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A Company recruits Partners, coin

Licensing group gets financial boost

By [ED MEZA](#)

BERLIN -- Licensing group A Company has secured a helping hand and a big financial boost as it navigates turbulent markets in Central and Eastern Europe.

Expansion Media Partners, a private equity venture set up by the U.K.'s Future Capital Partners and Screen Capital Intl., is acquiring a 25.2% stake in the Berlin-based shingle.

In addition, Los Angeles-based Aramid Entertainment Fund is giving A Company a credit line of more than EUR 10 million (\$13.3 million) to fortify its licensing business and fuel growth.

Headed by Alexander van Duermen, A Company has become one of the leading independent licensors operating across Central and Eastern Europe since its launch in 2003.

Yet it ran into trouble last year after Berlin-based Senator Entertainment's planned acquisition of a 25.1% stake had to be reduced to 12.6% due to Senator's financial problems. The global downturn followed, wreaking havoc in Central and Eastern Europe and hitting Russia particularly hard.

CEO Alexander van Duermen said A Company succeeded in finding new partners during this difficult time because of the group's strengths.

Future Capital and Aramid "recognize the long-term potential of the emerging markets of Central and Eastern Europe and will rely on A Company's expertise and success to date as one of the market leaders in the media licensing business," Duermen said.

Tim Levy, CEO of Future Capital Partners and an Aramid board member, said, "In the current financial crisis it is possible to identify those companies that are best placed to take advantage of the huge opportunities that exist in the media business."

Levy added that A Company provided just such an opportunity.

Acquiring rights from indie producers and distributors including Lionsgate, the Weinstein Co., Lakeshore, Summit and Icon, A Company currently handles more than 220 films in Central and Eastern Europe, including "I'm Not There," "1408," "Elite Squad," "The Nanny Diaries" and the "Saw" franchise.

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