Fuji TV’s Toru Ota highlights landmark co-productions

YESTERDAY’s MIPCOM Co-produced Series Lunch at the Carlton hotel, hosted by Fuji Television Network, saw the launch of three “milestones in Japanese drama”, said Toru Ota, the company’s senior executive managing director.

"The first is a co-production with Germany’s ZDF Enterprises for a primetime drama series called The Window. Billed as a thrilling human drama that does for football what House Of Cards did for politics, The Window (10 x 45 mins) goes far beyond the simple business of winning and losing matches to reveal the dark circus behind a multi-billion dollar business of professional football.

"Ota’s second milestone is the US adaptation of Fuji TV’s Japanese drama phenomenon Train Man by Emmy Award-winners Phil Rosenthal and Tucker Cawley (Everybody Loves Raymond). “In the 60-year history of Japanese television, this will be a ground-breaking achievement,” Ota said.

"Based on a true story, Train Man starts when a nerdy young man rescues a young woman from a drunk on a train. With encouragement from his online comic-book chat group, he overcomes his shyness and embarks on a life-altering love affair.

"Ota also announced a new co-production with China’s Shanghai Media Group. “A market with 1.3 billion people is exciting enough,” he said. “But I’d like to look beyond China and hope that a new trend of content coming out of East Asia will become a trigger to stimulate the hearts and minds of viewers across the globe.”

The event was crowned with a prize for Ota, who received the MIPCOM 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award from Reed MIDEM president and CEO Paul Zilk.

"Toru Ota has dominated Japanese primetime with a string of successes in what is known locally as the ‘trendy drama’ genre, often using young actors in dramas with a strong love story,” Zilk said. “His forward thinking, his ability to evolve and his understanding of the international production market is truly exceptional.”

Cyber partners with Soyuzmultfilm

FRANCE’s multi award-winning producer and distributor Cyber Group Studios is partnering with Moscow’s Soyuzmultfilm Studio on two major animated series for kids, the two groups announced this week.

"Like us, Soyuzmultfilm is a creatively-driven studio,” said Cyber Group chairman and CEO Pierre Sissmann. “Russia’s animation tradition goes back 100 years and it’s a great pleasure to work with Russian animators and see their process.”

The first project, Digital Girl (26 x 22 mins), is a CGI series created by Sissmann and Sylvain dos Santos. It follows 14-year-old Chrisseie, the world’s first digital super-heroine, and her battles in cyberspace with frenemy — and digital supervillain — Hack Girl. The second, Magic Chess Odyssey (26 x 22 mins), is an adventure series in which chess and magic save the world. Also created by the French partners, it has the support of the World Chess Federation.

A third project will soon be announced, and this will be based on Russian IP.

TOEI SETS SIGHTS ON WIDER REACH

JAPANESE studio Toei Animation is pressing ahead with long-term plans to reach wider European audiences with the unveiling of new productions at this year’s MIPCOM. The company, which has its European headquarters in Paris, is launching a new animated film based on its renowned Dragon Ball series, due to air in Japan for the first time in December this year.

The Dragon Ball franchise, which is one of the most iconic animated brands in Japan, dates back to the 1980s. It has been revived and updated for modern audiences, with a number of new series including Dragon Ball Super and Dragon Ball Z, which debuted in 2015. “Dragon Ball is a classic of Japanese animation,” said Kazutomo Yamashita, director at Toei Animation. “We have brought the series back for modern young people but the essence of the story isn’t any different.”

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the One Piece series, another staple of the Toei output. A feature-length animated movie based on the series is set for release in the summer of 2019. Toei is also using MIPCOM to launch a new show, Bakutatsuri Bar Hunter, an animated children’s action series.