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Sunny Side of the Doc La Rochelle, France, 23–26 June 2009

**Report by Claire Jager,
Investment/Development Manager, Documentary**

Claire Jager attended Sunny Side of the Doc to:

- support Australian filmmakers attending the market;
- encourage more co-production and to assist Australian filmmakers to finance their international co-productions; and
- inform international sales agents and broadcasters about recent changes to the Australian documentary sector.

About the festival/conference

2009 was promoted as the 20th anniversary edition of international documentary festival/conference *Sunny Side of the Doc*. By the time the event wrapped in La Rochelle, the organisers could proudly announce an increase in attendance numbers over last year. Bucking the trend of industry conferences hampered in attendance by the worldwide economic crisis, *Sunny Side* actually reported an increase of 6.4% from the previous year, with 1812 participants. The number of commissioning editors and buyers who attended was also four percent higher, at 281. Overall, 443 exhibiting companies showed their wares for 110 television channels, with 45 countries represented amongst attending delegates.

Sunny Side of the Doc revolves around a 'base' of high-level buyers, who – so long as they continue to turn-up – guarantee the success of this international market. For four days, they have access to a wide range of resources: a digital video library for buyers; four catalogues (*Who's Who*, the *Video Library Catalogue*, the *Catalogue of Commissioned Projects* and *Projects in Development*), where participants can get all the information they need about films, projects in development, commissioned projects, and the screenings and events; private and public screenings offering a variety of content, form, writing, and treatment. For producers it's access to the main French broadcasters, distributors and mostly French and European producers often seeking possible coproduction partners.

In 2009, keeping in step with international conference trends, *Sunny Side of the Doc* introduced for the first time *The Innovation Area*, an area dedicated to technological breakthroughs, innovative production methods and alternative distribution networks; and *The BIPS - The Best International*

Projects Showcase, theme-based pitch sessions which took place in front of key decision-makers.

Best International Projects Showcase (BIPS)

The BIPS selection categories presented for funding and copro consideration covered four areas: science, history, environment, and political & social issues. Winners of each category were presented with a prize of 2,000 Euros.

The winner for History was *They Were Coming to Get Me* from Lupe Film, while *The Interpreter* by Inicia Films won for Science. *Burning Needs* by Notion Pictures won for Environment, *Run for Life* by Starhill D.o.o. won for Society/Politics, *Donkeymentary: Through the Eyes of a Donkey* by Bars Media won the Art/Culture award and *Poor Consuelo Conquers the World* by Escape Pictures won the award for Cinema, Special and Series.

The top five screened films from the video library were: *Web Warriors* by Edward Peill (Film Transit International); *The Maps of the Great Explorers* by Gil Kebaili (Grand Angle Production); *Fly Me to the Moon* by John Curtin (Film Transit International); *Astroboy in Roboland* by Marc Caro (Canal+) and *The Berlin Wall* by Patrick Rotman (France Televisions Distribution).

EBU European Broadcasting Union, Documentary Co-production Meeting

In addition to meeting at IDFA, the EBU's commissioning committee also meets at Sunny Side for a day before the official start to share professional experience and expertise with its colleagues. This is the largest association of national broadcasters in the world and it works hard to ensure that the crucial role of public service broadcasters continues to be considered and recognised by decision-makers. Around 60 commissioning editors and 40 public television channels from Europe and beyond are represented during the meeting, which is open only to EBU members.

European broadcasters each select a project they want to pitch – in fact they are presented by the producer – in the hope enough of the other broadcasters will like the project and also invest for their own channel. Twenty projects were pitched and all hoped to raise finance by way of co-productions, pre-buys - or any other method. Discussion is unfettered and illuminating. Questioning is robust and direct. It's easy for a project to go down in flames.

There is also a special 'round table' session to discuss the future opportunities of the group. The main topics were the convergence of media and the movement towards online content, which can provide new possibilities and ways of working in the field.

Reelisor

www.reelisor.com

Also pitching at the EBU meeting was the 'reelisor team' officially opening a special commissioner's section on their website. Reelisor is an online networking platform for European documentary professionals. The umbrella platform, funded by MEDIA, allows documentary professionals, CE's, festivals, markets and other initiatives to interact and bring forward their ideas

and concepts. They upload their business cards, slot profiles, calls for entries, as well as their produced films or projects in progress.

Around 70 commissioning editors registered and acknowledged that the new section on reelisr would be a useful tool to increase the exchange of projects and information. With the new section, commissioning editors have direct access to filmmaker profiles. Users can familiarise themselves with the broadcasters slot descriptions on reelisr, they can access films and trailers, as well as exchange rough cuts and film clips in a quick and easy way.

Innovation Area

Emerging media platforms and technologies were the stars of several well-attended sessions with *Daily Motion*, *3D* and *YouTube* being hot topics. The *YouTube* presentation, *YouTube and You*, was a packed session - with Yann Arthus-Bertrand's *Home* premiering simultaneously in cinemas, on TV and on YouTube. General feeling was that although interactive media is no longer new or emerging, it's still far from being fully exploited. And while it's seen to be a great breeding ground for small factual-based projects to evolve into revenue-generating franchises, no one presented models with any certainty.

The double session *Digital New Media 1 & 2* comprised a panel of documentary film makers/distributors, *Is There Life After (or before) TV* and a *Cross Media Forum*.

Is There Life After (or before) TV focused on Digital (Web, Mobile, Cross Platform) production and licensing for non-fiction projects and presented an overview of recent launches and trends in the digital (new media) landscape as well as related rights issues and approaches. The panel explored new media approaches for the non-fiction world from two perspectives: (i) finding new life & purpose for existing programs, and (ii) producing programs specifically designed for new media and cross-platform. They suggested ways for producers in an international coproduction context, to bring a new media awareness into their co-productions and distribution planning, and included an overview of new media video launches this year, the evolving business models, and related rights aspects affecting producers/coproducers across various platforms.

The *Cross Media Forum* which looked at the widespread practice of reformatting and recycling material to the point where the 'traditional chronology of media is shattered!' and asked, now that technological convergence allows for interactivity will it turn the 'mere spectator into the programmer'? There was an attempt to discuss the differences between 'new and old media' and how these differences should be 'managed' and to question the impact on the content of documentaries.

Television in the UK

There were few commissioning editors from the UK. **Nick Fraser** and **Greg Sanderson** were about. Earlier in March it had been announced Greg Sanderson – who was previously Editorial Executive for *Storyville* – would commission and oversee a substantial portion of each year's output. He now develops new shows for the strand and assumes full responsibility for the series' editorial compliance. Alongside Nick, Greg will also develop and manage *Storyville*'s increasing online presence. Sanderson joined the BBC in

2006 and has had editorial credits for Storyville's Oscar-winning *Man on Wire*, as well as the prize-winning docs *The English Surgeon* and *The Father, The Son and The Housekeeper*. If you want to see authored international docs on British TV go to *Storyville* on the BBC and *True Stories* on Channel 4's digital Channel More 4. These strands depend more and more on international co-productions and their CE's scour the world looking for documentary projects that they believe will work for their audiences – and, hopefully, win awards. Both Sanderson and Jackson were guests at AIDC 09.

In a *Broadcast Survey in the UK* (published in July 09 – a month after *Sunny Side*) only 1% of respondents to the survey said their businesses had not been affected at all by the downturn. The largest percentage of businesses (51%) reported that the effects of the downturn were either serious or very serious, with a slightly smaller 48% admitting that they were experiencing negative effects but that these were manageable. An overwhelming 94% of indies expected the indie sector to shrink over the next 12 months. Some 32% expected a contraction of 6%-10%. Another 37% expected the sector to contract 11%-20% – if they're right, it would mean 60 to 120 companies going to the wall in the coming year (based on 600 businesses making up the indie sector). A pessimistic 25% expected the sector to shrink by more than 20%.

The biggest change was seen to be a much tougher television business and commissioning climate, with late decision-making becoming increasingly common, and risk-aversion and the difficulty of raising finance all taking their toll.

People

Not surprisingly, the session UK Cable Channels – the Co-production Future moderated by John Willis with speakers including Richard Melman, Sky; Jane Rogerson, UKTV; David Clarke from Virgin Media and Hamish Mykura More 4, was well-attended.

Although there is pressure on program budgets, **Hamish Mykura** says it does not always affect factual programs. 'Often US acquisitions, which are really expensive and take up a large chunk of the schedule, get squeezed first. If you cut those back there is a lot more space in the schedule that needs filling. It's quite a logical step to turn to factual documentaries which are not as expensive.' Currently Channel 4 is spending \$203,000-\$234,000 (£130,000-£150,000) for a 60-minute documentary.

There's an interesting short interview with **Richard Melman** on dfg docs, a British Documentary Website
<http://www.dfgdocs.com/Resources/Articles/8.aspx>

And for **John Willis** just at the time he accepted the position at Mentorn
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2006/nov/06/mondaymediasection5>

There was the *UK Village*, an area dedicated to independent producers and distributors from the UK. **Charlie Phillips** is Marketplace Producer at Sheffield Doc/Fest and that means he looks after Sheffield's *MeetMarket* which operates in a similar way and for the same reasons as the AIDC's *MeetMarket*: "to provide doc-makers with an opportunity to meet with international funders and potential co-producers, in order to be able to pool together the available resources from across borders. European broadcasters like ARTE, or American broadcasters like PBS, cannot offer the

whole package of funds, but together the jigsaw builds. There is an issue over decreasing funding for new UK documentaries from traditional avenues, especially broadcasters. But that just means documentary-makers have to look beyond the limited UK opportunities and seek support from beyond the UK and beyond TV,” says Charlie P.

“It’s impossible to rely on UK broadcasting money now. The tide has turned - documentary is now seen as a cheap investment in something high quality. Compared with other TV genres, you get much more bang for your buck but the ‘big budget documentary’ is a rare beast, because doc-makers are skilled in making something very brilliant for very little.” This means looking beyond TV commissions. “It’s probably right to be suspicious of some of the more rhetorical promises of online distribution, but we shouldn’t dismiss the concept entirely”. Charlie suggests a change of emphasis; the internet as a place to get the documentary seen, not necessarily somewhere to make your budget up.

Tim Sparke is well known in Aust and there’s plenty of info available on their website (www.joiningthedocs.tv). Portals such his *Joining The Docs* (and *The Auteurs*, which calls itself a ‘virtual cinematheque’) offer an opportunity for high-end documentaries to be seen in a trusted place, guarded by platform editors with a commitment to publicizing quality films.

YLE Finland: Although Finland is a small nation it is a major player in documentary field. YLE is Finland's national public service broadcasting company. With a population of only five million it operates five national television channels and thirteen radio channels and services complemented by 25 regional radio programs. YLE recently opened Finland's most extensive and wide-ranging online television and radio service, YLE Areena.

During the last 20 years YLE has changed a lot. It screens an extraordinary number of docs per year – mostly acquisitions. ‘The documentaries are still in the very nucleus of the public service and they still have a big audience at prime time television at YLE channels.’ The 4 YLE TV-channels: TV1, TV2, YLE TEEMA and FST 5. They held an excellent session about their future plans. *likka Vehkalahti* is well-known in Australia. YLE offer relatively low presale amounts but this is off set by the following facts:

They proclaim to have one of the most progressive editorial commissioning policies, frequently providing early support for highly creative, controversial or intellectually challenging work. If YLE gets behind a project, it is often able to leverage presales from other Scandinavian countries, like Sweden and Norway. YLE also has strong connections with Dutch broadcasters, such as AVRO. YLE has supported numerous Australian documentaries in the past and is regularly represented at the AIDC.

As **Melanie Wallace** commented in another context (a session on *Programming Science* moderated by **Christine Le Goff** and **Alison Leigh** but equally transferable) – the more slots you have the more diverse the programming can be.

Jessica Raspe and **Marijke Huijbregts** ARVO Netherlands, **Barbara Truyen** VPRO were present and the extent of their financial involvement and slots are all discussed in previous reports. Jessica and Barbara are both familiar with Australian producers and the funding landscape.

The four major stations of the **German Network ARD** held an excellent presentation illustrating their slots as well as screening selected future projects, **Dirk Neuhoﬀ** Norddeutscher Rundfunk NDR has been a guest at AIDC, their commissioning practices are documented in other reports and online. **Hans Stefan Heyne**, Studio Hamburg which is the production company arm of NDR dealing with features and entertainment as well as docs.

ARTE is introducing new hybridisation initiatives combining Internet content with television documentaries, through new formats such as *Gaza-Sderot* (and with a spin-off *Havana/Miami* underway) or the *Twenty Show*. **Jérôme Clément**, the Chair of ARTE France, and Vice-Chair of ARTE says that, 'More than ever, the role of the documentary is essential in enabling us all to find our bearings in our modern world and introducing us to different sensibilities. International co-production and exchange play a vital part in fulfilling the ambitions of documentary-makers and enabling the genre to resist competition from other genres'.

At ARTE **Hélène Coldefy** is the director of the Unit Discovery and Knowledge, she and her team of 3 'program officers', **Christine Reisen**, **Nathalie Verdier** and **Edmée Millot**, commission, acquire and co-produce for prime time slots including *Discovery* – a 4 nights a week from Mon-Thurs 8pm slot for nature, world wildlife and knowledge; *The Human Adventure* - Saturday at 20:45 (2x52 or 1x90 min) civilizations of the human community, its history, its evolution, its work, beliefs and lifestyles. *The Human Adventure* features mostly extraordinary adventures, expeditions and human adventure with a strong dramatic structure. *The Theme Evening* – Sunday 8:45 first with a movie followed by a documentary.

Edmée Millot has very recently joined ARTE from the well-regarded company Gedeon.

Both **Hélène Coldefy** and **Christine Reisen** will be attending the World Congress of Science Producers (WCSP) December 1-4, 2009, in Melbourne. For producers check out www.artepro.com to familiarize yourselves with their schedules, programming needs and requirements.

For those interested in working with the French it is worthwhile heading to the **Sunny Side website** and browsing the newsletters – both informative and insightful. www.sunnysideofthedoc.com/uk/s_ressources_docutheque.php

Stephen Segaller Vice President Content WNET, joined WNET.ORG in September, 2008. He has primary responsibility for the coordination of all national and local programming from WNET.ORG's producing subsidiaries – THIRTEEN, WLIW21 and Creative News Group. Among the acclaimed productions Segaller coordinates are: *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *Wide Angle*, *Worldfocus*, *Exposé*, *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, *Cyberchase*, *New York Voices*, *SundayArts*, and *Reel 13*. If you are not already familiar with either Stephen or WNET check out www.wnet.org/about/officers/stephen-segaller/

Tom Permuter the President of NFB, Canada's National Film Board, showcased their cross-media projects. They recently announced a cross-media 'challenge' designed to inspire an exchange of storytelling practices among diverse communities, to use media innovatively with the aim of fostering an international dialogue on issues with local roots, and to unleash the creative talents of alternative voices and communities. The NFB is

interested in projects that use the versatility, mobility and borderless nature of new platforms to enable communities to talk to each other. Projects must be in French as well as documentary based. The theme for the 2009 challenge is *Migrations*.

www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/eng/portraits/tom_perlmutter

www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkRrygL77kg

Ellen Windemuth, Off The Fence: The company is well-known to Australians and develops, finances, produces and co-produces international non-fiction programs. Off the Fence Productions (OTF) recently announced a commission from ZDF/Arte for a five-hour wildlife series exploring the former Iron Curtain. The program follows German wildlife filmmaker Andreas Kieling as he walks the length of the 1400km former East-West German border exploring the wilderness and Germany's indigenous species that have remained there, untouched for 20 years in the shadow of the Berlin Wall. www.offthefence.com

Catherine Le Clef has left Fortissimo Films after 3 years as their head of TV and ancillary sales, to launch her own documentary sales company, *CAT and Docs*. Based in Paris, it will be looking for "relevant, innovative, topical and director-driven documentaries." Sales and acquisitions will be handled by Maelle Guenegues, who worked with Le Clef when she headed Doc and Co, before joining Fortissimo in 2006.

Jan Rofekamp, Films Transit International, who with **Diana Holtzberg**, has for 25 years been at the forefront of adaptive change as an international sales agent for documentary and who were instrumental in challenging the doc industry with their observations about A and B list festivals, and concepts of "urgent", "classic" and "epic" films. That article - first published in 2002(!) – called the *Current State of the Documentary Marketplace* was eye-opening then and is still worth a read – if only to remind ourselves of a different time but which signaled to where we now find ourselves. It was published at the same time that Robert Redwood announced the Sundance Channel for Documentaries. www.centerforsocialmedia.org/documents/currentstate.pdf

This link – www.independent-magazine.org/node/2237/print – gives a more current view of where *Rofekamp* sees the creative and industry trends are headed

Claire Aquilar, ITVS (International Television Service) regularly attends AIDC. The *ITVS* website is extremely thorough and outlines in detail their processes. Australian programs that have had success through their fund known as the *International Call* include *The Seige*, *4*, *Return of the Masta*, *First Australians*, *End of the Rainbow* www.itvs.org

Michael Alder EP Science and Natural History Unit – also well-known to Australian producers.

And if you haven't read Fest o' Fools: an articleblog for the DocAgora Webplex on the current state of documentary festivals and full of informed opinions gathered by **Peter Wintonick** here is the link: www.docagora.org/content/fest-o-fools

The seventh co-production meeting at the *Latin Side of the Doc* will take place on 25–27 November 2009 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Australians attending

There were 23 Australians attending Sunny Side, as compared with 15 last year. Most were from Melbourne: 12 (as against 6 last year – a 50% increase). Followed by: WA: 3; NSW: 6; SA: 1 and QLD: 1.

The breakdown was as follows:

VIC

- Steve Warne (Film Victoria)
- Claire Jager (Screen Australia, Investment Development Manager, Documentary)
- Stuart Menzies (ABC TV, Head of Docs)
- Genevieve Bailey (supported by Film Vic)
- Peter Kaufmann (Kaufmann Film/Media) (supported by Film Vic)
- Philippe Charluet (Stella Motion Pictures) (supported by Film Vic)
- Robert de Young (Lowlands Media) (supported by Film Vic)
- Luigi Acquisto (Abracadabra Films) (supported by Film Vic)
- Stella Zammataro (Abracadabra Films) (supported by Film Vic)
- Lizzette Atkins (CIRCE Films) (supported by Screen Australia)
- Sean Brandt (Visionary Films International.com) (supported by Screen Australia)
- Dennis Tupicoff (Jungle Pictures) (supported by Screen Australia)

WA

- Andrew Ogilvie (Electric Pictures)
- Judith Campbell-Cockburn (Electric Pictures);
- Jennifer Gherardi (Jag Films)

NSW

- Chris Hilton (Essential Media & Entertainment);
- Darryl Karp (Tattooed Media);
- Tim Slade (Vast Productions)
- Joanna Buggy (Vast Productions)
- Margie Bryant (Serendipity Productions)
- Susan McKinnon (Australian Documentary Foundation)
- Alison Leigh (Leigh Brown Productions)

SA

- Joost den Hartog (Director, Australian International Documentary Conference)

QLD

- Sean Bourdin

Industry briefing

Screen Australia and Film Victoria co-hosted a Sunny Side Industry Briefing in Melbourne on 7 October 2009. Panelists included Steve Warne (Film Vic), Stuart Menzies (ABC) and Genevieve Bailey (Independent Producer) and was moderated by Claire Jager. The event was attended by 25 guests.