

China: MIPCOM Country Of Honour

As MIPCOM's 2018 Country Of Honour, China brought more delegates to Cannes than ever before, and celebrated that status with a raft of deals and a number of presentations where MIPCOM attendees were given a window on the country and its vast TV industry

CHINA is now the second-biggest spender on television content in the world (\$10.9bn in 2017, according to IHS Markit) – surpassed only by the US. While a significant proportion of this total (49%) can be attributed to the country's booming domestic production business, the country's broadcasters and VOD platforms have also developed a voracious appetite for international co-productions and acquisitions. This was evident at MIPCOM 2018, where a large delegation of Chinese decision-makers came to celebrate their country's status as Country of Honour (COH). Among them was Fan Weiping, Vice-

Minister at China's State Administration for Radio and Television (SART), who said: "Policies for China's film and TV industry are featured with openness. As of 2018, China has signed co-production agreements with 21 countries, such as New Zealand, the UK and India." Speaking at MIPCOM's Co-producing With China Forum, Fan Weiping discussed how "Chinese and foreign media agencies have co-operated in creating a series of high-quality film and TV products including Kung-Fu Yoga, jointly produced by China and India; Born in China produced by China and the US; the China-Czech co-produced animated

series The Panda and Little Mole; documentary series Big Pacific, co-produced by China and New Zealand; the China-UK documentary Confucius; and China-US documentary series Treasures of the Earth."

Also presenting at the Forum, executives from companies including Shanghai Media Group, HBO Asia, SPT and Fox Networks Group Asia (FNGA) endorsed the spirit of co-operation outlined by the minister – outlining a range of co-production projects they had been involved with. FNGA executive vice-president, Keertan Adyanthaya said: "National Geographic has

produced hundreds of hours of programming in China in recent years, across genres such as wildlife, the environment, history and culture. It has been a powerful cultural exchange that has taken China to the world and the world to China." The message from the Forum was echoed across the week at MIPCOM. Among the many partnerships on show, BBC Studios and Tencent entered a co-production agreement for natural history series Dynasties. This was part of a wider deal that will also see the partners work together to create a Chinese fanbase for the BBC Earth Tribe website, which has just gone live on Tencent Video. David Weiland, executive



Stars of Chinese kids TV on the MIPCOM red carpet: Hehe the panda, with Little Head Dad, Big Head Son and Apron Mom



Vice-Minister at SART Fan Weiping, speaking at MIPCOM



BBC Studios' Tim Davie (second left) and Tencent Video's Suman Wang sign the Dynasties co-production agreement, witnessed by BBC Natural History Unit's Mike Gunton (left) and Tencent Penguin Pictures' Lexian Zhu (right)



Endemol Shine China CEO William Tan

vice-president, Asia, for BBC Studios, explained how the new deal was an extension of a partnership that has already seen the companies collaborate on Blue Planet II and Planet Earth II: “We are very excited to extend our partnership with Tencent and work with them to build a community of like-minded natural history fans,” he said.

Meanwhile, at MIPCOM's China Big Data and Content session, Suman Wang, chief editor of Tencent Video and senior vice-president of Tencent Penguin Pictures, said China's online market is maturing, with viewers prepared to watch more long-form video, and pay for it. Elsewhere, Endemol Shine and CCTV announced they would be co-creating a formattable version of The Nation's Greatest Treasures. Endemol Shine also signed an agreement with Blue&White&Red Pictures and Chinese IP specialist Cloudwood to make a Mandarin-language version of British crime drama Broadchurch for China.

Speaking to the MIPCOM News, Endemol Shine China CEO William Tan said: “It's China's year at MIPCOM. There are more Chinese here than ever before, and more Chinese shows than ever. China is a hotbed of creativity and a nation with a great entrepreneurial spirit.”

Reinforcing Adyanthaya's comments at the Forum, FNG's Nat Geo Wild announced a co-production with Bilibili on China's Hidden Kingdom. Further underlining the appeal of natural history to China, Blue Ant licensed 60+ hours of 4K content to CCTV. “China is an important market for us and buyers across all platforms are looking for the highest quality programming,” said executive vice-president Solange Attwood. There was also a strong Chinese presence at dedicated kids market MIP Junior, and this translated into deals during the course of the market. Huace Film & TV, for example, announced a new phase of collaboration and co-production with eOne

– focusing on an animated co-production called Delivery Service. Animation studio TeamTO was also able to unveil a five series output deal with UYoung.

There was also evidence of a growing meeting of minds between China and Japan, as a partnership between Shanghai Media Group (SMG) and Fuji TV was announced. TV Asahi also joined forces with Chinese producer Yi Zuo Yi You and Jiangsu TV on a format deal for Falling In Love Like A Romantic TV Drama. While there were plenty of examples of Chinese-linked co-productions in Cannes, the market was also notable for the growing volume of Chinese IP now being sold internationally. Chinese content company Sansang Media, for example, sold iQiyi drama Burning Ice to Japan public broadcaster NEP. In his media mastermind keynote, iQiyi founder and CEO Gong Yu explained how the video streaming platform was investing more in original content than ever before, suggesting that its presence

on the global market will keep growing.

Other Chinese content companies also had a high-profile at MIPCOM, as reported by the MIPCOM News. Ix Media was at the market with period drama Story of Yanxi Palace, while Suzhou Trace Vision Media brought the 6 x 45 minute documentary series Living In China. A large contingent of animation players was also in Cannes, including Jetsen Huashi, Putao Animation and CCTV. The latter was promoting a Sino-Russian animation co-production entitled Panda And Krash. The Chinese delegation of 156 companies (around 400 executives) was the largest-ever to attend MIPCOM or sister event MIPTV. This was welcomed by Laurine Garaude, director of Reed MIDEM's Television Division, who said: “In recent years we have seen the growth in Chinese shows being presented at our events for sale to international broadcasters and an increase in cross-border partnerships

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between Chinese and international producers. We anticipate that the trend towards Chinese content being exported to international territories will speed up over the next two to three years and we are very keen for MIPCOM and MIPTV to be part of that.”

Her comments chimed with Fan Weiping’s observation that “the export of content products and services created by China’s film and television industry has exceeded \$400m, with an increasingly varied array and larger number of products exported to Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the US, as well as SE Asia.”

As part of MIPCOM’s Country Of Honour activities, The Wit CEO Virginia Mouseler

presented a China-specific version of her popular Fresh TV franchise. A key takeout was the widening array of original IP coming out of China. Titles singled out by Mouseler included: nature documentary China From Above II (distributor: CICC); science series Forward to the Future (CCTV1 & CCTC Creative Media Co); cuisine series Once Upon a Bite (Tencent Video); and youth drama Perfect Youth (Jianxin Pictures). Also in the mix was Entrepreneurial Age (HUACE Pictures Co/JYS Media), a drama about a young app developer who fights for business success and falls in love with his investor.

All of this activity sets the stage perfectly for 2019, which will see MIPTV quickly followed by MIP China in Hangzhou. Held

from June 5-7 at the Grand Hyatt, MIP China is a dynamic platform for bringing together international and Chinese companies through networking events and pre-arranged one-to-one meetings. Designed to be mutually beneficial, the event will help international companies sell completed shows and formats while also finding co-financing and co-production partners. Among those signed up for one-to-one meetings are all the major streaming platforms as well as national and regional broadcasters, producers and consultants. For Chinese companies, meanwhile, the event will help match them with the right partners to tap the global market – while also introducing them to the world’s best available IP.



**Olivier Dumont of eOne
with Huace's Zhi Liu**



iQiyi founder and CEO Gong Yu