

# Recolouring the e.tv entertainment spectrum

 By Leigh Andrews

14 Dec 2017

Earlier this month, I chatted to e.tv MD Marlon Davids about their growth over the past two decades as SA's fifth terrestrial television channel and biggest independent one, as well as the channel's new #OurWorldIsRed campaign.

[Summer brand campaigns](#) are currently dominating TV channels, with some channels themselves taking the time to promote their offerings.

The latest of these is for e.tv, which is turning back the hands of time somewhat in repositioning itself ahead of its 20th birthday.

Davids is well aware of the frustrations of repetitive repeats and unexpected schedule changes. So while their programming going forward will include the freshest content like the SA debut of the Oprah Winfrey-produced *Greenleaf*, with reboots of cult classics like *Lethal Weapon* and *MacGyver*, as well as much more local content, the five individual channels comprising the overall family of e.tv channels themselves – e.tv, eExtra, eMovies, eMovies Extra and eToonz – formerly each represented by a different colour, have rebranded to align to the core red entertainment 'e' of the mother brand.



Marlon Davids, MD of e.tv.

If that wording sped by too fast for you, the TV viewer in you will be pleased to hear that e.tv associates red with the following qualities: Power, passion, drama, fire, revolution, classic, heroic, epic, radical, romance, royal, fabulous and legendary.

Here, Davids shares what makes e.tv stand out in the local TV space, and lets us in on more of what to expect from this repositioning of the e brand in the multichannel environment.

**■ Let's start off with a trip down memory lane: Elaborate on e.tv's successes over the years, from its inception to its current five-channel offering.**

e.tv has always been considered an underdog brand in the market. So even the eNCA 24-hour news channel's success

stems from the initial success of the e.tv and eNews brand. It's always been a daring brand and has tested various things over the years and matured a bit. I was a lot younger myself when e.tv launched, so to see the channel evolve was amazing and very exciting.

The benefit for the viewer at the moment is that lots of our additional channels on OpenView and DSTV were born out of the success of various genres on e.tv. Our kids' block has always been successful in terms of the quality of the content so we created the separate kids' channel, eToonz; movies have always been one of the key pillars of e.tv, so we have two 24-hour movie channels – eMovies and eMovies Extra; and eExtra is an extension of e.tv itself.



### e.tv extends OpenView HD

15 Mar 2017



If someone is going through our channels and sees an animated movie, there's an action movie or a romcom on another channel, so we cater to as many viewers as possible while keeping people within the bouquet of channels.

Our previous payoff line was 'e is for everyone', and even though we don't push that anymore in terms of marketing and positioning, it's something that's still at the back of our minds in whatever we do.

#### ■ **Explain the #OurWorldsRed repositioning campaign: why the need, what has response been like so far, what can viewers expect going forward?**

Based on spontaneous observations from social media, we found that viewers simply weren't aware of the variety of channels and alternative programming they could get apart from the main e.tv channel.

If you looked at the e.tv Facebook page for instance, there would be comments about not wanting to watch *Despicable Me*, asking why we broadcast a kids' movie on a Saturday night. Even though for many people a Saturday night movie is synonymous with family time, and people look forward to spending time with their kids watching that movie, there's still another audience that doesn't want to watch that. We do cater to that audience, but they may not have but aware of it. So we've changed positioning in that we now upsell the benefits of the other channels.



### #OurWorldsRed

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So the #OurWorldsRed campaign and realignment of the red 'e' just brings all of that together and reinforces the message that it's part of the same 'e' that people love, we've just given them more choice, more of what they want.

#### ■ **Expand on how production values make e.tv stand out in the local TV space, as SA's fifth terrestrial television channel and biggest independent?**

Our view has always been quality over quantity, so in terms of our dramas and soap operas, we focus on the quality of the production, so we're not just churning out a certain amount of hours per year but rather being really discerning in how we select projects that we go forward with.

That's what sets us apart – it's not a fixed model but rather based on whether a project is worth doing, whether it's something that has never been done before, and also challenging in terms of production values. We always try to 'up' what we have previously done.

#### ■ **So you're never really 'done'. Talk us through the current broadcast environment in SA – the limitations, challenges, and opportunities.**

Having personally been in the industry for about 16 years now, I've certainly noticed huge changes since e.tv's inception two decades ago. These changes have been good for viewers as consumers as well as advertisers as they force broadcasters to be innovative, to be at the top of our game.



## Marlon Davids appointed as MD of e.tv channels

eMedia 24 Jun 2016



At the end of the day, we're all fighting for the same audience pool. So we have to manage repeats, we have to manage the quality of the content, and we need to offer a compelling content offering because people vote with their remotes, so they can easily tune out if you're not catering to them.

*“ It's a fight for eyeballs every single day, and you can't take for granted the fact that you have a certain audience in a certain slot. That audience is always up for grabs by any of the other competitors, if they offer something more compelling. ”*

**■ Today, that fight for attention's not just with your broadcast competitors but also with social media. How do you handle second-screening, where your audience has split its attention and is multitasking, not just zoned out and focused on your programming?**

The second screen has definitely become part of how things are done. I look at myself and I'm part of that generation of people who are viewing content and tracking on social media. Sometimes, you look at what's trending tonight on social media and that almost migrates you back to TV, because you want to see what everyone's talking about and what this big fuss is on social media that's been generated on TV.

So I don't necessarily see it as a negative – it creates awareness and some people depend on seeing what's trending tonight and what's popular tonight before they settle on a channel. So the social media offering is often complementary to our linear TV offering.

**■ Share what you're most looking forward to in a broadcast business sense from 2018.**

There's such a lot of good content out there. I consume a lot of TV each day myself – probably around five hours per day and not just on my channels, I'm also looking at competitor channels – so I know there's a fight for which channel you go to.



Screengrabs from the #OurWorldIsRed e.tv brand campaign.

I speak to people at various broadcasters all the time and everyone in the sector is upping their game. So 2018's probably going to be the year that there will be a lot more choice for viewers and that keeps us on our toes, it's an exciting time.

From an e.tv perspective, obviously our 20th year will be an important one for us, it's quite the milestone so there's a lot of work going on behind the scenes in how we reposition our brand and our channels. We've never been afraid of change at e.tv, it's something that we embrace. I know schedule changes are a huge irritant for viewers, and I don't like a lot of schedule changes either when I settle in to watch TV, but the changes we do have planned will be positive and people will enjoy what we've got to offer in 2018.

Seems there's lots to look forward to from the industry in 2018. Visit the [e.tv press office](#) and [click here](#) for more on the

e.tv #OurWorldIsRed campaign, and following their [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) profile for the latest updates.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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