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Sizzling Looks

From Valentino to Gaultier, *CSI: Miami's* Eva La Rue goes glam at Paris Fashion Week

ACM Female Vocalist of the Year nominee

CARRIE UNDERWOOD

How this Southern beauty avoids the pop star meltdown

Country's Big Night

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All the World's a Screen

In an era of globalization and free-market trade, one U.S. export is holding strong—television

By Jim Colucci

If this summer, you turn on the TV in your hotel in Stockholm, don't be surprised if you come across *Numb3rs'* resident genius Charlie Eppes hashing out his latest theorem in Swedish. That's because the show, which just finished its fourth season here in the States, is a Nordic hit in Sweden.

"The average American is a little surprised to go somewhere abroad on vacation and encounter a favorite show from home in French or German," says Armando Nunez, president of CBS' international distribution arm. "Most people don't really know about the process of selling shows overseas. But those sales make millions, which helps offset the cost of producing those series in the first place."

To rake in that international bounty, Nunez's division sells programming—including most of the hit shows you'll see on CBS and its sister pay cable network Showtime, and some that you'll see elsewhere but that are produced by CBS Paramount, like NBC's *Medium*—to more than 100 countries around the globe. Nunez deals some of our hottest syndicated talk and game shows, too, and it all makes for some interesting multicultural combinations. *Oprah*—a big hit in the Middle East?

NCIS star Michael Weatherly discovered first-hand how popular his series had become overseas while promoting the show in Paris in 2006.

"I was walking up the Champs-Élysées on my first day there, and people were pointing

"The average American is a little surprised to go somewhere abroad on vacation and encounter a favorite show from home in French or German."

Armando Nunez, president of CBS' international distribution arm

and laughing at me." Weatherly says. "I thought for a second that my fly was down, or maybe I had toilet paper on my shoe, but [it turns out] they recognized the character." The actor was amazed when a French woman identified him merely by the tip of his nose peeking out from his jacket hood. "I found myself constantly reminded by the French how much they love the show, which is ironic, because the French aren't really known for their love of American culture," he says.

THE CSI EFFECT

America's dominance of foreign airwaves dates back to when Europe plugged in its first TVs after World War II. Well into the 1980s

ДЕТЕКТИВ НА



most countries hosted only a few state-run broadcasters and, lacking the infrastructure to produce quality shows on their own, gobbled up U.S. shows.

In the 1990s, when many of these nations began privatizing their airwaves and developing their own shows, many simply didn't need us much anymore. With increased competition, American productions were often relegated to less-than-optimal time slots or got squeezed off the airwaves altogether. But then a new force stormed the beaches of Europe (probably looking for sand particles to analyze)—a little show called *CSI*.

Not long after its U.S. debut in 2000, *CSI* began building a fervent fan base internationally. "Good stories, well told, can travel anywhere in the world," says Jack Myers, founder and editor of TV industry newsletter *jackmyers.com*. "There's a universal appeal to stories dealing with crime—that's

why the *Godfather* movie series always did so well internationally."

The entire genre of the procedural crime drama is something uniquely American, Myers adds. "*CSI* brought an American sense of justice in showing how crimes are solved, how the bad guys are tried and convicted," Myers says. "It's not something you can really remake with a local flavor."

In the early years of this decade, *CSI* was one of the first shows to break back into prime time in Europe," Nunez says. Most shows tend to follow the same patterns worldwide as they do in the U.S., and so *CSI* quickly became a ratings juggernaut on both sides of the pond.

And a season or two later, just as it had in the States, *NCIS* slowly became a sleeper hit; it's now among the top American shows in Australia, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and France, where it recently delivered a record audience of 7.1 million viewers.

THE HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

U.S. imports aren't just competing within their own American league—they're often

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Many of America's top shows prove to be popular globe-trotters, from *CSI: NY* (top) in Russia to *Numb3rs* and *NCIS* in Japan.



**KOMMEN SIE HINTER
DIE WAHRHEIT!**

Above: TV viewers in Iceland are warming to *Dexter*, while *CSI: Miami* is scoring well in Germany.

Right: America's *Next Top Model* is drawing fans in more than 100 countries—and has spawned 15 foreign versions of the show.



CSI: Miami is one of the world's top shows. In regions with very long winters, Florida's sun and sand are all the more appealing.

beating the home team on its own turf. *CSI: NY* is now the top show in France, period. "The franchise *CSI*—Vegas, Miami and New York—is the biggest series success story in France," says Laurent Storch of that country's TF1 network. "Only sporting events draw more viewers. In 2000, as we at TF1 watched *CSI* for the first time, we were immediately impressed by its ability to renew the cop show."

Yes, other countries make good shows, too—British exports, for example, routinely make the rounds—"but there's no comparison," Nunez says. "The demand and appetite for American programming is heads above that of any other place." The reason is simple: quality.

"We're creating content that, to cut to the chase, is just working in a lot of territories around the world," says Nunez, a bilingual Cuban-American exec. Americans may be losing factory jobs overseas, but U.S. productions still have an unparalleled level of professionalism in writing, in casting, in acting and in filming—and the budgets to pay for them all. Add to that the currently cheap American dollar, and it's a perfect storm.

AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

Via digitized bits spanning the oceans, Americans are selling awfully glamorized images of themselves—and lots of foreign folks are buying them. Back in



The *CSI* franchise has won over fans around the world.

the *Baywatch* days, many Europeans undoubtedly thought all Californians featured Pamela Anderson-like curves. For a while, *Friends* effectively convinced viewers abroad—heck, viewers right here in the U.S.—that the typical New Yorker actually lived in a livable apartment. It all helps explain why *CSI: Miami* is one of the world's top shows. In regions with very long winters, Florida's sun and sand are all the more appealing.

Our reality shows can capture worldwide attention as well. So while we in the States tend to gawk at the exotic likes of Brazil's Gisele Bündchen, viewers in more than 100 countries have become enamored with the predominantly homegrown women of *America's Next Top Model*. Fifteen countries, including Australia and Canada, even produce their own local versions of the CW network hit. And so, in some far-off lands, there can be as many as three different versions of *Model*, all running at once.

CUSTOMERS AND LOCAL CUSTOMS

Yes, Europeans may have loved *Seinfeld's* Kramer, but Nunez says that one of the few formats that tends not to travel as well is the American sitcom. For one thing, they require a half-hour companion to form an



hour-long block, so executives abroad often find them difficult to schedule. Plus, many sitcoms are dubbed into local languages, and humor can sometimes fail to make the translation.

And yet the language barrier, or lack thereof, isn't a completely reliable predictor of sitcom success or failure. *The King of Queens* became a hit in Germany, whereas *Everybody Loves Raymond* never caught on in the U.K. "We did focus groups, but we couldn't find out why," Nunez recalls. "Sometimes, just like here, you can be the right show in the wrong time slot or on the wrong network."

Just chalk it up to local idiosyncrasy—a factor Nunez and his sales team always have to keep in mind. Other countries tend to be more sensitive to violence than we are but allow more sexual content, to the point where even premium cable shows from Showtime can run on broadcast TV. There are also the occasional censorship issues, where racy—and even, from an American perspective, seemingly innocuous—episodic themes can run afoul of local beliefs. And so, in the relatively restrictive Middle East, for example, networks may pick and choose just which episodes they wish to broadcast.

TO DUB OR NOT TO DUB

For American distributors, another key decision is also made by relying largely on local custom: Some countries like dubbed

shows and others prefer subtitles. Sometimes, if there are multiple satellite or cable channels in a country, a viewer might encounter both. But in general, Nunez says, dubbing is the way to go in Western Europe; they've become accustomed to it, and so they don't giggle like we Americans do at the kung fu movie-style lack of lip sync. Conversely, with a particularly high percentage of its citizens conversant in English, Scandinavia often opts to run shows with subtitles.

In the countries that dub, the process has spawned a cottage industry of sound-alikes. For each language, one actor will usually win the coveted lifetime role of providing lines for an American counterpart (see sidebar). The problem with this decades-old process, Nunez notes, is that because dubbing is usually done in batches, whole seasons of series can be held up before they can air abroad. Delays like this didn't use to be a problem. But now, with spoilers and entire episodes popping up so quickly on the Internet, many countries are scrambling to find a new solution.

Ironically, the forces of technological change, which earlier this decade brought American programming back into vogue, are switching things up yet again. One network in France is considering licensing subtitled versions to show on its Internet feed first, reserving dubbed episodes for broadcast later. And last year, CBS signed a deal with Network Ten Australia to broadcast *Jericho*

"day and date"—meaning that the Aussies are free to unspool the postapocalyptic drama any time after the last U.S. telecast from the CBS affiliate in Hawaii.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD FULL OF SMALL SCREENS

Every May, during the week following the unveiling of the network's schedule for the domestic media, American TV studios roll out the red carpet for the more than 1,500 international networks and stations that descend upon L.A. from around the globe.

"My job is part sales, part marketing, part economist and part-time U.N. diplomat," Nunez jokes. And as the competition for U.S. shows grows ever hotter, Nunez says that his clients have grown ever more savvy about predicting which shows look like potential hits to bring back home: "Everyone is looking for the next *CSI* or the next *NCIS*."

Yes, even with a growing resentment of American policies in some pockets of the world, audiences continue to warm to our shows—even those, like *NCIS*, with a military theme. "That has nothing to do with the appetite for Americana," Nunez says. "At the end of the day, it doesn't matter whether it's an American show or German or French. Wherever you're watching—Manhattan or Kansas or Paris or Moscow—the same emotions will touch you. All around the world, people just want to be entertained." **U**

▶ Parlez-vous CSI?

Funny who you meet in Paris. While attending Paris Fashion Week for *Watch!* (see story), actress Eva La Rue had a chance encounter with her French voice, Anne MassotEAU, who has been dubbing La Rue's lines for three years now for the French telecast of *CSI: Miami*.

"It's not a piece of cake to dub, considering the scientific [dialogue]," says MassotEAU, who also did La Rue's voice for the Lifetime movie *Cries in the Dark*. "We have to be very concentrated and very careful about our articulation when the easiest word to say is 'epithelial cells,'" MassotEAU jokes.

The key to translating La Rue, says the voice artist, is "to stay focused on Eva's eyes, and then translate her feelings, her thoughts, her lines through my voice. The good point with Eva is that she's a good actress. A lot is going through her eyes. They are always sparkling and smiling. It gives a humorous touch to her character."



CSI: Miami's Eva La Rue with her French "voice," Anne MassotEAU.

Dubbing is a family affair for MassotEAU, who also does Rachel Griffiths' voice for *Brothers & Sisters*. Her husband, Guillaume Orsat, provides the French voice for Peter Krause in *Dirty Sexy Money* and also dubs for actors Brendan Fraser, Peter Gallagher and Vin Diesel. And their 9-year-old daughter Alice is the French voice of Maria Lark in *Medium*.

"To respectfully translate the acting of someone who has done his job well, you have to be committed, too," MassotEAU says. "You have to find the right chemistry between you and what's happening on the screen."