

Europa Cinemas

Network Review #38

December 2021



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Collaborate to Innovate
Europa Cinemas Awards

Europa Cinemas Network Review

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Winning back the audience is our priority



Splendid Palace, Riga

Initial observations

Eighteen months ago, in the first wave of the pandemic, film theatres closed their doors for many months. Today, they are still recovering, especially when it comes to attendance.

Despite vaccinations and health measures within cinemas, one section of the population (the oldest) is still wary about going out and cultural activities have been the first to suffer. This same category of film lovers has preferred to explore online platforms (together with their diversity) and has gotten used to viewing films at home as they did during lockdowns. The risk now is that this group is less motivated to make regular cinema visits. A different observation can be made about younger audiences. They have returned to the cinema for blockbusters, but the attraction of bars and outside seating where they can meet up without wearing a mask has instilled habits that are more conducive to outdoor recreation and socialising.

Distributors report an apparently systematic decline in admissions. These have collapsed for less prominent films and even major films have not been left unscathed. So, will cinema visits be saved only for films “worth going out for”, those that stand out for their dramatic or artistic qualities, thanks to their promotional resources and their event-like impact? If this is the case, distributors and exhibitors will have to come up with compelling arguments for their editorial choices and coordinate

efforts to raise the film visibility. For Europa Cinemas, the stakes are highest for the “discovery” of non-national European film directors, putting the diversity we treasure so deeply at risk.

Winning back audiences

Exhibitors in our network are highly proactive about promoting their cinemas and programming, which is borne out in their success. However, in the current climate we need to come up with new ideas and practices.

We are going to have to increase our efforts to rekindle the interest of previously regular cinemagoers. But above all, we need to reach out to all those audiences who feel that our cinemas are not for them or who do not seem interested in what we have to offer. Our venues are open, inclusive and easily accessible places that bring life to their towns and add value to their districts. Their constantly changing programmes spark curiosity, while the diversity of their audiences and events attract passers-by every day of the year. How fortunate film lovers are to be able to walk freely into a cinema, discover a film from the other side of the world on the big screen, and to discuss it with fellow audience members, or even the directors – all for less than €10! These meeting places are well known in their towns and their reputation is an asset to promote on social media and other digital communications. When it comes to cultural leisure activities, the cinema must keep the top spot.

Younger generations – a priority

It goes without saying that we want to attract younger audiences. Because we need these generations if we are going to steer our programming choices to reflect those visions and behaviours of the future most important to them.

A growing number of member cinemas are adopting decisive, socially responsible practices that promote environmental awareness and conservation and foster sustainable development, diversity and equality. By doing so, they will attract a generation of young cinemagoers who are increasingly aware of and more radical about the issues they see as vital to their future.

Most of our film theatres open every morning for school screenings and have a programme for young audiences every day in the holidays. Some venues have spaces for meeting, reading, gaming, and co-working, so young people can spend time there outside of film screenings.

A network of experiences

Our network is fortunate to be able to share an extensive range of innovations and good practices with its members. In every country, exhibitors are adopting local initiatives, and by dint of their professionalism, these can be of interest to colleagues and adapted across borders. It is Europa Cinemas' role to feature these initiatives on its website and in its publications and to provide a forum for sharing experiences at its Innovation Labs. The most recent lab, in Seville, from the 10th to 14th November, was particularly productive. Over the three days of workshops, 38 exhibitors from 17 countries came together to analyse how the post-lockdown reopening was going and to discuss, with practical examples, the use of data and the practices they need to develop based on their new needs. This lab broke new ground itself by sharing all its work with five European sales agents and live-streaming most of the sessions, which increased attendance numbers significantly beyond the professionals present in Seville. We will continue to take this new hybrid approach to our labs in the coming months, not least in Sofia in March 2022.

Innovative collaborations

Europa Cinemas has just created a new initiative called *Collaborate to Innovate*. After an initial call for proposals, 15 projects (out of 32 received) are currently underway, with funding of €1 million from MEDIA/Creative Europe. This budget will be doubled in 2022 to support a new series of initiatives in which exhibitors will join forces to come up with new practices and tools to further the circulation of European films. The level of support is sizeable (up to €100,000 per project), to enable professionals to supplement their own funds for essential

investments for this new age we live in. In three years, around 50 projects will have started up all over Europe, giving our network the strength it needs and a new look so we can offer members a package of ideas they can adapt to their own venues.

Examples to follow

Two major prizes for 2021 have just been awarded to two of the network's members. The Splendid Palace in Riga has been recognised for the quality and diversity of its programming, and Cineville in the Netherlands has received the prize for Best Entrepreneur. It is worth expanding on this second award, as it recognises an initiative that was started by several members of the network well before the pandemic and gained momentum in the months of enforced closure. These cinemas had already been working together as part of a group of exhibitors who were building a vast network of cinephiles around quality programmes screened in outstanding venues.

The Netherlands has been a particularly inspiring country in recent years. In May 2020, we highlighted another highly original initiative – the creation and development of Picl, a streaming platform in collaboration with and supporting the exhibitors themselves (see our articles Cineville in this edition and the interview about Picl on our website).

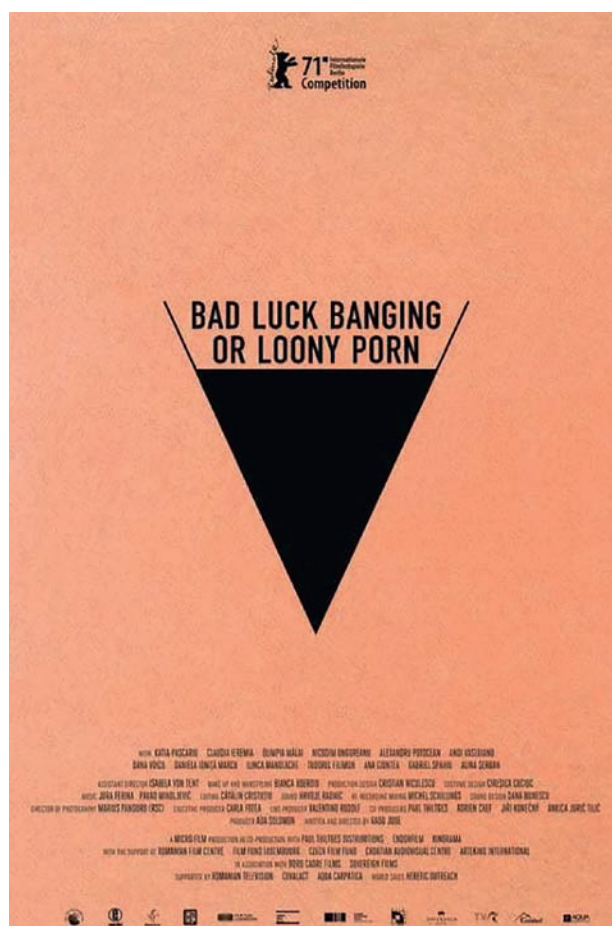
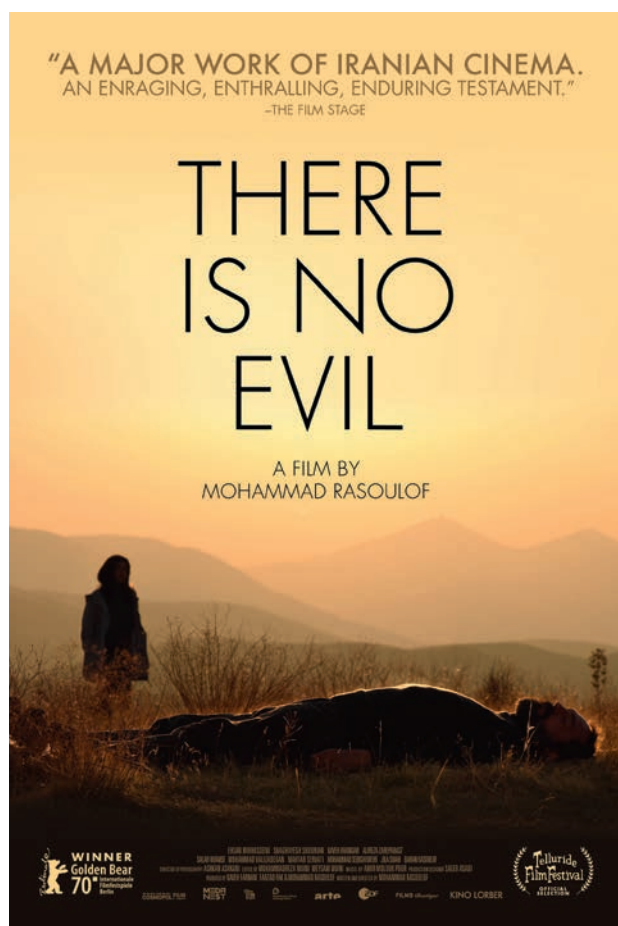
Exhibitors in our network are ready to rise to the post-Covid challenge. But, above all, they are willing to work together on inventing all kinds of new tools to attract and bring audiences back to European films with the support of the teams at our cinemas, who know how to pass on a passion for discovery and a taste for a shared adventure.

Claude-Eric Poiroux

General Director



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The pandemic’s impact on European independent distribution

The past 18 months of the Coronavirus pandemic have focused the minds of Europe’s independent distributors on their place in the film industry’s ecosystem and how to react and adapt their business practices in a swiftly evolving business.

In an op-ed for the French newspaper *Le Monde* at the end of October, Carole Scotta and Eric Lagesse, co-presidents of the independent distributors association DIRE, set out the crucial role played by their sector.

“Distributors are the first to read and invest in the scripts of future films, whether French or foreign, well before television channels, regions, film and audiovisual industry financing companies and other financiers in the sector. When the film is shot, they are still the first to discover the editing, sometimes reworking it with the producer and director, and then orchestrating the release of the film: presentation at festivals, choice of release date and press attaché, choice of cinemas and number of

screens, creation of trailers, posters, press-kits and all the promotional elements.”

“All this is done with their own funds, plus the financial advances paid to acquire the films. In total, their investments amount to several tens of millions of euros per year, most of which is recouped from box-office receipts,” they noted.

“It is a critical role, linking creation and production to exhibition (cinemas, DVD, VOD, TV) and the ultimate goal: the audience,” adds Christine Eloy, managing director of Europa Distribution, a network of around 115 leading distributors representing 30 countries in Europe and beyond.

“In that, distribution is a fragile sector by essence,

dealing with the important gap between upward investments in acquisitions and future potential audience and income. If this ‘gambling’ aspect of the sector is not new, the level of fragility has now reached a frightening level: large amounts of money have been spent on acquisition, release and promotion of films, while revenues have disappeared from the distribution equation,” Eloy explains.

Looking at the sector’s experiences over the past 18 months, Lagesse says that emergency aid provided by the French government via the CNC was “very helpful and generous and a lot of companies could survive the crisis thanks to their financial support.”

“This said, the second reopening on May 19, 2021 was very different from the first one (on June 22, 2020),” he recalls. “On the first one, there was very few films that dared to be released during the summer 2020, so we could release our films on a wide scale and make some fair admissions.”

The second reopening came with a veritable logjam of films wanting at last to be released after the months when the cinemas had been forced to close due to the introduction of lockdown measures.

“We all held back our films during 7, 8, 9 months...so something like 350 films had to be released and we are still paying the price,” Lagesse points out.

In fact, the last two titles scheduled to be released by his company Pyramide Films this December are two from

2020: Mohammad Rasoulof’s Golden Bear winner *There Is No Evil* and Stéphanie Pillonca’s documentary *I Have Been Waiting For You* which premiered at Angoulême’s Festival du film francophone that August.

The problem of the backlog of films now looking to get a theatrical release is compounded by the fact the releases now have a shorter life in the cinemas and it is very difficult to have a success.

According to Lagesse, only the very big films like the latest Bond extravaganza, *No Time To Die*, the new screen adaptation of Frank Herbert’s sci-fi classic *Dune*, Cedric Jimenez’s crime drama *The Stronghold* and Yann Gozlan’s mystery thriller *Black Box* continue to have success at the French box-office.

The scale of the problem was further highlighted by a study undertaken by France’s National Agency for the Development of Cinema in the Regions (ADRC) which reported that admissions to releases by French independent distributors in September 2021 was 70% down compared to two years ago before the pandemic in September 2019.

Meanwhile, Norwegian distributor Frank Stavik of Fidalgo, whose eclectic release line-up includes such titles as *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*, *Sparkling: The Story of Champagne*, *Captain Volkonogov Escapes* and *Une Histoire d’Amour et de Désir*, says that his company was “one of the few distributors that kept going throughout the pandemic,



delivering films to cinemas. What obviously happened due to the restrictions was that we saw a solid reduction in admissions, but that was in part outweighed by the fact that we also saw a significant increase in the number of bookings. Smaller cinemas we normally do not hear from so often programmed our films.”

“Now that Norway has re-opened and more or less gone back to normal, we are however seeing that the numbers are appallingly low, it seems that the art film audience is not ready to come back yet, and no one knows if they will at all...,” Stavik says.

However, he suggests that the disruption to the distribution and exhibition business and the associated fall in admissions cannot be totally blamed on the pandemic since there had been a change to cinema audience viewing habits for some time before then.

“Films that would in the 1990’s do upwards of 20 000 admissions have been steadfastly dropping, and are now at about 10% of what it was then, i.e. around 2,000 admissions,” Stavik explains. “And lately falling rapidly to new depths: *Bad Luck Banging* as an example, struggled to climb above 600 admissions.”

Another preexisting trend which has been exacerbated by the pandemic is the dwindling amount of space given over in newspapers and magazines as well as on television and radio to cover the latest cinema releases each week in any substantial way.

Since many film critics are freelancers, they saw their main source of income dry up as film releases were postponed or cancelled completely by distributors given the uncertainty in many countries of when the cinemas would be able to re-open on a more regular basis.

Some journalists had other strings to their bow such as translation work or started reviewing series produced by Netflix, Amazon and similar for their publications.

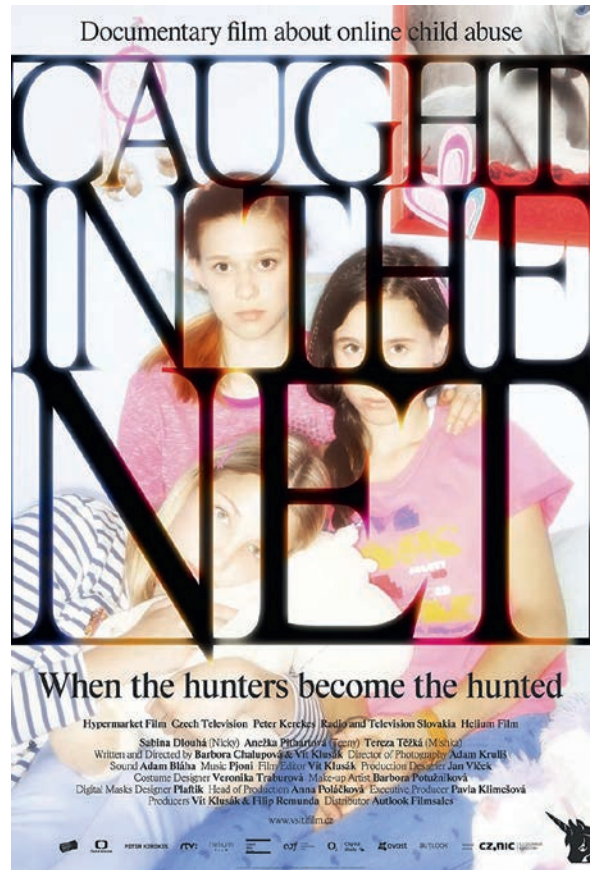
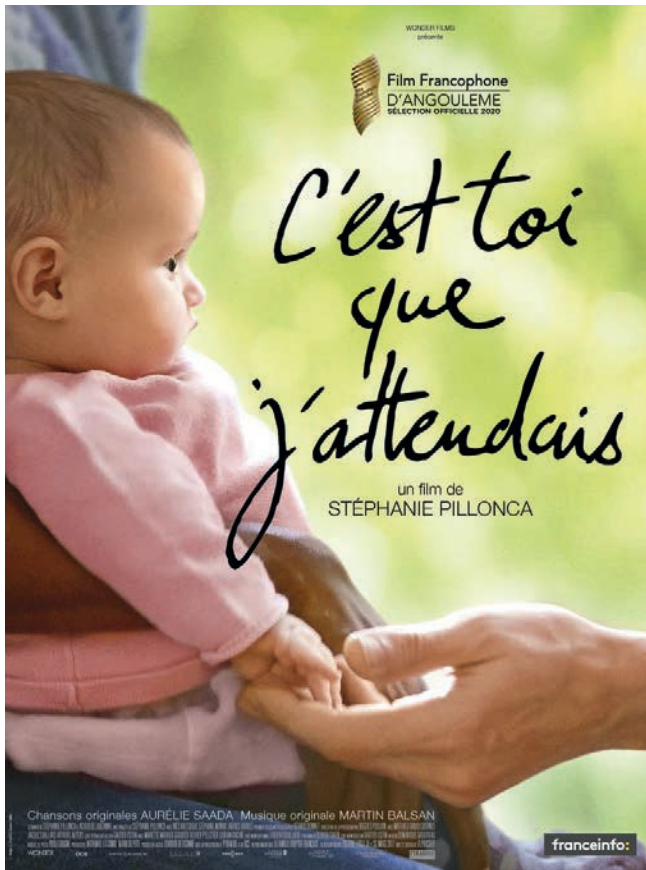
Sylvia Müller, managing director of the Berlin-based film press agency and co-managing director of distributor Neue Visionen, agrees that this struggle for every space of editorial for film PR campaigns had been ongoing beforehand.

“But the completely reversed focus of coverage on digital content could only have happened because of the lockdown,” she suggests. “The long habituation to this state of affairs has now resulted in cinema culture being in part completely and in part radically removed from media coverage in a very short time.”

Meanwhile, the pandemic has also stoked the debate on the pros and cons of preserving the traditional model of windows for a film’s release and also prompted several distributors to experiment with different solutions to have their films released online when a theatrical release was not possible.

Czech distributor Aerofilms, for example, released the documentary on *Caught In The Net* straight to VOD and





saw the cybergrooming drama become the territory’s most successful release of 2020, while its release of Radu Jude’s Golden Bear winner was successfully presented in a mix of theatrical and on demand.

And the fledgling Hamburg-based distributor *not,sold* adopted an innovative approach when Covid-19 scotched plans for a nationwide one-day cinema event for 100.000 - *Alles, was ich nie wollte*, a portrait of the German Youtuber/musician Fynn Kliemann. The film was then presented in a 24 hours online TVOD event, which resulted in 120,000 tickets being sold and over a quarter of a million euros being donated to German cinemas.

At the same time, the competition for distributors (and exhibitors) from the streaming services has become ever stronger – especially during those months of lockdown and cinema closure when the platforms were more than happy to be there for cinema-goers wanting their fix of filmed content.

“We still hope that we will be able to live peacefully and in parallel with the platforms but I have never been certain that this is what they have in mind,” Eric Lagesse says. “We do not have the same business model!”

Any chance of an *entente cordiale* between distributors and the new players looked in jeopardy when Netflix initially planned to host a film festival of its released and

unreleased titles at selected cinemas across France for a week from December 1st.

DIRE and fellow distributor trade association SDI soon went into action, declaring that “at a time when many films are barely able to get released in a way that is in line with their potential, we denounce the holding of such a festival, which is akin to a large-scale marketing campaign, a huge promotional trailer aimed at inciting more spectators to subscribe to their paying service.”

“Once again, it is not a question of being ‘against’ Netflix,” Lagesse argues. “Their success is extraordinary and they have all my respect for this, but I think they have to choose their territory: either theatrical or TV. The day Netflix or others want to become theatrical distributors, this would be very different. They would become fair competitors to the theatrical distributors.”

Martin Blaney

Live Stream Collaboration Network, Austria

Interview with Michael Moser, Filmcasino

by Martin Blaney

This year saw Europa Cinemas launch the Collaborate to Innovate scheme to support outstanding innovative and collaborative projects initiated, developed and implemented by cinema-owners within the Europa Cinemas network.

Financed by Creative Europe's MEDIA sub-programme with a total budget of €1 million for 2021, the scheme selected 15 projects, representing 114 film theatres from 13 European countries, to develop new strategies for the cinema-going experience and audience development for European films.

The issues being addressed by the various projects range from customer management software, data analysis and streaming and multi-platform releases through digital marketing to green working practices.

As Europa Cinemas General Director Claude-Eric Poiroux pointed out, "the scheme was launched at one of the most difficult times in the history of cinema, at a time when the pandemic was forcing closures of film theatres across Europe. But the scheme really caught the imagination and inspired some really exciting entries."

We spoke with Filmcasino's Michael Moser about one of the selected projects, the Live Stream Collaboration Network, which he has established as project coordinator with partner cinemas Filmhaus (Vienna), Movimiento (Linz), Leokino (Innsbruck), and the Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus (Vienna).

What was your motivation for applying for support from the Collaborate to Innovate scheme?

When the Covid crisis started, nobody knew if the audience would come back to the cinemas. However, we at Filmcasino didn't suffer too much from a reduction in attendance because our programming has been targeted at specific audiences and we tried to offer a wide variety of films, special screenings as well as discussions and panels. The idea therefore was to share our particular experiences with other exhibitors, so we looked for potential partners in other cities in Austria who were interested in offering an added value to their programming as a way of attracting audiences back into the cinemas.

Have you worked with the partner cinemas previously on live streamed film events?

Yes, Filmcasino already collaborated with our partner in Leokino (Innsbruck), Movimiento (Linz), as well as other partners when we had the avant-premiere of Jasmila Zbanic's film *Quo Vadis, Aida?* on 24th June. The film was

shown in cinemas that evening and we organised a live online Q&A with the director who was attending the premiere in Vienna. The feedback of all partners was quite encouraging. However, it strengthened our vision for a more interactive approach. We continued the partnership with these and more partners at the premiere event of *Curveball. A True Story. Unfortunately* (Q&A with director Johannes Naber, streamed from Filmcasino) and the premiere of *Walchensee Forever* (Live Zoom talk with director Janna Ji Wonders, who couldn't attend the premiere in person). These premieres have been part of the learning phase for Live Stream Collaboration Network.

What are you planning to do as part of the Collaboration Network and what is particularly innovative about your project?

We want to bring cinemas together through the possibilities of live stream technology. One example would be premieres where the director can't travel to all of the cinemas, but where we can still offer the audience the chance of having a dialogue with the filmmaker about their film. The aim is to give the audience the feeling that this is all happening right now, as if this was actually taking place in their cinema, and there should be the possibility for interaction between the audience and the filmmaker or with a panel of speakers on a particular topic.

In the past, the discussions after screenings via Zoom, didn't have much interaction with the members of the audience. You would have someone asking questions and the director then answering them, and then there would be a WhatsApp or SMS number where you could send your questions, but that didn't give the direct connection we want to create. In my experience, those written messages weren't usually passed on to the director as the moderator was asking all the questions. But the audience will feel that they can ask a question if there is a camera and microphone in the cinema connecting them with the director.



Filmcasino, Vienna

Our activities within the Network would not necessarily all be concentrated in Vienna with a premiere or panel only being streamed from one of the cinemas there. We want to break down the hierarchy of everything being Vienna-centric, so that the live stream could come say from Linz or Innsbruck and that could give us easier access to more guests.

What are you hoping to achieve with this initiative?

We want the partner cinemas to be in a situation where they have the technical equipment in place so that they can stream panels and discussions to each other without too much hassle, although we have faced some technical problems such as ensuring that there isn't any sound feedback during the streaming.

Looking to the future, we could see the project expanding to include other cinemas and this wouldn't just be

restricted to Austria as it is at the moment. For example, if a European film is opening in more than one country at the same time, the director might not be able to come to every country or city for the premiere, so we could connect the cinemas together through our Network and so give the audience the feeling that they are experiencing something rather special.

Partner cinemas:
Filmcasino (Vienna)
Filmhaus (Vienna)
Movimiento (Linz)
Leokino Innsbruck (Innsbruck)
Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus (Vienna)

Arthouse Cinema Pass, Belgium

Interview with Frédéric Cornet, Cinéma Galeries

by Aurore Engelen

Could you please introduce the Cinéma Galeries in a few words?

Cinéma Galeries is an arthouse cinema with three screens. We mainly show festival films, focusing on arthouse, sometimes experimental work.

What about the Arthouse Cinema Pass, how would you present it?

The Arthouse Cinema Pass is a project between us and three other movie theatres in Brussels: Palace, Aventure, and Vendôme. We wanted to create a card that could be shared between the venues.

We had heard of the Cineville experience, as presented at the Europa Cinemas conference in Lisbon. Our purpose is to begin with Brussels, working with all the arthouse cinemas here, on an unlimited pass. We're starting with four theatres, but we're already in discussions with other venues. Next, we hope to expand to Flanders and Wallonia. In addition to the pass, we'll have a website and an app, where we'll publish reviews. We want to build a community.

We hope it will have the same effect as in the Netherlands, where it attracts younger audiences. Typically, our audience for arthouse films are 35 years old and over, but

we do expect to attract audiences between 18 and 30.

We don't actually have many cinemas in Brussels and Belgium. There are several neighbourhoods in Brussels where there are no screens. We think it might help for them to know that there's a film community. We need to map the possibilities in Brussels to have new screens as, in the Netherlands for example, they also opened new cinemas.

I should add that we are a very small country, where people tend to commute from one city to another, meaning they could go to the movies in Brussels as well as in Liège or Antwerp. That's another reason why we think the pass makes sense as a countrywide initiative, and will be adopted very quickly.

If we use the same technology as Cineville, people will even be able to go to the Netherlands, and attend the Rotterdam Film Festival, for example.

How will the pass work?

It's going to work as a monthly subscription, something around 20€/month, and the cardholder will be able to see as many films as they want, at any of the four participating cinemas in the first instance, and then for all member venues.



Cinema Palace, Brussels



Cinéma Galeries, Brussels

What was the need for it in Brussels, and in Belgium?

If I compare Belgium with France or the Netherlands, it seems that over there the relationship with cinema is much stronger, people tend to go to the movies to discover new films, even though they may have never heard of them. We need to find a way to offer something that will push our audiences to make more cinematographic discoveries.

With the Cineville pass in the Netherlands, they've had a 20% growth for arthouse films! In France, they have unlimited passes which are accepted in most theatres, so people become far more curious about new kinds of movies. That's what we want!

Do you think the monthly subscription is a good way to attract younger audiences, who are more used to this formula through their online consumption of culture, whether it's music, series or other content?

I think younger audiences have more time to spend on culture, and the pass will encourage curiosity. When you have a subscription, you feel like you don't pay. They feel they see the movie "for free".

Thanks to the diversity of cinemas, which will be part of the network, the audiences will have a wide range of movies to discover. We are mostly arthouse, but the Aventure has a more mainstream approach, with crossover programming, as does the Palace on occasion.

Every cinema will benefit from it. People will be able to see the new James Bond as well as the new Pedro Costa or Julia Ducournau with the same pass. The pass will create a link between our programming. I hope, in the coming months, we'll be able to convince other theatres, even the Cinématek, to join us.

Will the pass also include festivals?

Yes, I think festivals in Belgium could benefit from it for some screenings. That's how it works in the Netherlands. We want to offer special events to our community, including some premieres, and Q&As with directors. We'd like to do some outdoors screenings, too. We'll also work with film students to write about films for the website and the app. It's a whole package.

What will it change for you on a day-to-day basis?

We'll have a direct link with our audiences, they'll be able to book their tickets online with the card, and we'll also reserve some seats for our cardholders.

We'll launch a survey in a few days to know more about how people would like the pass to be, what kind of films they'd like to see, and which ones they'd like to see with subtitles—we'd like to address the very large expat community that exists in Brussels. We could plan a weekly meeting and screening with English subtitles, for example.

We'll have the results at the beginning of December, and we plan to launch the card in March–April at the latest.

Partner cinemas:

Cinéma Galeries (Brussels)
 Cinéma Aventure (Brussels)
 Palace (Brussels)
 Vendôme (Brussels)



Art Kino, Rijeka

Coastline Cinema, Croatia

Interview with Alen Munitic, Kino Mediteran

by **Stjepan Hundic**

Alen, tell us more about yourself and the partners involved in this project?

Coastline Cinema is a collaboration project between independent cinemas on the Croatian side of the Adriatic, which was created with the aim of networking and developing a joint business model to encourage audiences back into cinemas after a global crisis. I am the director of Kino Mediteran, a network of small cinemas on Croatian islands. Kino Mediteran is coordinator of this project and our partners are coming from bigger cities on the coast: Art-kino in Rijeka, Zlatna Vrata in Split, and Kinematografi in Dubrovnik. In this project, stretching from north to south Croatia, our aim is to connect the audience with film and cinema culture. This is why we named the project Coastline Cinema, to cross the 700km between our cities and islands with the help of great films!

Why did you choose to launch this project?

All the partners in this project connected over a strong belief in European programming, but also owing to the seasonality of our work: for one quarter of the year we use outdoor cinemas. This uniqueness comes from the rich tradition of open-air cinema in Croatia. We survived the

pandemic because of these two factors, and we decided that the Collaborate to Innovate scheme could help us, not only to connect more but, also, to develop a new approach that will motivate the audiences to return to the cinemas and to contribute to overall audience development, especially future generations of cinema-goers.

What was the need for it in your country?

Our cinemas are often the only oases of cultural life in their communities, and we need to raise awareness that going to the cinema and the experience of watching a movie on a big screen have both social and educational value. This is really important to emphasize at a time of global pandemic, and we need projects like this to help us think out of the box – to help us improve things and to implement them on a local and on a national level as well. Our programmes are rooted in European cinema and our target is a general audience, but with a strong focus on developing new audiences, especially children and youth.

What are your expectations?

This support is a huge opportunity for all partners to significantly improve the innovative practices they are

already implementing in their communities and to expand them further. In our proposal, we try to emphasize that each partner in this project can benefit from this collaboration and that each partner can learn something from other partners. We are all very successful cinemas within our communities but are now faced with new challenges. Coming together with a firm plan for this innovative strategy of audience development, and methods that will help bring audiences back to the cinemas, we can make a significant step for the whole southern region of our country.

What could be its impact at the local and national level?

We have developed the programme elements primarily by target group: children, youth, and general audience. We've added innovative parts to each element we are working on. This approach will help in the additional engagement of the audience and in education, in the context of European film. The participation of the audience in each element is the greatest value of the project, which will not only bring new audiences, but will also improve their attitude towards cinemas. We hope that our activities, if proved successful, can easily be adapted for any other members or groups of cinemas in the Europa Cinemas Network.

Please elaborate on planned activities to increase children and young audience engagement in local cinemas.

First, curated content for children will be developed in partnership with local schools. We want to make Adriatic the first region in Croatia to implement a joint-designed

school film catalogue, with titles for all ages, and a teacher's manual will be prepared for each title. The development of a young audience is the biggest challenge of our project. We will try to engage them in their final years of high school through "Film Graduation", a programme that will be fully designed and created by students, and our staff will only provide logistical support. The final part of this programme will be held at our open-air cinemas in the form of a public event for their friends.

Can you tell us more about the #kinostalgija initiative?

#kinostalgija is the segment of the Coastline cinema project related to raising awareness of the importance of cinemas, and will serve as a public campaign to encourage and invite audiences back into cinemas. Through personal stories and reminiscences related to movies, cinemas, and open-air venues; we want to awake memories across generations of our audience. By collecting stories, photos, and videos from our cities and islands, we want to create a virtual exhibition of cinemas on the Adriatic coast. This will also be a testimony to public cultural spaces, some of which have disappeared, others that are in danger of disappearing. We are really looking forward to this initiative and all the great memories we will collect!

Partner cinemas:

- Kino Mediteran (Split)
- Kinoteka Zlatna Vrata (Split)
- Art-kino (Rijeka)
- Kino Sloboda (Dubrovnik)



Ljetno kino Bačvice, Split

New collective innovative software for small-sized cinemas, Estonia

Interview with Andres Kauts, Tartu Elektriteater

by Pavel Sladky

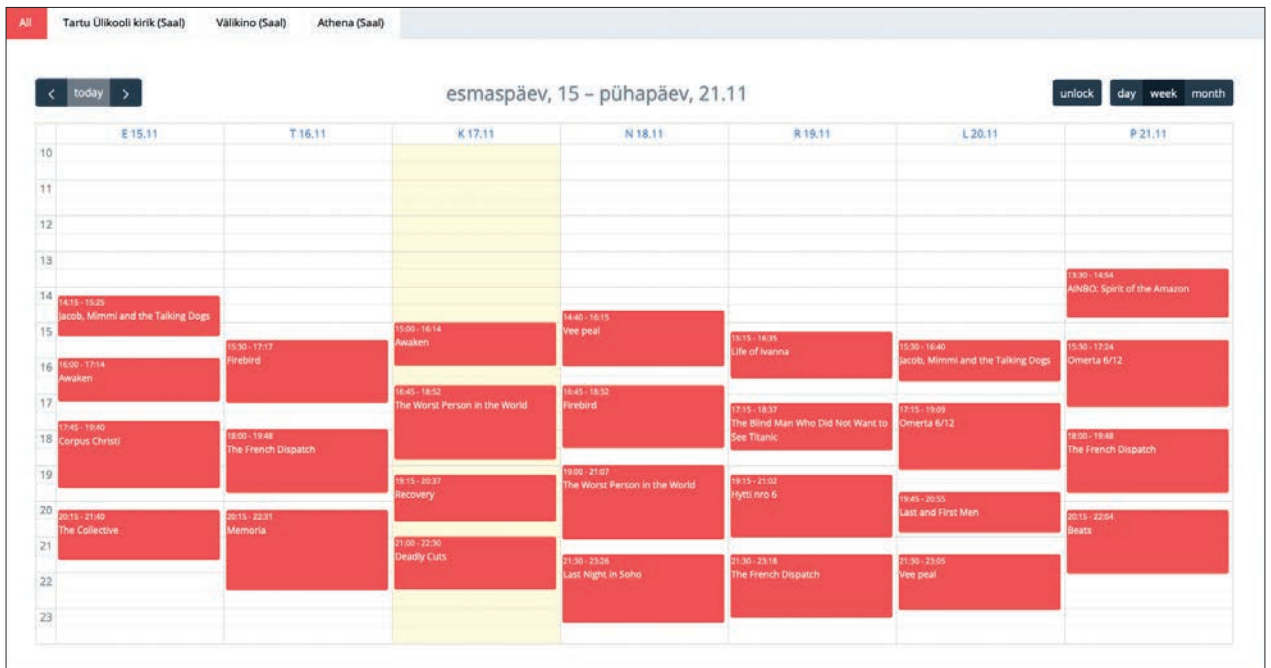
“Let’s make days in cinemas easier and happier.” Estonian Tartu Elektriteater is developing new software for small-sized cinemas. We talked about it with Andres Kauts from Tartu Elektriteater team via Zoom.

How would you characterize Tartu Elektriteater?

We are an arthouse cinema in Tartu, the second biggest city in Estonia with around 150,000 inhabitants, including a number of students. We are a single screen cinema with 120 seats, and we have been operating for more than ten years. We started as a group of students, focusing on what we were missing, and it evolved over time, of course. I hope we host more diverse and rich programming now. We often screen a film just once in any given week, meaning we can easily end up with fourteen films showing in one week, even though we are single screen cinema. Our audience needs time to discover smaller independent productions, so that word of mouth has time to spread. We are the only

independent cinema in town and there are just so many great movies to enjoy!

This wide range of programming is where your ideas for the software comes from, right? And the goal is to spend less time on the administrative work behind it? Nobody wants to spend too much time on manual administrative work, I guess! We have had the idea in mind for quite a long time. We felt the work could be done more effectively if it was automated. I have a background in IT, so it felt even more natural for me to head in this direction. We have loads of Excel spreadsheets for shared data, but it takes so much time! A lot of this work is simply repetitive. We



Screenshot of calendar to prepare the film schedule.

want to think about the content of our cinema, not whether or not the data is correctly copied into all fields of a spreadsheet. And it also helps us to avoid spending extra hours on reports. That is a job a computer could do, if the data is in the correct format. We talked to other cinemas and realized they have similar issues. Two years ago, we decided to take action and see where it goes. When Europa Cinemas announced the Collaborate to Innovate initiative, we knew our project would fit perfectly.

There are big corporate softwares for cinemas, but we feel it is not for us. They are too big, expensive and don't meet our needs. We wanted it to be small and cute, but useful. As our colleagues from Riga say, "Software should work for people, not people for software." The software prototype is now ready, we are testing it before we start using it in December.

How does it work?

We use public movie databases as well as our own database as the sources of information. You can easily add new films to the system without filling in many fields. Afterwards, you can continue with scheduling, then it's ready to be published on your website. You can use different tags or labels to show whether the screening is a part of series, what the pricing is, etcetera. And you can add your own tags to projections. This helps later with statistics, where you can filter different tags, and it gives a perfect overview. Once it's on your website, cinemagoers can buy tickets, and use their membership cards. Scheduling takes little time. We plan to develop the reporting system further, so cinemas can retrieve ample data. It takes just a minute to generate the overview required. We want to ensure small cinemas have access to contemporary software to make their workflow easier and more efficient. Cinemas do have little reports they can use. Even the most basic statistic overview of a previous month is hugely advantageous.

How many cinemas are there in the group planning to start using this software?

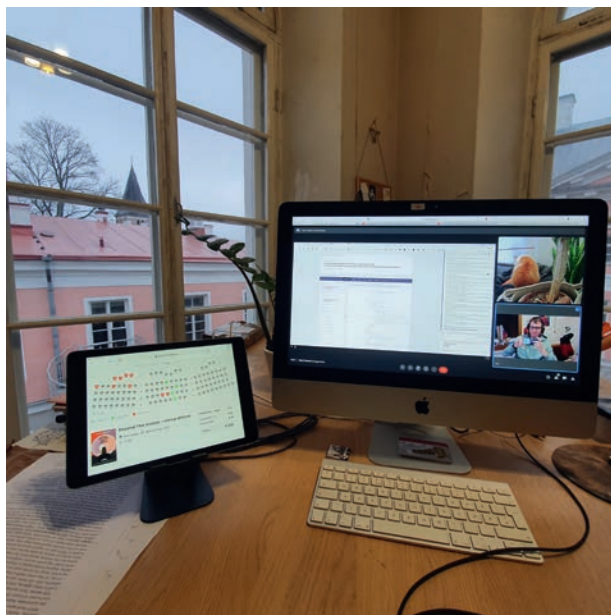
We are a group of four Estonian cinemas: Tartu Elektriteater, Kino Sõprus in Tallinn, Thule Cinema in Kuressaare, and Cinema Kannel in Võru.

How do your partner cinemas contribute to your software? How would you characterize your cooperation?

Partner cinemas contribute greatly in providing their input on what their biggest needs are and what tasks they would hope to automate. Their main input is in constant testing and feedback on what is working and what should be changed to make things better. We, in Elektriteater, together with programmers, are undertaking the technical work. But a lot of the thinking, finding the best solutions and, most importantly, in identifying problems to solve, is done together with all four partner cinemas.



Project partners in development team enjoying the cake to celebrate the milestone when booking with reserved seats was completed.



Online developing session.

What languages does your software work with?

To begin with, we have it in Estonian and English. But it is easy to add more languages and make it international.

How are you going to evaluate whether your project is successful?

The main criterion is simply whether cinemas use it and are happy with it—including us. It should make an operational cinema day happier and easier. It is hard to quantify, but, if more and more movie theatres adopt it, this will tell us that the software is useful and a success.

Partner cinemas:

- Tartu Elektriteater (Tartu)
- Kino Sõprus (Tallinn)
- Thule Cinema (Kuressaare)
- Cinema Kannel (Võru)

PasserelleCiné, France

Interview with Philippe Lecocq, Tarik Roukba, and Jérémie Monmarché, Cinémas Studio

by **Melanie Goodfellow**

The PasserelleCiné project involves the creation of a dedicated online cinema resources platform for social workers in priority neighbourhoods, or areas of social and economic deprivation earmarked for special state support.

It is an extension of the PasserelleCiné association launched in 2020 by Tarik Roukba and Jérémie Monmarché of Cinémas Studio in the French city of Tours. With the backing of its director Philippe Lecocq, its aim is to make the venue more accessible to people living in these neighbourhoods.

What was the inspiration behind PasserelleCiné?

Philippe Lecocq: Our location in the centre of Tours means our public tends to be financially comfortable and cultivated. We felt we were missing a connection with people living in priority neighbourhoods. Our films are for everyone, but we rarely get people from those areas through the door.

There are ten priority neighbourhoods in and around Tours. We decided to create an association that would go directly into those neighbourhoods, to connect with the people living there to then encourage them, through different initiatives and events, to come to the cinema.

In the process of setting up the project, we realised that the best way to connect with this public was through the social workers in these areas. They are in daily contact

with the people there, and are in a position to propose group cinema trips or other events including workshops or discussions around film.

How does the online PasserelleCiné platform fit into this initiative?

Tarik Roukba: The idea is for it to be an interactive tool for the social workers so that, in one click, they have all the information they need on a film at their fingertips, which, in turn, will help them organise trips or events around these films, hopefully bringing this audience that we're missing. It will also enable cinemas involved in the initiative to share material around films and events including workshops, discussions, and filmmaker events.



Cinémas Studio, Tours

What is your long-term goal for the platform?

Tarik Roukba: For it to be transposable to other cities in France and the rest of Europe. We already have five other cinema partners in France: Cinéma Les 7 Batignolles in Paris, Cinéma Le Castillet in Perpignan, Cinéma Jean Vigo in Gennevilliers, Cinéma Le Méliès in Montreuil, and Cinéma Lux in Caen.

Do you have any partners outside of France?

Tarik Roukba: We've started talking with a cinema in London and another in Hungary, with hope of expanding the initiative to those places next year.

When will the platform come online?

Jérémie Monmarché: It's still under construction, but we're aiming for end-January, start-February. In addition to Collaborate to Innovate, the project was selected for the Challenge Futur@Cinéma [an incubator event aimed at projects supporting the renewal of cinema audiences running under the auspices of Les Arcs Film Festival]. We will first present the platform at Les Arcs in December.

Tarik Roukba: In the meantime, we're laying the physical foundations for the initiative, talking to social workers and social centres. Even though the platform isn't online, we're already working on films locally as if the platform were live. We're hoping to do a sort of test run with Nabil Ayouch's *Casablanca Beats*. It's a film about hip-hop that touches on a lot of other issues like the place of girls and women in society. There are a number of angles around which we'd like to stage events.

Will the initiative mainly work with films with storylines connected to people living in the priority neighbourhoods or could you select a work completely beyond their realm of experience, like, say, Xavier Giannoli's costume drama *Lost Illusions*?

Tarik Roukba: The aim is to support European arthouse films, but we're sensitive to the fact that some films are more accessible than others. *Lost Illusions* is a fairly accessible film. We're currently considering categorising films along the lines of the colour-coded system used for ski slopes. An experienced cinephile can go down any slope, while groups or individuals with less experience of arthouse cinema can choose a green slope film. This could be useful for social workers when they're trying to judge whether a film will work with a certain group or not.

Jérémie Monmarché: We also take our cues from the feedback and suggestions from the social workers. Sometimes they come to us with films we hadn't thought of. We recently had a request for Vincent Maël Cardona's *Magnetic Beats*, which revolves around the community radio scene. We discovered that interest in the film was sparked because the neighbourhood where the request came from had its own community radio station.



Where do you plan to screen the films being promoted within the PasserelleCiné initiative?

Tarik Roukba: It's important that the screenings take place in a cinema theatre. That is the best place to discover film and that's what we're defending.

Philippe Lecocq: We have a system in France that is very precise about where you can show a film, especially those on general release. You can't just screen them anywhere.

What do you hope PasserelleCiné and its online platform will bring specifically to your theatre?

Philippe Lecocq: The end game is to increase our audience numbers with people who didn't go to the cinema before and, in the process, hopefully create new cinephiles.



Partner cinemas:

- Cinémas Studio (Tours)
- Cinéma Les 7 Batignolles (Paris)
- Cinéma Le Castillet (Perpignan)
- Cinéma Jean Vigo (Gennevilliers)
- Cinéma Le Méliès (Montreuil)
- Cinéma Lux (Caen)



Café des Image, Hérouville Saint-Clair

In Extenso, France

Interview with Elise Mignot, Café des Images

by **Melanie Goodfellow**

Billed as a “sound factory capturing the life of cinema theatres across Europe”, In Extenso revolves around the creation of podcasts and other sound-based content inspired by the participating cinemas and their programmes. Elise Mignot, the director of the Café des Images cinema in Hérouville-Saint-Clair, a satellite city of the Normandy port of Caen, leads the project.

The other key partners include: Cinéma TNB, which is part of the National Theatre of Brittany (TNB) cultural complex in Rennes; Cinéma le Zola in Villeurbanne, the second-largest city in the metropolitan area of Lyon; and podcast studio Narrason.

Mignot talks about the origins and ambitions of the project.

Can you tell us a bit more about the project and its origins?

Even though we’re called the Café des Images, we’ve been thinking about the question of sound for a while now and, in 2019, we started developing a project called Café des Sons (Café of Sounds) looking at different ways of working with sound in connection with cinema.

In the process, we connected with other cinemas that had also started working with sound and, specifically, podcasts. The Cinéma TNB, which, as part of the TNB, has access to production facilities, for example, started producing podcasts when cinemas were closed during

lockdown. We thought it would be great to work together, collectively, to delve into the question of sound in greater depth. We all intuitively felt that it could be an interesting way to connect people with cinemas.

Can you give some examples of the types of sound content you plan to create?

That’s what we’re figuring out now. When we submitted the project, we gave ourselves a wide brief that we’re now in the process of defining. A key focus will be youth and the issues around which they are politically engaged. At the same time, we want each participant to produce

sound content that is pertinent to their theatre, so it will be very diverse.

Will the content be narrative or soundscape-based?
 Mainly narrative.

A key element of the project is short residencies by sound artists in each of the participating cinemas. Can you explain the thinking behind this and how it will work?

Within the project, there is the idea that, as well as being a place of diffusion, cinemas can also be a place for the production of cultural content. Under the residencies plan, different sound artists will spend time in each of the participating theatres to create a one-off “feature-length” sound work that reflects the life of the cinema, in collaboration with Narrason. As well as generating a new piece of work, the residency week will also give us an opportunity to raise questions around sound with both our staff and audience.

Will you extend the project to other European partners outside of France?

The plan is that each of the participating cinemas in France will twin with another theatre in Europe on the project. For example, the Cinéma TNB holds the Travelling Film Festival every February where it focuses on a single city, and the city for 2022 will be Prague. The idea is that the residency will take place during this festival and that an exhibitor from Prague will also attend so they can integrate their cinema into the project.

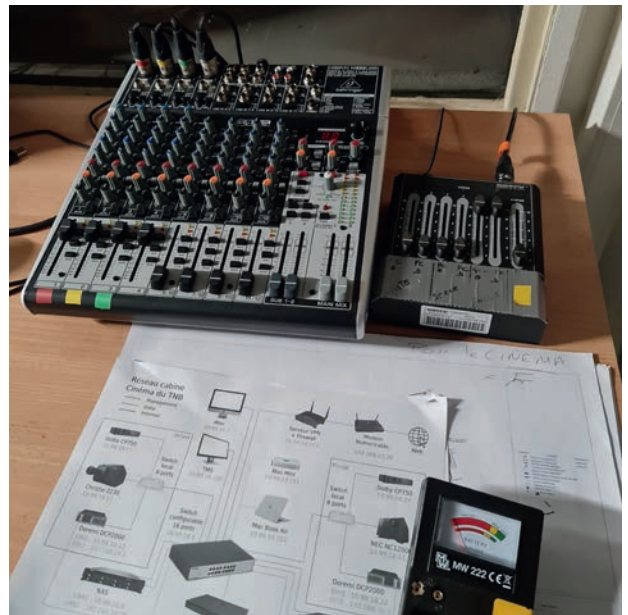
When do you plan to run the residencies at the Café des Images and Cinéma Le Zola?

In November for Cinéma Le Zola, to coincide with a short film festival that they have at the time, and for the Café des Images, it will be around end-January, early February.

What will you do with these podcasts and other forms of sound content?

The question of how we diffuse these podcasts and integrate sound content into our programmes is another key element of the project. We want to experiment with the idea of listening to sound content in a cinema theatre.

At the Café des Images, we have planned an event on November 26th around a preview screening of *Lamb*. We often show short films ahead of the main programme but this time we have experimented with short podcasts connected to the themes of animality and strangeness that are in the film. It is a test case and gives us an opportunity to see how it works and how the public reacts. We also have other ideas around making them available in our entrance hall on headphones via a system of QR codes.



Are there any other elements to the project?

The third phase is to create a kind of blueprint or template for creating podcasts. Our teams already do this using a very set format with Narrason, but it’s something we want to develop. The aim is for each of the three cinemas in the initial round of the project to create five podcast episodes, lasting five minutes each, to create a 15-episode series around the lives of our cinemas. We’d then like to be able to offer the opportunity to other cinemas in France and Europe to create podcasts for this series, giving them the benefit of our experiences and know-how.

These episodes could be about a wide range of topics from films to artists and actors, or even events in the participating cinemas. The editorial line will be quite wide but, at the same time, we want to touch on subjects that will connect with younger audiences in all their diversity and different types of political engagement, whether it be around ecology, feminism, or inclusion.

What are your hopes and expectations for this project?

That we will have really worked in close collaboration with our partners to deepen our understanding of sound and how we can use it to capture the lives of our cinemas and integrate that into the work that we do. A longer-term hope is that we will find a way to sustain these initiatives into the future.

Partner cinemas:

- Café des Images (Hérouville-Saint-Clair)
- Cinéma TNB (Rennes)
- Cinéma Le Zola (Villeurbanne)

Imperceptibles, France and Hungary

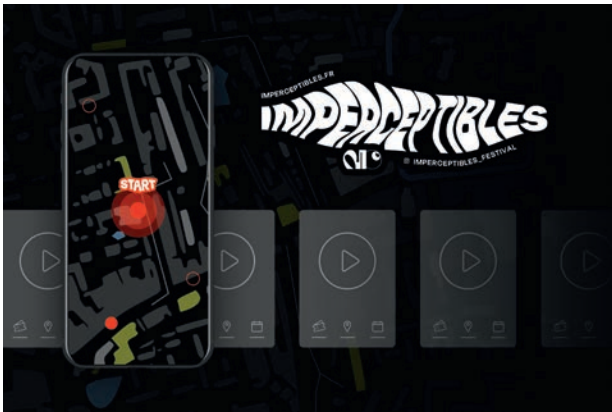
Interview with Alix Menard, Le Balzac

by **Melanie Goodfellow**

The Imperceptibles project will see one of Paris's oldest arthouse venues, the 87-year-old Le Balzac Cinema off the Champs-Élysées, lead the way on a secret film festival inspired by the Space Invaders pixel mural hunt craze, augmented reality mobile game Pokémon GO, and the underground techno scene.

Other participants in the project, aimed predominantly at the 15 to 25-year-old age group, comprise three other Paris arthouse venues, the Studio Des Ursulines, Luminor and L'Épée de Bois, and the Budapest Film Zrt group and its six cinemas in the Hungarian capital, the Corvin film palace and Művész, Puskin, Toldi, Kino Café, and Tabán arthouse cinemas.

The project is the brainchild of Alix Menard, head of development and local anchoring at independent cinema chain Étoile Cinémas and graphic artist Robin Pierre.



Why did you choose to launch this project?

Independent arthouse cinemas in Paris are perceived as places for older audiences. Through my work at Etoile Cinémas, I could see that, of all the cinemas in the group, Le Balzac was suffering the most because of this perception. I felt there was an urgent need to reflect on how we could get a younger audience into the cinema. The types of independent films we show often tackle issues of interest to this age group and would likely have a longer lasting impact than many of the blockbusters but, the challenges is getting that age group through the door.

What is the thinking behind the secret film festival?

The identity of the festival lies in its secret nature, rather than the films or venues. One of our inspirations has been the underground techno scene in cities like Paris and Berlin, and their pop-up events in unexpected locations that are promoted as something rare and exclusive but, in reality, generate a lot of excitement and hype.

If the event is secret, how are you going to promote it?

Rather than using traditional methods of posters, flyers, or trailers, we've developed an App-based, augmented reality mobile game using our own icons. When located and scanned, they'll bring up exclusive film content, and completing the game will give the user access to information on the film and venue. The final stage will be buying a ticket to the event. The initiative is predominantly aimed at the 15 to 25-year-old demographic, but there will also be two or three routes aimed at children and films for that age group.

Graphic artist Robin Pierre came up with the initial concept. He approached me as a student about a year-and-a-half ago asking for help on his final dissertation. He had similar ideas around arthouse cinemas as I did, and he had read the final dissertation I wrote on the future of cinemas while studying exhibition and distribution at the Fémis. We were bandying around ideas when Europa Cinemas launched its call for projects Collaborate to Innovate and it felt like a good opportunity to try them out.

When will the inaugural edition to take place?

June 2022.

How will you create the line-up?

We're partnering with three festivals; the Strasbourg European Fantastic Film Festival (SEFFF), the Premiers Plans Film Festival in Angers, and the National Festival of Animation Film organised by the French Association of Cinema Animation (AFCA) in Rennes. We'll select films from their line-ups that we find the most relevant for



Project presentation at Strasbourg European Fantastic Film Festival, with Alix Ménard and Robin Pierre

our initiative. There will also be an animated short film programme, involving works by French and Hungarian filmmakers. We want to create events around the screenings in keeping with this idea of it being a festival. This could be a concert or perhaps a fake power-cut for a horror film... it will depend on the films we end up selecting.

What was your thinking behind partnering with arthouse cinemas in Budapest for this inaugural edition?

I visited Budapest and I was struck by how its arthouse cinemas are much more inventive than the cinemas in Paris. They don't have the system of state support that we have in France, so they need to generate different sources of revenue. The Toldi Mozi, for example, transforms itself into a night club. I found this dynamic interesting. There are also lots of cinema theatres in the city so, in that respect, it's a bit like Paris.

Will there be any physical interaction between the audiences in Paris and Budapest?

There will a competitive element to these games under which the person who collects the most icons in Paris and Budapest will then be invited to the closing event in the other city.

What are your expectations for this project?

As well as being selected for Collaborate to Innovate, the project has also participated in the Challenge Futur@Cinema [an incubator event aimed at innovative projects supporting the renewal of cinema audiences running under the auspices of Les Arcs Film Festival]. Through that, we've met a lot of people, including distributors who are very interested in the concept of the game and how it could be applied to individual releases of their films. Beyond encouraging younger audiences into arthouse cinemas, we think the concept could help transform the marketing of independent films.

Partner cinemas:

Cinéma Le Balzac (Paris)
 Studio des Ursulines (Paris)
 Luminor (Paris)
 L'Épée de Bois (Paris)
 Művész Art Cinema (Budapest)
 Puskin Art Cinema (Budapest)
 Toldi Art Cinema (Budapest)
 Kino Café Art Cinema (Budapest)
 Tabán Art Cinema (Budapest)
 Corvin Film Palace (Budapest)

Z-Power.

Young people back to the movies, Italy

Interview with Silvia Pareti, Area Metropolis 2.0

by **Stefano Radice**

“Z-Power. Young people back to the movies” is an Italian project for young people aged 9-23 conceived by Cineteca di Milano and supported by Europa Cinemas as part of Collaborate to Innovate. It is a training opportunity that will establish a group of young programmers ready to promote European films on the big screen and will also provide a growth opportunity for exhibitors.

Bringing audiences—especially young audiences—in to watch European cinema on the big screen is the challenge that exhibitors, distributors, and institutions face. In Italy, “Z-Power. Young people back to the movies” is aimed at young people aged between 9 and 23 and involves a network of 12 cinemas, 11 of which belong to the Europa Cinemas network. We spoke with Silvia Pareti from Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, who served as the main creator and promoter of the project.

How did the idea for this project come about?

The idea stems from the relationships created between exhibitors at Europa Cinemas’ meetings during the lockdown caused by Covid-19. The project, therefore, is in the spirit of collaboration and from a mutual understanding that has consolidated in recent months between cinemas of different types and geographical locations. They are all competent and well-established in the territory, and venues with whom we already have a working relationship.

We applied with Area Metropolis 2.0 in Paderno Dugnano, near Milan. The aim is to bring young audiences to our cinemas with a film education programme. Each cinema will have a group of 10-15 young programmers coordinated by a tutor, who will be in charge of selecting the titles for a film showcase to be held in the early months of 2022. These young people will then hold a discussion with the audience; this is another objective of the project, to establish intergenerational dialogue between young people and the older audiences that make up the majority of our regular cinema attendees.

Which films will be part of the film showcase?

These are European films. The fifteen titles, from which the young people will choose six, were selected by the Network exhibitors from among the European films that have already been released in Italy and those that haven’t been widely seen, among other new titles that we plan

to distribute in their original languages, subtitled. We, as Cineteca, have made our wealth of experience in the acquisition of films: we have always tried to give visibility to films that deserve attention and those that rarely find a home in cinemas.

Who is the project aimed at?

Certainly the young audience, the cinema audience, but also the professionals and exhibitors for whom we are preparing a series of training courses. In fact, the project is also a way of giving the exhibitors themselves more tools with which to involve young people. During the project there will also be a series of meetings open to other associations and cinemas to learn about the work we are doing. In December, for example, the coordinator for the group of young programmers at the Lucas Film Festival in Frankfurt will hold a seminar for our network, an invitation to which will then be extended to exhibitors who wish to participate. We will do the same with the Spanish association Abao in Qu. These are all opportunities to explore new themes and ways of working.

What needs does this project meet for the industry?

More involvement for young people in European cinema on the big screen. We aim to have staff trained and increasingly qualified in working with young people, and to create more networking opportunities between exhibitors. This challenging work has already started and we are carrying it out step by step. We are very happy with the work done so far. Thanks to the open line of dialogue between colleagues across the network, many ideas have emerged.

What is the timing for the call for projects?

We learnt at the end of August that we had secured funding, but the project implementation had started in July and will end in June 2022. We hope what we are doing will become permanent. Securing funds for this project was

important because it gave us the opportunity to organise our activities, to define them, and to establish a timeframe. Our theatres could not do it alone. The support from Europa Cinemas is paramount. We also hope to use the funds to invite directors during the festival.

Did the idea of the project come from the Fondazione Cineteca di Milano?

During lockdown, together with other exhibitors, we promised ourselves we would come up with something to relaunch our activities. We all contributed with the best of our resources, skills, and abilities. As Fondazione Cineteca we collated the different ideas and developed this project, further facilitated by previously developed film education strategies.

Are you happy with the work done?

I would say so, yes. We are the only ones in Italy to have been selected within this support scheme and it was a nice surprise for us. If Europa Cinemas had not given us the green light, we would have gone ahead anyway, but it would have been much more difficult to coordinate with other exhibitors. Without a body or an institution that formalises and supports initiatives like this, it is difficult to get going. This is why the support of Europa Cinemas makes us proud.



Cinema Rondinella, Sesto S. Giovanni

Partner cinemas:

- Area Metropolis 2.0 (Paderno Dugnano, Milan)
- Cinema Palestrina and Cinemino (Milan)
- Rondinella (Sesto San Giovanni, Milan)
- Multisala Ariston (Mantua)
- Capitol Multisala (Bergamo)
- Cinema Nuovo (Varese)
- Cinema Edera (Treviso)
- Il Nuovo (La Spezia)
- Cinema Mignon (Chiavari, Genua)
- Cinema Astoria (Lerici, La Spezia)
- Cinema Garibaldi (Carrara).



Cinema Ariston, Mantua

Travel with film education, Latvia and Lithuania

Interview with Ieva Sipola, Splendid Palace

by Pavel Sladky

“Our mission is a new audience, educated in cinema.” Latvian-Lithuanian project Travel With Film Education is getting ready.

Cinemas in three Baltic cities united to find new young audiences to offer them the possibility of an enjoyable education. The plan is to address social issues, national history, culture, language, and many other topics through a series of European films screenings. We sat down with Ieva Sipola, manager of the beautiful and traditional Splendid Cinema in Riga, to talk about this new activity.

Which cinemas launched the project and what motivates you?

In Travel With Film Education, there are three cinemas involved. My colleagues and I from Splendid Palace in Riga, Latvia, coordinate the project. Our partners in Lithuania are Romuva Cinema in the city of Kaunas, and Pasaka Cinema in the capital, Vilnius. Our cinemas are quite different in terms of programming, audience, number of screens, and capacity, but we do not consider it an obstacle, rather, a challenge. We have a shared mission in that we want to work with new audiences to educate them through film about a range of topics.

What kind of audience do you want to work with and what is the plan?

The Travel With Film Education project aims to bring young audiences between the ages of 15 and 25 to cinemas, for afternoon sessions with screenings. We also plan to create digital tools, through which young people, while playing and solving prepared tasks, could deepen their knowledge not only about European cinema, but also about other relevant topics including social issues. Tools that are currently being developed include tests, questionnaires, puzzles, crossword games, and other types of tasks with pictures, audio, and video material, all of which are accessible in a mobile app, because smartphones are the place where younger generations can be found.



So, you aim to mix education and entertainment. What are your expectations and what could be the impact on a national level?

We want to educate Generation Z while entertaining them. The diversity in cinema programming throughout the year is, unfortunately, limited. We want to bring Polish, Romanian, Belgian, and Greek cinema to our venues. We are reaching out to find intelligent young people, and we do not want to offer simple lectures that could feel the same as being in school. Screenings will be accompanied with workshops, and local influencers will participate in both promoting the events via their Instagram, Youtube, or TikTok channels and in the live workshops.

The heart of the project is a series of eight film programmes. Screenings of European films—classic and contemporary films of different genres—will be paired with lectures, discussions, practical workshops, and tailor-made activities appealing to the interests of young people, to attract them to traditional movie theatres. There is





Splendid Palace, Riga

essentially no film or audio-visual content taught in either Latvian or Lithuanian schools currently, and we believe that if there is no education on European film culture in the school system, someone else should do it. We consider that our mission.

**Could you be more specific about the programme?
What kind of films do you want to screen?**

The Travel With Film Education project plans to kick off with *Amélie (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain)*, the famous French romantic comedy starring Audrey Tatou. The Latvian-Lithuanian project would like to use the film as an entry point to French culture. Our theme for the opening session will be the history of arts and culture in France. The accompanying digital app could inspire our participants to follow in the footsteps of the film in Paris, and we might even continue with creating intriguing tours in our cities.

Cristian Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile)* is planned as our second iteration of the project. A much darker film, set in communist Romania in the final years of the Nicolae Ceaușescu era, it tells the story of two students trying to secure an illegal abortion. For this screening, we would like to team up with young influencers so we can address the topic of abortion, and also other social issues including the gender agenda,

LGBTQ+ issues, coming-out, and other current social topics related to body and mind.

How far along are you with the project? Are you concerned about any Covid related complications?

Some of the tools and programmes are still ideas under development at the moment. We are really curious about what films, topics, and activities will work. We plan to run focus groups with our target audience ahead of implementation, so they can tell us which ideas to keep and which to abandon. We are a little worried, that is true. But lockdown has been lifted on November 15th here, and cultural events in seated venues are possible again. We really hope to start in January as planned. We are ready to continue as a so-called "green events place" for audiences who are either vaccinated or have recovered from Covid-19 within 90 days. If pandemic restrictions are relaxed enough, Travel With Film Education will premiere on January 27th 2022.

Partner cinemas:

Splendid Palace (Riga)
Kino "Pasaka" (Vilnius)
Kaunas cinema centre "Romuva" (Kaunas)

Hybrid futures for European cinema, The Netherlands

Interview with Pien Houthoff, Cinema Lux

by **Geoffrey Macnab**

The Cinema Lux in Nijmegen is the largest arthouse venue in the Netherlands – and is considered by many to be the most beautiful. It hosts events, Q&As, and musical performances as well as showing films. During the pandemic, working with streaming platform Picl, the venue expanded its online offering. Under its manager Pien Houthoff, the Lux is now introducing the joint project “Hybrid Futures for European cinemas,” for which it has strong support from Europa Cinemas through the Collaborate to Innovate support scheme.

Lux is leading the way in a project combining online offerings with physical screenings. Other venues across the Netherlands, from LantarenVenster in Rotterdam to the EYE in Amsterdam are also part of the initiative, which will use the Container, (a platform enabling hybrid streaming and online ticketing).

Why did you choose to launch this project?

Lux is a big theatre, home not only to film, but music and theatre, too. It has seven screens for film, and one more for theatre and debate. Over the last year-and-a-half, we have launched many online programmes due to lockdown. We were looking for a tool to combine ticketing and all the different platforms on our website. While we were doing that, we discovered the Container [the platform that gives arthouse cinemas a way of organising streaming and online ticketing], and we thought it would be a good idea to start it – not just for Lux, but for the other theatres, too – so we could combine our content. The idea behind the Container is that it is adapted to your own website, and it looks like your own programme, but it can also be initiated by

another film theatre. We organise many film discussions and courses – we can offer that online or hybrid – not only here in Nijmegen but in other cities in Holland, too. As such, we asked the Association of Dutch Film Theatres if there were other theatres interested in this idea and 15 of the 25 theatres were very enthusiastic. So that’s why we started this initiative.

What was the need for it?

During the pandemic, people have been a bit scared to go back to live meetings with others, sitting next to each other. This is a bridge between the pandemic period and (I hope) a period in the future where we can forget about those restrictions. In general, people have less time. I think film theatres have to look to the future. There are [now] many online platforms, such as Netflix and HBO, that are expanding rapidly. We must make changes for the future. “Hybrid content” is, partially, a way to expand our audience. You can build communities and attract people to your film theatre. You can build a better relationship [with the audience] so they feel at home online as well as in venue.





Cinema Lux, Nijmegen

What are your expectations?

The collaboration between the 15 film theatres is very unique, so I hope we can participate in events together. In the long term, I hope we can extend it not only across Holland but also Europe, where we can secure Q&As and red carpet events, as well as film discussions and courses.

What could be its impact at local and national level?

Why this is a good idea, and why Picl also works so well, is because the film theatres have a big local and regional audience. They can reach the audience better than a national platform can. That's why I think, for the local and regional public, it will expand the programmes we offer. Also, it's a chance to be part of a wider community. A large segment of our audience are film-loving, which means they really like communicating with other film-loving people, not only in Nijmegen but in other cities. That's why it's interesting to be part of a wider community, in Holland or Europe.

Nationally, we can get a bigger audience. It will open possibilities for more people to be part of these events. If you don't live near a film theatre, it's still possible to join the chat and ask questions.

The Container was started by the four film festivals in the Netherlands, IDFA, IFFR, The Netherlands Film Festival and Cinekid. For us, this project is a good way to ensure better interaction with film festivals because they are already using it, and we are now adapting it for the film theatres, too.

What is the timeframe for this?

At this moment, we are integrating the system at five of the theatres. I think the first online content available will be around January. By March, we will all be participating.

Will this appeal to younger cinemagoers?

Our audience is mixed. We have an older audience, as all the film theatres do, but also attract a student, and younger audience. Specifically, the younger viewers are very keen on online offerings. I think it will be very interesting for us in expanding our younger audience.

Would you have been able to push ahead with the programme without Europa Cinemas support?

No, not at this rate. We would still have started this initiative, but it would have taken years for us to be at the point where will be within half a year, thanks to the Collaborate to Innovate support.

Partner cinemas:

- Lux (Nijmegen)
- Filmschuur (Haarlem)
- Ketelhuis (Amsterdam)
- LantarenVenster (Rotterdam)
- Chassé (Breda)
- De Lieve Vrouw (Amersfoort)
- EYE Filmmuseum (Amsterdam)
- Concordia (Enschede)
- MIMIK (Deventer)
- Verkadefabriek (Den Bosch)
- 't Hoogt (Utrecht)
- Filmhuis Den Haag (Den Haag)
- Groninger Forum (Groningen)
- Rialto (Amsterdam)
- De Fabriek (Zaandam)

ZEF Filmowe Okno na Europę, Poland

Interview with Urszula Biel and Agnieszka Piotrowska-Prażuch, Kino Amok

by Anna Tatarska

“What are we going to watch today?” Every parent knows the anguish such question can cause. To follow blindly is the easiest way: just choose whatever film plays in your nearest multiplex, or whatever title is the “pick of the day” on the streaming platform of your choice. You can be sure somebody’s Excel chart and marketing plan just succeeded, and yes, the algorithm is happy too! But are the true needs of a young viewer satisfied? Has the screening added anything to their emotional or intellectual landscape? Has their imagination been stimulated, their potential increased? It never hurt anyone to ask for support.

ZEF Filmowe Okno na Europę (“Cinematic Window to Europe”) is a project developed by Agnieszka Piotrowska-Prażuch, Urszula Biel (both from the Polish Kino Amok) and Bolesław Drochomirecki (Kino OKO), within the framework of Collaborate to Innovate.

This is your first venture with European funds, correct?

Urszula Biel: Yes, that’s true. We’re excited to learn and a little stressed out by the formalities. But we know what we are doing functionally, due to years of experience as cinema managers, programmers, and educators, so that’s giving us the confidence and energy to move forward.

Can you tell me more about ZEF?

Biel: The Polish abbreviation ZEF stands for “Zespół Edukatorów Filmowych”, Film Educators Panel. It’s comprised of teachers, people from the cinema industry, children’s festival programmers, and film and cultural

educators—people who’ve watched the young film market in Poland grow and change for years. This experience is extremely helpful, considering adult opinions don’t often align with children’s. We’ve been working as a group for a while now, in different forms and capacities, and we know how to pair the two. Presently, we have not founded an official association. Hopefully this project will allow us to formalize.

Agnieszka Piotrowska-Prażuch: The project we launched, thanks to Collaborate to Innovate, is coordinated by Amok, an arthouse cinema founded almost 25 years ago, situated in Gliwice, a city in Upper Silesia in southern Poland. Partner cinemas are OKF Iluzja (Częstochowa),



Kino Amok, Gliwice

Kino Sokół (Nowy Sącz), and Kino Mikro (Kraków) from the Europa Cinemas network and OKO, a mobile cinema from Opole that hosts screenings in places without cinemas. The choice of collaborators was far from random: we were interested in cinemas that operate in the field of education. For example, OKO's founder, Bolesław Drochomirecki, happens to be one of the founders of ZEF.

What's the goal of ZEF Filmowe Okno na Europę?

Piotrowska-Prażuch: The hope is to grow and make our work useful to other cinemas all over Poland and beyond. ZEF Filmowe Okno na Europę is designed to support various institutions and organizations with an interest in creating quality programmes for their young audiences, as well as teachers, parents, tutors, and anyone interested in using film as an educational medium while working with youths.

Why do you feel such an initiative is needed in the first place? Isn't there enough film choice already available for younger audiences?

Piotrowska-Prażuch: Our impression is that cinema for younger audiences—something that's not marketed by the big studios—is not widely available in Poland. As someone who's been watching more artistic, independent, festival youth films for years, I know how much they have to offer, and I think it would be great if children and young audiences had a wider choice.

Biel: The main problem is that, while film festivals are open to less mainstream, more original productions, after they wrap there aren't enough distributors interested in putting those movies on the screens available for a wider young audience.

Piotrowska-Prażuch: Therefore, one of the goals of this initiative with Collaborate to Innovate is to create a well-oiled, steady mechanism that will allow us to promote

these movies with the hope of increasing the audiences', teachers', educators', and parents' interest. And, if more people buy tickets, the distributors might realize these are movies worth distributing outside of the festival circuit.

Do you think that's a realistic plan?

Biel: Over the years, Amok cinema has managed to raise a whole generation of conscious and curious viewers. We pay enormous attention to the quality of what we screen and see our work bear fruit every day. They trust us.

Enriching the selection of widely distributed films for children and adults is also important as it can affect the local production market.

Piotrowska-Prażuch: Polish production of youth movies is too scarce, compared to, say, Scandinavia. It used to be an important sector in the local market, but that's changed. Currently, there's usually around one premiere a year, and some animated features. But I can tell that when a Polish movie for kids is finally released, the audiences are enthusiastic. Recently Polish media has praised "Czarny młyn" (Black mill), a fantasy kids' movie with strong social undertones. Directed by Mariusz Palej, and based on a book by a successful novelist Marcin Szczygielski, it has attracted an audience of over 270,000 viewers since it opened in late August. One can only wonder what the numbers would be without the pandemic.

Partner cinemas:

- Kino Amok (Gliwice)
- OKF Iluzja (Czestochowa)
- Sokol (Nowy Sacz)
- Opolskie Kino Objazdowe (Opole)
- Kino Mikro (Kraków)



OKF Iluzja, Czestochowa

European films for next generation, Serbia

Interview with Ivona Kopilovic,
Bioskop EuroCinema

by **Stjepan Hundic**

Ivona, can you tell us more about yourself and your partners involved in the project?

The coordinator Eurocinema was founded in February 27th, 2010 within the Open University Subotica (OUS), a company with 68-years' experience in non-formal education and cultural event organization. In that time, the Eurocinema programme was enriched with special screenings, guest appearances, and educational activities aimed at young audiences. For our "European films for next generation" project, Eurocinema is responsible for the marketing strategy and activities, acquisition of films for planned events, and the overall coordination of the project. Our partners, Cinema Fontana and Cultural Center of Novi Sad, will be responsible for the organization of the training programme for cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as for the engagement of lecturers (directors, screenwriters, critics, actors, etc.) who will present

special screening for school students. The Cultural Center of Novi Sad has a long history of organizing cultural events and education. They contribute to the growth and popularization of film and cinema culture by organizing film forums and non-commercial art cinema programmes. In this project, they will be responsible for selecting films for the film marathon and special screenings.

Why did you choose to launch this project?

All the partners are focused on the promotion of European cinema, and on creating new audiences for European films, but the general trend has been decreasing audience numbers, even before the pandemic. In addition to this new challenge, we have identified poor participation of children and youth in our general audiences, as well as a lack of participation across other demographics. Children under the age of 10 are into kids' animation, mid-late teens tend to only watch blockbusters, while pre and early-teens are somehow missing from cinemas altogether. It's our primary motivation to engage pre and early-teens in cinema-going culture and to popularize artistic European films among these young audiences to create a new generation of our audience, who will be familiar with the quality of European cinema.

What was the need for it in your country?

All participating cinemas have, to some extent, educational and marketing activities aimed at increasing young audience engagement and the circulation of the European films. However, these occasional workshops, lectures, special screenings, and media campaigns are not sufficient to make significant and lasting results. It is necessary for this form of activity to be realized over a longer period of time, and for it to be evenly scheduled, promoted, and implemented. Developing a habit requires continuity and the constant presence of this type of activity. For a long time, feature films for kids were unfairly neglected. In European cinema, we have excellent feature films for children, but, unfortunately, even if they are distributed it is usually without marketing support from the distributors, so they are not seen widely enough. Our aim is to change this. Documentaries, except at festivals, are also almost impossible to find for cinema distribution. Teenagers are completely uninterested in documentary film, even though the form is engaging and their various topics could be of interest to this age group. This is why it is very important that, through education and organized



screenings, we introduce young people to this entertaining and educational mode of film. In order to achieve these objectives, a joint and larger-scale involvement, and activities are needed. Therefore, we have decided to join forces, experiences, knowledge, and skills.

Please elaborate on planned activities to increase young audience engagement in the European cinema.

To create a joint marketing strategy and campaign targeting young audiences to popularize and raise awareness of the diversity of the European film. Part of our planned activities is to organize a one-day film marathon simultaneously in all 3 cities and cinemas on the 14th November, on the occasion of the European Arthouse Cinema Day. The target group will be young adults. We will also organize special screenings of European children's films and documentaries with a lecture on film art (introduction to the artistic and technical characteristics of audio-visual production) for primary school students, four lectures per cinema, and one lecture quarterly for one or two classes. To ensure the sustainability of the project, and to strengthen capacity for our partners, we are also organizing a two-day training programme for cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers aimed at educating the people who will facilitate young audience engagement.

What are your expectations?

After the implementation of our planned activities, including the marketing campaign, we will be a step closer to building the "next generation", bringing them closer to European cinema, and all its diversity. By educating cinema staff and elementary and secondary school teachers we are including film in the educational curriculum for children, to obtain knowledge of the artistic and technical characteristics of



audio-visual production. This will, in the short-term, provide an enriched cinema experience for the target group and, in the long-term, will lead to an increased audience engagement in European films, and thus, to the increased circulation of European films.

What could be its impact at the local and national level?

We will strengthen the cooperation and exchange of experience between the three cinemas involved through development and implementation of our joint marketing strategy and campaign targeting young audiences. Training cinema staff and schoolteachers will ensure the sustainability of the project and strengthen local capacity, aiming to educate the people who will facilitate young audience engagement and increase the demand for European films for future activities. We aim to see, as the end result of our actions, more diversity across age groups attending screenings in our cinemas, increased demand for regular or special screenings of European films, as well as an enriched experience for every person attending screenings and events in the future.

Partner cinemas:

- Bioskop EuroCinema (Subotica)
- Cinema Fontana (Belgrade)
- Cultural Center of Novi Sad (Novi Sad)



Bioskop EuroCinema, Subotica

Project Viridiana, Spain

Interview with Silvino Puig, Cines Lys

by Jesus Silva Vilas

Silvino Puig, coordinator of “Project Viridiana”, walked us through the particularities of their initiative, aimed at strengthening the presence of European cinema across the country through a series of film screenings broadcast simultaneously in partner cinemas.

How did the idea for Viridiana come about?

When cinemas closed, in March 2020, some colleagues and I started a series of weekly meetings, simply to support each other in difficult times. Before lockdown, we were already running a film club in our theatre, but we decided to move it online, to stay in contact with our audience during this period. We made it transferable to the other cinemas in the group and convinced renowned filmmakers to join us once a week. It was a beautiful experience because it allowed us to stay in touch with people that love cinema.

After lockdown, we continued with these meetings and added more cinemas to the network. When we restarted physical screenings of our film club, we continued to invite directors to join us after the films, or at least remotely. It was something that really enhanced the experience, and we noticed an increase in attendance. Meanwhile, the invitation to submit a project for the Collaborate to Innovate support scheme arose. After analysing the situation and reflecting on the experience we had during lockdown, we found a way to bring European cinema to places it doesn't usually reach.

How will it work? What are the main goals?

We intend to organize one or two screenings a month, with directors present. A total of 13 sessions during the first year, each one hosted by a theatre in a different town. Both the screenings and the Q&As will be broadcast in all the network cinemas, which consists currently of 26 venues. We will agree on a date and a specific time that's suitable for everyone, working with distributors to bring talent to the theatres.

The aim of the project is to bring visibility to European cinema in places it doesn't have an audience, but we would also like to find new talent along the way. We want filmmakers to remember Viridiana as one of the projects that helped them become well-known, both in Spain and in other territories. The goal is to increase the overall presence of European cinema.

How is the programming going? Which films will be part of the project?

We started in Barcelona with the latest film by Benito Zambrano, *Lemon and Poppy Seed Cake*. There is a selection committee with people from different theatres, and we are now working to secure more titles. I think most of the work will be in finding new voices. We'll make every effort to make distributors feel comfortable, but we know it will be a tough start.

We must collaborate with distributors so that they can offer us the product, and always accompanied by talents. They must be willing to visit places like Utrera, Palencia, Palma de Mallorca, or Valencia. That is our milestone to achieve. We are flexible, and will adapt to the schedules of the filmmakers. This programme could strengthen European cinema in our theatres, while sharing the risks.

When dealing with such a widespread network, what will be the communication and marketing strategy to promote the project?

We have hired a communication agency to manage the social media and website for the project, which is already operational. On top of that, there will be some internal work for each cinema, which may require further investment of time and money. The communication of Viridiana will focus on general information, but it is up to each cinema to contact their local media and encourage their audience. Moreover, if this is not the kind of cinema they usually show on their screens, then the theatres must commit to giving some continuity to those films they are premiering. It doesn't make sense to host a screening of a film if it won't stay on screen afterwards. We must support European cinema for it to take root in these venues.

What are your expectations? What kind of impact do you expect to have?

We are very excited, but we also know that it will be difficult. We are professionals with great experience in the sector, but entirely new in this field. At the end of the day, we want people to identify with the Viridiana brand, and come to watch the films trusting the project because they had a good experience with previous films. We don't care



Silvino Puig Boltés, Benito Zambrano, Rogelio Delgado

if there are only a few people in the room, as long as they come back to the cinemas.

We think the project should continue in the long term. This year there might be some mistakes, but we want to learn from them and keep growing. If something doesn't work as expected, we won't understand it as a failure. The intention is to get things rolling this year, convincing distributors to believe in the project. The aim is that it will become established and sustainable in the future, ideally without any external support.



- Partner cinemas:**
- Cines Lys (Valencia)
 - Multicines 7 (Bilbao)
 - Florida (Vitoria)
 - Centrofama (Murcia)
 - Multicines El Centro. Cineapolis Cadiz (Cadiz)
 - Cines Babel (Valencia)
 - Augusta Af. (Palma)
 - Cines Princesa (Madrid)
 - Renoir Plaza España (Madrid)
 - Renoir Retiro (Madrid)
 - Renoir Floridablanca (Barcelona)
 - Cines Broadway (Valladolid)
 - Cines Manhattan (Valladolid)
 - Getxo Zinemak (Getxo)
 - Cine Zugaza (Durango)
 - Multicines La Laguna (La Laguna)
 - Cineapolis Dos Hermanas (Sevilla)
 - Cineapolis Utrera (Utrera - Sevilla)
 - Cinemundo-Cineapolis Huesca (Huesca)
 - Rívoli Aficine (Palma)
 - Multicines Guadalajara (Guadalajara)
 - Multicines Avenida (Palencia)
 - Mk2 Palacio De Madrid (Madrid)
 - Mk2 Cine Paz (Madrid)
 - Mk2 Cinesur Nervión (Sevilla)
 - Mk2 Cinesur El Tablero (Córdoba)



Interrail through Europa Cinemas, Spain

Interview with Barbara Fernández Vilariño,
Golem Madrid

by Jesus Silva Vilas

We caught up with Bárbara Fernández, project coordinator of Interrail through Europa Cinemas, an initiative that invites young audiences on a cinematic journey through European cinema, placing special attention on the theatres in the network.

How did the project come about?

We had a terrible year in 2020 when cinemas closed for the first time. The initial idea for the project comes from our need to get out and travel at this time. Young people and university students were unable to experience what we all dream about when we are studying: travelling, Interrailing, going on Erasmus... We realized there was a gap there; people have been watching films at home, but they could not travel. And what better way to attract this audience than with an Interrail of European cinema? That is basically how the idea came about.

Why did you decide to focus on young people?

When Europa Cinemas launched the Collaborate to Innovate call for projects, we understood that we all have the same problem in trying to reach younger generations. It is difficult to attract them to watch European cinema, but they are interested in travelling and visiting other countries, so we wanted to combine these two worlds. This project is a

real boost for us, creating a shared mission with other cinemas in the network.

Then we started thinking about what we need and how to better reach this audience. We intend to launch a strong social media campaign. We believe this will help us approach young people through their own channels.

Ultimately, it is a very well-rounded project: we will meet our needs when it comes to connecting with this demographic. That is our main goal, to present European cinema as something appealing to them. And I believe that this is also a great opportunity to create a network with other players on a national and international level.

How will it work in practice?

It is simple: we organize a programme of European cinema that will be hosted in different theatres. We are working with various European institutions, educational bodies, and the embassies of several countries, to present these European territories in our cinemas. Not only through film, but also

through the actual theatres located in these places. When the audience arrives at the screenings, the host country and cinema introducing the films will be the theatre staff. They will give first-hand information on the particularities of their cinemas and the cultural diversity of their cities through a video or live connection, which will be broadcast in all partner cinemas (Golem Yamaguchi, Golem Alhóndiga, Van Golem Arlanzón, Van Dyck, Van Gogh, Cines Principe and Cines Siete Infantes).

For the first time, different Spanish cinemas are partnering up for a joint film series, while involving international exhibitors from the Europa Cinemas network. This year, the series will be comprised of 8 films. These will represent the different stops on the journey, which will take us through 8 cities with 8 selected theatres. We also want these stops to generate a sort of community, so people will want to come back for the next trip. The programming work is huge because we are selecting films together with all the participating cinemas and negotiating with the distributors.

What could be the impact at a national and international level?

This year will be our starting point, but I think the project can really last into the future. We can expand into other territories, both national and international. Our ideal would be to have continuity, in time. Just as we are exporting the idea to other European cinemas in the network, next year, others could take over, and we could be the ones showing our cities and theatres.

Currently, we are hoping to generate a network with several agencies and organizations to expand as far as we can. We want to work with Erasmus, with schools, and other educational centres, so that they understand the importance

of European cinema for education. Not only through films that deal with historical subjects, but also when it comes to showing the cultural diversity of these places. We are promoting a variety of synergies to emphasize value in the films and also the venues.

On a personal note, what are the short-term expectations?

We are experiencing a difficult time for film exhibition. When it comes to the young audience, we are basically starting from scratch. Any attendance will be very positive. Any feedback we receive from the youngsters will be essential for us. It is crucial that they return to the theatres to watch more European cinema. Having even half of the seats occupied in the screenings would be wonderful. Of course, we count on our regular audience to show up, but we really want to reach the younger demographics, too. Luckily, with digitisation, we can measure audiences far more precisely. I'm confident that next year we will have more stops on the way and that we can create a community of young people interested in European cinema and culture.

Partner cinemas:
 Golem Madrid (Madrid)
 Golem Yamaguchi (Pamplona)
 Golem Alhóndiga (Bilbao)
 Van Golem Arlanzón (Burgos)
 Van Dyck (Salamanca)
 Van Gogh (León)
 Cines Principe (San Sebastián)
 Cines Siete Infantes (Logroño)



Streaming technology in movies theatres, Spain

Interview with Xavier Bachs, CineBaix

by Jesus Silva Vilas

We talked to Xavier Bachs, who shared with us their experience in the field of innovation and the particularities of their project, focusing on implementing streaming technology in film theatres.

What is the history of CineBaix and its innovative approach towards film exhibition?

We are a recovered cinema. In 2003, this theatre closed because it could not compete with the commercial multiplexes that started operating in the city centre. This caused a citizen movement that, after a lot of pressure, convinced the city council to buy the building. The local citizen's platform turned into an association and took over CineBaix. They expected us to last three months, but we have been running for sixteen years. We survived an important crisis with the digital revolution in the late 2000s, which caused the closing of 700 theatres in Spain. Being a non-profit organization, supported by a cooperative of ethical and solidarity financial services (Coop57), we could ask for loans to gradually restore all our screens. The current project will be our second stage of digitisation.

Why did you decide to launch this project?

Its origin was in the closing of cinemas due to the pandemic. Just before lockdown, we were about to

celebrate our Latin American film festival, which we produce ourselves. At that stage, we had already booked and programmed everything, so we decided to launch a virtual platform. This allowed us to carry on with the festival and even to increase audience numbers from the previous year. As such, we decided to continue with the platform in order to keep in touch with our audience.

On the other hand, we had embraced the idea that our cinema shouldn't only be a "receptor" for the premieres and distribution calendar. We wanted to be more proactive and multi-purpose. We already had a specific programme aimed at schools, as well as four self-produced festivals in the theatre, and we saw that all these activities could be improved with new technologies. For this reason, when Collaborate to Innovate was announced, we decided to add value to this experience and share it with other network cinemas across the territory.

Could you briefly explain how it works?

Essentially, this project has three legs: One is the VOD



CineBaix, Sant Feliu de Llobregat



CineBaix, Sant Feliu de Llobregat

platform we started during the pandemic. We have been working on it for a year-and-a-half, despite the difficulties, including distributor relationships, exhibition windows, etc. But it is functioning now.

The second is what we call CINEBAIX.LIVE. We used to broadcast operas and other shows in our theatres. What we want to do now is stream the events we organize here. For example, if we host a film screening with the director present, we can broadcast it for audiences at home. We have installed high-definition cameras that allow us to operate as a small TV studio. The technology enables other cinemas in the network to follow what we are doing in CineBaix, and vice versa.

The third, which might have the greatest impact, is that we have started to screen our films via streaming. We had to adapt to special servers that can work with cheaper projectors, which meant a substantial saving. It's no longer necessary to bring DCPs to the cinema, as we don't need to download, store, or return the files. We have already installed the system, and we are now testing it.

What are the next steps?

Now, the remaining cinemas in the project need to set it up, so we can enter the collaborative stage: connecting with each other and sharing films and events. The funding from Europa Cinemas has allowed us to include five other independent cinemas in the project (Rambla De L'art-Cambrils Aie, Duplex Cinema, Cinema Truffaut, Zumzeig, and Cineciutat). We will all employ these technologies together, to make them work in a sustainable, effective, and collaborative way. The goal is to collaborate, not only in the acquisition of films, but also in broadcasting. Each of us with our own programming and editorial line, but negotiating together with the distributors and organizing events and festivals in a cooperative way. We are already in contact

with many distributors to provide us with the content for this project.

What are your expectations? What could the impact be at a local and national level?

Given that, during digitisation, more than 700 cinemas had to close, I believe that, with more affordable and suitable technology, the possibility to reopen more cinemas is attainable. Thus far, we are delighted because we were able to keep in touch with our audiences at a critical time. The response from the public has been more than accepting, even enthusiastic in some instances. This encouraged us to submit our proposal to Europa Cinemas.

On the other hand, before the pandemic, the cinemas in the network were selling 8 million tickets: 26% from European non-national cinema, and 16% from other nationalities—almost 3 million in total. The potential is tremendous. With this technology, we could recover the space that has been absorbed by other platforms and reduce costs for the distribution of European cinema. This would also encourage a change of model, which is something I have mentioned previously: we can't be mere receptors of content. We should be active programmers, turning cinemas into cultural centres.

Partner cinemas:

CineBaix (Sant Feliu de Llobregat)
 Rambla De L'art-Cambrils Aie (Cambrils)
 Duplex Cinema (Ferrol)
 Cinema Truffaut (Girona)
 Zumzeig (Barcelona)
 Cineciutat (Palma De Mallorca)



Best Programming

Splendid Palace (Riga, Latvia)

Since 1923, Splendid Palace cinema has been one of the most magnificent and long-standing European cinemas bringing joy to film lovers through high quality film. The cinema building was the first in Riga to be made specifically for the requirements of a film theatre with an impressive Neo-Baroque style facade, while the interior dazzles visitors with its diverse Neo-Rococo style.

Nowadays, the cinema combines a historical aura with modern solutions, with a 35mm cinema projector co-existing with the latest technologies, giving visitors the opportunity to enjoy quality and an historically rich cinema experience at the same time.

Our mission is to show people high-quality European and world cinema, to educate and create a new generation of cinema-goers through artistically valuable films, as well as to promote the availability and visibility of Latvian national cinema on both local and international levels. The team at Splendid Palace has been working purposefully for years to curate the cinematic taste of its audience and the belief that the most luxurious and oldest Latvian cinema shows the highest quality programme.

The programming strategy at Splendid Palace cinema is based on three basic principles: a high-quality cinema offer, a place with splendid atmosphere and welcoming service, and an educated and precisely defined audience. The interaction of these elements and innovative solutions shape and promote the performance of the cinema. The cinema's programme consists of high-quality art films, arthouse films from Europe and other regions of the world, as well as pieces that have gained recognition in film festivals globally.

The regular cinema repertoire includes Documentary Cinema Mondays, Children's Mornings, Senior Screenings, and special cinema events. Historically, we have preserved and continued to develop screenings with the participation of the film's creative team.

Entertaining, informative or educational film events, including discussions with filmmakers and Q&As following film screenings, provide an opportunity to deliver a high-quality film offer. The cycle of film lectures "What you have to know", in cooperation with the Riga Film Museum, is very popular among our audiences. Screenings of restored

cinema classics, which are traditionally restricted to two to four times a year, have become a novelty.

The cinema programme is complemented by live screenings of operas and recordings from world renowned opera houses. The cinema has become a host for various film festivals, and continues to amaze viewers with new and creative film projects.

We worked very hard on each film as an event, creating several special screenings with the aim of filling relatively large auditoriums (566 and 206 seats). In our cinema, any given film has a short time in rotation due to the large number of seats in the auditorium, which are difficult to fill without a special event. Consequently, the programme consists of a wide range of films.

The wide-ranging offer and screenings unite disparate generations and, consequently, disparate film audience demographics. For example, this year's 20th anniversary screening of *Amélie* was attended by audiences who wanted to return to their youth, as well as today's youth who enjoy cinema classics as a sort of dessert with a retro touch.

Every year in December, the cinema's anniversary is celebrated, offering visitors an exclusive holiday programme. There are always sold out screenings, and we are very proud of that.

Our main challenge is to attract more targeted audiences, so we created an international film festival. It is an original project titled Student Film Festival, the task of which is to create synergies between the universities focusing on audio-visual culture in the Baltic Sea region, evaluating and presenting the diploma works of the art universities at Splendid Palace. By organising this festival,

we want to discover new talents and make their first film debut on the big screen.

The cinema has also successfully cooperated with the Latvian Ministry of Culture's project "Latvian School Bag", offering students a national film education programme, nurturing the young audience's love for Latvian cinema, thus improving attendance at national film screenings. Another success with pleasing results is a series of Student Film Lectures, where introductory lectures with filmmakers and an influencer known to young people accompanies specially selected national films.

The project European Lecture Course aimed at school students was launched and successfully continued, where we screen European co-produced films that are thematically suitable for youth audiences.

On 11th June 2021, the Splendid Garden cinema terrace opened—an incarnation of the long-cherished idea of enjoying summer cinema in the city centre, under the stars. In good weather, the screenings take place every evening, extending the summer season until September. The new venue won the public's love with films awarded at European Film Festivals. Our summer hits were François Ozon's *Summer of 85* and Giovanni Troilo's *Frida. Viva la Vida*.

The Best Programming 2021 award from Europa Cinemas is enabling further work in preparation for the centenary anniversary of the cinema in 2023. Our plan is to create a really high-quality, attractive and interesting anniversary programme for our visitors.

Ieva Sīpola, Head of cinema
Daira Āboliņa Ilješāne, Art director





KINO Rotterdam.

Entrepreneur of the Year Cineville (The Netherlands)

Back in 2009, four students were sitting in their favourite Amsterdam cinema. They looked around. Why was the room half-empty? Where were their friends who said they were into film but rarely came along? They realised there and then that the arthouse films they loved had a branding problem. In order to claim back the market share lost to multiplexes and Hollywood, they created Cineville: a cinema collective, all-you-can-watch membership and online platform for independent film. Thirteen Amsterdam cinemas got on board. Over forty other cinemas in different Dutch cities followed.

Today, Cineville is the first stop for adventurous film fans in the Netherlands, amounting to 1.5 million admissions yearly. The four friends at the bar have transformed into a team of twenty that manages Cineville's campaigns, calendar, magazine, and app. Content creator Lauren Murphy sees how Cineville's tailored cultural compass makes it easier and more fun for members to go to the movies, "We're like the friend you call when you can't pick a film. We know our stuff, but we don't brag. Our tone-of-voice

is cordial, because everyone loves film - whether it's slow cinema, horror, or chick flicks. We want to encourage new audiences to hop on and die-hards to dig deeper."

Cineville now has over 55,000 subscribers, which is more than before the pandemic began. Cineviller Eline Soumeru became a member in 2015, "I joined because my friends did. The card gives me a sense of freedom. Going to the cinema is never wasted, and it feels like Cineville knows my taste. I remember going to see *Honeyland* (2019) because Cineville suggested it. I probably wouldn't have gone to a film about a Macedonian beekeeper otherwise."

A collaborative effort

From the beginning, collaboration was key. No Cineville cinema is alike, and it's through their singular programming, atmosphere, and audiences that Cineville comes to life. All the associated cinemas—most of whom are part of the Europa Cinemas Network—are also members of the Cineville Association, which plays a large part in Cineville's strategy and decision making. 90% of the membership fees

are divided amongst them. Frank Groot, director of KINO Rotterdam and chairman of the Cineville Association, believes the way the cinemas, distributors, and festivals have joined forces is unique, “No one could have envisioned that working together so closely on a project like Cineville would create such strong ties between cinemas that never worked together before. We learn from and support each other. I wish every cinema owner could experience that.”

Research has shown three main effects of Cineville: audience rejuvenation, increased cinema admissions, and more adventurous film choices. Cineville members go to the cinema more often and experiment more, which boosts attendance for smaller films. The past few years have



Post-lockdown re-opening campaign.

seen a slew of new cinemas opening in the Netherlands. Groot believes Cineville is one of the main factors behind that growth, and behind the success of local cinemas like KINO, “Cineville gives its members an incentive to try something new, like visiting a cinema in a different city. The audience for independent film in the Netherlands has grown and become younger, which gave us the foundation we needed to open a new cinema in Rotterdam and invest in a local film community. Cineville is definitely one of the main pillars on which KINO was built.”

(Post)pandemic challenges and Vitamin Cineville

The pandemic and the lockdowns forced Cineville and the associated cinemas to come up with emergency solutions. In 2020, Cineville launched a temporary VOD service: Vitamin Cineville. It allowed members to watch independent titles from home whilst supporting their local cinemas. Thomas Hosman, director of Cineville says, “We wanted to strengthen the connection between Cineville, our members, and the cinemas. 70% of our members ended up using Vitamin Cineville and paying their subscriptions over the six-month lockdown. That was a huge financial support for the cinemas.”

Soumeru also stayed on board in 2020, “It felt good to have some continuity, watching the same films from home while everything came crashing down. And I really wanted the cinemas to still be there when we got back.”

When the cinemas reopened, Cineville played a large part in re-introducing their members to the big screen - because online is the support act, not the main event. Groot says, “Cineville first and foremost promotes the arthouse cinema as the perfect place for film. They believe in the communal viewing experience. In effect, no one else is more equipped to help cinemas reclaim their position after lockdown and the continued rise of VOD.”

The future

Through close collaboration with cinemas, partners, and members, Cineville has become the brand it is today. So, what does the future hold? Vitamin 2.0? Further community building through different types of membership schemes? For now, Cineville is mostly exploring how it can help other European cinemas and like-minded cultural initiatives to set up similar projects. Hosman says, “I think collaboration is now more important than ever, with so many platforms competing for the audience’s attention. Having started Cineville from a cinema ourselves, we know every location and audience is unique. Having a local perspective and ownership is key, but we have a lot of lived experience and practical tools to offer others. It’s what we love: making sure local cinema culture reaches its full potential sustainably and inclusively.”

Cineville



First campaign poster of Cineville.



Watershed, Bristol, United Kingdom

No winners as UK exits Creative Europe

End of an era for UK Europa Cinemas members

Europa Cinemas will say goodbye to some of its longest standing network members in the next few weeks, as the UK withdraws from Creative Europe.

UK network members are feeling a profound sense of loss after decades of fruitful collaboration and cooperation.

“It feels like we are losing something important to us,” said Allison Gardner, Chief Executive of Glasgow Film and previously Programme Director of the Glasgow Film Theatre. “We have been very proud to be part of Europa Cinemas and really valued the exchange of ideas and the sharing of best practice with our European colleagues.” Some Glasgow audience members have taken to applauding the Europa Cinemas’ trailer.

For Mark Cosgrove, Cinema Curator at Watershed, Bristol, the trailer has also had a poignant personal effect: “It is a reminder that we have been part of a larger family, not just European but global.”

Membership was not about finance, he said, with the incentive to screen non-national European films making up a relatively small contribution to the overall budget. “What was important was the reciprocity with our European

colleagues and the flow of shared ideas and perspectives.”

And Ian Wild, Chief Executive of Sheffield’s Showroom Cinema, said the value of network membership was about “the ideas, projects and general mutual support that came from so many different people sharing their ideas and talking about collaborations in a spirit of cooperation was stimulating and encouraging.”

Their reactions serve to highlight the core value of Europa Cinemas that can too easily be taken for granted: the network has created and nurtured essential cultural ties across borders that should be at the heart of Europe.

The UK has been hurriedly creating would-be alternatives to Creative Europe support. A one-year £7m (€8.2m) UK Global Screen Fund (UKGSF) – which includes games, TV and film – has been set up to support international co-production, sales and business development. That is significantly smaller than the average received from Creative Europe – £12m (€14m) in 2018 – and much less than the £17m (€20m) requested by the British Film Institute.

Like much of post-Brexit policy-making, there is little sense of a coherent strategy. Leaving Creative Europe, and

other institutions such as Erasmus, was not a matter of considered debate, or even of a democratic mandate from the 2016 referendum. Non-EU members can, and do, play an active role in such bodies.

What is clear is that the government is focused on inward investment, production capacity and export and the UK is likely to enjoy continued growth in the screen industries with high levels of investment in commercially-driven international production, not least thanks to a subscription streaming boom in original content.

How the post-Brexit UK will support cultural works and cross-border cultural relationships is not clear. Some from the UK nations and regions are trying to fill some gaps but Gardner warned, for example, that “exhibition is barely visible to the naked eye” in funding schemes.

The core problem raised by Europa Cinemas members and many more across the film industry is that the exit from Creative Europe threatens relationships that have become integral to both the UK and Europe. There are few if any winners in the current situation.

The fate of UK’s *auteur* cinema is a case in point with Ken Loach offering a valuable illustration.

I, Daniel Blake—like most of Loach’s works—made more money in France than the UK and close to 75% of its revenues came outside the UK. It has appeared on 641 screens in 26 countries in the Europa Cinemas network. *The Angel’s Share* (2012) was bigger in France too and took 22% of its box office at home (491 cinemas in 25 countries for Europa Cinemas).

The idea that the work of Ken Loach no longer counts as European is a challenge to both the logic of the UK’s decision to leave Creative Europe and to the rules of the European Commission.

But rules are rules and that has landed bodies, such as Europa Cinemas, with a problem of how to adapt incentives models.

UK films have made up a significant proportion of the non-national films screened across the network. In the 10 years between 2010 and 2020, UK films accounted for an average of 21% of the top-50 films.

UK works were in the top three of the network’s annual top-50 best performing films in nine out of 10 years between 2010 and 2020:

- The King’s Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010)
- Iron Lady* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2012)
- Quartet* (Dustin Hoffman, 2013)
- Philomena* (Stephen Frears, 2014)
- The Theory of Everything* (James Marsh, 2015)
- I, Daniel Blake* (Ken Loach, 2016)
- Victoria and Abdul* (Stephen Frears, 2017)
- Darkest Hour* (Joe Wright, 2018)
- The Favourite* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2019)
- Downton Abbey* (Michael Engler, 2019)



Glasgow Film Theatre, United Kingdom



Showroom, Sheffield, United Kingdom

In the 2022 guidelines, none of those films will qualify as European in the calculation of the Europa Cinemas incentive.

That leaves a significant problem for Europa Cinemas members, for whom the UK offered a regular supply of often very accessible but high-quality works from established directors.

Europa Cinemas and Creative Europe may find a short-term fix and build longer-term strategies that may have some benefits for non-UK European films.

But the departure of some of Europa Cinemas most committed members will not feel like anything but a tragic loss for all sides.

Michael Gubbins, Partner SampoMedia

Sevilla Audience Development & Innovation Lab “Re-Energising Cinema-Going through Collaboration”



After a very challenging period for the sector, of over a year in which Europa Cinemas successfully launched the Online Labs allowing European exhibitors to stay connected amidst cinema closures, we teamed up with the Sevilla European Film Festival (5th-13th November 2021) to organise the fifth edition of the Sevilla Audience Development & Innovation Lab.

The first physical Lab since 2019 took place from Wednesday 10th to Saturday 13th November. Open to all European exhibitors and entitled “Re-Energising Cinema-Going Through Collaboration” this Lab welcomed 38 exhibitors from 17 different countries. A joint effort with Europa International allowed, for the first time, five sales agents from Charades, Coproduction Office, The Party Film Sales, Wild Bunch International, and Les Films du Losange to actively participate in the whole Lab.

Led by Madeleine Probst (Programme Producer, Watershed, UK & Europa Cinemas Vice-President) and Frank Groot (Programmer, Financial Director, Kino Rotterdam, Netherlands), the focus for this Lab was on exploring the potential of cinemas as vital connectors in their local communities and beyond, from local partnerships to international and multi-partner collaborations.

Exhibitors and sales agents had the opportunity to gain a sense of perspective of the actual context and to share strategies around market positioning, data-driven

approaches, partnership-led approaches, programming, and eventisation (in-venue and online), as well as balancing income generation with sustainable, accessible, and ethical practices to create value and navigate the current operating environment.

Practice-based insights, small group discussions, and panels helped European practitioners to find creative solutions to specific challenges as well as opportunities to share and pitch ideas with the wider group.

On Friday 12th November, one of the highlights of the programme was a joint session with Europa International. Katarzyna Siniarska (New Europe Film Sales, Poland) discussed, with Cristina Mota (Cinema Trindade/ Nitrateo Films, Portugal) and Ramiro Ledo (Cinema Duple/ Atalante, Spain), significant shifts in the market in the wake of the pandemic, challenges for the future of (European) films, and how cinema theatres fit into this environment.

In an ever evolving and digital environment, and especially during these difficult times, Europa Cinemas also learnt to reinvent its work with an ongoing spirit of sharing. Therefore, Europa Cinemas live broadcast and recorded the Sevilla Lab through YouTube with the intention of giving our members the opportunity to stay informed and connected, even if they cannot come to the physical events.

Irene Angel Echeverri & Adrian Preda

27 Times Cinema

Return on Experience of Two Ambassadors



Diego Armando Aparicio,
Ambassador of the 2018 edition

When I arrived in Venice in 2018, with almost no prior experience in film, I had no idea that 28 Times Cinema [now called 27 Times Cinema after Brexit] would be the catalyst to kick-start my professional journey in the industry.

Those 12 days in Venice remain my most treasured European experience to date: a true melting pot of cultures, and the best possible example of building bridges and long-lasting friendships through art. As a jury member for Giornate degli Autori, I gained new insight on cinema through my daily interactions with filmmakers, cinephiles, and film professionals. Workshops with Cineuropa and Europa Cinemas, and discussion panels with the GdA programmers and the LUX Prize team offered a good glimpse of various sectors in the industry, and indirectly led to a number of exciting opportunities: interviewing Oscar-winner László Nemes at IFFR; attending the ICO course *Developing Your Film Festival*; working as head of partnerships at the 10th edition of the Watersprite film festival; and assisting the GdA as pre-selector for the past three years.

Returning to Cyprus in late 2019 marked a radical change for me after a seven-year career in physics. Despite the lockdowns, I have since worked as a production assistant on four international co-productions: *Sous Le Ciel d'Alice* (Cannes Critics' Week 2020); *Patchwork* (Karlovy Vary 2021); *Tel Aviv-Beirut* (post-production); and *Embryo Larva Butterfly* (post-production).

All these experiences equipped me with skills and enough confidence to found Queer Wave: the first international LGBTIQ+ film festival in Cyprus. After an online inaugural edition in August 2020, and a physical second edition in September 2021, Queer Wave was one of 20 finalists worldwide shortlisted for the 2021 Commonwealth Youth Awards, amongst thousand projects from 43 countries.

28 Times Cinema is a project that keeps giving long after those wonderful days in Venice. Having served as ambassador for the LUX Prize in 2018, I was honoured to be invited to serve on the 2022 selection panel for the freshly minted LUX Audience Award, presented jointly by the European Parliament and the European Film Academy.



Bo Alfaro Decretón,
Ambassador of the 2020 edition

Thinking of the Chris Norman and Suzi Quatro song, I come closest to a precise description of my falling in love with cinema in saying it was a process of “stumblin’ in”. But maybe there is elegance to be found in dedication, and that is definitely where the 27 Times Cinema project comes in. Upon being selected as the 2020 Belgian ambassador, a world of boundary-breaking cinephilia opened up: going to Venice, serving as a jury member at the always exciting Giornate degli Autori (chaired by Nadav Lapid), taking part in workshops presented by a wide range of sharp industry professionals, connecting with fellow film lovers from all across Europe, dreaming of the possibilities to work together...

27 Times Cinema has given me a lot: not only a broader frame of reference, newly gained friendships, but also a greater sense of connection, since there’s a network out there, and although it can come across as tightly knit, there are ways to reduce the intergenerational gap. I did not know what to concretely expect once my year of ambassadorship was over, but doors opened which, in the midst of a pandemic with lockdowns, was more welcome than ever.

In addition to being a member of the selection committee for Film Fest Gent, regularly writing about film for different platforms, and temporarily going back to my birthplace to collaborate with the Atlántida Mallorca Film Fest, I was invited to preview films for this year’s edition of the Giornate degli Autori, and to be part of the panel in charge of selecting the three eligible films for the 2022 Lux Audience Award (films which will be shared and discussed with audiences all across Europe very soon).

I am thankful for the opportunities 27 Times Cinema has afforded me, as well as the great people I have met so far, and their insights that enrich my ongoing dialogue with cinema. I hope this dialogue will continue emphatically and in as many languages as possible. “Signore e signori, vi preghiamo di prendere posto la proiezione sta per iniziare...”

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