



Banijay UK acquires leading scripted producer The Forge

Major acquisition bolsters Banijay's scripted presence in UK

2 November 2023: Banijay UK today announced its acquisition of leading scripted independent producer, The Forge.

The *Marriage, Help* and *Becoming Elizabeth* producer, which has a well-established reputation for high quality, ambitious and award-winning TV drama, joins the Banijay UK stable of companies with immediate effect following completion of the acquisition deal.

The Forge currently has multiple, high profile new titles for both linear and SVOD platforms in production, including a major, 8 part series ***The Buccaneers*** for Apple TV+, due to launch globally on November 8; 4 part Disney + series ***Shardlake*** by Stephen Butchard (*The Last Kingdom*) due to release next year; factual drama about the Grenfell disaster by Peter Kosminsky (*Undeclared War, Government Inspector, Wolf Hall*) for BBC One; youth-skewing drama series for BBC Three that will film next year and ***Generation Z***, a six part series and the first original TV project from Ben Wheatley (*The Meg II, Sightseers, Kill List*) currently shooting for Channel 4.

This acquisition will bolster Banijay UK's scripted output and bring the number of scripted labels under the Banijay UK umbrella to nine including wholly owned labels Kudos, Tiger Aspect and Wild Mercury.

Patrick Holland, CEO Banijay UK said of the deal; "I have been a massive admirer of The Forge since its inception. George Faber, Mark Pybus, Beth Willis and George Ormond have together grown one of the most ambitious and exciting drama slates in the UK. With a commitment to the most distinctive authorship, a desire to make shows of the highest quality and a creative commitment to make drama that appeals to broad audiences. The Forge is an extraordinary group of talented producers. We are so delighted that they have chosen Banijay UK as their partners for their next chapter of growth and can't wait for them to join the other brilliant companies in the group."

George Faber, Founder of The Forge added; “We’re thrilled to be going into partnership with Banijay, a company whose culture and values feel like a great fit for The Forge. We’re ambitious for the next stage of our growth and we believe that Banijay’s superb distribution arm, production expertise, management team and global reach will help us chart an exciting path to the future.”

The Forge boasts an impressive slate of titles including *National Treasure* (C4), *Ackley Bridge* (C4), *The Miniaturist* (BBC), *Kiri* (C4), *Help* (C4), *Marriage* (BBC), *Becoming Elizabeth* (Starz), *Collateral* (BBC), *Rules of the Game* (BBC), *Roadkill* (BBC) and many more.

They have collaborated with writers Jack Thorne, Anya Reiss, Stefan Golaszewski, Katherine Jakeways, Ayub Khan Din, Ben Wheatley, David Hare, Peter Moffat, Levi David Addai, Janice Okoh and Stephen Butchard amongst many others.

The Forge also has a reputation for showcasing some of the industry’s leading talent and has worked with Jodie Comer, Stephen Graham, Sarah Lancashire, Sean Bean, Nicola Walker, Carey Mulligan, Hugh Laurie, Anya Taylor-Joy, Babou Ceesay, Robbie Coltrane and Julie Walters. Upcoming series, *The Buccaneers* stars a number of widely popular actors including Kristine Frøseth, Alisha Boe, Josie Totah, Aubri Ibrag and Imogen Waterhouse, alongside Christina Hendricks and Mia Threapleton.

The company has picked up a wealth of awards for its programmes, including the BAFTA for Mini-Series (*National Treasure*) and the International Emmy for Best TV Movie (*Help*).

This deal includes a first look deal for Banijay Rights.

The Forge’s senior creative team include Founder and Managing Director, George Faber, Mark Pybus (Executive Producer/ Head of Business Affairs), Beth Willis (Executive Producer) and George Ormond (Executive Producer). Their collective experience and stellar track record make them trusted partners for top writers, directors, agents, and broadcasters alike.

Faber, having run single drama at BBC for several years, co-founded Company Pictures producing the likes of *Shameless*, *Wild at Heart* and *Skins* before setting up The Forge. Mark, also previously at Company Pictures, has a background in Business Affairs but has also produced a raft of high-profile shows including *Wolf Hall* for BBC. In her role as Head of Drama at Channel 4, Beth commissioned *The End of the Fucking World*, *Humans*, and *No Offence*

before joining The Forge; George Ormond was previously an Executive Producer at the BBC, where he developed a raft of shows including BBC's 2016 adaptation of *War and Peace*. He also produced Sarah Phelps's Bafta and Emmy award winning *Great Expectations*.

The Forge were advised by Tom Manwaring at Helion Partners.

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About Banijay

Launched in 2008, media and entertainment powerhouse, Banijay, is home to over 130 production companies across 21 territories, a multi-genre catalogue boasting over 172,000 hours of original standout programming, and a complementary live entertainment business – Banijay Events.

Imagining and delivering high-quality, multi-genre IP that was born locally and travels globally, the business offers the best stories told the best way, and represents some of the biggest global brands in the market including *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Peaky Blinders*, *MasterChef*, *Rogue Heroes*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Mr Bean*, *Love Triangle*, *Hunted*, *The Summit*, *Black Mirror*, *Blow Up!*, and *Starstruck* among others.

Built on independence, creative freedom, collaborative entrepreneurialism, and commercial acumen, the company, operates under the direction of Chief Executive Officer, Marco Bassetti. It is under his leadership, the business has grown to reach €3.2bn in revenues and €472m in EBITDA for 2022.

About FL Entertainment

FL Entertainment Group is a global entertainment leader founded by Stéphane Courbit, a 30-year entrepreneur and entertainment industry pioneer. Our mission is to inspire passion by providing audiences with engaging and innovative entertainment experiences. The Group's activities include content production & distribution (through Banijay, the world's largest independent producer distributor and online sports betting & gaming (through Betclix, Europe's fastest-growing online sports betting platform). In 2022, FL Entertainment recorded revenue and Adjusted EBITDA of €4,047m and €670m respectively. FL Entertainment is listed on Euronext Amsterdam (ISIN: NL0015000X07, Bloomberg: FLE NA, Reuters: FLE.AS).

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