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## EDN MEMBER OF THE MONTH – Francesca Breccia

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In this monthly interview series EDN focuses on one of its many members to show both members in the spotlight and the diversity of the EDN membership group.



Our EDN member of the month for February 2015 is Francesca Breccia founder of Coccinelle Film Placement - Sales & Acquisition, Italy. Francesca is born in Rome, studied there and got a BA in Political Science with a thesis entitled "Cinema between fascism and antifascism". In 2002 she earned the EMAM – European Master in Audio-visual Management from the Media Programme. After that she worked in the development department of Cattleya, one of the most important Italian independent production companies, and for Universal Networks, the thematic cinema channel of the film studio. In 2003 Francesca moved to Germany to work for the international distributor Media Luna Entertainment, first as Festival and Marketing Manager and then in the sales and acquisition department. In 2006, her work in sales led her to deepen her knowledge of the market by working with buyers. This desire prompted her to move to Milan to work for SKY Italia as editorial coordinator of cinema channels. At SKY, she worked with the content selection team. In 2009, Francesca moved back to Rome in order to work for MGM Networks, the cinema channel of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, where she was in charge of acquisition, strategic programming and promotion. In 2010 she managed the channel. In 2012, after earning a Master in Web Marketing she decided to merge her two skills in sales and broadcasting and founded Coccinelle Film Placement, a world sales company for documentaries and narrative films.

EDN has, among other things, talked to Francesca about the profile and vision of Coccinelle Film Placement and about this month's European Film Market in Berlin.

**EDN: Can you start by telling more about your motivation for launching Coccinelle Film Placement?**

FB: It was August 2012. Midst of the international economic crisis which saw various media empires downsize by cutting their international offices to the bone including the one I was working for.

At that point, I decided to make use of my 12 years of experience in sales and in broadcasting and put together a new business model: as I could not draw on a reserve of funds, I decided to build a network of like-minded industry insiders by creating a strong brand with which experienced media freelance professionals, who wanted to get in on the ground floor, could join without having to make the hard choices between their current consultancy for other companies, their country, or their interest in this start-up.

Coccinelle Film's mission is a direct result of today's reality, the current economic crisis and the increasing role of emerging markets in the creative industry: responding to the lack of big budget cash flow, qualified sales and acquisition consultants can become affiliated with Coccinelle Film. This means that each sale drives the profits for all the consultants involved in the success of that specific sale. Money begets money, e.g.: if a consultant in Kabul or Rio De Janeiro or Sydney discovers a valuable documentary and, for example, another Coccinelle member sells it, the consultants involved in the success of this specific sale will receive a share in the Coccinelle sales commission.

**EDN: What is the profile and vision of Coccinelle Film Placement? How does the company differ from other sales agents?**

FB: Coccinelle Film Placement business model is an answer to the changes in the market: Its business model represents the new 2.0 era of film distribution. We are a hub for professionals in sales & acquisition who, by working under the same umbrella and using the same brand, strengthens the work that each would do individually. Each member is independent and can decide his level of commitment in Coccinelle Film and can keep his former consultancies/jobs, work from his own country without having a defined working time shift. The more valuable the content each consultant brings in, the greater the chance to sell it and to share in the commission. Our network can count so far on the sales and acquisition experience of Gaetano Maiorino (Rome) with focus on narrative films, Sara Monacelli (Paris) with focus on documentaries, Jef Nuyts (Belgian, but living in Rome), with a focus on narrative films, Setsu Higa (Japan) with focus on both. Our network naturally also encompasses legal competencies with Donatella Mugnano being a legal consultant.

Coccinelle Film model cuts costs – there are no offices and the staff is highly motivated by working on commission - and this is not only beneficial for Coccinelle Film Placement but also for the producers or the authors whose films we are working on.

The concept of "Filmmaker/Producer first" does not mean we do not work for our profit: it means we are well aware that helping a filmmaker to market and distribute his movie is the first step toward success for the whole team.

An important point is that we sell in the name of the producer and the producer is the one who directly invoices our clients so he gets the money before we do. Afterwards, Coccinelle Film invoices the producer for its sales commission.

**EDN: Which types of documentaries are included in the catalogue – is there a prevalent theme, genre or style?**

FB: Art, culture, history, biography of iconic characters are the docs we mostly look for.

**EDN: How do you select which titles to work with?**

FB: We mainly look for 52min TV documentaries and for docu-series with a commercial potential. A commercial potential means a content that can fit in a TV channel's programming and that consequently can raise interest in a broadcaster. Broadcasters want a result in terms of TV share and consequently advertising tends to go/pay more to TV channels that performs the best. It is all business. So it is very important to watch and study the content of the broadcasters you want to approach.

Important is also timing: broadcasters often work on anniversaries and events and we, as sales agents, look always for documentaries that could match specific dates/anniversaries. Of course you have to consider that some broadcasters close their schedule many months in advance, so if you have a doc suitable for Christmas, you should offer it to a sales agent or to a broadcaster several months in advance.

**EDN: How many titles do you take on a year and do you take on films before they are completed? Is your company also actively involved in the production phase?**

FB: There is not a closed number per year. We take finished films or films just on a previous step. We are not involved in production yet but this is a plan for the future.

**EDN: How does Coccinelle work with rights? Do you acquire all rights when taking on a film?**

FB: We usually take all rights but contracts are personalized to the single producer. So if there are specific needs for the producer (e.g. keeping some territories) we are always open to discuss them.

**EDN: Coccinelle Film Placement is based in Rome. How is the environment for independent documentaries in Italy? Who is buying and screening documentaries?**

FB: Few members of Coccinelle are based in Rome, some others in other countries, and that is possible because we do not have a headquarter but we are a hub of professionals sales & acquisition free lancers. Environment for indie documentaries in Italy: yes, they can find their place in some pay and free TV channels such as Rai 5, Rai 3, Sky Arte. No chance for indie docs in big theatre distribution. The important thing is to study the channel before submitting a film and being sure that your film suits the channel's editorial line.

**EDN: One of your latest releases is *Nathan – Free as a Bird*, which had its world premiere at IDFA last year. What is the film about and at which stage did you get on board the project?**

FB: The film is about a story that, in October 2013, ended up in worldwide press. Nathan Verhelst, a 44-year-old man from Sint-Niklaas in Belgium, demanded and received euthanasia after several failed gender operations. Nathan's backpack of life was filled with rejection and incest. Director Roel Nolle started following Nathan with his camera three years ago and documented how 'Nancy' became 'Nathan'. Little did he know the story would end this way. Among his friends, he stood beside his bed, to watch him find his freedom.

We got involved when the film was finished but we saw that there were some points that needed to be better developed. The director has been very open and accepted to take a new cut of the film that raised IDFA's attention. This film is a challenge for us all because it has to do with a very difficult and sensitive matter that easily breaks into religion, bioethical and personal principles and can be disturbing for many. We decided to take the risk, as we believe that such a story needs to be known. People need to know how life can be different for somebody. How life is. The film is having good runs in the festival circuit and gets a very big and positive audience reaction.

**EDN: This month, from the 5th to the 15th, the Berlinale International Film Festival takes place in Berlin also hosting the European Film Market (EFM). How do you operate there as a documentary sales agent and how is the market there for documentaries?**

FB: We, as a team, are always present at the EFM where we look for new narrative films and documentaries. It is a place to be because it is a perfect ground for new networking and for strengthening relationships with clients. Being mainly a cinema market, it is a better place to sell feature films (either narrative films or documentaries). EDN in particular is very useful (and please, believe me, I am not saying that because you are interviewing me!!) because EDN has created a targeted place for documentary business networking and updating panels that helps to have a focus in such a big cinema oriented market like EFM. We will be there to pitch our documentaries (for example our doc about acrobats and Cirque du Soleil, "Grazing the Sky" has been sold to several major broadcasters and EFM can give us the chance to give it even further visibility) and to get to know new producers and contents. As we mainly represent TV docs, we believe that EFM is important but we cannot miss "documentary only" festivals and markets as you meet clients only interested in this content and you can give more targeted attention and visibility to the documentaries you represent.

**EDN: Do you have any advice for independent filmmakers – how does one go about finding the right sales agent for a documentary? And what does one have to be aware of when entering a deal?**

FB: Be sure that you have material in place when you offer your film (M/E separated tracks, clean feed, HD international version, 25fps if you want to sell to TV and 24fps for theatrical) and have always a feature cut (for festivals) and a TV cut for broadcasters (usually 52min).

Find a sales agency that represents films similar to yours and talk with other producers represented by that agency, if you want to have feedback. Once you get into a deal with a sales agency, trust its knowledge of the international market and be aware that the budget of TV channels might differ a lot from one territory to another.

**EDN: What lies ahead for you and Coccinelle Film Placement?**

FB: Setting up a branch for production. Improve our international network of professionals. Keep our eye on emerging markets in order to challenge major companies, which are frequently less willing to take a risk on promoting independent filmmakers.

More information:

<http://coccinellefilm.com/>