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Nick Curwin and Scarlett Ewens keen to help N&R indies seize the moment

By [Chris Curtis](#) | 27 March 2019

Former The Garden boss joins Scarlett Ewens to launch advisory service Matisse

Nick Curwin and Scarlett Ewens have launched an indie consultancy that aims to help nations and regions (N&R) producers capitalise on the “transformative moment” fast approaching.

The duo, long-term colleagues at Dragonfly and The Garden, have joined forces to create advisory service Matisse. They believe they can help the “plethora of talent [outside of London] that has sometimes been underestimated or overlooked”.

Matisse plans to help indies take advantage of [Channel 4](#)’s decision to ramp up its out-of-London spend to 50% and the [BBC](#)’s N&R commitment, and rise to the challenge of competition from London labels opening satellite offices.

It will offer creative and commercial support, from helping to shape a development slate to dealing with cash-flow problems, personnel matters or credibility issues with buyers.

An unusual part of Matisse's strategy is that it is open to taking small stakes in its clients, in lieu of payment. These are likely to be around 5% to 10% and represent a vote of confidence in the producer, according to Curwin.

"We'll spend time working with the company but won't make anything [from our stake] unless the indie does well."

Matisse has already taken a stake in one production firm and has undertaken two consultancy projects, including one for David Glover and Mark Raphael's 72 Films.

The business has rowed back from its initial vision of investing in production companies. Last year, Matisse explored raising up to £20m, but ultimately declined offers of funding.

Curwin said that N&R producers are more interested in Matisse's hands-on experience than it becoming another investor in a crowded market.

"We've changed our original plan for a better one," Curwin said. "This way, we can concentrate harder on what we do best, while also not being limited to a fixed investment pot or just one set of investment criteria."

The company intends to help indies navigate sales by matchmaking with potential investors. Matisse's first appointment is Edwina Silver, a former Dragonfly head of specialist factual, as director of new business.

Her role will be to build relationships with producers and investors so that they understand Matisse's strategy, as well as helping clients hire senior talent.

She will join Ewens and Curwin on the Matisse board. The trio worked together at Dragonfly (formerly Firefly), the first of two firms that Curwin created and subsequently sold, alongside co-founder Magnus Temple. The other was The Garden, where Ewens was managing director.

Matisse will focus on N&R indies but will also advise London-based producers.