

## Special Focus: The global co-production update

**Money has always been hard to come by, but it was usually available for those intrepid souls willing to share their ideas with partners around the globe. In the spirit of 'many hands make the budget lighter,' filmmakers have turned to coproductions as a way of realizing their cinematic aspirations. To judge the opportunities available to filmmakers, realscreen makes stops in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the UK and the US to see how changes locally might affect productions internationally**

### The US

**Sure, there's lots of money... if you can find it**

by: Kelly Anderson

Unlike their European or Canadian counterparts, producers in the US must dig around to find financing from sources outside of the studios and broadcasters, as almost no public money is available. As external sources of funding became harder to come by, many producers in the US have reacted by turning towards 'angel investors' - what some call private equity sources. Many find these angel investors by word-of-mouth, and then guard those names closely.

Without having a few angels of their own on speed dial, filmmakers will have to turn to research to uncover the pots of money that might be available to them. The Foundation Center offers a vast database of grants available to US filmmakers, and some serious scouting may result in finding a foundation or grant that suits the subject of your project. Savvy producers should note that foundations are looking beyond the film to its social impact, so it's advisable to have an outreach plan when applying to funds.

The primary sources of documentary funding Stateside tend to be funds such as the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The Ford Foundation fund generally gives around the US\$200,000 to \$500,000 range. The MacArthur Foundation is moving towards digital initiatives, but funds projects in the same range as the Ford Foundation.

Another big player in the US industry is International Television Service (ITVS). Besides funding American producers, ITVS has an international fund for projects that have a broader appeal. Projects made using the international fund will broadcast on other US outlets besides PBS; this differs from the US ITVS fund, since those projects are exclusive to PBS. The maximum amount an international copro can get is \$150,000. In exchange, ITVS gains US television rights for seven years, a coproduction credit and revenue share.

The Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program is also very beneficial to producers. Thanks to program director Cara Mertes, there's an increase in the features of the program. Part of the program is the Documentary Fund, which has a total of \$1.5 million available, up from \$1 million.

Producers can gain \$150,000 for their project if funded in all of the categories; there are two categories anyone can apply to (the development fund and the production and post production fund), and another three related to distribution that are accessible after the first two are approved. The second-stage grants are the engagement, impact and discretionary grants. Because Sundance's program acts more like a foundation, they do not acquire rights or take a revenue share.

As well, Sundance recently announced a partnership with the Skoll Foundation to explore social entrepreneurship and film. They will provide \$1.2 million in grants to fund the seeding, development and creation of new films.

The newly announced Tribeca-Gucci fund, with \$80,000 in total to assign, is also a welcome sight (see sidebar).

Besides grants, there is always new opportunity on the cable front. For example, producers should note the re-launched cable station, Ovation. The station reappeared last June with delivery to a national audience. Ovation airs arts-based programs with a limited number of one-hour specials and short series for 2008.

## US links

by: Kimberley Brown and Kelly Anderson

### **Gucci's designer docs**

Docs got a little sexier following the November announcement of a new fund launched by Gucci and Robert DeNiro's Tribeca Film Institute. The fund offers finishing money and post support to feature docs that cover social issues absent from mainstream media. It will begin by awarding at least three filmmakers between US\$5,000 and \$30,000 each. Both international and US filmmakers are eligible, but the committee will favor projects with strong potential for worldwide distribution. Submissions open February 5 and must be post-marked by April 11. Winners will be announced this summer.

Though better known for peddling luxury goods than social awareness, the new fund isn't the fashion house's first foray into factual film. Last February, it partnered with the Ambulante Film Festival to the tune of \$40,000 to support three Mexican docs. Daniella Vitale, president of Gucci America, noted the initiatives underscore the company's support of filmmaking, film restoration and preservation. **Kimberley Brown**

### **Foundation Center**

A comprehensive database of US grantmakers and their grants.

[foundationcenter.org](http://foundationcenter.org)

### **Sundance institute Documentary Film Program**

Information on their funding, as well as year-long support of labs and screenings.

[sundance.org/docsource](http://sundance.org/docsource)

(this website launches after the festival in February)

### **International Television Service**

[itvs.org](http://itvs.org)

### **Grantmakers in Film and Electronic Media (GFEM)**

Information on sources of US grants.

[gfem.org](http://gfem.org)

### **Renew Media**

Information on their Media Arts Fellowship, funded by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, as well as other sources of funding.

[renewmedia.org](http://renewmedia.org)

### **The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**

[macfound.org](http://macfound.org)

### **The Ford Foundation**

[fordfound.org](http://fordfound.org)