

Janine Gold



ITALY/UNITED KINGDOM

IT TAKES THREE TO FANDANGO

New Italy-UK sales outfit Fandango Portobello Sales made a splash in Cannes this year with **Matteo Garrone's** Naples-set Mafia drama *Gomorrah*. The title won the Grand Prix, was one of the most coveted films in the Marché, and one of the few Italian films in recent years to sell worldwide.

Overseeing the many deals closed on *Gomorrah* was **Janine Gold**, Fandango Portobello's London-based head of international sales and distribution. "As a young company still in its infancy, this year has been tremendous," she says. "*Gomorrah* has lent a greater profile to the company. My hope is that it will open doors."

Gold is a well-known figure in the world of film sales, after stints at Film4, Element X and Celluloid Dreams. She was approached to lead the sales team by Fandango boss **Domenico Procacci** just before last year's Cannes festival. Procacci's partner in the venture is his friend **Eric Abraham** of London-based production company Portobello Pictures.

"Eric Abraham and I have been friends for many years," says Procacci. "I had my films with different sales companies and he did the same. Recently, I was thinking to create a structure to sell directly my films and he was thinking something similar."

Reflecting Abraham's strong Czech connections as the producer of **Jan Sverak's** Oscar-winner *Kolya*, the company's 2007 slate included such Czech titles as Sverak's *Empties* and **Alice Nellis's** *Little Girl Blue*.

Cannes 2007 was, in Abraham's words, "a toe-dipping exercise".

"It was about seeing how it went," Gold explains. "That's part of the reason we didn't make any grand announcements."

Janine Gold and Domenico Procacci talk to **GEOFFREY MACNAB** about their plans for the fast-evolving Anglo-Italian sales company Fandango Portobello

By the time of Berlin 2008, where Fandango Portobello presented the Italian drama *Quiet Chaos*, starring **Nanni Moretti**, the company was on a more formal footing.

There are various projects in development in Italy at Fandango and in the UK at Portobello that will end up on the company's sales slate. These include the screen adaptation of **Christopher Hampton's** play *Embers* and a film version of **Jung Chang's** *Wild Swans*. Meanwhile, in the Czech Republic, Sverak's next feature, *Kooky*, is due to go into



Domenico Procacci



Eric Abraham

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Janine Gold, Fandango Portobello

production this summer. The company also has a US project, the political thriller *Black Bird*, and a **Ronan Bennett** film called *Top Boy*, about black teenage gangs in London, on which it is likely to partner with the BBC.

"What is interesting about Eric and Domenico is their versatility," suggests Gold. Fandango's activities include not only film production and distribution but music and book publishing. It is also producing **John Turturro's** film adaptation of stage play *Souls Of Naples*. Meanwhile Portobello's activities include film production, TV and theatre. Abraham has also set up a company in South Africa with **Mark Dornford-May** (*Son Of Man*, *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha*) to produce theatre and film projects. Named Isango Portobello, it is developing musical project *The Struggle* which looks at apartheid.

Titles likely to be ready for autumn festivals and markets include novelist **Alessandro Baricco's** *Lecture 21*, starring **John Hurt**, and **Ferzan Ozpetek's** *A Perfect Day*.

"It's not just going to be exclusively Fandango and Portobello projects," Gold says of what will appear on the company's market slates in future. "We're taking baby



Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah* has launched the company internationally

steps and approaching other like-minded producers, writers and directors... at the same time, we would like to keep the boutique quality that exists now. It is not about volume but about how we work."

The challenge now will be to emulate the success of *Gomorrah*. "It has been a roller coaster," Gold says of her experience with Garrone's hit film, which buyers have been pursuing since the idea was unveiled at the Rome Film Fest last year. Many distributors pre-bought the film (including Optimum for the UK) and IFC took US rights during Cannes.

It is possible certain projects in which the partners are involved — for example, co-productions — could be sold by other companies. As Gold puts it: "It has to be about how one can best finance a film."

Procacci also has a stake in UK outfit, The Works. "I thought an involvement in a British company would be a better way to produce English-language films and have access to the English-language film industry, which is quite far away from local film industries in some countries," Procacci explains. "I was involved in the development of [**Francois Girard's**] *Silk*, which I also produced, and I will probably be involved in other [Works] projects in the future."

Gold says the international market has changed since her days at Film4 in the late 1990s. "I don't know if I would call it a sellers' market [back then], but there was so much of a bigger appetite. Television was still buying," she recalls. "But I think the appetite is still there. Cannes was the proof of that. There were some very strong and interesting films that were quite challenging for distributors and yet they were sold. Deep down, a distributor will still respond emotionally or viscerally to a film."