

Senior Execs From ITV, Newen, ZDF & NBC Debate “U.S. Brainwash” & The Next Wave Of Crime – Berlinale Series Market



ZDF/Beta Film's 'The Swarm' Swarm TV Production

“I think we need to find a way to avoid the U.S. brainwash,” said [Newen Connect](#) CEO Rodolphe Buet at this morning’s Berlinale Series Adapting to the Market session.

The head of the French distributor urged global buyers to stop “copying too much from the U.S. audience” as he cited research that showed the streamers have far more U.S. and UK shows on their platforms locally than they do from the rest of the world.

Ruth Berry, [ITV Studios](#) Head of Global Distribution, struck a more positive tone when she said stories in foreign languages have become “far more accessible” due to audiences being more willing to watch dubbed or subtitled shows, which is “clearly an exciting opportunity.”

“Now it’s really more about finding topics that resonate,” he added. “What I have learned talking to American producers is that they now know they have to learn what the Europeans are actually looking for. If we don’t create content that is meaningful for them, they will just spend time on Instagram.”

Franke flagged ZDF and Beta Studios’ *The Swarm* as a perfect example of European shows cutting through. Premiering out of competition at the [Berlinale Series Market](#), Frank Doelger’s big-budget eco-thriller is co-produced by a range of European partners along with Hulu Japan.

European quotas have also forced the Americans “not to discriminate against European companies,” added Franke.

Beatrice Springborn, the U.S.-based President of Universal Content Productions and Universal International Studios, said when her outfit is striking deals with European talent such as *Parallels* creator Quoc Dang Tran, it “wants them to be our partners on the ground.”

“This isn’t just about a U.S. based exec going into France or the Nordics,” she added. “We take a talent first approach to these areas.”

Next wave of crime

The execs debated the next wave of crime after research showed buyers are doubling down on the traditional genre.

For Springborn, who oversees a large crime portfolio, this next wave could be made up of a range of “stranger than fiction” shows.

“I don’t want every story to be about murder or people getting killed,” she added. “The market has seen enough of that but it realizes you can do true crime but with a fraud element, for example. That’s why stories like FTX are so interesting.”

Both Berry and Franke mulled the “lighter” side of crime as representing the future, with viewers seeking an escape from the dark news cycle.

“If you want to see dark stuff you can just turn on the news,” said Franke. “This is about genre blends, where you will find one specific genre blended or mixed with another to make it relatable for different users.”

Berry pointed to ITV Studios’ “MeToo-esque” upcoming drama *Fifteen Love* from *Line of Duty* producer World Productions, which has an undertone of crime set in the world of sport.

The distribution doyens were speaking after research from Ampere Analysis, which opened the Berlinale session, showed buyers both traditional and in streaming are still commissioning tonnes of crime content to satisfy audiences. Ampere Co-Founder Guy Bisson suggested buyers are “falling back on the mainstays of crime and [traditional] drama.”

All execs agreed that their outfits must take a “nimble” approach to the global market given the huge shifts that are currently taking place including mass layoffs in the U.S.

“Studios are cutting but does that really mean they will stop producing?,” questioned Buet. “My main focus right now is leading the distribution arm to make sure we address the market flexibly.”

According to Springborn, [NBCUniversal](#) is “changing the way we develop things” to suit the changing marketplace, packaging some projects while developing others with broadcasters. “This is about changing the way we do our portfolio and taking a positive attitude,” she said.

Berry struck another optimistic tone when she said viewers tend to stay in and watch more TV during times of economic strife, which suits global distributors.

The panellists also agreed that European buyers are immune from the current U.S. penchant for canceling shows before they make it to air.

Franke said “we cannot afford to not release stuff in Europe,” while Berry pointed to the “reset economics” approach taken by these studios across the pond.

“They want to reset the economics and start a clean year in 2023 with a balance sheet that can look healthy,” she added.