

## MTV Ukraine channel unveiled

by Elisabeth Sewall, Assistant Editor  
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Photo by Courtesy photo  
General Manager of MTV Ukraine Yevgen Stupka, a well-known Ukrainian producer, composer, and sound arranger, will be leading the media project

MTV Ukraine has officially started airing on cable and satellite TV in Ukraine

MTV Ukraine officially started airing on cable and satellite TV in Ukraine Aug. 24, adding its signature, locally-produced mixture of mainstream and alternative music and entertainment programming with a Ukrainian slant that caters to the country's youth audience.

The launch of MTV Ukraine, announced by the company in an Aug. 27 press release, is the newest addition to the US-based MTV Networks International's (MTVNI's) global network of TV channels.

A previous attempt at launching an MTV Ukraine channel occurred in 2006, with the backing of different investors and other involved players, but it collapsed.

This time, the lead investor in MTV Ukraine is the private equity fund manager Horizon Capital through its Emerging Europe Growth Fund, a \$132 million mid-cap private equity fund.

Horizon Capital, which began investment activities in Ukraine and Moldova in 1995, today manages a total of \$280 million through its two private equity funds, with investments in a range of industries, including food, banking and energy.

MTVNI is a unit of US-based, publicly-traded media conglomerate Viacom and has programming in 161 countries with over 500 million viewers worldwide.

Although MTV Europe and MTV Russia have already been available to Ukrainian viewers via cable and satellite TV for at least the past decade, the new MTV Ukraine will broadcast unique, locally-produced Ukrainian programming and music in addition to its line-up of international shows and music.

MTV Ukraine will employ Ukrainians to produce and manage its programming, as well as feature local music and Ukrainian VJs on their locally-produced shows.

With headquarters in Kyiv, MTV Ukraine will follow the general model of the US-based media giant's past expansions into new, country-specific markets, with programming that will be custom-tailored to appeal to Ukraine's specific youth market, combining internationally-produced shows and popular music with Ukrainian music and other locally-produced content.

The press release stressed that MTV plans to provide Ukrainian youth programming that "reflect their tastes and interests as well as supporting the region's vibrant music industry."

"MTV is not just music videos, it's a lifestyle and we're confident that young adult Ukrainians will make it part of their lives," the press release quoted Peter Charchalis, vice president of Horizon Capital, as saying.

General Manager of MTV Ukraine Yevgen Stupka, a well-known Ukrainian producer, composer and sound arranger, will be leading the media project. According to MTV Ukraine's press release, he has vast experience in Ukraine's music and entertainment industry.

“MTV will be the first politics-free channel in Ukraine, which will really respect its audience and will prove Ukraine is a unique country on its own, but at the same time, a member of the world community,” the press release quoted Stupka as saying.

Evguen Repetko, PR and event manager for MTV Ukraine, said that the company is in the “test-launch” phase and that no locally-produced shows are being aired in the meantime. The brand will have its official launch on Sept. 3, at which time local programs and ads will be added to the 24-hour TV programming. He said that MTV Ukraine doesn’t know how large its Ukrainian audience is at the moment.

The channel is currently accessed through satellite and cable TV through several major providers in Ukraine, such as Volia Cable in Kyiv. The new MTV Ukraine channel will replace the MTV Europe and MTV Russia programming that had until now been available on satellite and cable TV in the country.

Repetko said that the channel will be filling a TV niche that is currently unoccupied in Ukraine. While there are several other music-based channels in Ukraine, none are up to the standards of programming that MTV Ukraine will be.

The music channels competing for viewership are the M1, Enter, and O-TV channels, but only the former two provide any original programming, and all lack the sophistication and production quality of MTV, according to Repetko. None of them cater to MTV’s particular youth-oriented niche.

According to GFK Ukraine’s TV market share report for the week of Aug. 13-19, only M1 makes the list of the top 10 TV channels, with barely 2 percent of market share. GFK Ukraine is the monopolist provider of data on television channel ratings in Ukraine.

In line with its Ukrainian broadcasting license agreement, 50 percent of the music shown on MTV Ukraine will showcase Ukrainian bands. However, Repetko said that the channel is having trouble finding enough high-quality, locally-produced music videos to reach that quota.

Repetko said the channel would counter this problem by seeking out and assisting little-known, quality Ukrainian musical acts that have so far lacked the financial means to market themselves and create quality music videos.

“We are planning to take an active part in the development of the Ukrainian music industry and talent,” Repetko said.

“We know they are there, but they just don’t have the platform to show themselves to the public,” he added.

Repetko also emphasized that MTV Ukraine will earn its money through advertisements, and not by charging local music bands for playtime, or “pay for play,” as it is locally known, which he said is a widespread policy used by other music channels in Ukraine.