



Brand/Rebrand: A+E Networks' Global Revamp of Crime + Investigation

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It's said the Brits love a good grizzly crime story. From tales of the shadowy Jack the Ripper, who left a bloody trail through London's East End, to the Moors murderers of the 1960s or the mysterious death of "God's Banker" Roberto Calvi, who was found hanging from Blackfriars Bridge one morning in 1982, the darker side of human nature has always gripped the British public.

Perhaps that's why A+E Networks chose the UK as the starting point for a global revamp of Crime + Investigation, its channel dedicated to all things macabre and mysterious. The refresh is about the look and identity of the channel as much as the content which, the broadcaster has said, is going to take viewers even deeper into the "heart of the criminal mind."

"When I joined A+E Networks, one of the brands that immediately drew my attention was Crime + Investigation," said Amanda Hill, chief marketing officer, A+E Networks, in a statement. "I felt we could reinvigorate both the brand and the programming in such a way as to not only make it more about powerful storytelling but across multiple platforms. We now have a clearer positioning and a more contemporary look and feel-one which is fresh, bold and

unexpected. The result is a distinctive, modern package about which we are all hugely proud and which we know viewers will enthusiastically embrace."Â

"We made some brave decisions with our channel partners on logo design, imagery, use of typography and brand spots. We were in lock step with each market to ensure that the look and feel of the brand would speak to the new vision, powerful and immersive," said Chris Gargani, vice president, global creative, A+E Networks, who led the creative on the project.

To deliver this ambitious brief, A+E turned to London-based branding and creative agency DixonBaxi. For the agency it was a new challenge, one which co-founder Aporva Baxi says at its core was a need to create unity among the various incarnations of Crime + Investigation globally.

"The motivation for the rethink was driven by a need to rationalize the channel as a brand," says Baxi. "To unify its presence globally rather than feeling like individual channels in the territories where it is aired. It would still be localized and feel authentic for the audience in each country, but as a brand it need to have a common purpose, ambition and voice."

From this initial brief, the intense work began in earnest. Baxi says that what followed was a six week "strategic sprint" working hand-in-hand with A+E to go back to basics on the channel: its core audience, what makes them tick, what the true-crime genre is all about and how it could be evolved both televisually and from a branding perspective.

"Together, we shaped a new strategy that reframes Crime + Investigation with a bold new purpose," says Baxi. "Where viewers become life's investigators, journeying to the heart of the criminal mind to better understand human behavior and how it can manifest. Each journey is personal and emotional, telling the stories through those who were most affected, and those who ultimately solved the cases -- because 'Truth is worth pursuing.'"

Somewhere along the way Baxi says the team had something of a crime investigation moment of their own when an "incident room" was set up in the agency's London office and details began to emerge. To remain faithful to the genre and, Baxi says, with "storytelling and immersion at its heart," the branding, the logo and the whole look of the channel was made "photographic, rich with imagery that is ambiguous, open to interpretation and inviting closer inspection," he says.

Even the idents have been sprinkled with mystery. A set of 15 shorts are laced with hidden details and each has been written with different endings to keep viewers guessing in between shows. As does as an extensive collection of stills, both macro and wide-lens shots, all interwoven as backgrounds and tapestries to "build a bigger world through details." These will be used for a range of uses, on screen and for social media and the marketing of the rebrand.

As for that essential branding element, the logo, the choice was for something bold, contemporary and typographic, with the word "investigation" given a fractured feel, redolent of an "uncomfortably incomplete" puzzle, all set in the Flama typeface.

Behind the scenes, A+E has an impressive slate of programming in store, from the tried-and-tested shows like Emmy-nominated true-crime series Cold Case Files, to new shows including 60 Days In, which follows innocent civilians who go into jail undercover to discover what life behind bars is really like, and Babies Behind Bars, which tells the stories of the 100,000 women who give birth to children each year while in US prisons.

Laura Fleury, head of international programming at A+E Networks says: "The proliferation of crime and investigative storytelling through streaming and podcasts has made fans out of non-crime viewers, and Crime + Investigation has expanded our slate even more due to the broadening interests of the wider public."

With the rebrand finished and some strong shows on the slate, now the challenge is to showcase the new global brand to the world.

Tom Lucas, head of international marketing at A+E Networks says part of this has been to adopt a "ripple effect" strategy.

"We're moving from being a broadcaster brand that is generally disconnected from emerging crimes to more of an always-on news-style brand; offering commentary and curating the conversation in real-time using our army of passionate fans to fan the debate," Lucas says.

A big refresh is always something of a gamble. But with some interesting tie-ups linked to the strategy, such as with the British Harrogate Crime Festival, a slick new look and a solid slate of programming in place, Crime + Investigation's reputation as a home for mystery intrigue and suspense looks secure for a long while to come.