

Television Asia

Market Review: MipTV 2005

May 2005

Asian sellers' and buyers' responses to this year's MIPTV ranged from mildly pleased to wildly enthusiastic.

On the enthusiastic end of the scale, few were as upbeat as Singapore, which announced several big deals, including three movies, six TV shows and an animation venture. All told, 27 Singapore media companies, with 67 participants, were on hand in Cannes. "It's been amazing," said Shaw Soo Wei, the Media Development Authority's (MDA) assistant manager for market development.

One of the larger deals signed was the US\$3.2 million investment by the MDA and Discovery Networks Asia in up to 40 hours of factual and lifestyle content. International and local partners are expected to top up the funding for the programmes, which will air on either the Discovery Channel or Discovery Travel and Living in the Asia Pacific.

Two local media companies, Interactive Visual Laboratory and Lingan Mill, signed a deal to join the Nelvana Ltd - WETA Workshop animated series, *Jane and the Dragon*. MDA chairman, Dr Tan Chin Nam, described the benefit of the companies' involvement in the first project as "first-rate, world-class exposure... This sort of experience is what our animation industry needs if we are to produce quality animation projects that have worldwide appeal".

Singapore-based independent production house, Oak3 Films, announced a MOU with the MDA for a range of film and television projects over three years. The deal is valued at about US\$18 million. Oak3's second MoU was with German production house FFP New Media for three telemovies over the next three years. The first telemovie will be *Julia's Journey*, which traces the trials and tribulations of a rich girl and how she comes to terms with failure. The new agreement between Oak3 and FFP New Media follows *House of Harmony*, a mini-series the two companies co-produced last year. Singapore animation company, Scrawl Studios Pte Ltd, previewed 2D animated series, *Nanoboy*.

The Vietnam Media Corporation (VMC) left Cannes as pleased as anyone, with sales of 120 hours to US-based Imagine Asian TV. "This is the first time we've sold Vietnam Television programming to the United States," said Bao Mai Nguyen, VMC's sales and acquisitions manager. "There are many Vietnamese in the United States, and we've been pleased with all the US interest we've received at MIPTV."

Vietnamese participation in the international market is expected to increase. Private investment in movies and television has been allowed for just over a year. "It was a big change," Nguyen says. "When the government produced everything, it was just a propaganda and serious pictures. But with private funding, we're making love stories and fun films. Our content is much more flexible."

Nguyen said VMC had received "serious interest" in its coming programme. *39 Degrees of Love*, a 16-episode series about the lives and loves of young people in Ho Chi Minh City. With the biggest budget ever for a Vietnamese series, *39 Degrees* was relying on international sales and product placement (by companies such as

Pepsi and Samsung) to turn a profit, Nguyen said.

Japanese seller mostly said that the market was slow this year. "We're up in Europe this year," said Yasuhiko Nakajima, manager of sales and purchasing at Toei Company Ltd. "But we did more business at Filmart [in Hong Kong] and at the Tokyo Anime Fair". The two markets took place just before MIPTV. NHK's deal of note this year was the sale of *Satoyama* to the BBC's Natural World. *Satoyama* consists of two programmes about the relationship between people and nature in traditional rural environments in Japan.

Korean sellers had a fairly strong market, thanks in part to the market's official Korea focus. Taking a prime location was money well spent, said Korea's largest broadcaster Korean Broadcasting System's Sung Tae-ho, manager of the Global Strategy Team. "We did really good," Sung said, adding, "The good location really helped".

The Korean Broadcasting Commission (KBC) and France's Conseil Superior de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) agreed to work together on policy and content issues, with the goal of reaching an official cooperation agreement in the near future. No timetable was disclosed. CSA officials are expected to make an official visit to Korea later this year to deepen ties between the countries. "This is the first time Korea and a European country have made an agreement like this," said Kim Choon-shik, KBC general director. "For the KBC, it is a good opportunity to gain European experience and knowledge to help develop our market while protecting our culture." *Mark Russell*