

MoFo Helps ‘Homeland’ Find a Home in Germany

Posted by Zoe Ferguson

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Thanks to Morrison & Foerster, Claire Danes now has a place to cry in Germany.

Less than two years after opening in Berlin, the Am Law 100 firm is advising Twentieth Century Fox on the production in Germany of a fifth season of hit cable drama “Homeland,” which stars Danes, Mandy Patinkin and F. Murray Abraham.

MoFo announced last week its representation of Rupert Murdoch’s film studio on the financial, transactional and production aspects of the Showtime series, which will be filmed on location in Berlin and at Studio Babelsberg outside the city.

Christiane Stuetzle, head of MoFo’s German film practice, says “Homeland” will be the first major U.S. television show to film in Germany. Stuetzle, who joined MoFo in 2013 when the firm established a base in Berlin after hiring a 30-lawyer team from Hogan Lovells, is leading a team from her new firm working on the matter.

“The exceptional thing about ‘Homeland’ is it’s the first international or U.S. high-profile television series ever that has come to Germany,” says Stuetzle, who has her own webpage on the Internet Movie DataBase, thanks to her work on films like Wes Anderson’s “The Grand Budapest Hotel,” George Clooney’s “The Monuments Men” and Brian Percival’s “The Book Thief.”

Stuetzle says the decision by “Homeland” to film in Germany may be a result of a new funding plan announced by German economics minister Sigmar Gabriel at the Berlin International Film Festival this past February.

“[Gabriel] has allowed a new funding scheme which applies to high-profile television series,” says Stuetzle, noting that while the structure is not yet in place, “the whole [film] industry is hoping that this thing will be implemented.”

The funding plan will most likely apply the principles currently in place for films shooting in Germany to television shows like “Homeland.”

“Based on my close conversation with [Gabriel], it very much looks like it will apply the same concepts as for the feature film funding,” says Stuetzle, adding that the system for film finance in Germany currently involves a grant given to a production company. The funding scheme for television, which Stuetzle says the German government is “still working on,” will likely use a similar system and



Christiane Stuetzle

concepts, such as “20 percent of the amount spent in the country will be counted as non-refundable subsidy.”

Stuetzle says Germany has been “very fortunate” to host several notable feature films shooting in the country in recent years. She attributes this influx of business to “quite an elaborate funding scheme for feature films.”

The fifth season of “Homeland” is filming in Germany in a time jump, skipping ahead several years to a period when the main character, a spy portrayed by Danes named Carrie Mathison, is living and working in Berlin. The change of location reflects a change in Danes’ character, now estranged from her former Central Intelligence Agency colleagues stationed in the Middle East.

One important aspect of filming an American show in Germany, Stuetzle says, is confirming that both countries’ legal film standards are aligned, including regulations on acquiring and securing rights.

“It’s like crossing the bridge to make sure that Hollywood standards will be adhered to here in Germany as well,” she says, making sure to note that German standards “are also high.”

Stuetzle says MoFo’s German film practice, which now includes the team advising Twentieth Century Fox on “Homeland,” works to “monitor the interests of productions coming here.”

Last year the firm sponsored a panel moderated by Stuetzle at Berlin’s annual film festival—also called the Berlinale—on the benefits of a transatlantic film partnership between the U.S. and Germany. The initial Berlinale in 1951 was launched in large part with Marshall Plan funds from the U.S. in the aftermath of World War II.

Stuetzle sees herself as a conduit for artists and other entertainment professionals wanting to bring their projects to screens both big and small.

“I also try to be helpful in the legislative process, to point out what may be of importance,” she says. “We want to make sure that the interests of the relevant industry are also reflected.”

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