

digest

Thompson gets go-ahead for BBC shake-up

LONDON — The BBC Trust gave the green light Wednesday to director general Mark Thompson's plans for the pubcaster, which include sizable job cuts. Insiders said Thompson told the trust that the budget moves would involve 2,800 job cuts but that he aimed to create 1,000 new roles to cope with the digital age. Thompson is set to announce today the full extent of his plans and decisions to both BBC staffers and the public.

Los Angeles on new Star map

Star, the Hong Kong-based media and entertainment company and a wholly owned subsidiary of News Corp., is expanding distribution of its Hindi- and Mandarin-language programming in North America with the opening of a sales office in Los Angeles. The office, headed by vp distribution and sales David Wisnia, will market and drive distribution of Star's Asia-based networks in North America. Star broadcasts more than 40 Asian-language channels to 300 million viewers worldwide and produces more than 10,000 hours of Indian- and Chinese-language programming a year. In the U.S., it's looking to expand distribution of its four channels that are available on DirecTV.

Suharjono joins Warners' int'l offices

Erlina Suharjono has been named senior vp Asia distribution at Warner Bros. Pictures International. Suharjono, who reports to Warner International executives Veronika Kwan-Rubinek and Sue Kroll, will be responsible for supervising distribution and marketing in Asia through the Warners network of affiliate offices and licensees in the region. Based in Hong Kong, she also recently assumed duties as chief representative of Warner Asia, supervising the distribution of American-made films in China.

Johns back in Sony's d-cinema fold

Gary Johns has rejoined Sony Electronics as vp at its digital-cinema systems division. A 25-year Sony veteran, Johns spent the past four years as a consultant to Sony in areas including d-cinema market development and digital sound licensing. Before that, Johns was president of Sony Cinema Products. He will remain based in Sarasota, Fla.

5 emerge victorious in WIF/GM honors

Women in Film and General Motors have announced five women who have been selected as winners of the second annual acceleration grant for emerging filmmakers. The winners are Jamie Taucher of Sedona, Ariz.; Julia Kots of Manhattan; Connie Florez of Honolulu; Joyce Lee of San Francisco; and Mabel Valdiviev, also of San Francisco. The grant, awarded annually, is a program of the WIF/GM Alliance, the goal of which is to support talented filmmakers from under-represented communities.

Chapman student collects Angelus prize

Nicholas Ozeki, a student at Chapman University's Dodge College of Film and Media Arts, has won the Patrick Peyton Excellence in Filmmaking Award, the top prize in the 12th Angelus Student Film Festival, for his film "Mamitas." Sponsored by Family Theater Prods. Hollywood, the Angelus Awards will be presented to seven student filmmakers and 16 finalists at a screening and awards ceremony Oct. 27 at the DGA in Los Angeles.



For expanded digest items and more news, turn to hollywoodreporter.com

At long last, 'Daily Show' is firmly anchored on Web
Own site houses thousands of clips

By Alex Woodson

NEW YORK — After more than a decade on the air, Comedy Central's "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" has its own online home.

The new site, DailyShow.com, will go live at noon EDT today, presenting nearly the entire video archive of the show for the past nine years.

The site contains more than 16,000 video clips spanning headlines, correspondent pieces and such regular segments as Lewis Black's "Back in Black" or "This Week in God." For now, the archives start in early 1999,

covering the Jon Stewart-era of the MTV Networks show. The earlier version of the program, which started in 1996 with host Craig Kilborn,



Stewart

could be available by early 2008.

Uninterrupted episodes will not be available, though full shows can, for the most part, be pieced together from the clips.

Erik Flannigan, executive vp digital media at Viacom's MTV

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London off to 'Promises' start

By Stuart Kemp

LONDON — The Times BFI London Film Festival kicked off



Cronenberg

Wednesday with the unspooling of David Cronenberg's London-set Russian gangster noir "Eastern Promises" at the Odeon Leicester

val, was introduced to a packed house by festival director Sandra Hebron.

Cronenberg was on hand to introduce his movie alongside stars Naomi Watts and Vincent Cassel.

For the next two weeks, the British capital promises to play host to several sparkling shindigs, with heavy U.S. representation.

Upcoming high-profile screening

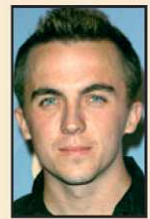
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First deal is 'Sexiest' at Hamptons

By Gregg Goldstein

NEW YORK — In the first pickup from the Hamptons

International Film Festival slate, Think-Film has nabbed North American rights to



Muniz

Thursday's world premiere "My Sexiest Year."

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Davies has hold on French game

By Rebecca Leffer and Nellie Andreeva

"Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" executive producer Michael Davies has snagged U.S. rights to a new foreign game show format from French TV production company Efferescence.

The deal for the project, whose tentative English title is "Hold Onto Your Seat," was

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Davies

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negotiated during last week's MIPCOM market in Cannes. "Hold" was acquired through Davies' deal at Sony Pictures TV and will be developed by the producer's company, Embassy Row and SPT.

Davies plans to shop "Hold" as a half-hour strip to air in daytime or early fringe in syndication or on cable.

The original "Hold," which is hourlong, is a trivia quiz show in which five challengers try to unseat a reigning champion, who has a number of advantages in the game. The show's latest champion remained on the air for five weeks.

"He's no Ken Jennings, but he did manage to hold his spot on the air for 25 episodes," Effervescence co-managing director Romain Cousi said.

In France, the game show airs daily on national terrestrial channel France 2. It is the highest-rated program for the network, and on Tuesday, the show drew its highest audience share,

25.5.

Davies, an expert in the game show arena, having produced such series as "Millionaire" and CBS' "Power of 10," was immediately taken by "Hold."

"It is so rare to see something in the game show format that is so inherently stylish," Davies said. "This game show could only have been created in France; it's like the Chanel of daytime game shows."

In addition to the deal with Davies, Effervescence has sold the "Hold" format to Alchemy Reality for the U.K. and Australia and to Novem in Canada.

"It's easier to sell a game show in the U.S. than in France these days," Cousi said. "As soon as they see a good idea, they want to exploit it. It's great news for French productions."

Effervescence, founded two years ago by former Teleimages president Simone Harari, has sold several series to France 2 and France 3 and is building partnerships abroad.

Rebecca Leffler reported from Paris; Nellie Andreeva reported from Los Angeles.

Hamptons

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Writer-director Howard Himelstein's autobiographical coming-of-age story follows Jack Stein (Frankie Muniz), a 17-year-old aspiring writer who lives with his mother (Frances Fisher) in Brooklyn. When her health declines, she sends him to live with his horse-racing handicapper father (Harvey Keitel) in Miami.

Jack soon becomes distracted by new friendships with a rich druggie (Dan Levy) and his sister (Haylie Duff) and the famous model (Amber Valletta) Jack falls for. Ryan Cabrera plays Jack's high school nemesis. Christopher McDonald and Karolina Kurkova also star.

The pickup reunites ThinkFilm with producers Michael Cerenzie and Paul Parmar, part of the team behind its upcoming Sidney Lumet thriller "Before

the Devil Knows You're Dead."

Himelstein directed "Power of Attorney" and scripted Myriad Pictures' upcoming Oscar Wilde adaptation "A Woman of No Importance."

Cerenzie and Christine Forsyth-Peters of CP Prods. will produce Russell Mulcahy's "Zen and the Art of Slaying Vampires."

ThinkFilm U.S. theatrical head Mark Urman will attend the fest with three other new films: "Dead" (accompanied by a conversation with Lumet), Paul Schrader's "The Walker" (hosted by star Lauren Bacall) and Alex Gibney's war torture docu "Taxi to the Darkside."

With "Sexiest" off the table, the traditionally acquisition-light Hamptons fest still has several other titles up for grabs, including "Turn the River," "A Table in Heaven," "The Elder Son," "Kabluey," "American East" and "Do You Sleep in the Nude?" ■

MEIFF grants two victors

By Jola Chudy

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — A surprise tie was announced Wednesday at the gala award ceremony of the Middle East International Film Festival's InCircle Pearl Grant competition. Rusudan Chkonia of the Republic of Georgia was awarded first place for her project "Keep Smiling," with Soman Chainani of the U.S. co-honored for his romantic comedy "Love Marriage."

The pair received their prize before an audience of international financiers, executives and decision-makers at a ceremony held on the poolside terrace of the recently completed Shangri-La Hotel in Abu Dhabi.

The winning filmmakers, drawn from a shortlist of six finalists, will receive a production grant significant enough to help fund their next films.

"I thought it was a bad sign when the jury said it was a 'good project' before the announcement, then suddenly I heard my name," Chkonia said in an interview.

The Georgia-set tragicomedy, which revolves around seven mothers and their battle against a corrupt beauty contest, already had garnered the young director acclaim at the Festival de Cannes.

"For me, to win this prize has a real meaning," she said. "Production in Georgia is really difficult. I was looking for production money, and after this grant, it's going to be easier."

Taking second place was Iranian-American filmmaker Kayvan Mashayekh, who received a \$25,000 stipend awarded jointly by the MEIFF and Paul Kavanaugh's Relativity Media for "Barring for Palestine," his film about a Jewish minor-league baseball manager in Texas who recruits a Palestinian rock thrower as his ace pitcher.

The Film Financing Circle, a key component at MEIFF, provides a three-day networking and discussion opportunity for key players in the film industry as well as a chance for emerging filmmakers to be exposed to their expertise. The InCircle Pearl is a competitive pitch program created to expose emerging directors to high-level decision-makers and to facilitate financing for talented filmmakers.

Said EFC director Adrienne Briggs: "I'm ecstatic. There was an incredible dialogue between the executives and financiers and people in Abu Dhabi who are interested in film, and also the students who wanted to learn about film. I can't tell you the amount of meetings we've set up. Everyone's excited — and not just the executives but the local investors who finally have answers to their questions about so many different things like financial models."

Briggs said that a MEIFF dinner had raised more than \$300,000 for the InCircle Film Lab, which will teach Emirati filmmakers writing and directing.

London

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events include the world premiere of Robert Redford's "Lions for Lambs," starring Tom Cruise and Meryl Streep, and galas for Steve Buscemi's "Interview," in which he stars alongside Sienna Miller, and Todd Haynes' Bob Dylan portrait "I'm Not There," which stars Cate Blanchett as the singer-songwriter.

Festival organizers also are

ramping up industry events, adding a Production Finance Market to the roster. The two-day market will take place Monday and Tuesday and focus on new private forms of investment, film finance and fresh distribution avenues, the festival's industry office said.

The festival runs through Nov. 1, closing with a gala for Wes Anderson's India-set comic caper "The Darjeeling Limited." ■

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