

3Vision, a UK consultancy, was established with the new distribution platforms in mind, on the basis that an in-depth understanding of the new and emerging technologies could identify the best opportunities for delivering content to customers. According to 3Vision's Toby Russell, "every programme is different," and he points out that successful shows capitalise on multi-platform potential and offer services that are relevant to their content. "Viewers are increasingly expecting content to be available anytime and anywhere. Not only do they want the increased choices of multi-channel digital TV, but they also want the control and convenience they get from PVRs or VOD."

John Nolan, head of commercial programming at North One, part of Britain's leading independent production group, ALL3MEDIA, goes one step further. "PVRs have educated viewers in watching when they want; IPTV adds what they want."

Russell adds that viewers expect to be able to consume and interact with content away from the home, using a PC in the office or a mobile phone on the move. "To achieve success in the future, programme makers must understand this major shift in consumer behaviour and broaden their creative development processes to consider all platforms for delivery content, not just broadcast."

GET CARTER. At international production company FremantleMedia, part of the RTL Group, the creative imperative is certainly something that has already been taken on board with the appointment in January 2006 of Gary Carter to the newly created position of Chief Creative Officer, New Platforms, responsible for creating new brands and concepts specifically for mobile, broadband, game consoles and IPTV.

Carter will manage a team of development executives whose focus will be to create new brands and concepts specifically for new platforms and will also work closely with executives in FremantleMedia Licensing Worldwide (FLW) who are already responsible for exploiting the company's TV brands across multimedia

There is a suspicion among buyers that not enough programme pitches have thought through the IP Dimension and what it can deliver for the platform. IPTVi asks: "How do you put the IP in your pitch?"

channels. In addition, he will also work with third party developers to acquire formats that can be developed for new platforms.

FremantleMedia CEO Tony Cohen said that in his new role Carter would bring, "considerable commercial skill to

the development of creative concepts, which will be vital as new business models emerge" Carter believes that we are living through profound changes in entertainment,

Putting IP in the pitch

"not just in production and distribution, but in form. I'm excited to have this opportunity to explore the world of entertainment creativity is opening up through technology," he added.

SPIN-OFF. Carter's colleague at FremantleMedia, Claire Tavernier, senior VP of interactive, suggests that IPTV is another word for what people have been doing already, "it adds potential for new applications," she notes. For Tavernier and her company, VoD is something interesting, and she says that 'spin-offs' may emerge in the way that DVDs are marketed with extra content. Jack Davison, Toby Russell's colleague at 3Vision is more sceptical. "Who watches the DVD extras?" he asks. Tavernier looks forward to interactive possibilities with the programmes. "We haven't been able to do so much previously. With the IP set-top box, there's a lot more we can do in terms of enhancements." She highlights the 'community' aspects of popular programme, citing long-running UK London police drama *The Bill*. "That's got a loyal and stable viewership who access the programme's website. The extras are limited so far. We'll be able to offer more in the future. With IPTV, suddenly there's a lot more possibilities in terms of what we can do creatively."

North One's Nolan extends the community concept to brand relationships. North One is involved with the recently-launched digital satellite service The Audi Channel, and he draws particular attention to motoring programme *Fifth Gear* and *The Gadget Show*, popular programmes on the UK's 'five' terrestrial channel. They both run download services on



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their websites and report high-levels of downloads. He agrees that it's about "building community interest in your programmes. You need to focus on people engaged with particular programmes." Where once it was fashionable to talk about 'compelling' content attracting viewers to new platforms, Nolan hints that 'engaging' content will continue to drive that community loyalty.

X-FACTOR. At FremantleMedia, one entertainment brand that has become global in its appeal is the 'Idol' pop talent show and its various iterations, with reality talent search show *The X Factor* providing Fremantle with the most successful interactive TV show of 2004 in the UK, with 22 million votes were cast during the series. The 157,000 calls during a single minute of the penultimate episode set a new record for the highest number of calls generated by a single televote.

In addition, an agreement with mobile operator '3' allowed fans to watch out-takes exclusively created for their video mobiles, the first service of its kind. Tavernier admitted that at the moment Fremantle mainly uses mobile for its interaction with the viewer. "People are confident with that," she admits. Chat-rooms will become a feature of IPTV programming, according to Tavernier, who points out that during an episode of drama series *Lost* in the US, a whole community of people were commenting online during the show. "It's like inviting a bunch of friends round to watch your favourite show together, that's very powerful."

For Tavernier, IPTV technology becomes an enabler. "It opens new possibilities." She goes as far as to say that eventually, there will be programming that is specific for IPTV, not the broadcast channel. "We have a mission to create a market," she admitted, we're investing in content with an appropriate budget. It's a priority for us." Nolan also foresees a trend for his company to become more

business-to-consumer than via third party broadcasters. "We're definitely investigating true multi-platform distribution without broadcast involvement," he reveals.

OFF BUTTON. Tavernier is as enthusiastic about IPTV potential as she is nonplussed by 'Red Button' interactivity. "It's in a bit of a crisis," she observed. Noting that UK broadcaster Channel 4 had scaled back its use of interactivity. "Our view is that Red Button technology is a clunky and inefficient use of capacity," said Channel 4 chief executive Andy Duncan explaining the decision. The broadcaster said it wasn't much loved or used by audiences, it's expensive, and it has been rather overtaken by the opportunities offered by the Internet and broadband. Channel 4 will continue to offer interactive advertising, but will not have interactive as a priority, focusing instead on activities such as weaving broadband and mobile into the fabric of its output.

"Red Button interactivity really only has a UK focus," said Tavernier. "It doesn't really make sense for a global entertainment com-

pany such as FremantleMedia to put too much emphasis in that direction. We know that developing for a windows platform may be cheaper." With a number of telcos opting to use Windows IPTV solution, it comes as no surprise that Tavernier is in contact with a range of potential telco customers. "They can be important distribution partners."

Davison look to the On Demand possibilities that IPTV promises. "If a programme has been broadcast on a traditional linear channel and you've missed it, the available audience can be so much bigger if there's a chance to catch up at some stage. He likens the possibilities to IPTV providers being able to offer box-sets of series. He also suggests that there are many examples of content that can't find a place for itself in the schedules, but can in VoD.

WHAT CAR? One video-on-demand channel launching as IPTV International goes to press is 'What Car? TV'. The channel is a joint venture between the popular consumer motoring magazine and UK broadband ADSL-operator HomeChoice and allows viewers to select from more than 260 three-minute video road tests of cars currently available in the UK. Patrick Fuller, publishing director of *What Car?*, described the channel launch as "another first for the *What Car?* brand. Our mission is to deliver content in the way the consumer chooses to receive it, which is why emerging technologies such as video on demand and 3G are so important to our plans."

The *What Car?* video library is constantly updated with new models and road tests. In addition, viewers will be able to select from regular news updates, motor show reports and exclusive features such as reader clinics. International motor show reports are filmed and edited at shows around the world and then made available to view within 24 hours. *What Car?* TV will be easy to navigate and videos will be categorised according to type of car and viewers will also be able to search by model or manufacturer.



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UK and the US. She suggests that they all agree that the future is about new ‘disruptive’ business models, dealing with telcos and various content aggregators, and argue that the majority of new entrants still do not understand “the way content happens”, and the importance of ‘windowing’ for the film and television value chain.

According to Bosnak, from a ‘cash chasing’ producer’s point of view, broadband and IPTV may be a promising new opportunity for independent filmmakers to create and possibly reach a wide range of audiences beyond domestic markets. “These filmmakers will welcome any new content delivery entrant who may be an inventive new source of financing.” On the other hand, Bosnak suggests, big producers,



buyers and all who have spent decades in the entertainment industry minefield, view IPTV as a pure DRM issue and

Dean Hawkins, COO of HomeChoice, said that *What Car?* TV really showed the potential of video-on-demand, “allowing people to watch a What Car? road test of their choice at a time that suits them.”

FILM FESTIVAL. Aleksandra Bosnjak is a content and media analyst for Ovum’s Broadband Content and Mobile advisory services, visited the Berlin Film Festival at the beginning of 2006, and reported that it provided food for thought in considering IPTV content issues and the implications for content providers. “Broadband IPTV content and/or new business models raises hopes that both content providers and buyers will think about convergence.”

Bosnjak had an opportunity to discuss the future of niche content and IPTV with some prominent independent producers from Canada, the

Distribution Platform	Value Added Consumer Offer
Broadcast	Broadcast of programme PVR ‘Red Button’ / iTV Live betting Increased participation Information Games Telephony Premium rate telephone voting
Mobile	Interactivity via SMS Streaming & downloading video clips Other mobile content Wallpapers Games Future Streaming of entire channels
DVD	Extra features Added scenes Cast interviews Alternative endings
VOD	Extra features Added scenes Cast interviews Alternative endings
Broadband / VOD to PC	Extra features Added scenes Cast interviews Alternative endings

Source: 3Vision

argue that studios will continue to dominate, playing ‘hard to get’. “Media empires such as Disney are only just warming up to VoD distribution, fearing it could cut into revenues from rentals and DVD sales.”

ENDGAME. It would appear that linear programming is not dead, but certainly under increasing attack, and the deployment of On Demand services via IPTV will see a new form of water cooler television, except that the discussion will not be in the office the following morning after a programme, but during the programme itself. Furthermore, there will be programmes and schedules that will be unique to a viewer, who will select when and what he wants to watch.

How then does a prospective programme provider pitch in the IPTV era? Davison and Russell summarise their advice.

“Look at all distribution platforms; consider which platforms could offer value adding services to the viewer and increase revenue for the broadcaster; create a consumer offer that includes all platforms and services that would:

- 1. Make the programme more enjoyable**
- 2. Encourage audiences to watch the programme**
- 3. Generate more revenue.”**

