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Mip Jr. spotlights short-format comedies

Two-day tyke TV market wraps up

By [ELSA KESLASSY](#)

Short-format comedies targeting kids 6 to 11 dominated Mip Junior, the two-day tyke TV market, which wrapped Sunday in Cannes.

The top three of the mart's most-viewed shows all fall into that category: "Angelo Rules," produced by U.K.'s Cake Entertainment and France's TeamTO, following 12-year-old Angelo as he uses comic tricks to get around adversaries; "Canimal," a mix of animation and live-action produced by Barcelona-based BRB Intl. and South Korea's Vooz; and "Almost Naked Animals," featuring illustrations from Noah Z. Jones.

"Younger auds are easier to target because they haven't yet been completely lured by live-action shows and videogames," said Julien Borde, head of youth programs for Gallic pubcaster France Televisions. "I've seen more shows targeting upper-preschoolers, the 6- to 9-year-olds, than anything else."

Live-action shows, cheaper to produce than toons, were also making a comeback at the mart.

"Live-action is becoming more and more popular worldwide, even in Europe, where it hasn't done well in the past," said Jules Borkent, senior VP of global acquisitions and international programming for Nickelodeon.

"In Germany, Holland and Benelux, for instance, live-action shows used to be shown in the original language with subtitles. Now they're being dubbed and that's opened up the market to younger viewers. The 6- to 9-year-olds that weren't traditionally watching are now coming in."

Nickelodeon is ramping up live-action programming. It's presenting "The Troop," a mix of sci-fi adventure and comedy. Upcoming is "Frankentwins," produced by RDF Media and developed by Andy Watts, set to bow in 2010.

The trend for live-action is also hitting Asia. More than half of Japanese web NHK's slate is dedicated to live-action -- some 25.5 hours -- compared with 19 hours of animation.

During a recession, broadcasters also focus on library catalogs and established brands. “They are interested in shows that make them stand apart from competitors,” said Philippe Soutter, prexy of Paris-based PGS Entertainment, whose sales slate includes “Iron Man” and “The Little Prince.”

“It’s a tougher time for everyone,” Borkent said. “In the past we would do more co-production in local markets, specifically in the U.K., but now we look for programs that can work for all our networks and as much as possible we try to collaborate with the U.S. That’s a way we can find the funding.”

The merging of vidgame, publishing and kids’ programming has yielded a flurry of new toons with strong brands attached and built-in auds.

With production facilities all over India, DQ Entertainment has emerged as a key player by producing cult comicbook-adaptations, including “Iron Man” and “Little Nic,” with European partners.

DQE’s latest show to hit the market, “The Jungle Book,” was the fourth-most viewed program at Mip Junior. The CGI-toon is co-produced by Germany’s ZDF and France’s Moonscoop. Borkent expressed interest in acquiring it for Nickelodeon. As many toons and live-action shows now have their roots in vidgames or books, broadcasters are looking to expand the brand loyalty on multiple platforms, by creating virtual worlds and TV show-related games on the web and mobile phones.

“We need to extend the on-air experience online,” said Tim Brooke-Hunt, executive head of children’s content at pubcaster the Australian Broadcasting Co. “The idea is to provide kids with an engaging and interactive experience.”

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