



Majid's Mohamad Yehya

## MAJID EXTENDS BACKING OF MIPJUNIOR PITCH

FOLLOWING the announcement that the MIPJunior International Pitch was won by *The Boy Who Switched Off The Sun* — produced by British company Fourth Wall Creative — the sponsor of the international pitch, Majid Entertainment, has committed to sponsoring the initiative for the foreseeable future. “We’re going to keep supporting this international pitch because strategically it’s something we want to do for the next three to five years,” said Mohamad Yehya, general manager of Majid Entertainment. “This will help us to discover new talents and new projects that we can co-produce and support. It will also be good content for our screens.” Yehya said selecting the winner was a formidable task as the standard was extremely high. “We are so happy with the amount of proposals we received — more than 130 unique ideas. If it was up to us really we wanted all 130 up on stage. It was a tough decision to select the winner but in the end there is only one. We’re looking for the new concept, looking for new ideas. We’re trying to support talented producers for their unique projects. That’s why our main target this year was to sponsor this year’s edition.”

## Chance encounter inspires a magical journey to Thingdom

THE MAGIC of MIPCOM is well known: a chance meeting in the depths of the Palais leads, years later, to a hit series or a major deal. In the case of *Thingdom*, a full-length animated feature film from award-winning Mexican director Rene Castillo of Cascarita Films, that magic worked quickly and the film is due to hit the screen within 18 months of the first meeting. The story began at last year’s MIPCOM when Castillo (*Hasta Los Huesos/Down To The Bone*, 2001) fell in love with a 30cm-high model ostrich on the stand of Zhejiang Versatile Media. The ostrich came from their film *Axel, The Biggest Little Hero*, and its director, Leo Lee, persuaded Castillo to make his next film — *Thingdom* — in 3D, in China, with a view to it going into theatres in 2016. “This is a story about a child’s self-belief,” Lee said. “Lucas is a little boy who discovers Thingdom, a magical world where rubbish comes to life as funny



Magical meeting: Corazon Films' Eckehardt von Damm (left), with Zhejiang Versatile Media's Leo Lee and Cascarita Films' Rene Castillo

characters. Here, together with his new friends, he battles the terrible King, who hates kids, and learns to trust in himself and the power of his imagination.” Beneath the laughs and the adventure, there’s also an environmental message: value things, even though they’re not new. And there’s a message for the animation business too. Chinese studios are quick.

“This is an adventure for me since I have never been to China,” Castillo said. “Mr Lee and I will go together on a journey into this magical world, and I am very excited to be working with his incredibly talented team.” Development funding was sourced in Mexico by Eckehardt von Damm, CEO of Corazon Films, and production is financed by Zhejiang Versatile Media.

## Rooftop deals have scientific proof

ROOFTOP Content Group, the Amsterdam-headquartered international distribution and production company, said a recent deal with UK-based Scorpion TV demonstrates why MIPCOM is vital to its global ambitions. Rooftop completed its acquisition of two popular-science titles from documentary distributor Scorpion TV in Cannes. The titles are *Ever Wondered*, a 20 x 30 mins science series that covers a wide variety of themes from outer space to green energy and genetics. The *Brain Fitness Programme* is a five-part one-hour series that looks at the latest developments in brain development and neuroscience. The transaction, which follows a

specific request by an unidentified client, exemplifies the type of deals Rooftop has been in Cannes for, said joint managing partner Jordi van Even. “MIPCOM is probably the most important market in the year for us,” van Even said. “We come to cement existing relationships such as the one with Scorpion and to acquire new titles.” Rooftop has also been seeking theatrical titles in the Benelux region at the market, plus the usual factual and fiction content for TV channels and video-on-demand portals, van Even added. Rooftop, launched in 2014 by van Eden and his business partner Marcel van Berkel, has also started a production division for



Scorpion TV's David Cornwall and Rooftop's Jordi van Even

fiction content only. It is part of the overall ambition to be an umbrella company involved in all aspects of entertainment production, from intellectual property development to content exploitation, van Even stated.