years.

### NOSTALGIA, HISTORY, ROMANCE, SOCIETY OR POLITICS... SERIES' THEMES ARE DIVERSIFYING

Relying on a sample of series in production throughout the world, Guy Bisson distinguishes 4 key themes. Boosted by the success of series like *Stranger Things*, nostalgia is probably the most covered theme. Period dramas continue to appeal to channels, notably series that are set in the 40s or 50s. Series that explore more modern themes, with a social aspect (sexuality and gender) or political (immigration) have also been extremely successful. Romantic comedies are also seeing a new wave of interest. Finally, fantasy series – the fourth and final theme – are still just as popular.





## BROADCASTERS AND PLATFORMS: THE BATTLE OF OLD VS. NEW?

Léa Cunat analyses the impact of new viewing trends on the television market in Western Europe and, more specifically, on content demands.

Europeans continue to watch television at a "higher" level since they spent almost 4h25 a day watching in 2018 (vs 4h18 in 2016). However, the figures show that they are watching it differently, as seen by the notable breakthrough of OTT, whose considerable rise is at the expense of conventional linear television. As a reminder, OTT, or over-the-top, is television viewing via the internet, bypassing traditional cable, telephone or satellite subscriptions. OTT covers all types of video on demand services (SVoD) as well as video streaming platforms like YouTube.

Where the conquest of the European audience by the SVoD is inexorable, pay television is far from dead. Indeed, unlike the United States, abandoning linear TV in favour of SVoD offers has not become common practice everywhere. For example, in the 2019 first quarter, 43% of European Internet users subscribed to both SVoD and TV whereas only 20% subscribed only to SVoD and 19% to a TV subscription.

While SVoD has already been embraced by the younger generation, today in Europe, the new subscriptions are coming from the viewers aged over 55 years old, who are imitating the viewing habits of this younger generation, such as binge watching. This evolution has had substantial consequences on the SVoD's programming strategy, forced to adapt their content to a new audience. Thus, while younger viewers are mostly interested in comedy, drama and horror, older generations prefer thrillers and documentaries.

## INVESTMENTS WITH NET GROWTH AND CHANGING PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES

Investments into audiovisual content (not including sport) amounted to 123 billion dollars in 2018 (up by 30% compared to 2013). These investments are predominantly done by the American broadcasters. Netflix and Amazon announced a combined investment of 12.5 billion in 2018. On their end, European broadcasters invested, in 2018, more than 24.8 billion dollars, similar amount since 2013. It is worth saying that 60% of investments by European channels are now allocated to original content (vs. 50% in 2005).

The programming strategy of key American platforms, primarily Netflix and Amazon, will, in the coming months, be profoundly disrupted by the new European

directives. European Parliament has voted favourably for new audiovisual regulations aimed at imposing a 30% quota of European content for streaming services. In France, Netflix will have to add more than 3000 hours of European content to its catalogue in order to comply with the new requirements.

Today, the FAANGs are true heavyweights in the world of audiovisual production. Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google are well and truly competitors and are developing very distinctive goals and strategies to satisfy the "gluttony" of content consumers.

The FAANGs primarily respond to the expectations of different types of viewers whose specific tastes influence the content strategies they put in place. As a result, the video consumers on Facebook Watch or Google (YouTube) are on average younger, have the lowest incomes and are more likely to live with their parents. They have a preference for reality TV, animation and music videos. Apple, Netflix and Amazon users are older and richer. They show a clear preference for scripted content. They also tend to have young kids (one or more), which explains their high consumption of children's content.

Netflix, based on their highly aggressive and heavily funded strategy, is investing colossal amounts into the production of original content. Amazon on the other hand, prioritises quality over quantity and continues to invest in *premium* audiovisual content in order to attract and retain subscribers with the aim of having the viewers become buyers. Although their numbers are far from matching those of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, Facebook and YouTube are on the offensive and focused on the creation of exclusive original content, announcing the production of 22 and 10 dramas respectively. When it comes to Apple, where the number of projects in production is still quite low, there goals are extraordinary. Indeed, the brand has already invested more than a billion dollars and did not hesitate in poaching senior executives from major players such as Sony.

With Netflix, Amazon and Apple responding to the expectations of their respective audiences, they therefore favour scripted content. Facebook and YouTube tend to "specialise" in non-scripted content. With regards to format, Netflix and Amazon favour the typical 50-minute long episode, with each season made up of 10 to 12 episodes. On Facebook however, the series have on average thirty-odd episodes per season, each lasting no more than 30 minutes.

In terms of genre, Netflix and Amazon both have catalogues with very similar profiles and are mainly



banking on kid's content, drama series, sci-fi and thrillers. However, a more detailed analysis on content available online from both platforms during the first term of 2019 shows that Netflix is increasingly interested in reality TV and entertainment, to the detriment of other genres. This shows a change in strategy whereby they are looking to attract new profiles in a saturated market. Where Amazon does not favour any particular genre, reality TV and entertainment are making a notable entry into their catalogue. With regards to genre, Apple seems for the time being to be copying its two main competitors' programming. There are currently only about 30 programmes in production, which does not provide a clear picture of its long-term strategy. This will have to be based more on a combination of films, shows and series from third-party channels and services than on the production of original content (which is utilised more as marketing tool to attract viewers to the platform). YouTube and Facebook on the other hand are looking to differentiate themselves by favouring documentaries and reality TV.

Netflix has been able to rely on a catalogue of acquired content, programmed in the front window of linear

broadcasters. Although their original content is very popular, their lifespan is very short. The viewers' interest is very high for the three weeks following the upload of all episodes online, then fades quickly. Furthermore, the most sought-after series do not belong to the platform. A sitcom like *Friends*, which is watched a lot on Netflix, is owned by Warner Studios. The content acquired from studios, be it scripted or non-scripted, continues to make up a key element of their strategy.

Netflix's appetite for content seems insatiable. Between December 2018 and May 2019, the platform added approximately 1000 hours of acquired content and 100 hours of original content each month onto their catalogue. Its preferred genres are kid's programmes, crime drama, comedies and romantic series. Amazon added, over the same period, over 2000 hours of acquired content each month with a strong preference for reality TV, comedy, dramas and content for children. Some content is now available simultaneously on both platforms; they can therefore be sold twice. Talk about prospects!

# RENEW, INNOVATE, TAKE RISKS... A RENEWAL FOR THE PUBLIC AUDIOVISUAL SERVICE

## FOCUS ON FRANCE TÉLÉVISIONS & DR

**SPEAKERS :** ANNE HOLMÈS (head of national fiction, France Télévisions)  
 SENED DHAB (head of digital fiction, France Télévisions)  
 NATHALIE BIANCOLLI (head of international fiction, France Télévisions)  
 CHRISTIAN RANK (head of drama, DR)  
**CHAIRIED BY :** CAROLE BIENAIMÉ-BESSE (board member, CSA)  
 and ALEX BERGER (executive producer, The Oligarchs Production)

France Télévisions and DR, the two major public audiovisual groups in France and Denmark, are currently in the midst of a revolution. The strong competition in their domestic markets has required them to reaffirm or redefine their strategy, programmes and positioning with regards to creating drama, and to take new risks and explore new universes.

Although France Télévisions and DR, two major European public service groups, operate in different territories and speak to different audiences, today they do share the same ambitions and have faced similar challenges.

### NEW FICTIONAL UNIVERSES FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE

DR, the Danish public broadcaster, has produced some emblematic series such as *Borgen*, *Broen* and *The Killing* – the latter two having substantially contributed to the television acclaim of ‘Nordic Noir’. This movement, which originates from the world of literature, was born in Denmark in the 50s but television truly enabled it to

succeed in the rest of the world thanks to ‘noir’ series that are marked by a raw realism, shifting the traditional setting for thrillers.

Backed by innovative series, stemming from their creator-centric strategy, DR enjoyed a position and image that was the envy of all of Europe. But in 2018, the Danish government imposed budget cuts of 20% of the group, forcing it not only to shut down their television and radio services, but also to entirely redefine their strategy in terms of creating original drama. Piv Bernth, previous Head of Drama for DR and producer of *The Killing*, leaving in 2017 followed by a large part of the drama team, could have been seen as a sign. The new drama team were



asked to focus on national drama; but as far as Christian Rank is concerned, by no means does this mean they needed to scale down the public service’s qualitative ambitions for drama. The projects presented at Série Series reflect this new impetus and renewed editorial line.

For France Télévisions there was criticism for producing too many crime series. Anne Holmès, Head of National Drama, admits that the French public television group was too tunnel-visioned. Today their ambition is to diversify the drama programmes on the group’s channels.

There was a – successful – first attempt at diversifying last year with the production of series such as *Speakerine* or *Philharmonia*. This strategy will be maintained throughout the 2019/2020 season, and even somewhat strengthened with projects such as *À l’intérieur* (a miniseries with Béatrice Dalle set in a psychiatric hospital), *The Last Wave* and *Romance*, two fantasy series, which is a genre that is

rarely explored by France Télévisions. The group is also returning to comedy, a somewhat difficult genre, with the *Faites des gosses* miniseries (about the new parent-child relationships) and *Il a déjà tes yeux*, an adaptation of Lucien Jean-Baptiste’s 2017 film. Finally, history will take centre stage with the upcoming broadcast of three new miniseries on Charles de Gaulle, Voltaire and Diane de Poitiers.

### LOVE RISK TAKING

Strategies utilised by DR and France Télévisions are also the result of the intense competition amongst the different broadcasters, be they private or public, on the European market. The major American platforms are overtaking the original series market and the broadcasters, notably the public ones, will only be able to set themselves apart by finding their voice, developing projects that are modern, unexpected and out of the ordinary.

“The arrival of SVoD platforms on the European market has opened the viewers’ eyes, which has allowed for France Télévisions to take greater risks”, according to Anne Holmès. The traditional channels have often had a tendency of censoring themselves, putting aside certain projects with the, generally misleading, pretence that they would not ‘work’. “Creation is disruptive and questions itself” explains Anne Holmès, adding that the projects that are presented to her are “stronger and stronger”. Just like *Romance* and *Une belle histoire*, that were both presented by their creators. *Romance* is Hervé Hadmar’s first foray into a genre he is not usually associated with, being a great thriller specialist. Indeed, as its title suggests, *Romance* is a love story. Love is also at the heart of *Une belle histoire*, an 8 part series adapted from the British show *Cold Feet* by the creators of *The Line* (Frédéric Krivine and Emmanuel Daucé), where the storyline follows three couples whose lives cross paths.

At a time where the war of content is raging, France Télévisions intends to increase its share of high-budget premium series and is introducing an active strategy to develop drama with international appeal. The first cornerstone of this strategy was the launch, in 2018, of the ‘Alliance’, bringing together France Télévisions, Rai and ZDF. Three large European groups working on

comparable markets that could all be considered ‘under threat’ due to the arrival of platforms. Nathalie Biancolli explains that the members of this Alliance “meet every two months to share projects, from co-productions to pre-purchases or even acquisitions. The Alliance is very flexible in the way it operates. The three countries are free to accept or decline any projects. They are also free to look to other partnerships.” For Nathalie Biancolli, through this new European alliance, France Télévisions aims “to promote French writers and create an international platform for them”. The Alliance is already bearing fruit as it has enabled the production of an espionage series made up of six 52-minute episodes – *Mirage* – directed by Louise Choquette starring Franco-Canadian Marie-Josée Croze, British Clive Standen and German Hannes Jaenicke. The series will be broadcast in February 2020 during prime time on France 2. The Alliance’s second large project is an adaptation of *Around the World in 80 Days* by Jules Verne, a 6x52 minutes with David Tennant and French actor Ibrahim Koma.

As a response to the unbridled competition from new platforms, France Télévisions is also banking on digital drama. Therefore, Sened Dhab’s missions is to develop and supply series for the group’s two digital branches: France TV Slash, a 100% free video media for 18 to



30 year olds, and France.tv, the “generalist” public broadcaster’s streaming platform. “With the emergence of new platforms, it was urgent for us, he admits, to create a complementary offer, which was more anchored in France’s socio-cultural fabric and more likely to reach the viewers that are currently abandoning France Télévisions to watch Netflix and Amazon.”

After the success of the *Skam France* series, France TV Slash has extended its offering to young adults with *Mental*. The series explores the world of teens through the prism of mental disorders and follows the everyday life of four young patients in a children’s psychiatric clinic. Filmed with teenagers for teenagers, *Mental* “talks about subjects that directly affect young people” and aims to remove the stigma around mental disorders and create an open conversation about this subject which is still considered a taboo. “The subject is complex, but the screenwriters knew how to broach it in both a truthful and uplifting manner” insists Sened Dhab. Nowadays, digital drama has the capacity to speak to targeted audiences and cover a spectrum of new subject matters.

Today, a group like France Télévisions is more inclined to broadcast niche series, that are more divisive, at the risk of attracting only a fraction of the viewers. Anne Holmès is of the opinion that the viewing figures are important (the viewers pay the fees to watch television), but it is

no longer essential. “The *Aux animaux la guerre* series, that was presented at Série Series two years ago, did not find its audience. However, I strongly believe it was a very good series. I will never regret making it. No one will criticise me for making it.” Incidentally, it is completely understandable for viewing figures to vary depending on the projects. “What is the point in making a thriller, for example, which is pure entertainment, if it’s not a success? If a niche series does not find a wide audience, that’s less important.”

The series produced and broadcast by DR are a testament to the Danish group’s effort in taking risks. The series presented during this year’s Série Series are proof that the public Danish broadcaster is not afraid of being disruptive and even shocking their viewers. As shown by *When the Dust Settles*, which was screened during the opening ceremony, which depicts the effects a terrorist attack can have on a small community, without silencing the violence of the event; as well as *A Family Matter* (since renamed *Cry Wolf*) which is a portrait of a divided family, where the daughter is claiming to be the victim of domestic abuse while the parents are adamant that is not the case.

The attendees of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Série Series also had the opportunity to see several extracts of *Deliver Us*, a series created by Marie Østerbye and Christian Torpe.



"THE STORIES THAT DR TELL SHOULD BE A REFLECTION OF OUR SOCIETY. THEY SHOULD HELP THE VIEWER TO DECIPHER AND UNDERSTAND THE WORLD AROUND THEM."

As Christian Rank is sure that viewers will always have a need for powerful stories; those that can confront and strengthen the view they have of others and themselves. "The stories that DR tell should be a reflection of our society. These stories must be honest and captivating. They should help the viewer to decipher and understand the world around them and in that sense open up the conversation." Christian Rank grew up watching DR. "The channel helped me to become the person I am today. It helped me find my place in society."

The goals of the public service are also at the heart of the work done by France Télévisions. On this, Anne Holmès highlights that "the drama broadcast by the public channels

must always be a reflection of the contemporary world" and France 2 will continue to program many debates, covering societal subjects that can be difficult, such as incest, paedophilia, pregnancy denial and fatphobia.

Christian Rank reminds us that the public channels should in no way be trying to compete directly with the major platforms of pure entertainment market. "American platforms will always have more money. Their series will always have more dragons." But the public service's values are what give purpose to France Télévisions and DR's work. It gives them the opportunity to develop and create powerful, original and impactful series; series that can change the world.

In line with the series that gave DR its global reputation, *Deliver Us* seems, at least at first glance, to be extremely dark. The pitch is as simple as it is daunting: "Citizens of a small town join forces and plan the perfect murder to get rid of their neighbourhood psychopath. Only to end up realising that by taking yourself for God, you end up becoming the Devil." The series avoids all manichaeism when exploring the grey area within the human soul. For Christian Rank, it has allowed the channel to venture into different areas that are probably riskier. "The creators had previously worked in the United States and brought a new way of working to the channel, meaning it had to adapt and question itself."

Christian Rank, Head of Drama for DR, is convinced that competition is good for creation. It has forced the channel to revisit its strategy. However, he wonders whether the never-ending development of series on offer on the market has any sense. "In 2015, 17 new series were produced in Scandinavia. In 2018, more than 50 series were produced." He argues that at this stage "the last thing the world needs is a new series!"

The drama team at DR is opening up new creative horizons while continuing to make the most of their well-established model, that has led to its greatest national

and international successes: internalising a large part of production (as is the case for *When the Dust Settles* and *Cry Wolf*, both produced in-house), trusting the creators and implementing ideal working conditions (particularly with the consideration for the development stage and the creation of writers' rooms), as well having a strong understanding of the important role drama plays in terms of public service. DR Drama has recently been compelled to change directions by reducing their budgets and refocusing on national drama as per the request of the heads of the channel. That being said, the diverse and ambitious projects presented during this session have shown that despite these injunctions, DR Drama is able to produce unique, meaningful and universal works.

#### REAFFIRMING THE NOTION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

It can seem surprising, especially coming from a Head of Drama, but Christian Rank believes the amount on offer is excessive. "No one has time to watch that many series." He adds that a majority of the series produced, that are often created in haste, are not good. According to him, the evolution of the market gives broadcasters like DR the opportunity to reconnect with the values of the public service, which have driven them from the start.



# DRAMA IN EUROPE: MODELS FOR FRANCE TO FOLLOW?

## SACD DEBATE



**SPEAKERS :** AUDE ACCARY-BONNERY (deputy managing director, CNC)  
 LISELOTT FORSMAN (executive producer, international projects, Yle)  
 SÉVERINE JACQUET (screenwriter)  
 JÖRG WINGER (screenwriter, executive producer)  
 BÉNÉDICTE LESAGE (executive producer, Shine Film)  
**CHAIRER BY :** PASCAL ROGARD (managing director, SACD)

**The creative euphoria that has taken hold of the continent, fed notably by the arrival of the big online platforms, makes us question the evolution of methods and the place held by authors in the creative chain. Although many agree that screenwriters are at the heart of the process, it is still apparent that together we need to find the best way of giving writers the means to work.**

Europe is a rich and diverse place for series creation. Nevertheless, there is not just one European model. As France is thinking of setting a specific support plan for series, the practices that exist in Europe are faced with the rules in place today in France.

### THE SCREENPLAY COMES FIRST!

When talking about good practice in terms of creation in television, the conversation naturally turns towards Scandinavian countries, which have been behind some of the most exciting series of the last decade. Liselott Forsman points out that the vast majority of Scandinavian series produced by public channels are co-productions. These were made possible through a system set up in 1959, which allows different countries in the area to

many questions. Liselott Forsman mentions that, for years, the creative power was almost always in the hands of the director, often to the writers' detriment. Nowadays, it seems that everywhere in the world, the balance is shifting and the screenplay is considered the cornerstone of creation. "We have learnt from our Danish colleagues that a sizeable part of investment should be put towards the writing, as early as possible in the creative process".

For Jörg Winger, writing is essential. He quotes Billy Wilder who, when asked about the direction of a film, would answer that there was only one thing that mattered: "screenplay, screenplay, screenplay!". For years, in Germany, the writing of the script took up less than 2% of the budget, whereas that number ranged between 8 and

**"SCREENWRITERS ARE PROGRESSIVELY RETURNING TO THE POSITION THEY DESERVE TO BE IN WITHIN THE CREATIVE PROCESS."**

help each other financially and thereby create ambitious projects. "We have decided, she adds, that next year we will co-produce 12 series with the big Scandinavian national broadcasters, meaning Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland."

Nevertheless, despite a very virtuous co-production system, financing the writing of series still brings up

10% in Scandinavia and the USA. However, the situation is improving and on average roughly 6% of the budget is spent on writing. "There's still a lot of work to be done", says Jörg Winger. "Screenwriters are progressively returning to the position they deserve to be in within the creative process. We finally understood that a director doesn't always know how to write." Screenwriters also benefit from the strong competition which reigns today



in the German audiovisual market. "Nowadays, they can send their screenplays to over 10 broadcasters."

Séverine Jacquet then brings up the Belgian example: "When the plan for new French-speaking Belgian series was launched three years ago, the budget was roughly 260,000 euros per episode. Series like *La Trêve* and *Ennemi Public*, were produced in difficult conditions. Nevertheless, the budget put towards screenplays was precise: it had to be a minimum of 17,500 euros per episode and was therefore already over 7% of the total."

In France, Aude Accary-Bonnery points out, screenwriters' remuneration represents less than 5% of the overall budget of a series.

### FAIR PAY TO FIGHT PRECARIOUSNESS AMONG WRITERS

The CNC and the SACD have joined forces to carry out a study on the economic model of the writing phase of French feature films and TV series. The study draws up the outline of writers and analyses modalities and the level of pay for the writing phase according to the type of piece. One of the main findings of the study was that writing is generally done by several people. On average, two screenwriters take part in the writing of a feature film, compared to between two and ten for a series. Favouring collective writing allows for continuity through seasons. The study also noted regular delays in payment. Writers' contracts for feature films stipulate 5 payment

deadlines on average. Screenwriters are paid up to a third of their remuneration at the end of the writing phase, almost two years after the launch of the project. For series, screenwriters' pay is also spread over several instalments, which often come into play a long time after the conception of the project. The writer therefore carries all the risk.

This study led to the new "Series Plan" launched by the CNC to support French original creation. One of the objectives is to reinforce writers' position in the creative process and to assure that they have better means, are better recognised and mostly paid better. This is to happen as early as the pre-development stage, when it might not be certain that their series will ever broadcast.

Séverine Jacquet confirms the lack of security that screenwriters have when they work on a series. The time when a screenwriter will be paid is indeed always uncertain. "I recently worked on a very important series, she confesses, which was being produced by the channel. It took me 6 months to get a contract whilst the series was being developed."

Bénédicte Lesage points out that situations are very heterogenous. She sees a difference in pre-development and development phases. In the pre-development phase, a writer and a producer collaborate on a project with the aim of presenting it to a broadcaster. This phase - which Bénédicte Lesage compares to the "research and development" stage - is very risky for both the producer

and the writer because there are no guarantees that the project in question will be completed enough for it to be presented to the broadcaster. In fact, some series projects are abandoned at this stage, based on a mutual agreement between the producer and writer, before they are ever even sent out. In the development phase, the work is then done as a trio: writer, producer and broadcaster. The project is then set up in a much more secure financial model, for both producer and writer.

For Bénédicte Lesage, the main difficulty that the audiovisual market has is indeed writers' remuneration. It is a complex question, due mainly to the fact that a writer's remuneration is linked to a "result" and not a length of time. "We have very little visibility on the duration of this work, as is it subject to successive stages of deadlines and script approval, first by the producer and then the broadcaster. We need to find a system to allow for the acceleration of this process. We can't demand that a writer, in return for a certain sum of money, dedicates all his energy, intelligence and time to a project for periods of up to 6 months or even a year."

The way scripts are given to broadcasters (via producers or face to face when it is produced internally) and response times vary massively from one channel to another and from one country to another. In France, writers often have to wait more than 2 months to get feedback from broadcasters. In Belgium, this can often be a much shorter wait. Séverine Jacquet points out that the RTBF, inspired by Scandinavian and American

models, committed to giving notes and feedback to producers and writers within less than five days. Writers are free to respond to them. Creation rests on genuine exchange, rich dialogue amongst writers, producers and broadcasters. Séverine Jacquet regretfully says that in France, writers rarely have the opportunity to speak to the broadcasters directly. Jörg Winger, who has worked with Amazon, notes that the response time of online platforms is very speedy, for the simple reason that they have optimised the decision chain by reducing the amount of intermediaries. In the big traditional channels, there are many deciders and writers sometimes have to wait months before getting feedback on their writing.

In the current situation, in order to make a living, most writers have to work on multiple projects at once. It was partly to tackle this phenomenon that the public Finnish broadcaster Yle, inspired by their Scandinavian neighbours, decided to offer a monthly salary to screenwriters. This is set up from the development stage of the project and also carries on during a period that varies according to the nature of the project. For Liselott Forsman, getting a monthly salary allows screenwriters to focus and dedicate all their time to one project.

#### THE ADVENT OF THE BIG PLATFORMS HAS CREATED CHANGE ALL THE WAY DOWN TO WRITING PRACTICES

Pascal Rogard relaunches the debate around VOD platforms, the arrival in Europe of which is leading to



major changes in the TV market. These platforms bring in a lot of competition, which should be very positive for the talent. Pascal Rogard, however, points out that the different platforms aren't a homogenous group and they don't all work the same way. The economic model of the platforms brings in new challenges, the first of which is the introduction of exclusivity, even confidentiality, clauses in writers' contracts. These clauses don't conform to French laws, especially in terms of moral rights. Pascal Rogard highlights the many positive contributions of these big platforms, especially in terms of the broadcasting of European work. Nevertheless, he feels there is a risk that "the French, and even European, creative model could disintegrate, as well as a risk that the writers' rights system will be reconsidered in favour of copyright."

Although Jörg Winger is very aware of the many creative opportunities made available to European writers by these TV creation behemoths, he nevertheless criticises their "feudal" practices. A platform like Netflix is currently "hoovering up" all the biggest talents across the world and is guaranteeing complete fidelity by offering them exclusive contracts over several years. These authors can therefore not work elsewhere. Bénédicte Lesage adds that the new collaboration methods imposed by the

platforms are extremely violent. When working for Netflix "one isn't working on a project, but to enrich the Netflix brand". Working with Netflix offers numerous advantages to writers, but there is still a price to pay. Bénédicte Lesage doesn't want to demonise Netflix, but she does still think that working for them often means accepting to "sell one's soul".

Aude Accary-Bonnery feels that the advent of the platforms offers a considerable opportunity to make European and French creation shine. However, she does compare their arrival on the European market to the convicts that shook Greek and Roman civilisations. "Europe needs to vanquish its fearsome conqueror. In order to do that, it needs to "Hellenize" these platforms and insert them into its regulated model, which has been proven to work". Aude Accary-Bonnery brings the session to a close on a positive note. Europe has all the tools necessary to get the best from the arrival of all these platforms. But efforts will have to be collective and all of the life blood of creation will be to be employed.

On that note, it is indeed the creation chain that needs to adapt from the very first link in the chain, the one that holds all the seeds to creation: the writing.

# THE TV SERIES MARKET: EMPHASIS ON INNOVATION, DIVERSITY AND LOCAL PRODUCTIONS

## "DRAMA'S PERFORMANCE IN EUROPE IN 2018"

SPEAKER : NATHALIE SONNAC (board member, CSA)

Each year, using data provided by Mediametrie, the CSA publishes a comparative study of drama in 5 European countries: France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK.

Looking at the national landscape of the TV series market, one can see a real emphasis on innovation, a strong turnover and a growing genre diversity. Although certain series establish themselves and are then hard to dethrone, in France and Spain notably, the ranking for best viewing figures is filled with new series. National series are also dominating. Although one can possibly think that the temporary shortness of breath of American series is the cause of these local series taking off, it is also possible that local series have made their mark enough that the Americans (and notably Netflix) now come to Europe, especially Spain, to buy.

Nathalie Sonnac exclusively presents the 2018 results of a comparative study which is periodically carried out by the CSA since 2009. It concerns the performance of drama in Europe. The countries studied (France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK) are chosen because of their common characteristics in terms of television consumption (notably, individual listening time), what they offer in terms of national drama and the structure of the audiovisual landscape (free, paying, public and private channels). This data allows them to bring to light the position of national dramas in each territory, the specifics of each country studied, but also the power balance between public and private broadcasters as well as linear and non-linear ones.

The viewing figures used are set on a database provided by Eurodata TV Worldwide, Mediametrie's international department, which collects audience data from television across the world thanks to partnerships with local audience measuring institutes. The rankings measure the best audiences in terms of viewers for all of the drama section (TV films, series and mini-series). Cinema and animation are not included in the study. For series and mini-series, only the episode that recorded the largest audience in the year is taken into account.

### MORE NATIONAL DRAMA IN THE TOP 10

For a long time, the French drama market was very keen on imported series, especially from the USA. Today, taking example from its European neighbours, it is largely dominated by national dramas. Amidst the 2018 Top 10, 9 are national productions (compared to 5 in 2013 and 2010). Six of these dramas were launched in 2018, which shows a high turnover in French production.

The 10 best drama audiences in Germany and the UK are, as previous years, exclusively for national programmes or programmes co-produced by a national channel. For a few years now, two crime series - *Tatort* and *Police 110* - have been at the head of the rankings of the most successful German drama series, whereas the British rankings are led by *Doctor Who* and *Bodyguard*. Co-productions hold an important position in British drama, as has been proved by the successful launching of drama series *McMafia*, produced with the USA.

However, the number of national dramas in the rankings has shrunk in Italy and Spain, due to the success of American series *The Good Doctor* in both countries. This is also the only foreign drama in the French rankings and is what has enabled American drama to reestablish itself within European audiences.

### DRAMAS, CRIME STORIES, SOAP OPERAS AND SCIENCE-FICTION... THE POPULAR GENRES

The drama genre dominates the rankings in 3 of the 5 countries studied: Italy, Spain and the UK. In France and Germany, crime series clearly take the top spot. In Italy and France, comedy is gaining ever more importance.

Spain and the UK have the most eclectic rankings in terms of genres, with an important success for soap operas which are absent in the other countries. Fantasy and science-fiction seem particularly appreciated in Spain. On the other side of the coin, only 3 genres are seen in the German rankings and crime series make up 16 of 20 of the most successful programs.

The diversity of genres in demand in Spain could partially explain the increasing interest that the big American platforms have with the Spanish market. In July 2018, private group Atresmedia made a framework agreement with Netflix in regards to series produced by its branch Atresmedia Studios. Netflix gets a first look at the new series produced by the group for their video on demand distribution, for three to four years. Series like *La Catedral del mar*, *Apaches*, *Farina* and *Vivir sin permiso*, are now in the American editor's catalogue. For its part, Amazon Prime Video has struck a similar deal with the main public and private groups in Spain. These deals show the interest that American online platforms have with Spanish TV series, which is undoubtedly linked to *Casa de Papel*, first in the ranking last year when it was launched on Antena 3.

### INCREASING NUMBERS OF NEW DRAMAS AND A FEW ICONIC DRAMAS ON TOP OF THE CHARTS

The French ranking has the largest number of new dramas - meaning launched in 2018. With 11 new series amidst the top 20, TF1 is, within the 5 studied countries, the channel that managed to get the most new dramas into its national rankings. Among them are also shows like *Balthazar*, *Le jour où j'ai brûlé mon cœur* and *Les innocents*. TF1 is closely followed by Rai 1 and BBC 1, both tied with 7 new series in their national rankings.

Despite a significant decline in the number of new dramas in the Spanish ranking in between 2017 and 2018, Spain is the country where the successful dramas are the most recent (2.2 years on average within the top 20). The British ranking, on the other hand, despite many new dramas in 2018, has more older programmes. This is linked to the persistence of some much older dramas in the rankings, notably iconic soap operas *Coronation Street* and *Emmerdale*, respectively broadcast on ITV since 1960 and 1972. There is also science-fiction series *Doctor Who*, created in 1963, which took the second spot on the ranking in 2018.

Germany is the country where successful dramas are the least renewed. German dramas in the rankings are on average over 15 years old. Five series in the 2018 top 20 were created before 2000, including *Tatort*, which has been broadcast every Sunday since 1970 on ARD and has always taken the top spot in the ranking. Although they broadcast 16 of the 20 series on the ranking, ZDF got no new dramas on to the ranking. In 2018, only one





recently launched series on a public channel made it to the German ranking: *Babylon Berlin*. It's interesting to point out that the series was previously broadcast in 2017 on German paying channel Sky1, before being broadcast on the free public channel ARD. It was sold to over 100 countries.

#### BEST VIEWING FIGURES: A BATTLE BETWEEN THE NEW AND THE ESTABLISHED

Since 2013, the French and Spanish rankings are regularly dominated by new dramas. In France, they are mainly TV films. Contrarily, in Spain, they are only series, like the comedy *Cuerpo de élitos* or the now famous *Casa de Papel*. Nevertheless, the success of these new series cannot seem to reach the high ratings that were set in 2013 in the two countries.

In Italy, the UK and Germany, new launches rarely trump the dramas that are already established. However, British series *Bodyguard* was an exception to that rule in 2018. Launched on BBC 1, one of the episodes of the series racked up to 14 million viewers, which is 3 million more than *Sherlock*, the 2017 leader. The best UK drama audience actually surpasses that of Germany in 2018, which is quite surprising considering these numbers compared to the population (66 million in the UK against 83 million in Germany). If we compare drama audiences to population, Italy takes the top spot.

#### FRANCE PLAYS TO THE FRENCH

Since 2015, the first place of the French ranking has been taken by a French drama. In 2018, it was a TF1 programme, adapted from a recent true story - *Jacqueline Sauvage, c'était lui ou moi* - which had the highest number of viewers (8.8 million, which was a 33.5% audience share). Another TV film, also inspired by a true story - *Le jour où j'ai brûlé mon cœur* - had very good audience results for TF1. The 2018 ranking still sees French drama on the rise, but brings up some questions. French drama series might have simply profited from a temporary puffing out of American series. Indeed, the 2018 ranking shows that original American series (*The Good Doctor*, *The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair*,

*Gone*), are very successful amongst French viewers. Three French dramas adapted from foreign formats also appear in the ranking: mini-series *Les Innocents*, adapted from a Norwegian series, series *Les Bracelets Rouges*, adapted from a Spanish programme and *Insoupçonnable*, adapted from British series *The Fall*.

In 2018, the ranking for the 20 best performing dramas is dominated by TF1 (17 programmes) followed by France 3 (3 programmes). Since 2017, France 3 series *Capitaine Marleau* has stayed at the top of audience numbers. Newly launched series and TV films perform well and take up two thirds of the ranking. As in previous years, these programmes have a cast of very well known actors. Dramas and crimes series over-performed in 2018, unlike comedies, which were a lot rarer than in previous years.

For each of the top 3 dramas of the 2018 French ranking (*Jacqueline Sauvage*, *Le jour où j'ai brûlé mon cœur* and *The Good Doctor*), the report analysed the episode that recorded the highest audience over the 4 viewing types. The three dramas studied are consumed a lot on replay or on catch-up TV, especially with *The Good Doctor*, which sees its audience increase by 27% in between the first broadcast and the J+8 a week later. However, the audiences on other screens (computers, smartphones and tablets) are still weak in comparison, although they still represent 250,000 extra viewers for something like *Jacqueline Sauvage*.

#### IN SPAIN, NEW IS THE NEW BLACK

The ranking of the most watched dramas in Spain shows the public has a strong interest in drama series that have recently been launched. The evening programmes start later than in other European countries (in between 10.30 and 10.45 pm) and most last 70 minutes. Just like in 2017, only 3 American series placed in the top 20 for drama series. However, in 2018, these drama series performed better. *The Good Doctor* ranked second. The first episode of the new season of *American Crime Story* also recorded great audiences. This was possibly due to Penelope Cruz being cast, which would have been very appealing to Spanish viewers.

# SERIES IN FOCUS



# WHEN THE DUST SETTLES

DENMARK



**WITH :** DORTE W. HØGH (co-creator, screenwriter), IDA MARIA RYDÉN (co-creator, screenwriter), STINNA LASSEN (producer), CHRISTIAN RANK (head of drama, DR)  
**CHAired BY :** PIERRE ZÉNI (journalist, Canal+)

## AN ENSEMBLE AND DECIDEDLY HUMAN PIECE

*When the Dust Settles* follows eight people during and after a terrorist attack. The series makes the original choice of not focusing on the attack itself and its perpetrators, but instead on eight ordinary protagonists who are more or less affected by the attack. It also represents different aspects of society: an old man, a young girl, a chef and also the minister for justice. Even with this last character, the idea is to show their daily and private lives.

The eight characters are all equally important in the series, just like the eight actors who play them. Some of them are celebrities and some are new faces, but all were paid equally. In all their complexity, each character has a specific, almost archetypal, role in the series: the

victim, the witness, the hero, the coward, etc. Each of them also represents a dominant emotion. All together they make up the gallery of diverse reactions one can expect following such an event.

## THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

The two creators explain that their choice of focusing the plot around a terrorist attack wasn't remotely there at the origin of the project. Their project aimed more to talk about the polarisation of the world and the way individuals within a society are linked and impacted on by a series of events. They bring up Danish philosopher Knud Ejler Løgstrup, who said that each time we meet someone, we briefly hold a little bit of their destiny in our hands. This implies great responsibility.



In order to approach these themes, they thought about the most impactful event, one that most interferes with the lives of a group of people. That's how the idea of the terrorist attack came about. The attack is a catalyst, around which the series is framed. However, it is not meant to be its object, which explains why the attackers, as well as the detectives, are almost absent.

## "STRUCTURING CHAOS", AN OPEN AND SHIFTING CREATIVE PROCESS

The creators chose to place the crux of the plot - the terrorist attack - in the middle of the series, in episode 5. Episodes 1 to 4 follow the protagonists through the 9 days before the attack. Episodes 6 to 10 follow them in the 9 days following it.

Episode 5 was a key moment. It was one of the first to be shot, along with 1 and 2. After this first set - overseen by Milad Alami, "concept director" of the series - was finished, filming was paused. Then, the creative team had time to work on the edit, an absolutely decisive step for a multi-plot series.

The multiplicity of plots opens a whole lot of possibilities, being that it can be decided at which moment and how to tell each of the stories. The series isn't structured around

a beginning, middle and end, so the creative process stays completely open. It stays that way until the "final cut".

Hence, important changes took place during the edit. "Seeing the characters flesh out, the way we look at them and our desire to defend them obviously changes", point out the creators. They explain that they made certain characters evolve and even totally reinvented one of the love stories, as well as one of the character's endings. They also point out that many lines were cut, as they became redundant once the actors spoke the dialogue.

## MAKING SOCIETY

The creators, producers and broadcasters all agree that the subject matter of the series, through a gallery of individual portraits, is to show a society where links between people are strong, without us really realising it.

For Christian Rank, this makes *When the Dust Settles* a true public service project. This is because a broadcaster's role is to showcase social cohesion, to speak about our world and to encourage viewers to think about things from a perspective other than their own.

**Original title:** Når Støvet Har Lagt Sig / **Original idea:** Dorte W. Høgh, Ida Maria Rydén / **Screenwriters:** Dorte W. Høgh, Ida Maria Rydén / **Directors:** Milad Alami, Jeanette Nordahl, Iram Haq / **Composer:** Maartin Dirkov / **Production:** DR Drama / **Producers:** Stinna Lassen / **Broadcaster:** DR / **Distributor:** DR Sales / **Cast:** Jacob Lohmann, Karen-Lise Mynster, Peter Christoffersen, Arian Kashef, Henning Jensen, Viola Martinsen, Malin Crepin, Adam Brix / **Format:** 10 x 60' / **Date of broadcast:** January 2020

# DARK MONEY

## UNITED KINGDOM



**WITH :** LEWIS ARNOLD (director),  
BABOU CEESAY (actor),  
MARK PYBUS (executive producer, *The Forge*)  
**CHAIRÉD BY :** PIERRE ZÉNI (journalist, Canal+)

### GOING BEYOND VALUE JUDGEMENT

When following the story of these parents under pressure, who accept a considerable amount of dirty money to buy their silence following the sexual molestation of their son by a famous producer, everyone's reflex is inevitably to ask themselves "What would I do in that situation?"

But *Dark Money* quickly encourages us to go beyond prejudices and to focus on an entirely different question: why do these two characters make such a difficult

decision? As the series' creator, Levi David Addai's goal was not to study morals but to understand the causes and repercussions of such a devastating situation on a family and on each individual member of the family.

The social context is a key element in the plot, as it is a deciding factor when trying to convince the parents to accept the money. But, as Babou Ceesay points out, their decision is never based on only one factor; he mentions for example, the characters' degree of emotional intelligence, which is explored in depth in the script.

### CREATING EMPATHY

Although the series depicts two characters in turmoil who are weak and take decisions that are somewhat forced upon them, it manages to create a deep empathy for them. It was essential for the team to depict these anti-heroes with sincerity, but also to show the extent to which they themselves are sincere through their actions. The couple are lost, stuck in a power play that is beyond them, and are crumbling under the weight of their social condition.

This feeling of entrapment is particularly present with the father, played by Babou Ceesay, for whom this role, with a primary focus on the character's psyche, was a real challenge. He therefore found the weeklong

rehearsal invaluable. In order to ensure that the actors' performances were as genuine as possible, certain scenes were revealed at the very last minute (notably the scene where the parents discover the horrific incident when watching the video on their son's phone).

The character's feelings are even mirrored in the sets: Babou Ceesay mentions for example the fact that the father having a cramped office without any windows is no coincidence. He is a man locked inside his own head and is incapable of communicating. These decisions deepen the empathy the viewer has for the characters.

Aired shortly after *Série Series* in the United Kingdom, this psychological drama with a social commentary will soon come to France.



**Original idea:** Levi David Addai / **Screenwriter:** Levi David Addai / **Director:** Lewis Arnold / **Composer:** Sarah Warne / **Production:** The Forge, all3media International / **Producer:** Erika Hossington / **Broadcaster:** BBC One / **Distributor:** all3media International / **Cast:** Babou Ceesay, Jill Halfpenny, Susan Wokoma, Rebecca Front / **Format:** 4 x 60' / **Date of broadcast:** July 2019

# FLOODLAND

BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS



**WITH :** RIK D'HIET (co-creator, screenwriter), CHANTAL VAN DER HORST (producer, Column Film), PETER BOUCKAERT (producer, Eyeworks Film & TV Drama), JASMINE SENDAR (actress), MYLENE VERDURMEN (broadcaster, AVROTROS) ELLY VERVLOET (broadcaster, VRT)  
**CHAired BY :** CAROLINE PALMSTIERNA (consultant, Shoot for the Moon)

## WRITERS' VISION

*Floodland* is set in particular universe, at the edge of a river, by the Belgian-Dutch border; an unfamiliar land where nature is wild and harsh and where people are isolated, neither truly Belgian nor Dutch. In this strange setting, a Dutch detective and a Belgian psychiatrist try to shed a light on a mysterious human trafficking case.

Both writers grew up in this region and were surrounded by the very specific culture. They had the idea of creating a story that would speak to both the Dutch and Belgian audience. It was an image, like a vision, that brought the

story to life: that of a young black girl on a drifting boat. It was from this strange vision, imbued with something magical, that they started shaping the storyline. They specifically wanted to find the right register, adding a touch of humour in order not to replicate the Nordic Noir style.

Within this very particular universe, the structure of the series remains a classic one: around the two detectives at the centre of the plot, there is a gallery of characters, weaving a storyline full of cliff-hangers. The writers had a clear vision for their two heroes, and had Jasmine Sendar in mind as the female lead when they were writing. Erik



de Bruyn, who also directed the series, suggested a certain physical embodiment and precise attitude for her character.

## CO-PRODUCTION, A MUST-HAVE

The two producers were equally involved. Beyond a question of means, the co-production had a strong meaning with this project. Alongside the creators, the producers had a unique vision for the series and a true desire to have the two cultures cohabit, both in front and behind the camera, where mutual understanding was not always easy.

Mylene Verdurmen, head of drama for the Dutch channel Avrotros, was involved from the start of the project, and deeply appreciated this true team work. Elly Vervloet, from the Flemish broadcaster VRT, came onto the project

later on, but found a lot of meaning to it. The theme of human trafficking, for example, is an important topic in Belgium, and it is interesting for a public broadcaster to take on the subject through drama.

The series is visually demanding, which was a real hurdle, as the team had a very limited budget available. Initially, the budget per episode was at 500 000 € (for 52'), which quickly turned out to be insufficient, notably due to the fact that many scenes were filmed outdoors, with long distances requiring to travel and unpredictable weather conditions. A complicated challenge that the Dutch and Belgian producers and directors are used to working around! When filming started, the final budget was far from being reached; it was completed by the tax shelter and the Belgian broadcaster, and by Federation Entertainment, which distributes the series, to finally reach over 5 million euros for 8 episodes.

**Original title:** Grenslanders / **Original idea:** Erik de Bruyn, Rik D'Hiet / **Screenwriters:** Rik D'Hiet, Erik de Bruyn / **Director:** Erik de Bruyn / **Production:** Column Film, Eyeworks Film & TV Drama / **Producers:** Chantal van der Horst, Peter Bouckaert / **Broadcasters:** AVROTROS, Eén / **Distributor:** Federation Entertainment / **Cast:** Jasmine Sendar, Koen De Bouw, Wim Willaert, Monic Hendrickx, Sebastien Dewaele, Fedja van Huêt, Herwig Illegems, Nico de Vries, Anne-Laure Vandeputte, Adanna Unigwe, Robin Boissevain / **Format:** 8 x 50' / **Date of broadcast:** August 2019

# HIDE AND SEEK

UKRAINE



WITH : IRYNA GROMOZDA (director), SERGEY KRUTKO (director of photography), OLESYA LUKYANENKO (creative producer, Film.UA)  
CHAired BY : PHILIPPE TRIBOIT (screenwriter, director)

## ALL POINTS EAST

*Hide and Seek* is quite an atypical project for the Ukraine, due to its dramatic genre. The starting point to this psychological thriller is the inexplicable disappearance of a young girl whilst she is playing hide and seek with her father in a locked apartment. This is the first of a long sequence of mysterious disappearances. Filmed in a Ukrainian industrial town, *Hide and Seek* was produced on a low budget but with a strong international potential.

Due to their cultural and linguistic similarities, Ukraine and Russia have a longstanding tradition of co-producing, but due to the current context of political tensions, alternatives must be found. European co-production is a new opportunity to be explored.

The Ukrainian TV industry is made up of 8 public channels, and no private local platforms. Film.UA is the country's largest production group and brings together approximately twenty companies that cover the entire production process, from the development stage to post-production. Film.UA produces both feature and short films, animation and series, amongst which was *The Sniffer*, sold in approximately 50 countries including France, and adapted in Japan.

For *Hide and Seek*, production was launched on the company's own funds with a helping hand from the ICTV channel. ZDF Enterprises joined the project later on, consolidating the budget and opening up new international perspectives.

## AT THE FRONTIER BETWEEN GENRES

*Hide and Seek* starts off as a thriller, but progressively takes another direction into drama. The investigative plot is a pretext to delve deeper into the characters and their secrets.

The series follows a particular rhythm, deep-diving into the characters and the sub-themes. It is, in this sense, very cinematographic, and steers away from the crime series' standards. The team explains that they wanted to be somewhat modest when it came to violence, never showing it upfront. "The country we live in is already violent enough as it is!"

The storyline was truly approached as a psychological drama, from a screenplay point of view, but also for the cinematography and editing. The team looked to express the dramatic elements through the images, in order to maintain a certain subtlety when it came to the emotions conveyed by the actors. The director of photography took part in most of the artistic decision making, and there was special attention paid to the sets, within the limited budget. The colours, for example, are full of meaning, with grey coming back often during the moments filled with anxiety, or blue when the scene is set within an administrative setting, within the 'system'.

## AN EIGHT-HANDS PIECE

The creative quartet behind the project (screenwriter, director, director of photography and creative producer) worked alongside each other throughout each stage of the series' creation, from writing the screenplay to filming. The team had worked together on previous projects, which is why the producers gave them *carte blanche*, despite their limited experience with thrillers. The production company was involved during different stages of the project. For example, they pushed the creators to replace the actress playing the leading role after having seen the first teaser.

The total sense of confidence amongst the 4 main members of the creative team enabled to put in place specific methods and processes: each of them was able to give his opinion during every stage of the project, there were multiple rewrites and adaptations, and they left substantial space for improvisation. Iryna recalls that she found the idea on how to close the last episode... the day of the shoot!

This sense of collaboration and confidence around the project enable them to experiment and play around with genres; creating a qualitative series which should find success internationally.



**Original title:** Pryatki / **Original idea:** Simor Glasenko / **Screenwriter:** Simor Glasenko / **Director:** Iryna Gromozda / **Production:** Film.UA / **Producers:** Olesya Lukyanenko (creative producer), Andriy Ryzvanyuk (executive producer), Kateryna Vyshnevska (co-producer), Viktor Mirsky (executive producer) / **Broadcaster:** ICTV Ukraine / **Distributor:** ZDF Enterprises / **Cast:** Yulia Abdel Fattakh, Pyotr Rykov, Vyacheslav Dovzhenko, Aleksandr Kobzar, Mikhail Troynik / **Format:** 8 x 60' / **Date of broadcast:** October 2019

# 45 REVOLUCIONES

SPAIN



**WITH :** GEMA RODRÍGUEZ NEIRA (co-creator, screenwriter)  
 DAVID PINILLOS (director) & GUIOMAR PUERTA (actress)  
**CHAired BY :** PIERRE ZÉNI (journalist, Canal+)

## PAINTING A PICTURE OF AN ERA

*45 Revoluciones* portrays the boom of rock & roll in Spain during the 60s, a country muzzled by the Franco dictatorship. Guillermo, an old timer in the music industry, is launching his own crazy project: creating a rock & roll label, with the help of young Maribel and the prodigious musician Robert.

Mariní Callejo's journey as the first Spanish rock & roll female producer was an inevitable source of inspiration when writing the series; it is not intended to offer a faithful transcription of history, but rather to allow the viewer to take the pulse of an era and recognise certain aspects that echo our current decade.

Today, the Franco period as a subject matter in fiction remains a sensitive subject, and the representation of the dictatorship on screen is still the source of debate and questioning in Spain. The writers of *45 Revoluciones* decided to create a joyous series, pulling from the characters' infectious energy, without shying away from the dark times in Spanish history.

## A DAZZLING SERIES WITH A ROCK & ROLL SOUNDTRACK

The series runs to a rock & roll beat and follows the whims of its protagonists. This dazzling series is rhythmic, at some points even fast-paced. The sense of urgency – an urgency to escape from the shackles, but also to fulfil their dreams – is felt throughout, and takes the viewer through a whirlwind of emotions.



This rhythm was of course built throughout the writing and filming stages, but also through the actors' in-depth work. They were able to take part in a month's worth of rehearsals prior to filming which is quite rare, notably to work on their elocution, ensuring it was both fast and clear.

## YOUTH AND RENEWAL

Through Maribel, who is trying to escape the pressures of social norms, and Robert, who is on a mission to make it in music, the series depicts a young generation that is hungry for freedom and renewal. Guillermo, who is older, embodies a new lease of life and a sense of

emancipation. He boldly throws himself into his project, which he sees as both a revolution for himself and for the music industry.

The series revolves entirely around the tension between this locked world and the individual and collective aspirations of the younger generation, as well as those, just like Guillermo, who are looking for a second chance at youth. Through this ultimately very universal and timeless tension, *45 Revoluciones* connects the youth of today with that of yesterday's and highlights their similarities. After all, as Guiomar Puerta mentions, today's struggles are often similar to those of yesterday...

**International title:** 45 rpm / **Original idea:** Ramón Campos, Gema R. Neira / **Screenwriters:** Ramón Campos, Gema R. Neira, M<sup>o</sup> José Rustarazo, Paula Fernández, Javier Chacártegui, Salvador S. Molina, David Orea, Curro Serrano, DC Torallas, Moisés Gómez / **Directors:** David Pinillos, Gustavo Ron / **Composer:** Federico Jusid / **Production:** Bambu Producciones / **Producers:** Sara Gonzalo, Marta Miró, Ramón Campos, Teresa Fernández-Valdés / **Broadcaster:** Antena 3 TV (Atresmedia) / **Distributor:** Atresmedia International Sales / **Cast:** Carlos Cuevas, Guiomar Puerta, Iván Marcos / **Format:** 13 x 50' / **Date of broadcast:** March 2019

# HAPPILY NEVER AFTER

ICELAND



**WITH :** NANNA KRISTÍN MAGNÚSDÓTTIR (creator, screenwriter, director, producer, actress)

**CHAired BY :** LARS LUNDSTRÖM (screenwriter, producer)

## THE ART OF CREATING A DRAMEDY

The series revolves around Karen, a mother and couple's therapist, whose world falls apart when she finds out about her husband's infidelity. *Happily Never After* blurs the lines between genres. The comedic aspect is most certainly present, but as creator Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir explains, the chosen subject of divorce is clearly quite tragic. This dramatic aspect took on a greater importance as she took inspiration from the various divorces happening around her as well as her own when she was writing the series. However, this work is not autobiographic, which is why Nanna decided, when she was going through her own divorce, to take a break from the project.

As Nanna points out, the humour and all the comedic scenes in the series are intrinsically linked to the female lead, her attitude and behaviour. The sub-themes, notably building yourself back up after a divorce, lead the series more into the realm of drama. These dramatic aspects are broached in a realistic and day-to-day way, creating a strong empathy towards the characters.

## FEMALE HEROINES

The female lead in the series, Karen, is disarmingly natural. Something we rarely see on our TV screens, including in Iceland. The sex scenes are a proof of this, far from the ones in Hollywood, these are, as Nanna jokes, "Icelandic style", raw and very real.

As she was also acting in the series, Nanna wanted to create a female character that was different to the love-stuck or victimised characters that have consistently been offered up to her. She also wanted to create an alternative to the strong female leads that we are seeing more and more in series, that are often heartless. In *Happily Never After*, the main character is ordinary, and all her weaknesses are put under the spotlight. Breaking down stereotypes also involves working on the other female characters, notably the husband's mistress, who is neither the embodiment of evil, nor the witless bombshell that Karen was expecting.

## A ONE-WOMAN ORCHESTRA

Nanna is simultaneously the creator, screenwriter, director, producer and lead actress of the series. For her, taking on these different roles is vital in finding her place in the small Icelandic ecosystem. It was particularly

necessary for this original project, for which Nanna received many rejections.

However, she was by no means alone on this project, as she co-wrote some episodes with a male friend of hers (it was suggested that she worked with a man) as well as a younger woman, who taught her a lot. She produced the series with her own company, CUBS Production, with the support of the Icelandic Film Fund, the public channel RÚV and the Danish company REinvent. As she herself explains, she loves producing and enjoys being involved in each different stage of the project, particularly during the edit, which is for her the most challenging stage as it requires some difficult decision making.

Season 1 will air early October in Iceland. Season 2 is in development, but production will need to wait for the funding to be released by the Icelandic Film Fund.



**Original title:** Pabblahelgar / **Original idea:** Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir / **Screenwriters:** Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir, Huldar Breiðfjörð, Sólvéig Jónsdóttir / **Directors:** Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir, Marteinn Thorsson / **Composer:** Gísli Galdur / **Production:** Zik Zak Kvikmyndir, Ungar kvikmyndafélag / **Producers:** Birgitta Björnsdóttir, Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir (producers), Thor Sigurjonsson (executive producer) / **Broadcaster:** RÚV / **Distributor:** REinvent / **Cast:** Nanna Kristín Magnúsdóttir, Sveinn Ólafur Gunnarsson / **Format:** 6 x 45' / **Date of broadcast:** September 2019

# BACK TO LIFE

## UNITED KINGDOM



**WITH :** AMY CHAPPELHOW (Script Editor, Two Brothers Pictures)  
**CHAired BY :** MARIKE MUSELAERS (co-CEO, Lumiere)

*Back to Life* which is created by Daisy Haggard, who also plays the lead character, is a dramedy that follows Miri's day to day life after having finished her sentence in prison for a terrible crime. In her late thirties, jobless and friendless, she has no other choice but to go back to live at her parents. But how can she move on and live a normal life while her crime is still the talk of the town?

### A 'HOW TO' ON SCRIPT EDITING

Amy Chappelhow details the – extremely varied – role of script editor. The script editor is present during each stage, from development, production, filming to editing. Their role is to ensure that the writers are putting forward their best work and that their voices are heard at each stage of the project.

As far as development is concerned, the script editor keeps a close eye on the writing, ensuring that the writers have access to the research they require, that the structure that they have built is coherent and being a more distant voice within the conversation. The script editor then becomes the link between the screenwriter(s) and the production, in order to guarantee that the writers' vision is respected. With *Back to Life*, the situation was somewhat different as Daisy Haggard, who is both the creator and actress, was on set, which strengthened the ties between the actors and the project and therefore gave room for improvisation.



### A WELL-OILED MACHINE

Daisy Haggard knew Harry Williams, one of the founders of Two Brothers Pictures, and they wanted to work together. She wanted to write something on the consequences of a mistake: how can one split decision affect an entire life?

A creative team came together around her with Sarah Hammond and Harry Williams, executive producers, and Chris Sweeney, director, who were all involved at an early stage. A 10-minute teaser was created very early on in order to show the series' tone, which convinced BBC Comedy.

When writing the screenplay, Daisy Haggard chose to work with Laura Solon, despite the logistical constraints due to her living in Los Angeles. The two writers are very complementary and were able to create two comedic aspects: where Laura, thanks to her time in America, has mastered the art of comedy based on characters and storyline, Daisy adds an eccentricity to the story and a certain flair to the characters and their behaviours.

**Original idea:** Daisy Haggard / **Screenwriters:** Daisy Haggard, Laura Solon / **Director:** Christopher Sweeney / **Composer:** Solomon Grey / **Production:** Two Brothers Pictures / **Producers:** Sarah Hammond, Jack Williams, Harry Williams / **Broadcaster:** BBC Three / **Distributor:** all3media International / **Cast:** Daisy Haggard, Geraldine James, Jamie Michie, Souad Faress, Frank Feys, Jo Martin, Liam Williams, Adeel Akhtar / **Format:** 6 x 30' / **Date of broadcast:** April 2019

Interviews were held with ex-prisoners, which gave Daisy Haggard various anecdotes on life in prison and once you are released. Judicial podcasts, their pace and the way the mystery unfolds, were a great source of inspiration for the team.

### ONE STEP FROM COMEDY TO MYSTERY

*Back to Life* is a mix between comedy, drama and thriller, all balanced masterfully thanks to the complementary team members: whereas Daisy Haggard comes more from a comedy background, the producers at Two Brothers have perfected the art of the thriller and intrigues.

The series is not a typical "Whodunnit?" as we know that the main character is guilty from the start, but more of a "Whydunnit?" Throughout the 6 episodes, we seek to understand the reasons why Miri committed such a dreadful crime, which are revealed at the end of episode 2. Some questions will be answered, but not all of them. Could this mean there might be a possible second season?

# POLICHINELLES

FRANCE



**WITH :** SANDRA PARRA (creator, actress), ADRIEN PALLATIER (editor)  
 THÉO LABOULANDINE (producer, Melocoton Films)  
**CHAIRÉD BY :** BÉRENGÈRE LEGRAND (producer, Septembre Productions)

## GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

*Polichinelles* follows a lesbian couple who are looking to start a family. This theme resonated with the two writers, Sandra Parra and Armand Robin (also the director). The idea of focusing on a gay couple seemed to be a particularly poignant way of broaching the subject of wanting a child; as there are no accidents when it comes to same-sex couples, the child is always planned.

The project initially took shape in a short 1-minute film, *Toi et moi*, created for the Mobile Film Festival. The two creators wanted to develop the characters,

while maintaining the short format that was part of the project's DNA. They first thought of the key moments in a relationship that they wanted to depict, and then took inspiration from their own lives, their desires and their fears. *Polichinelles*, a 6 x 3'30 series was born.

Once it was developed, the project was presented at the Valence festival of screenwriting and received the Plume de Cristal award. There, the creators met Théo Laboulandine from Melocoton Films, with whom they have been working on the production of the series for the past 2 years.

## THE ART OF PACE

In order to be as truthful and impactful as possible within this short format, the creators did a lot of ground work prior to filming, in order to prevent any accidents: once they came to the end of the writing process, Armand and Sandra then took on their roles as director and actress respectively.

The editing was the last decisive stage. Adrien, the editor, had previously worked with Armand, and understood his expectations well, particularly in terms of pace ("always faster"), which made things move smoothly. During the edit, important changes were made to the screenplay (moving sequences around...) in order to create stronger impact. The "jump cuts", however, were written in from the very start, which allowed for a dynamic pace to be created during the edit, without impacting meaning.

## FINDING ITS PLACE

For the producer, the series represented a true challenge, as it did not fit any of the expectations broadcasters had in terms of format. He therefore had to find alternative solutions to financing, where the team turned to the CNC, Pictanovo, La Fabrique des formats as well as crowdfunding.

This allowed them to develop 6 episodes of 3.30 minutes each, which is just a beginning: a second season is already in gestation and the series had a strong reception, notably with the press and the LGBTQ+ community.

Currently, there is little room for short format projects, but Théo Laboulandine is sure that it is a cyclic phenomenon. *Polichinelles'* strength is in its format, it would have been absurd to alter it for artificial reasons.



**Original idea:** Sandra Parra, Armand Robin / **Screenwriters:** Sandra Parra, Armand Robin / **Director:** Armand Robin / **Composer:** Linda Edsjö / **Production:** Melocoton Films / **Producers:** Théo Laboulandine, Archibald Martin (production manager) / **Broadcaster:** Melocoton Films / **Cast:** Sandra Parra, Magali Genoud / **Format:** 6 x 3.30' / **Date of broadcast:** May 2019



# AND ALSO... THE WORKS IN PROGRESS



**A Family Matter**  
(Denmark)



**A Long Night in Paris**  
(Israel, France)



**Deliver Us**  
(Denmark)



**Everybody is Perfect**  
(Italy)



**For Life**  
(Norway)



**Frankenstein 1918**  
(Sweden)



**Gangs of London**  
(UK, USA)



**Ghosts of the Past**  
(Belgium)



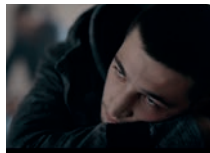
**Heirs of the Night**  
(Netherlands, Norway)



**Holy Mary!**  
(Malta)



**Malaka**  
(Spain)



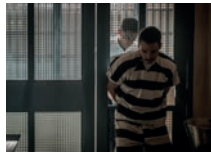
**Mental**  
(France)



**Mirage**  
(France, Germany)



**Moloch**  
(France)



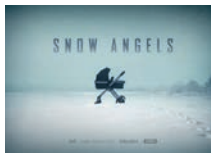
**On Death Row**  
(Spain)



**Parlement**  
(France, Belgium, Germany)



**Romance**  
(France)



**Snow Angels**  
(Sweden, Denmark)



**The Trial of Christine Keeler**  
(UK)



**Turbulent Skies**  
(Netherlands)



**Une belle histoire**  
(France)



**White Wall**  
(Finland, Sweden)

# AND ALSO... NEW PROJECTS, NEW VOICES

## SPOTLIGHT ON TRAILERS BY SÉRIE SERIES

Focus on 10 new projects for series, presented by their creators through a teaser made especially for this occasion :



**Bande Originale**  
(France)



**Broken Run**  
(Italy)



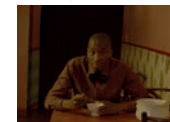
**G-Card**  
(France)



**Ku Klux Klub**  
(France)



**Miserere**  
(Italy)



**Motel**  
(France)



**No Blabla**  
(Burkina Faso, France)



**Thank You For Playing**  
(Finland, France)



**Transit**  
(Belgium)



**The Umbrella**  
(Bulgaria)

In partnership with La Fabrique des Formats, accompanying 2 of the formats in focus through their investment fund.



## FLASH PITCH

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **SACD**  
SOCIÉTÉ DES AUTEURS ET CÉLÉBRITÉS DÉPENDANTES

9 emerging talent coming from diverse horizons, spotted by associations supported by the SACD, were invited to pitch their project for a series in front of the professionals in attendance. The format of the session: a filmed portrait followed by a pitch of no more than 1'30!

- Vieilles canailles** – Aurore Serra and Madeleine Guillo
- Entre cousins** – Fabrice Kalonji Mbikayi
- Génération Z** – Steve Achiepo and Alice Giordan

- Cuir noir** – Samuel Germelus
- Olivia TV** – Rosine Kaboré
- Avec le feu** – Vincent Maury and Aurélien Many



THE MINUTES WERE WRITTEN BY



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Olivia Mella and Mattias Mella

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Aude Perrier

DÉCLINAISONS GRAPHIQUES :

Loïc Le Gars and Hugo Thomas

Série Series warmly thanks the speakers, moderators, participants, the series' teams, the volunteers and all the partners who made this 8<sup>th</sup> season possible.

To replay the sessions and best moments of Série Series 2019 and watch exclusive interviews of the speakers, check out our channel:

[www.vimeo.com/serieseries](http://www.vimeo.com/serieseries)

Photos from this edition are available on [www.serieseries.fr/en](http://www.serieseries.fr/en) and you can follow us everyday on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.



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