

NEWS



Kyle Murdoch of NHNZ

BIG PACIFIC MAKES WAVES AS NHNZ'S AMBITIONS ARE REALISED

"BIG PACIFIC is the biggest and most ambitious series we have ever produced," said Kyle Murdoch, managing director of New Zealand's NHNZ at the world TV premiere at MIPDoc. "It has the best crew, the best technology and the best co-production partners we've ever had."

Shot in 4K HD, the series shines new light on the ocean's mysteries, using cutting-edge scientific techniques. The four one-hour episodes are themed by 'emotion' rather than the more usual geographic or scientific themes — with titles such as Mysterious Pacific and Violent Pacific — and are accompanied by a 'making-of' special.

Big Pacific was co-produced by CCTV9 of China; PBS (US); ZDF and ZDF Enterprises (Germany); Discovery International; Channel 9 (Australia); ARTE France; and recent addition, NHK.

"Big Pacific explores the most splendid ocean on the planet, and it is one which China is keen to protect," said Zhang Ning, deputy editor-in-chief of CCTV. "This series is an indication of China's desire to connect with the world, and to make further co-productions." Distribution is by ZDF Enterprises.

Innovation is essential for giving factual viewers the goosebumps

Co-production is not enough to ensure high quality factual programming, concluded leading commissioners at Saturday's MIPDoc Keynote Superpanel. To break through you need innovative ideas for content and marketing, they said.

Big Pacific, a MIPDoc World Premiere TV Screening from New Zealand's NHNZ went for innovation. "We tried to find the unexpected," said NHNZ managing director Kyle Murdoch. "So we made a really innovative sizzle reel and sent it to our co-production partners. We didn't tell them it was a doc about the Pacific. We just asked them what they thought."

"It gave me goosebumps," said Ralf Rueckauer, vice president ZDFE.factual, one of Murdoch's many co-production partners. "Excellent pictures, extraordinary music. I see hundreds of sizzle reels every year. This one really was outstanding."



MIPDoc Superpanel

"We need our shows to look like Hollywood to meet audience expectations," said Jens Monath, commissioning editor of TerraX ZDF, "and we need a log line that works in three sentences."

Helene Ganichaud, deputy head of ARTE France, encourages producers to be ambitious and think big. Like her, Yuan Tian, head of international co-production at China's CCTV9 channel, looks for shows that domestic audiences can relate to. "We learn from our partners and other platforms," he

said, "as when we did a series with Kyle called The End Of The Wild. Sending a famous basketball player to Africa was a good way to help Chinese viewers understand what is happening there."

"Co-production is important to us because it really helps us stretch our dollars," said Pamela Aguilar, senior director of programming and development, PBS. "We don't have tons of money to market our shows, but our network of local stations helps us reach a huge audience."

Warrior Women wins International Pitch

THIS year's MIPDoc International Pitch was won by Warrior Women, a three-part documentary about female soldiers across the ages. Executive producers Sebastian Peiter and Richard Melman of UK production company Urban Canyons impressed the judges by portraying the lives of female warriors, from the fifth century BC to today, using exhaustive research to bring them to life through re-enactment and CGI.

"The quality of the re-enactment is very high, especially for the available budget, and it's backed up by rigorous research and on-screen interviews," said juror Kristina Hollstein, director acquisitions and co-productions, documentary, ZDF. "This is history that has never been told before, and it will be very watchable." Warrior Women was one of five

programmes shortlisted for their creativity, originality, storytelling, production values and global appeal.

Also shortlisted were two other historical studies that use re-enactment. Secret Societies: The Struggle For Power by Arcadia Content (Canada) examines closed groups, ancient and modern, while Slavery Routes from CPB Films (France) focuses on recent scholarly research to find a new angle on slavery and its impact on modern economies.

The final two pitches focused on more contemporary topics. Dark Business – Child Trafficking In The Heart Of Europe from Medienkontor (Germany), uncovers modern day slavery in the West and traces its routes. Finally, Trophy Hunters from Alleycats (UK) examines today's big game hunters, and challenges their ar-



Urban Canyons' Sebastian Peiter (left) and Richard Melman

gument that the revenue from hunting is funding conservation in ways that liberals never could. Hollstein's fellow jurors were Paul Hardy, creative director international development, A+E Networks; Justina Hemperek, manager factual acquisitions, eOne TV International; and Ben Nguyen, channel manager, SBS Corp, Australia.