Your chance to look into the future at Sony's UHD Theatre

MIPCOM delegates can see spectacular footage of the very best UHD content in the dedicated Sony UHD Theatre, with screenings from Sky, Japan’s NHK, Germany’s ZDFE, India’s ZEE, FremantleMedia, France TV, Brazil’s Globo, India’s Travelxp 4K, France’s Saint Thomas and National Geographic.

According to Geoff Daniels, head of unscripted programming for National Geographic and Nat Geo Wild, “4K is the default for the vast majority of our premium tentpole and unscripted slate, which continues to grow and is at the heart of our commitment to deliver the highest quality experience to viewers around the world.” He added: “We’ve been on the leading edge of this revolution and plan to keep pushing the boundaries even further.”

Daniels pointed to Emmy-nominated shows including One Strange Rock, Mars and the most-awarded feature documentary of 2018, Jane.

UHD is making its presence felt in markets across the world. Display sales are at record levels, and UHD broadcasts are gathering pace. European viewers now have dedicated UHD services from most pay-TV operators, and in some countries there are multiple UHD channels available — and more are promised for 2019. In North America, DirectTV and EchoStar's Dish Network are fully backing UHD and there are more than 10 all-UHD channels now on air.

Over half of the major companies operating within the media and entertainment (M&E) sector say they intend to invest in 4K, UHD, High Dynamic Range (HDR), Wider Color Gamut (WCG) and High Frame Rates (HFR) in the next year, according to new figures from the Society of Motion Picture Television Engineers (SMPTE). According to the organisation’s annual Innovation And Technology In Media & Entertainment Survey, 56.3% of its respondents said they will invest in what SMPTE calls the Better Pixels Project in the next 12 months.

Nearly 80% of respondents said they view 4K, UHD and HDR technologies as important to their business: “The M&E sector has always been at the forefront in adopting technologies that have a dramatic impact on consumers’ relationship with content,” said SMPTE executive director Barbara Lange.

• 4K Ultra HD and VR sessions are taking place in the Sony UHD Theatre, in the Palais des Festivals, daily, October 15 to 18, from 09.30

New show marks 60 years of The Smurfs

THE SMURFS turn 60 this year and are celebrating at MIPCOM. Globally recognised, the little blue creatures were not originally stars in their own right. Cartoonist Pierre Culliford, who wrote under the pseudonym Peyo, had invented them as supporting characters in his comic of medieval heroes Johan And Pecwit, back in 1958. But audiences quickly warmed to them, and demanded more Smurf adventures - and, within a year, they were starring in their own comic book.

“October 23, 1958 was when the first little Smurf appeared in a drawing of an enchanted forest,” said Philippe Glorieux, head of marketing at IMPS, licensor of the Smurfs brand. “Then, all the fans, they started to write to Peyo saying ‘We love these cute imps and we want them more!’ And that’s how the story began.”

The TV series had their heyday in the Eighties and into the Nineties, but the 272 episodes produced in that time have lived on around the world.

The key to The Smurfs’ longevity is that they are available everywhere - as toys, in books, on TV, on clothing, in movies and music, in retail promotions and theme parks - there are very few places in the world where they haven’t been seen. Recent IMPS market research showed 95% awareness of The Smurfs’ brand, globally.

IMPS’ news at MIPCOM is that a new animated series is planned, produced with France- and Belgium-based Dupuis AudioVisual. The upcoming series will be celebrated at a 60th birthday party in Cannes.

“The Smurfs TV series produced by Hanna-Barbera in the eighties is a highly successful series, still being broadcast on a global scale,” IMPS president Veronique Clifford said. “But creating a new series, giving The Smurfs an updated look, was just a logical next step for the property after three Hollywood movies. We are very happy to embark on this exciting journey with the Dupuis group, one of our historical partners on Smurf comic books and animation.”