

marblemedia takes formatting for a spin

When a preschool live-action show appears to be the sum of its star's personality, distributors can run into brick walls as they try to sell the show to international, multi-language markets. With that in mind, the Toronto-based distribution teams for the marblemedia/Sinking Ship co-pro *This is Daniel Cook* are creating both formatted and dubbed versions of the series to increase the show's exposure rather than just the profile of its pint-sized protagonist, Daniel.

The series made strides in English-speaking territories with sales in 2004 and 2005 to Playhouse Disney in the U.S. and Canadian nets Treehouse and TVOntario. But the live-actioner's depiction of real people in non-fantastical, everyday settings made non-English speaking broadcasters balk at the idea of picking up the show in short, subtitles don't work on programs targeted at early readers and dubbing the voices of live-action players often confuses this demo.

To prove a dubbed live-action preschool series could work, marblemedia took a proactive approach and translated two episodes into German with no broadcast deal attached. The prodco's head of business development, Rita Carbone Fleury, says the eps paid off with Disney Channel Germany, charging marblemedia to dub 65, five-minute episodes for the Pay-TV channel.

Still desirous of scoring international sales, but aware many broadcasters likely won't follow Disney Germany's lead, marblemedia has put another version of the *This is* franchise into production. The goal is to convince skeptical nets it's a format-worthy concept because the subject matter, not its star, puts the world at a kid's level. *This is Emily Yeung* is a 65 x six-minute format picked up by Treehouse in Canada for a Q3 2006 debut. It follows the Daniel Cook blueprint of interviewing adults, but is driven by the insatiable inquisitiveness of its six-year-old female host.

Carbone Fleury says it took two months to find Emily. "We found this little girl who has the same spirit as Daniel, driven by her curiosity, who is not in any way coaxed into being excited and bored," she says. Even though the concept initially met with skepticism from some broadcasters (how could you replace Daniel, after all?), Carbone Fleury's aim at MIPTV is to turn the talent search into a selling point. Networks could take a promotional tack and create national searches to audition and cast their own Daniel's, generating a lot of publicity before the show even hits airwaves.