

**2011 EUROPA CINEMAS' YOUNG AUDIENCE SEMINAR  
CINETICA DI BOLOGNA**

**25 – 29th June 2011**

***« Competing for attention & Educating through  
creativity »***

**Report**

At the opening of the 2011 edition of Europa Cinemas' Young Audiences Seminar, **Gianluca Farinelli** – director of the Cineteca di Bologna – stressed the need for films to be seen on the silver screen. But how can public attention be captured in the age of digital democracy? How can cinemas attract young audiences amid so much competition? How can they overcome their difficulties and creatively reposition their cultural offer?

### Competition and success

In an attempt to answer these questions, we first chose to analyse the principles shared by Europa Cinemas network theatres:

- **The location:** Is the cinema located downtown? Near universities? Is the building recent and in good condition?
- **The films:** Does the cinema have access to prints? In the first week of the national release?
- **The staff:** Are they welcoming? Are there enough of them? Are they qualified?
- **The financial support:** Is the cinema supported by its municipality? Does it obtain government subsidies? Does it develop partnerships with local organisations?

We then examined the success factors for the three most competitive network members that have received Europa Cinemas awards. These cinemas are also particularly dynamic in terms of activities for young audiences:

The **Kino Muranow** has developed an authentic character that sets it apart from the multiplexes and makes it a popular location among Warsaw audiences. And for the last several years the distribution company run by exhibitor **Roman Gutek** has offered a catalogue of films geared to young audiences (*Mały Gutek*).

The **Utopia** theatres in Toulouse are well known for championing independent, committed cinema. Nevertheless they take a modern approach and confront the issue of downloading by allowing viewers to purchase the films being shown in the theatre on a USB stick (*vidéo en poche – take home video*). Regarding young audiences, these theatres actively reach out to teachers and regularly accompany their screenings with discussions.

The **Sauvenière** is not only a model of architecture, it also has very well-conceived theatres offering quality programming. And despite the structural differences between the establishments, the association **Les Grignoux** has managed to give its three cinemas in Liège (Churchill, Le Parc and Sauvenière) a common identity, as is clear from their website. The association also initiated *Ecran large sur tableau noir* (large screen on a black board) a programme for screening films in schools that has now spread throughout Francophone Belgium.

### Attract attention and stand up to competition

In the case of the Sauvenière, the building is part of the attraction. But in other cinemas the exhibitors must make do with old buildings and find ways to make them appealing in the contemporary world.

Looking back, one sees that despite the evolution of cinema, the film theatre as such has not changed markedly over the years. For example the basic structure of the theatre did not change with the **arrival of sound** (*The Jazz Singer*, 1927).

Competition with other formats is not a new phenomenon either. After peaking in the 1940s, admissions dropped with the emergence of television in the next decade. **Cinemascope** was then invented to

counteract competition from the television by offering a spectacle that can't be reproduced on a small screen. Then came the renaissance of the sword-and-sandal film, a genre that had gone out of fashion twenty years earlier.

In the 60s and 70s, **independent cinema** became popular in the United States (*The Graduate*, *Easy Rider*) and Europe (Godard, Bergman, Loach). But with the passing years the rivalry between the production studios and television continued, culminating in 1975 with the first generally accepted **blockbuster**: *Jaws* by Steven Spielberg.

The next decades saw the development of various **home formats** (VHS, satellite TV). In 1985 the number of people going to the cinemas had never been lower. Things only changed with the construction of the **first multiplexes**.

Today, after a decade of **multimedia** and **multiplatforms**, how can the cinema be reintegrated into cultural life?

A recent study to be published by the British Film Institute reveals that for a very large majority of Britons the cinema is the first locus of cultural interest. However with the growth of specialised channels, most films are viewed on television. The same study also shows that 15-24 year olds increasingly prefer DVDs and downloading on the Internet to televised broadcasts.

How must cinemas react to these recent phenomena? The digital transition enables them to enrich their offer with new programmes. Alternative contents and "event" screenings are becoming increasingly widespread in an attempt to attract audiences.

How to make a screening an experience and enhance dialogue with the public?

This is the question put to **Gintare Karalyte** during the presentation of **Future Shorts**, an interactive platform proposing a vast array of short films. The project has spread over the social networks in around thirty countries, and the model continues to export itself by means of communication work developed exclusively on the Internet. And to prolong the experience, for several years **Secret Cinema** has allowed viewers to participate directly in film screenings by acting as extras in reconstructions of scenes from the films projected. The event's participatory nature and the shared experience are key factors in the success of this initiative.

On a more local level, **Cinemadivino** is a travelling programme proposing nightly film vineyard screenings in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. Cinema enthusiasts watch the films outdoors amid the silence of the vines, while enjoying local wines and food. With this initiative, **Alberto Beltrani** has established a connection between cinematic and culinary experiences. Audiences have responded with enthusiasm, and the project is now being exported to different regions in Italy.

The spectacular outdoor screenings scheduled each evening at the festival **Il Cinema Ritrovato** have also met with much success. These projections allow viewers to (re)discover major works from the history of cinema in the unique Medieval setting of Bologna's Piazza Maggiore.

### How to generate enthusiasm for the films of the past?

During the festival's opening night we witnessed the audience's infatuation with two films often deemed elusive: ***A Trip to the Moon*** by Georges Méliès and ***Nosferatu*** by Friedrich W. Murnau, both accompanied by an orchestra.

When the first work of Méliès was released in cinemas at the start of the last century, screenings were accompanied by a musician on stage playing "popular" songs. It was thus interesting to see the restored film accompanied by an original soundtrack composed by the French electro group **Air**. This added a modern touch, allowing the "newly-found" work to be shown to as large an audience as possible.

Several days later we attended a preview of ***The Artist*** by Michel Hazanavicius. Will this film rekindle the interest of young generations in silent films? That's certainly what its release in various countries indicates.

To open new perspectives using films of the past, **Mark Cousins** explored the history of cinema in an 18-hour TV documentary series: ***The Story of Cinema***. At a preview screening we were privileged to discover several scenes from this film rich in reflections, interviews and extracts of movies by the world's great filmmakers (Andrzej Wajda, Roman Polanski, Milos Forman, Vera Chytilova, Andrei Tarkovski, Alexander Sokurov, Ritwik Ghatak, Mani Kaul and Glauber Rocha to name just a few). Participants were then able to talk with Mark Cousins on skype. The director notably explained that it had been important for him to show how certain films of the past could still be considered innovative today. One example: the spectacular camera movement in the funeral scene from Mikhail Kalatozov's ***Soy Cuba*** (1964), certain scenes of which were shown.

### How to use the films of the past? Which films are considered the best?

Each year the Bologna Seminar proposes a section on the **film canon**, establishing a list of films considered as the best. Ever since the first publication by **Sight and Sound** in 1952, these lists have not ceased to evolve. **Ian Christie** gave a passionate presentation on the history of these lists, encouraging participants to draw up their own film ranking.

The participants proposed their **top 10 European films for young audiences**:

1. ***The 400 Blows***, François Truffaut, France, 1959 (9 votes)
2. ***Billy Elliot***, Stephen Daldry, UK, 1999 (6)
3. ***The Class***, Laurent Cantet, France, 2008 (5)
4. ***Persepolis***, Marjane Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, France, 2007 (5)
5. ***The Triplets of Belleville***, Sylvain Chomet, France, 2002 (4)
6. ***Cinema Paradiso***, Giuseppe Tornatore, Italy, 1988 (3)
  - Kes***, Ken Loach, UK, 1969 (3)
  - Hate***, Mathieu Kassovitz, France, 1995 (3)
  - Bicycle Thieves***, Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1948 (3)
  - The Fox and the Child***, Luc Jacquet, France, 2007 (3)
  - Microcosmos***, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou, France, 1996 (3)

To create a dialogue with the public, exhibitors may ask their viewers to help create a list of favourite films in their cinema.

#### Reminiscences: using archive images to foster dialogue

**Angela English**, researcher at **Birkbeck University of London**, presented the results of her research on reminiscence: by projecting compilations of archive films to elderly audiences, she has developed a body of work dealing with memory.

For example, proposing that the group view a compilation of archive films on London in the 1940s and 50s, she sparked a discussion among the participants who shared their memories evoked by these images.

This experience furnished an interesting model for what can be done using archive films. One can imagine that such an approach would be well worth developing in film education programmes, or to foster inter-generational dialogue.

#### Dialoguing with audiences in the digital era

To remain competitive it is indispensable that cinemas establish a dialogue with their audiences. During the workshops **Simon Ward** and **Madeleine Probst** underscored the importance of the social networks, wikis and blogs. With such tools exhibitors can broaden this dialogue, get to know their audiences and hear what they have to say. Marketing has evolved in the cultural domains, and the trend is to concentrate increasingly on the public. When possible, it is useful to carry out surveys to get to know audiences better, establish their profiles, gauge their expectations and understand what prompts them to go to the movies. In any event it is crucial that cinemas use the Internet to make their communication more dynamic.

A website must make a good first impression. It should be welcoming and have a friendly feel to it. The site must also let users share their opinions. Why not seek inspiration from existing models? It's always interesting to take a look at the websites of successful institutions and see how they've put their contents online.

After comparing the websites of their respective cinemas, participants often noticed the shortcomings of their own sites: unattractive photos, a lack of clarity, no screening times on the homepage.

If exhibitors are not in a position to set up or maintain a website, they shouldn't hesitate to start a blog. In addition, the free social networks also provide plenty of marketing opportunities: Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Viadeo, etc.

Is Twitter an indispensable tool? Although it's still difficult to gauge its impact, it's best to keep an up-to-date account. The site can be read more quickly than Facebook and provides instant information.

During the workshops certain participants didn't hesitate to put what they'd learned into practice, notably by creating their first **Twitter** and **Facebook** accounts.

Throughout the Seminar, Europa Cinemas edited a **Storify** page dedicated to the sessions: <http://storify.com/europacinemas/europa-cinemas-young-audience-seminar-2011>

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Lucas Varone, July 2011.

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Useful links:

**Cineteca di Bologna:** [www.cinetecadibologna.it](http://www.cinetecadibologna.it) / **Il Cinema Ritrovato:** [www.cinetecadibologna.it/cinemaritrovato2011](http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/cinemaritrovato2011)

**Kino Muranow:** [www.muranow.gutekfilm.pl](http://www.muranow.gutekfilm.pl) / **Gutek Film:** [www.gutekfilm.pl](http://www.gutekfilm.pl)

**Utopia Toulouse:** [www.cinemas-utopia.org/toulouse](http://www.cinemas-utopia.org/toulouse)

**Les Grignoux:** [www.grignoux.be](http://www.grignoux.be)

**British Film Institute:** [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk) / **Sight and Sound:** [www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound](http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound)

**Future Shorts:** [www.futureshorts.com](http://www.futureshorts.com) / **Secret Cinema:** [www.secretcinema.org](http://www.secretcinema.org)

**Cinemaincentro:** [www.cinemaincentro.com](http://www.cinemaincentro.com) / **Cinemadivino:** [www.cinemadivino.net](http://www.cinemadivino.net)

**Birkbeck University of London:** [www.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.bbk.ac.uk)

**ICO:** [www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk](http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk) / **Watershed:** [www.watershed.co.uk](http://www.watershed.co.uk)