

Television – Sidney Kimmel’s Next Act Bows at Mipcom

By [RANDEE DAWN](#)



CREDIT: COURTESY OF SIDNEY KIMMEL

During the course of his 91 years, [Sidney Kimmel](#) has accomplished a lot. That includes making a few videos for web series “Old Jews Telling Jokes.”

“John’s fault,” he says. “He dragged me over there and said, ‘You’ll get a free drink and a dinner out of it.’”

John is independent movie producer-financier [John Penotti](#), a longtime friend and now business partner in [S.K. Global](#). Penotti had been heading up Robert Friedland’s Ivanhoe Pictures when it merged in 2017 with Kimmel’s S.K. Entertainment, and that merger, which introduced TV producing into Kimmel’s vast wheelhouse, proves this particular nonagenarian is far from done with learning new tricks.

“When I first met with [Sidney Kimmel](#), he said, ‘Look, you gotta teach me about television. I don’t know anything about television,’” says [Charlie Corwin](#), co-CEO of [S.K. Global](#). “I said, ‘You absolutely do, you’ve made over 80 movies.’”

Kimmel is one of those sui generis Hollywood figures, an entrepreneur who founded apparel designers and marketers Jones New York in 1970 and didn't fully depart the company until it was sold for \$2.2 billion in 2014. He's a philanthropist who's donated millions to cancer research, cold fusion and the performing arts in his hometown of Philadelphia.

He's also a movie producer and has been since 1986 when he added his finances and name to both "Clan of the Cave Bear" and "9½ Weeks."

"I made a lot of money on '9½ Weeks' and said, 'That's an easy business. Easier than the apparel business,'" he says. "Little did I know."

Since then, films he's produced — including "The Kite Runner," "United 93," "Moneyball" and "Hell or High Water" — have kept him in the independent lane much of the time. He formed S.K. Entertainment in 2004, picking and choosing the kind of films he personally wants to get made.

"When I find a script I like, I get excited," he says. "Reading scripts is my life. I read scripts all day long."

It's a lane Kimmel could have stayed in for the rest of his life, but in 2015 he took another turn, partnering SKE with Ivanhoe, then at Penotti's suggestion, merging the two companies to form S.K. Global. That turned his attention toward not just a wider international market, but also one that includes television shows. S.K. Global, which he chairs with Friedland, has a growing slate of TV series based in India, Thailand, South Korea and the U.S., and it's just getting started.

"The business has been changing every few years since I started in 1983, but I kind of weathered the storm and made movies I wanted to make," he explains. "I was driven more by making good movies than making big profits. Then the merger just fell into my lap."

Kimmel says he likes the idea of making local-language movies, which is Ivanhoe's forte. Then, after "Crazy Rich Asians" — developed and produced by Ivanhoe — hit big at the box office, expansion across the rest of the world on other screens just made sense.

"Unless you're living under a rock, you'll know that television is a driving force for a lot of filmmakers and actors and directors," says Kimmel. "So now we have a triple play — local American-made movies, Ivanhoe international movies based in other countries and Charlie heading up our TV. We have three prongs to our global business."

And don't imagine this is the last hat Kimmel will ever wear; he's nowhere near retiring.

"I'm not sure I have any goal in mind other than to continue what I'm doing, and sharing my excitement with my two partners," he says.

But will he attend Mipcom this year? That's still an unsettled question. "I'll give you 50/50," says Kimmel. "I would probably have to go out and buy a suit."



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JOHN PENOTTI

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