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Marlene Edmunds

Good morning, everyone. My name is Marlene Edmunds. I'm the Chief Executive of Marlene Edmunds Media Consulting. I have been in the media and entertainment industry for 25 years as a consultant and a journalist. We know it's never been a more exciting time for drama players across the globe, and we are lucky to have with us today some superstars of the drama industry to talk up cutting edge issues that have arisen as a result of the globalisation of drama. So first let me introduce our superstars. Ran Tellem is a former Keshet executive renowned for his work on Emmy Award winning Prisoners of War and Homeland and is now Head of International Content Development for Media Pro, a company that has already played in the international big leagues of drama with productions like Woody Allen's Vicky Christina Barcelona and Midnight in Paris and The Young Pope. Jimmy Desmarais is the co-managing director of Atlantique Productions. Jimmy Desmarais is currently at work on Eden, a French-German contemporary political drama directed by Deutschland 83, Helmer Edward Burger. Before moving over to Atlantique last year at [Otec Corp], Jimmy worked on high profile French skeins such as The Returned and Panthers. Once at Atlantique he also helped bring Midnight Sun among other titles to the finish line.

Kelly Wright, Head of Latin America and executive adviser for Asian Pacific in the US. During Kelly's watch, Keshet International has struck up a deal with Telemundo Studios to co-develop and produce new original Spanish language drama and a multi project, multi year deal with Televisa to re-make four scripted formats from Keshet International over the next three years. Moritz Polter is an Executive Producer for International Television Series for Bavaria and now working on Das Boot as well as Freud and Arctic Circle. As former Vice President of Production for Camden Productions, Polter produced the first three seasons of Crossing Lines, Spotless and the mini-series Labyrinth. We know that SVOD has helped push local drama into the global sphere, but it is not just about SVOD. Across the globe, players are increasingly willing to take more and more creative risks in order to find truly original story lines and that is what happened when Ran Tellem and [Ulas Wylies, Yarmo Lampelle] got together to create the story line for The Paradise, The first Spanish-Finnish drama co-production. Ran, tell us about how the idea of working together turned into some crazy brainstorming and somehow came together into a unique, original Nordik Noir set not in the frozen north but rather in Spain.

Ran Tellem

Good morning. The idea began with a meeting from ...,from Mediapro and [Yarmo] from Wylie. We have all been watching and following Nordic Noir and we were trying to explore a new way to tell a Noir story. We wondered if there was a possible way to take Noir stories and bring them over to sunnier, warmer places. As we started researching, we found that many Europeans, North Europeans make their home in Spain and in there south of Spain there is a small village called ... that has 15,000 Finns living in it in the summer.

Marlene Edmunds

This village is very close to Malaga.

Ran Tellem

What we did is we said let's travel together, let's go into this place together so two Finnish, one Spanish and one Israeli men spent three days there together. At the beginning we just introduced ourselves, talked about how we came to do television, what our vision was, what we loved to do. We then went to meet people trying to understand the story of what it is to have a Finnish community outside of Finland. What does it look like? What does it feel like? What are their stories. Then, on the third day, we started creating.

Marlene Edmunds

So essentially for two days you did nothing but party and get to know the locals! Then you started writing.

Ran Tellem

Yes, because I think it is essential when creating co-productions, because we all speak about it in business terms but I think it is much more a human thing than a business thing. I think the best way to start creating co-productions is actually getting to know each other. Usually we're in a market and it's a limited time and it's 30 minutes and it's two hours and it's a lunch and I don't think a co-production can work like that. I think it needs time and patience and getting to know the people. For us now it is a system. This is the way we construct co-productions. When we find a subject, we travel together, we spend the time together and then we create it together.

Marlene Edmunds

It is getting harder and harder to find really original ideas.

Ran Tellem

I don't think so.

Marlene Edmunds

I think so, and having this kind of a creative process helps that.

Ran Tellem

I think there are a lot of incredible ideas. They are completely out there. The only thing is to get the broadcasters to be convinced to put them on the air. However, the amount of great ideas is infinite I think. There are incredible stories to put out there. I don't think that there is ever going to be an end to it.

Marlene Edmunds

I stand corrected. I am fascinated by the potential of the Iberian-Hispanic Latin-American triangle in film and TV, so Mediapro has some very big bridges to Latin and Hispanic America. You have a few offices in Miami, I think?

Ran Tellem

So Mediapro has offices in Argentina, Columbia and Miami and they are all very well connected to Latin America and America which is a good basis upon which to start projects. They have very good connections with storytellers, creators and production companies. Therefore, it is easier for us to get to the stories and the best creators and start working with them using all the knowledge and the infrastructure that we have in Spain but taking it into Latin America. I must say, coming from Israel or coming from Europe, we all know a certain story of this world but it's just one part of the story of the world and I think there is an abundance of incredible stories waiting in Latin America to be told and we are there to try and do that. We have a deal with [FOREIGN DIALOGUE], with Danielle [Bouman] who is one of the most talented writers in Argentina to start creating new dramas. We have two in the pipeline already, which is just the beginning. We have two projects with ... , with our Miami office and I hope that, in the near future, we can start telling you about what we are doing.

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you. Kelly, Keshet is building bridges everywhere through co-production and a number of other alliances, is making money and security rights the primary motivation or is it about creativity and collaboration or all of those things and more?

Kelly Wright

It's about both and definitely more than that. You can't make money off of something which isn't great and unique as a story concept and you cannot transmit that story from paper to screen without supportive financing structures. I think the tricky part here is to facilitate that and to make sure that both the financiers and the creatives have a pay off, whether for the creators it's having the freedom to tell their story or for the financiers to make a strong show which has strong revenue generation from the domestic and international markets. These things take a long time to negotiate though and the rights issue is very tricky and it can become very political and challenging to overcome who will distribute, what part will be financed, who will take the first window, but, if we can overcome that and if you find partners whose motivations complement yours, then building a relationship, as Ran was saying, rather than building just a product, I think is really the way forward and that's the route that we've taken as well.

That allows us to have repeat collaborations which means less posturing, less talking about deal making. You get that out of the way and then you move into the production of the ideas themselves and just get down to the business of making great TV. I want to talk about two different deals; one is with AMC and Sundance where we have created "The A Word" with BBC1 and Sundance as a collaboration/ co-production and the second, coming up soon, is Loaded with Channel 4 and AMC. That has been a great relationship which will continue to grow between ourselves and those clients. Also, with Televisa, as you mentioned. Therefore, we are creating four different scripted shows at Televisa . You might think what does Israeli TV have to do with Mexican content as they are so different from one another but it has been a really fun collaboration, growing and changing their market place and allowing some Israeli influence to take root there. Let's see some examples.

VIDEO CLIP

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you, Kelly. Jimmy, Eden is a co-production between Arte France, Arte Germany, SWR and Atlantique. It is a multi lingual production, something Atlantique has quite specialised in. What lessons have you learned over the years about making these multi lingual drama productions?

Jimmy Desmarais

Let us first watch the trailer for Atlantique.

Marlene Edmunds

Certainly.

VIDEO CLIP

Jimmy Desmarais

As you can see from the trailer, the first wave of productions were in the English language - The Borgias, Jo, Transporter. The last one we released, Midnight Sun, was in English, French, Swedish, Saami and Arabic. Before I was at Atlantique, I worked on Panthers which was also in Serbian, French, English and a little Arabic. We are now moving a step further forward with Eden which is going to be shot in German, Greek, French, English and Arabic. The answer as to why is that, first, it is contemporary political dramas involving a lot of nationalities, a lot of countries, and we are looking for authenticity, knowing that in American people are used to seeing French, Korean and German speaking in English, American in factM whereas in Europe we are not used to this convention. For us, it is a real way to emphasise the reality of these contemporary shows. It is also a way of getting really into other points of view because these shows are confronting the stories of people from various countries, confronting their culture, their vision of history and the subject sometimes is also this confrontation and using the original languages helps bring a true immersion in these spheres.

You then also have the question of not losing the viewer and how to manage this mix of languages. Through the experience of these shows, we are also trying to be true to how it happens in the real world. Today we all come from different backgrounds and we all speak English or "globish" depending on the level, so we try to confront the characters as much as possible from different nationalities and noT develop too many scenes where we put to Syrians

together, for example, because in Eden we have an ... boy, we have Syrian couple, we have a German couple, we have a French woman, we have a Greek god but the story lines just intertwine all the time. At the end I think we will have a majority of English which might be 70%. So it is a mix of taking into account the viewer and how to address a global audience while being true to the reality and the authenticity of all of this.

Marlene Edmunds

People are becoming used to some of these multi-lingual productions. If you live in Europe, you are used to hearing languages all the time. There are a number of different languages that are spoken. I live in Catalonia and there are a number of different languages spoken around me. Even though I do not speak Catalanian, I am beginning to understand it by expression and context.

Jimmy Desmarais

It has been developing as a result of the increase of the circulation of series. It started with a Danish and with a Nordic and the viewer got used to it. At the same time, we have to counter balance because in France, for example, in the countries that dubbed, after it was broadcast statistics showed that 85/90% watched it dubbed. There is, therefore, sometimes a gap between having the multi-lingual version for the critics and for a small portion of viewers who are looking for authenticity but, at the same time, we know it will end up mostly dubbed.

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you. Moritz, you will start lensing in August on Das Boot, the Variant, Sonar Entertainment and Sky Germany production. It is Sonar's first non-English speaking co-production for the most part. Traditionally players move to English as the major language to be assured of success but this one is, for the most part, in German. Can the right title be an international hit no matter what the language?

Moritz Polter

I think on a subject like Das Boot where it is already a brand that we are selling, it is much easier for an international partner like Sonar to come on board and say we are fine with doing it predominantly in German. Obviously, the Germans will speak German. There is a French resistance side who will speak French and, when Germans and French speak together, they

might well speak English because it all depends on what the characters have learnt in school. Therefore we are going with the authenticity that Jimmy has been talking about, for which shows like Panthers paved the way in order to have multi-lingual shows and to have big budget multi-lingual shows. At the same time, it is still hard and you need to get the American audience on board with it because, in most other countries, the show might well be shown dubbed. Undertaking international co-productions, such as Arctic Circle, which is a German-Finnish co-production, the main language will be English but there will be some German and some Finnish in it. I think it is key that the shows come together naturally, that the language is not an issue and that language actually becomes less important if you do not make it an issue. I think that, if you start to play the language card too much, meaning these two people cannot understand those two people, in Europe nowadays that doesn't work anymore because we would all speak English. We are all sitting here, coming from different nationalities and we can all understand each other unless we don't want to be understood.

I think that that is key in developing these multi lingual shows and co-productions in general, otherwise you get into the Euro-pudding that we were in a couple of years ago. I also think that being able to do it multi-lingually gives you the opportunity to use actors from those countries, because we all have experience in using actors from France speaking English, pretending it's real English and it doesn't quite work because you only have a very limited pool of people that speak that language well enough for them to act perfectly in the foreign language. I also think, when they speak their own language, you will see it in their expressions, you will see it in their performances and, if you then dub it, that's fine, but at least they have acted in a language that they are happy with, and I think you see that.

Marlene Edmunds

They will have the body language and expressions of the original language.

Moritz Polter

Exactly When you hear Spanish it works with the arms, and if they then speak in English the don't use the arms and suddenly that Spanish character does not seem Spanish anymore. I think that authenticity is a big part of it. Das Boot is a special matter because it is a brand so it is easier.

Ran Tellem

I think it is about the story rather than the languages. I think that the discussion about the language is a technical discussion. I think it needs to come with a story and the story usually has a story teller and that story teller usually has a language he writes in, which, I think, dictates what the story is going to be. I never cared if The Bridge was in any other language, it was just a brilliant show. I think the same goes for [Hard to Fail] which we've seen here - people have watched it. People are also watching Walter Presents on Channel 4. They are watching police dramas, Israeli dramas, we have two Spanish shows from Mediapro also on that channel. I don't think it makes a difference anymore. Yes, people are accustomed to dubbing, they will still use it, but I think it is an evaluation. At the end of the day, the only thing that matters is the story.

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you. Does anyone else have any comments on this issue?

Kelly Wright

How do you qualify international success? If there are a majority of countries in the world who are accustomed to watching things with subtitles or having been dubbed - except for the US being a major exception - international success then becomes a different measurement.

Ran Tellem

You said earlier something before which I agreed with. You asked about making money and you said we need to have a great story first. That is my answer. You need to have a great story first, then you can dub it, you can put subtitles to it. It doesn't really matter. You do what you are accustomed to but the real story, written by a person who usually writes in one language. Most writers have a language they write with and I think this is the key element.

Moritz Polter

To counter that, on Das Boot we have two German and three English writers. The English writers obviously write in English. There will still be a lot of German dialogue.

Ran Tellem

Because that is the story.

Moritz Polter

That is the story, exactly. I don't think it really matters too much in what language you write, it matters what the characters would speak. It is about coming from the story, coming from the characters. Language shouldn't matter and I think, if you make it matter too much, and a lot of networks still do, as the first question they ask is what language will the speak? I do not think it actually matters. I think it is something that you just need to show them and then they will buy into it. However, it is one of the first questions that comes across when we pitch something that is a co-production.

Marlene Edmunds

I think that is a hangover from traditional broadcasting where you could not sell to territories unless you had a specific language and it was dubbed if needed.

Jimmy Desmarais

It is a bad thing if you have to think how you can make the show international. For me the question is why can I not make it national and then I understand why the subject has to be multi-lingual or not.

Marlene Edmunds

I am going to open up to some general questions, the first regarding SVOD. There are up and down sides of SVOD. Some people love it, some people do not and I think the smart people have different relationships with it. Local producers see SVOD as a way of getting into the international sphere, but there are big issues with rights and SVOD can be helpful sometimes and sometimes not. What are the issues involved?

Moritz Polter

I think SVOD helps because it broke up the traditional network system, so now we have more people commissioning material. As a result, we can be more risky with our shows in general. It also helps because the talent goes more global and, therefore, there is a bigger pool to choose from, meaning actors and writers. We know more because we can get more. At the same time, I think that SVOD is not the golden age as it was previously presented. It is just another tool of financing and there are more players and I think that's what is helpful.

Jimmy Desmarais

Content wise, at the beginning when I looked at originals, for example, Netflix originals where they produce in each country, I thought it was just another pod-caster. It was just another French pod-caster. At the same time, it is interesting to see how it changes the way you think about your programmes because usually you have your national broadcaster, you know its audience, you know who they target and, if the project is first, you target this audience. Another difference is that you have to make a "local for the global" and you have to try to decide how to produce a local series that will appeal to the entire world which changes your perspective and it is something that has come along also with the rise of international sellers in the financing plan and the desire to try to decide how the programmes, even if they are very local, and, as we know, the "glocal" sells really well. It changes a little bit with Netflix, for example, because they really make you consider how, in the casting, subjects, etc, how you can make a French show that is also an international show. I think that that is an interesting question, even if I do not have a solution.

Marlene Edmunds

If it is universal enough, it should carry both locally and internationally.

Ran Tellem

I think that first of all it is fun to watch. I love it. I love that it is so easy and has great content. I also think it has influence both on viewers and creators because I believe now that we are much more exposed to the way content is produced in many, many countries. When you circle the globe and when you meet with writers across the world then you understand that we are all watching the same kind of programmes and are creating at a different level. I think that what is happening is that we are writing deeper. We have added more layers to the shows that we are making and it has a good influence. However, I totally agree that the most significant part with these players is breaking up the market. A lot of the markets are closed and are at a standstill. When the SVOD comes in and competition suddenly comes in then everybody is open for new ideas, and then you can create material which is a big edgier, the content is more complex and I think it is great for both content suppliers and for people who watch.

Marlene Edmunds

Kelly.

Kelly Wright

I think there are three points here. One is about going back to local versus global. The local, terrestrial broadcasters, our linear channels are curating for a local market and a local audience whereas these international SVOD platforms are picking and choosing based on algorithms and are more mathematical outcomes. However, they are still making brave choices and I think that their acquisitions people are still making eclectic choices and they are really representing a variety of different countries and giving people in Mexico access to Indian dramas and giving people in Korea access to Finnish dramas that they wouldn't normally see. So I think that that is allowing for a spread of creativity. It is also attracting a lot of talent to those SVOD platforms by way of writers, actors, etc because of that broad reach, that freedom of creativity; those more eclectic and brave choices.

However, going back to the issue of whether or not this global model works in terms of finances, I do think that there is a question here still that remains of whether or not monopolizing content in a way or consuming all rights, all revenues for programmes.

Marlene Edmunds

Yes, that is a huge issue.

Kelly Wright

It is very controversial.

Jimmy Desmarais

Yes, and especially as you don't retain a lot of rights. It is a threat to the independence of producers and how you manage to grow, thanks to the catalogue you create and how it helps you invest in development. If you are just for hire and you do not have this "wild treasure" year after year then it puts you in a more dependent position with less freedom in the long run. That is a real issue, especially with the French system which relies on the CNC.

Marlene Edmunds

For all the SVOD being Netflix and Amazon, etc, this is a huge issue and I do not see it being resolved any time soon. I think that we have been talking about it for five years now; Netflix does not give up its rights. I think that they are becoming a tiny bit more flexible - there's a little edge in there.

Kelly Wright

They are doing a show called The Greenhouse Academy which is based on an Israeli show called [FOREIGN DIALOGUE]. That is a teen daily drama. They produce an American version in Israel and, interestingly, they have retained the rights exclusively worldwide for only two years instead of their typical very lengthy distribution rights situation. Therefore, those rights come back, in this case, to ... and Keshet after two years. So I think that there is some movement there.

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you. I want to discuss transcending political and other barriers. We do work in a very polarized world now and some of the questions cannot really be asked but they are out there. For instance, the EU is now requiring visas as of May for US citizens coming into Europe who want to work or do anything else really. Brexit - nobody knows what's going on with this. There are issues in terms of independent production in China where there are a lot of regulatory issues. There are other cultural issues when working in the Middle East. Kelly, do you want to start?

Kelly Wright

I would like to highlight two of those markets, China and Brazil, which are very heavily regulated by government bodies both in terms of content and in terms of fostering a preferential treatment for local independent producers. It is difficult to work in those markets because everything that you do there needs to be original to the local country, whether it's Brazil or China, in order to qualify for those quotas and to make it on the air in those local markets. Accordingly, that is a challenge that should be discussed because those are both enormous markets which I think a lot of people probably in this audience would be interested in reaching as well. With regard to politics, coming from the Middle East and having shows like Homeland, we tackle very controversial themes. We saw what happened in Homeland. It airs in Lebanon and there were a lot of things that happened in Lebanon and Syria which were very unpopular with the viewers there. Accordingly, I think that these water cooler formats and shows are opening doors and exposing political issues that people have been putting a Band Aid on for many years now. That is a powerful thing and I think it has really fostered a huge conversation and huge movement towards more political themed dramas.

Marlene Edmunds

Jimmy, you were working on something which wasn't specifically political, but Eden is about refugees and that's a huge issue all over the world but specifically in Europe. Did you have any problems putting this together? Creatively, were there any issues?

Jimmy Desmarais

Creatively, it was interesting to confront the views on the same subject between the French, the Germans in the writer's room, between the writers, because it made you realise that there are very different stances. What France does, how Germany deals with a project and on an every day basis we raised misunderstandings and cultural differences. It happens on many projects and I think that that is the beauty of collaborating between countries. We had a project where we worked with an Israeli writer and it took weeks to explain what is secularity in France. At the start of the script, we had a police officer who performed an operation wearing her religious sign and we said no, it's not possible and it took time to adapt. With regard to the confrontation of the different points of view, I think they reflect in the series and becomes a real subject.

Ran Tellem

I think drama has to be relevant. In order to be relevant, it usually touches the most controversial issues. If you are thinking that working in drama is going to be a smooth ride with no politics involved, you are wrong. It is going to touch every subject and then go deeper and deeper into the wound.

Marlene Edmunds

We have been through a period where we demanded that it has to be entertaining, but what does that mean? I think we really do need to start digging into some of these things.

Ran Tellem

I think that drama, over the past few years, has been really strong in touching the most controversial issues and sometimes bringing up subjects - from autism to nationalism to anything - and putting them on the table and dealing with them. I think that we are increasingly seeing that the more you take a subject which is controversial, the more you go deeper into it, the more of a local story you make it, the better it is to travel around the world. It is actually completely the opposite of creating something which is entertaining and light.

Marlene Edmunds

I liked what was done with Midnight Sun because the local issues with the native Lapland, Saamis, I think that is a huge thing. It is not just the Saamis, it is all over the Inuit nations and to touch on that, even to just touch on it, I think, was important.

Jimmy Desmarais

Absolutely. To come back to your question about political barriers and how the world is evolving, I think that we will overcome any measures. We will find ways. It will be problematic in terms of production. There are going to be a lot of obstacles but, for example, just after Brexit, in discussions with our British partners whether it be broadcasters, producers or writers, they are even more eager to collaborate and sometimes the British have a special position in Europe. Now, even if we do not know the consequences of Brexit, I am starting to work with British writers on European projects and they just want to make bridges in advance.

Marlene Edmunds

I have noticed that as well. I have been interviewing a lot of people from Pinewood. Everybody is looking for ways to go around and build bridges right now because nobody knows what they are doing.

Moritz Polter

The day after Brexit happened, our head writer, Tony Saint from Das Boot, immediately called and asked what was going to happen, am I still on the show? Obviously he is but, looking into the future and looking into the imminent future of the next two or three years, it is a big question mark as to whether British writers will still count for the French system, for instance, whether they are still eligible in that sense. I think there is an issue right now because, when you start developing now, you know that you are going to be in production in a year or two years' time. As a result, starting new projects now with UK writers could be an issue, something that is a little bit more problematic. I absolutely agree that we will overcome it but is a question of do you risk it at the moment. However, on the other subject, in today's world where politics is so much more on the agenda for everyone, I think a lot of people are now reading newspapers again, people are watching more news. I think that it paves the way for productions that are coming out of this wake that will be a lot more political and will have a lot more to say but, of course, packaged in a way

that is accessible.

Ran Tellem

We are working on a show now in Argentina telling an incredible story about the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish foundation in Argentina about 25 years ago. It is a highly political story. It involves Iran and Lebanon and the US and Israel and Argentina but, at the end of the day, it is a story of one man, a spy, a spy with double agents and double personalities and I think it is a fascinating story. It is a very controversial subject. You touch it and it's very hot anywhere you touch it but, in the end, it is just an incredibly fascinating story about identity which I think is something that we all right now are asking ourselves every morning when we get up. With regard to those visas, I would like to say as an Israeli, I wait in every possible line in every airport. I never get to cross that incredible line so I invite you to join me on that line. It takes an hour usually. You have time to think about your next show and then you get it.

Marlene Edmunds

Kelly, did you have anything to add?

Kelly Wright

I just thought that what Ran said about really responding to what relevant topics of conversation and elevating that conversation with a stylised fictional show is really what we do. I don't think that any of us are trying to intentionally stir up a hornet's nest or put more lives or put judgments out there but just to bring that conversation onto the screen, make it glossy and talk about it.

Marlene Edmunds

Thank you. I am interested in ratcheting up creative alliances and I think that we have talked a little bit about that. As an example, Altantique is behind a move to network with producers with the aim of bringing top talents together. Jimmy, can you talk a little bit about that?

Jimmy Desmarais

It stems from a MIP a few years ago when the meetings increased which mixed all the people together. I was a bit surprised. You had 20 minutes and people arrived with a well built project, sometimes with a well advanced script and you had 20 minutes to decide if you were going to get married. I was a bit surprised. I don't know you, I don't know how you work, I don't know the

process, etc. I really think that this is in danger of turning into a Euro-pudding. So we are trying to develop a small network of producers that we like to start with from five European countries and we meet up regularly. Sometimes we have a workshop with the writers. There are a few goals like really knowing each other and how we work so that when, one day, a good project pops up, we know how to work together and we have created development deals with European companies through personal encounters and upcoming producers, for example, that we really like. It is not capitalistic.

The goal is just to have them grow their company and give development budgets but then we brainstorm on their projects and we have a deal with a German producer. We even brainstorm on his purely German projects but it helps him get out of the pure national audience of his own broadcaster to try to broaden the project. I think that the next step now would be to think how to create more spaces for meetings between writers, because in all of these festivals, markets and meetings we have a lot of distributors, broadcasters and producers who are here all the time. We meet every month all around the world. We could be in a plane without landing. However, the writers and the directors are not. They are here only if they have a project, so there is a real stake of creating a community of people and I am convinced that out of this will emerge strong subjects that are really coming from the heart.

Ran Tellem

I completely agree with you. This is exactly what we are doing. Not only is it interesting but it is amazingly fun to do together, to sit with incredible minds and incredible people and create together. That is the way we should do it.

Jimmy Desmarais

We did a workshop on comedy with writers and producers and it was hard. However, we wanted to try for fun. It was really difficult; we didn't manage to make everybody laugh at the same joke, during four hours, we tried to find subjects and ideas.

Marlene Edmunds

Are there any questions from the audience?

Imran Mari

I'm Imran Mari from Indian Television. When you are writing, and it's across two or three countries, how do you get the sensibilities right? There are nuances which you have to take care of, local in one country which doesn't work in another, how do you get that perfect? Do you have to have different versions/edits for countries/nations which are buying into the product?

Jimmy Desmarais

I think the heart of the question is to have one voice and one talented director or main writer who would be the leader of it . It is not a question of compromising, it is just a question of getting to another level where it speaks to everybody while respecting each writer's sensibilities inside the room. However, the key is to have one voice

Ran Tellem

I think you can use it as an advantage, not as a disadvantage. If you have a character that comes from another nationality and has different ways of acting, I think it is fascinating and interesting. You put it on the table and then you can write this character correctly. However, the main way to do it is, of course, you have a head writer, one voice that dictates what the plot is going to be, which characters are important, because it is impossible to conduct a democracy when you write a show. It never works.

Marlene Edmunds

Is there one more question?

Anna Marizova

Hello. My name is Anna Marizova. I am a business development executive for Keshet Television and Radio. Thank you very much for an interesting discussion. I want to know what stories do travel because you keep saying great stories, controversial stories - can you give me a couple of other examples. Is it family values, etc? What makes universal stories? What worked and what didn't work?

Moritz Polter

I don't think there is an answer to that question because that is exactly it. I think great stories - it doesn't matter whether it's crime, drama or a personal family story - it is all about the character

themes and, if it is about family, family works the same way all over the world. I think that, at the heart of pretty much every successful show, there is that family element. Whether that's in a crime, drama or comedy, it's what we can relate to.

Jimmy Desmarais

I think that, when you are in the process of writing a show, you shouldn't think about making it global or address a global audience. When we produced *The Return*, we wanted to be really French and we did not think it would travel. The goal was to tackle the genre from a very French point of view and that was our only concern. Finally, it ended up travelling a lot.

Kelly Wright

I think most of the surprising successes have been exactly that. *Prisoners of War*, being something which is so local, so Israeli, about abducted soldiers which happened to be relevant to a lot of other countries and fascinating for people to dig into. I think there are two real answers to that question. One is about broad topics, American comedy and more procedural crime dramas which hit everybody and are popular all over the globe. Then other are those specific local stories which expose or highlight something which you might have thought about but never really understood and that just dig their hooks into you and don't let you go.

Ran Tellem

I think there is no answer. It is a great question and there is no answer to it. You never know. Even when you think you have the greatest story in the world and you convince people to do it and you put it on air and it fails. You can never know. Only trust your instincts.

Marlene Edmunds

Trust your instincts and, bottom line, there are universalities for every human being.

Jimmy Desmarais

It would be like asking how do you make a big success?

Marlene Edmunds

But is an example *Border Town* which is a wholly local Finnish/French co-production? It has been a phenomenal success and part of the reason why is because it balanced family with larger

issues. It was also a crime drama, that helped. Thank you all very much for being here this morning. I hope you have a great day. Thank you panellists for all of your work.