

Reveille takes on Canuck office reality

Newly-independent LA production pod, Reveille is continuing to stoke its international distribution catalogue after picking up rights to the latest reality series from Canada's Lone Eagle Entertainment.

Run by agent-turned-producer Ben Silverman, Reveille has taken world rights for Lone Eagle's workplace reality *The Office Temps* (10x60'). Reveille will be repping the finished series, which debuts this spring in Canada on Global Television, and will also be selling international format rights.

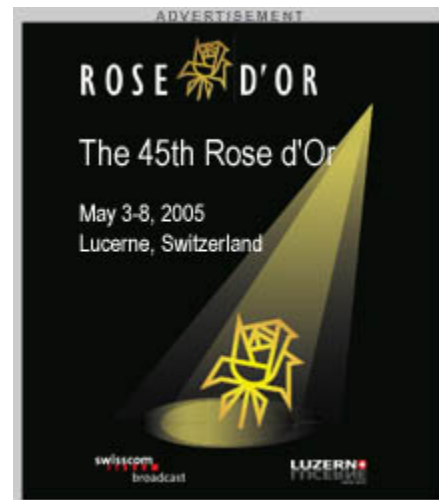
The LA producer is launching the format at MipTV later this month, and will then embark on a major push to sell it to a US network with Lone Eagle at its side as a coproducer.

Lone Eagle had previously been developing *The Office Temps* for the American and international markets with Fox TV Studios, however the deal fell through following a management shake-up at the US outfit last year.

Often described as Punk'd meets *The Office*, the series puts a hidden-camera spin on workplace reality. Lone Eagle president Michael Geddes calls it "political incorrectness played out on a grand scale." It uses a set and actors to pull a prank on unsuspecting temporary employees, revealing the stress and transformation that individuals undergo at a new place of work.

The series was created by the Los Angeles-based writer/producer team Darrel Vickers and Andrew Nichols, and was packaged with Creative Artists Agency. It is a good fit with Reveille, especially considering the shop's recent US adaptation of hit BBC reality series *The Office*, which premiered March 21 on NBC in the broadcaster's 21.30 slot.

Reveille is convinced that mixing classic sitcom with techniques borrowed from the reality genre could be the antidote to the ailing US sitcom scene, and according to Chris Grant (right), vp of



international distribution and creative affairs, the timing is right for Lone Eagle's series all around.

"We think the next phase in reality is 'reality-comedy' and The Office Temps is exactly that. It is also universal. Working in an office is something that everyone can relate to," he says.

He figures it will be a relatively easy show to adapt for the US. "This is something that the broadcasters and a lot of the cablers will respond to because it has such a broad appeal. It is also light-hearted and funny with everyone smiling in the end," says Grant.

"We're going to talk to the broadcasters about how they might like to see it differently, but I think the format is pretty straight on. I don't think it's going to need much of a change, and that's part of the reason we were attracted to it," he adds.

It's often said that comedy doesn't travel well, but Grant says that's not so. "The line in terms of humour, especially on the reality side, is diminishing in places like the UK, Canada, Australia and the US; what makes us laugh, makes them laugh," he says.

Weight-loss contest series The Biggest Loser, originally produced for NBC, is another topper on Reveille's international distribution list. Finished tape and format rights have so far gone to LivingTV in the UK, adding to the long list of US formats on the Flextech-owned network's production roster.

It is also due for local production on MTV3 in Finland, Solar TV in the Philippines, SBT in Brazil, an unnamed Middle Eastern channel, as well as a pan-Scandinavian version for SBS Broadcasting's channels in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Other Reveille-produced reality formats being shopped include Nashville Star (USA), Blow Out (Bravo), The Club (Spike), The Restaurant (NBC) and Date My Mum (MTV).

On the scripted front, Reveille is developing three new formats from the UK: Channel 4 sitcom Black Books for CBS; Channel 4 medical drama No Angels for the WB; and BBC1 legal drama Judge John Deed for NBC. For ABC, the outfit is developing a US version of telenovela Betty La Fea (Ugly Betty), with Hollywood starlet Salma Hayek reportedly involved.

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