



2010 PROGRAMMING WORKSHOP REPORT

To: WITBN Council
From: Micheál Ó Meallaigh, Director of Commissioning, TG4
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Subject: Programming Workshop, WITBC 2010

WITBC Taiwan Tuesday 9 March 2010

Seven of the founding members of WITBN had agreed to participate in the 2010 WITBC programme workshop –

Maori TV,

TITV Taiwan,

BBC Alba,

NRK Sámi Radio Norway,

APTN Canada,

SABC South Africa and

TG4 Ireland.

Because Lulama Mokhobo was attending the CEO meeting in Taipei, Haunui from Maori Television delivered the SABC paper and the workshop was enhanced by a very interesting presentation from Hawaii. Each presentation was followed by a Q & A session. A number of observers from TITV also attended and engaged in the Q & A session. The purpose was to enlighten and share with each other the work practices and experience in the decision making of WITBN members.

Each broadcaster was allotted 25 minutes to present a case study as well as a trailer from the chosen project. The presentation, included an examination of the decision making process, the philosophy which prompted the decision, the challenges faced and overcome and provided an insight into the workings and competencies of the particular broadcaster. It also examined how the broadcasters dealt with the eternal conflict of balancing cultural responsibility with audience figures.

Case Studies

TITV – Children’s Project – Cemdas Tseng

Little Science Hunters – target audience 9 -12

This series places emphasis on indigenous heritage and cultural identity and combines traditional knowledge with modern science. It receives government support and the purpose is to raise the awareness of science in native schools. It places emphasis on practical science and features an indigenous presenter who visits the schools using experiments and animation to engage the children. A web element for the series and interactivity are currently being developed. The trailer showed children learning about the formation of a typhoon, an annual hazard with which traditional life on the island has had to cope for generations. The challenges in producing such a series were considerable but were overcome successfully.

BBC Alba – Music Series – Margaret Cameron

HoRó Ghealaigh and Eadair Chluich

Because only about 1% of Scotland speak Gaeilge na hAlban, BBC ALBA recognises the need to build a broader base of viewership and cater to two audiences to create national resonance. Only broadcasting for about 18 months, BBC Alba is currently available to about 35% of the households in Scotland. All programmes are broadcast with subtitles in English. Limited budgets do not allow for the production of drama or comedy at the moment and teenage programming is a challenge. Programmes are sourced from 3 commissioning rounds per year and economies of scale are achieved from volume deals over 4 years with 3 major production companies. A lot of emphasis is placed on children’s and music programming, material more accessible to a broad audience. Music features in the top three programmes on BBC Alba. Trailers were shown of HO Ró Ghealaigh which is a long running music series with broad appeal and which TG4 is intending to acquire and Eadair Chluich, six short dramatisations and visualisations of Gaidhlig songs featuring well known television personalities. Whereas this latter series did not entice large audience figures it was highly critically acclaimed nationally.

TITV – Musical Drama Series – Maraos

A second case study was presented on behalf of TITV by Maraos - a music series that linked dramatisation and songs from the Paiwan Tribe. TITV is sometimes criticised for having too much music in the schedule but the Paiwan Tribe love to sing and this series of 13 x 25' presented the tribe with the perfect opportunity. The series featured non professional actors and it was discovered that they were more comfortable in their own environment than before cameras in studio. Storylines were written based on the story of the songs chosen and it was decided to shoot the series among the tribes where they performed naturally with no concern for the presence of cameras. The programmes combined music and documentary and included work songs much like a tradition in Ireland where workers while they worked performed Amhráin Saothair which would translate as work songs.

APTN – Drama Series – Peter Strutt

This drama series, Cashing In, which is now going into a second series could be said to be in gestation for about ten years since the foundation of APTN in 1999. The first series was a coproduction with Can West and for the first time it was going to tell the story from the aboriginal perspective. It was to adopt a new positive image and approach and leave behind the dark drama and negative image that had coloured the First Nation stories before then. Casino based, it was going to balance the modern and the traditional to feature successful aboriginal people and to flaunt a positive and successful attitude. Nationally recognised performing artists featured in natural credible roles and music was an important and appealing part of the package. There were three phases leading up to the production – with a one year development period during which the writing, directing and producing talent was sourced and developed. An inhouse production company was formed to produce the series. The first series comprised of 13 x 25' and the next series will comprise of 7 x 25' at a cost of approx \$4 million Canadian dollars. APTN also produce 4 pilot shows for drama series per year. Where as the series featured the culture and traditions of the First Nations the language of the series was English.

Maori Television – Drama Series - Haunui Royal

This family drama series 13 x 26', Kaitangata Twitch was based on the writings of the acclaimed international writer Margaret Mahy. Two Maori writers were engaged to work on the script and two Maori consultants were an

integral part of the project to ensure at least 20% Maori language content. Most Maori drama had been about Maori people who often do not know of their Maori heritage and going in search of their culture. This was a move away from that in so far as the family were very aware of their Maori culture and it incorporated elements of the supernatural. The story was not an indigenous Maori story in so far as the writer was a European writer approaching the subject from the outside. The total budget was \$ 6.2 million NZ dollars of which Maori Television contributed \$585k NZ dollars as broadcast licence fee. The series was given good marketing and performed very well on Maori Television.

Sami NRK – Proposed Comedy Series- Olé Rune Haetta.

The Sami people are scattered over four countries speaking different dialects of the Sami language

40,000 in Norway

30,000 in Sweden

6,000 in Finland

3,000 in Russia

The content of Sami Television is 70% news and 25% children's programming. Olé voiced an ambition to produce a comedy series for Sami Television and was seeking advice to help him in this undertaking. He was hoping to develop in March and shoot before the Summer. Sami broadcast a comedy series almost ten years and Olé is hoping to initiate a long running series that would have potential to return. Advice came from the various delegates including a suggestion to consider a comedy sketch show and TG4 promised to forward copies of successful comedy drama series that worked very well on TG4. We wish Olé the best of luck.

`Ōiwi TV – Hawaii

On behalf of `Ōiwi TV, The Hawaiian delegates from Makaha Production Company delivered a presentation on the video on demand service for Hawaiian language programmes. It is interactive television with immediate playback and the entire library is available on demand. The major benefit is that the audience is totally measurable. Of the 1.3 million population of Hawaii, the Hawaii community comprises of 300,00 people and the population who

can speak the Hawaiian language is approx 20,000 people. A federal grant has been made available to train an intern for 3 years which makes it the only state of the US that supports any indigenous language. Because there is no real budget for production, product placement and marketing are an integral part of the shows. The challenge is to build a television industry to add to the stock of programmes already available. Video on demand means that there is no linear schedule and the programmes can be any duration and the cost of running the channel which is available on cable is \$8,000 US dollars a month. One hundred minutes of news in Hawaiian per month is broadcast and a 13 part series on Hawaiian language instruction is also broadcast on CBS Honolulu.

SABC – Remember where you come from – Lulama Mokhobo

Because Lulama was in Taipei at the CEO meeting, Haunui volunteered to deliver the SABC case study about families torn apart and the displacement of individuals from rural communities who seek an alleged better life in the cities. Lulama was well served by her Maori colleague and the story had relevance for all of the members present. The series featured three languages, did not include scripted narration but featured protagonists who faced up to their demons. Intense research was essential to authenticate the stories. The series won a 35% of audience share but secured limited advertising due to the downbeat context. It's prime time slot had to face competition from a movie slot on a competing channel but became a focus of radio talk shows following the broadcast. The hard hitting content took its toll on the production team but will return later this year with a refreshed team in a less competitive time slot

TG4 – Comedy Drama Series – Micheál Ó Meallaigh

The seven hour comedy drama series was conceived as a metaphor for Irish society that had recently fallen into sudden wealth and seemed to have lost much of its innate integrity and appeal. But it was not to be a sermonising series but an entertaining approach featuring a good dollop of comedy and black humour. The seven part series was structured around the seven days of the most famous horse racing festival in Ireland – The Galway Races, with each episode thematically labelled with one of the seven deadly sins. It adhered to the TG4 motto, *Súil Eile* - a different approach – and consciously decided to be bilingual and provide linguistic credibility. Although over a million people would claim some competence in the Irish language, only 3% of the Irish population speak Irish on a daily basis. To broaden the appeal and

audience base a decision was made to begin most episodes with scenes in the English language but the overall series was over 80% in the Irish language. Whereas shooting against the backdrop of thousands of unpaid racing punters provided its own challenges it also provided production values that would not be affordable if they had to be paid. The series finally produced due to budgetary consideration was 7 x 40' and cost a total of € 2.3 million Euro with a € 750k contribution from TG4 of which €137k was licence fee and €613k equity in the series. Rásaí na Gaillimhe was the most successful drama series to date on TG4 and a second series is now in development with a view to production in the Summer of 2010. To heighten the appeal for our TG4 audience commercial music was used in the sound track which will raise difficulties if Rásaí na Gaillimhe was to be considered for inclusion in the programme exchange scheme.

NOTES & CONCLUSION

The workshop continued after lunch and some discussion centred on the success of the first Programme Exchange scheme. All five members who had partaken in the scheme were happy that it was a worth while scheme and that it gave us a better understanding of each other and our programming. Looking forward, the general consensus was that each broadcaster preferred to broadcast the programmes as originally produced with the addition of subtitles in the various languages that would make the programme accessible to their respective audiences. This would eliminate the need to provide clean tapes with separate M&E – essential elements if the programmes were to be dubbed. An English language version of the transcript or the subtitle file in English would enable the members to broadcast the exchange programmes with the minimum of cost.

The case studies that were facilitated by the workshop revealed the similarities between the members of WITBN and also highlighted the considerable differences between us and how we tackle the challenges facing us.

I believe that the case studies which included inspiring trailers of the various projects would be of interest to more than just those directly involved in the

commissioning and production of the material that we broadcast. I recommend that such a workshop be an integral part of the next WITBC hosted by Sami Television in 2012 and that the results of the new Sami comedy series pitched in Taiwan which will be a reality by 2012 will feature as part of the entertainment from that workshop.

Le dea-ghuí

Micheál Ó Meallaigh

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Stiúrthóir Coimisiúnaithe