

ÉCRAN TOTAL ARTICLE

Halley Production turns to microdrama with five projects underway

The company attended the Conecta event held in late May in Magaluf, Spain, to present one of its five vertical-format series projects, "The Last Battalion."

Determined not to miss the microdrama wave, French company Halley Production, which usually makes feature films, has embarked on five productions in the format. So far, two have been written and three others are in development. The aim is to shoot all five before the first quarter of 2027.

While the format is often associated with low-quality, assembly-line productions, the company wants to occupy a different niche: high-quality productions with artistic ambition. Distribution on social media nevertheless means following certain conventions. "Even though we try to break away from microdrama's narrative formulas, there are certain requirements we cannot avoid. The opening shot has to be catchy, followed by very frequent hooks to keep viewers from scrolling past," explains Corentin Koskas, a producer at Halley Production.

A series about film industry professionals

Among the projects in preparation is *The Circuit*, created by Elza Kephart and consisting of 50 episodes lasting between 90 seconds and two minutes. The series follows two film industry professionals, Stella and Marin, as they navigate the circuit of the world's three most prestigious film festivals: Berlin, Venice and Cannes. Both characters struggle to hold on to their place in this world. "Cinema's greatest spectacle may unfold not on screen, but in the fragile hopes of those fighting to remain part of it," reads the pitch.

The company is currently in discussions with a premium alcoholic drinks brand about financing the series. "We consider brand integration from the very beginning of the financing process for our projects," explains Andrea Marcelli, a producer at Halley Production. "However, we do not build a project around a brand; instead, we bring brands in when they are relevant to the project." Nevertheless, the company prefers working with broadcasters to bring its projects to fruition. Although the format is still in its infancy, some are beginning to embrace it. France Télévisions recently released its first vertical-format production, *P*tain de soirée*.

Financiers take a wait-and-see approach

One advantage of vertical dramas is their relatively streamlined production process. "For a feature film, production can take five years. For a microdrama, the timelines are very different," explains Corentin Koskas. Budgets are relatively low, ranging from €3,000 to €6,000 per episode.

Despite their low cost, these formats are still prompting a wait-and-see attitude, and partners can be difficult to find. "There is a lot of caution, but at the same time, you have to acknowledge that this is all anyone is talking about at every festival," says an enthusiastic Andrea Marcelli.

Indeed, one of their projects was selected for the pitching session dedicated to vertical-format series, held for the first time at Conecta, which took place in late May in Magaluf, Spain. *The Last Battalion*, comprising 58 episodes of 90 seconds each, follows seven strangers leading ordinary lives. They discover that they share fragments of the same forgotten past: that of members of a legendary Second World War battalion. They are mysteriously drawn to one another in present-day Brussels. Together, they will have to save the Earth.

The series was created by Stephan Deraucroix and Elza Kephart. Halley Production will bring in Denis Larzillière, a director who specializes in combining live-action footage with artificial intelligence.

Looking ahead, the company will, of course, continue to pursue other forms of production and will not focus exclusively on vertical dramas.

Article by Théo Nepipvoda