

# NEWS

## Big Pacific wows audience at Cannes UHD showcase

**T**RAILERS from Big Pacific, arguably the most expensive native 4K UHD wildlife documentary to date, had the MIPTV audience at the Germany Embraces Ultra-HD session applauding the visual quality and luminous colours powered by HDR (high dynamic range) imaging.

The \$10m (€9.4m) tent-pole factual series, exploring rare underwater life in the Pacific Ocean, was made by New Zealand-based NHNZ. But it is Germany's ZDF Enterprises (ZDFE) that is handling worldwide distribution. The first transmission is scheduled to be on the PBS network in the US in the second quarter this year, followed by ARTE in Germany and France later in 2017.

The other co-producers include China's CCTV9, German broadcaster ZDF and Discovery International.

"We're very selective about what we include in our catalogue and



we couldn't be more convinced that Big Pacific fits the bill," said Nikolas Huelbusch, director, ZDFE.factual at ZDFE.

"It was the most screened programme in the MIPDoc screening library and we've already got commitments from many countries. While theatrical distribution is not core to our business, it is also definitely an option."

Kyle Murdoch, NHNZ's managing director, said shooting and editing in UHD has numerous advantages, citing as an example the fact that the technology can future-proof the production for the next 20 years and more.

Challenges can crop up when storing footage on location, he said. "4K comprises four times as much information as standard footage and that requires a lot of storage space when filming in the wild," he said. "In fact, we had to edit it offline in HD as there are still not many post-production houses able to edit in UHD."

Also speaking was Simon Busch, CEO of Germany-based Busch Media Group, who demonstrated how UHD can be used to remaster vintage footage to create premium-quality content.

ZDFE's Nikolas Huelbusch

## How OTT will ease the take-up of 4K UHD

**OTT (over-the-top)** streaming technology will enable broadcasters to bypass hurdles currently slowing down the take-up of 4K UHD TV via traditional cable, satellite and terrestrial signals. That was a key message during UHD Super Session: Dramatic Entertainment In Ultra-HD, where it emerged that Insight TV, the pioneering Netherlands-based 4K broadcaster, has launched an online subscription-funded VOD version via OTT.

4K signals are too large for standard broadcast set-top boxes, as Rian Bester, Insight TV's CEO, said: "There are stumbling blocks against UHD on



Insight TV's Rian Bester

set-top boxes, including bandwidth problems," he said.

Also, while Insight TV has started adding HDR (high dynamic range) tech to offer even greater colours on its 4K shows, the number of 4K-capable TV homes is not growing fast enough. Streaming giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime have demonstrated that OTT 4K is a viable alternative to 4K broadcast. This has taught specialist 4K channels like Insight TV to grow their audience by reaching users of connected devices, including smartphones, laptops and smart TV sets.

"We now have our own SVOD offering via an app on digital

levices by Samsung, LG, Sony and [Microsoft's] Xbox One console," Bester added.

Pete Bellamy, senior vice-president at 4K online-video specialist NeuLion — the company that powers Insight TV's OTT service — said: "4K is increasingly becoming central to all our clients' brands."

Once on OTT, 4K content can migrate to broadcast set-top boxes when manufacturers enhance them for broader bandwidths.

"Our own Videoload [a VOD service] is already offering 4K content but only on OTT," said Peter Kerckhoff, Deutsche Telekom's vice-president, content. "But we hope to have it on set-top boxes during the second half of this year."