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SOME FESTIVALS TO COME...

FESTIVALS

● San Sebastian International Film Festival International (excerpts)

- Best Film and Best Actress: **Stesti / Something Like Happiness**, by Bohdan Slama (Czech Republic), and Ana Geislerova

- Best Actor: Juan José Ballesta in **7 Virgenes**, by Alberto Rodriguez (Spain)

- Best Screenplay: Wolfgang Kohlhasse for **Sommer vorm Balkon (Summer in Berlin)** by Andreas Dresen (Germany)

- New director: **Odgrobadogroba (Gravehopping)** by Jan Cvitkovic (Slovenia) and special mention to **El Taxista Ful**, by Jo Sol (Spain)

Source: www.sansebastianfestival.com

● Athens International film Festival (excerpts)

- Best film: **Stesti / Something Like Happiness** by Bohdan Slama (CZ)

- Best director: **4**, by Ilya Khrzhanovsky (Russia)

- Best screenplay: **Frozen Land**, by Aku Louhimies (Finland)

Source: www.aiff.gr

● Festival du film francophone de Namur (excerpts)

- Best film and Best actress: **The Death of Mister Lazarescu**, by Cristi Puiu (Romania), and Luminita Gheorghiu

- Special mention and Best actor: **A perfect day**, by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige (France/Lebanon) with Ziad Souad

- Special Jury Prize: **Delwende**, by Pierre Yaméogo (Burkina Faso/France/Switzerland)

- Best first film: **Bunker paradise**, by Stefan Liberski (Belgium/France)

- Audience Award: **Tout un hiver sans feu**, by Greg Zglinsky (Poland/Switzerland/Belgium)

Source: <http://www.fiff.be>

DIGITAL CINEMA

● The Norwegian Film Institute acquires 4K projector

The Norwegian Film Institute is among the first in the world to acquire the Sony 4K projector. (...) The Institute's largest cinema, the Tancred, has been equipped with the 4K projector during the summer and the plan is for the Tancred to operate as a national experimental cinema for digital development. The 4K projector was initially used at the Nova Kino [member of Europa Cinemas] for the Trondheim Film Festival. "Our ambition is to follow developments and, at the same time, ensure that the whole history of film is kept alive through presentations in our cinema", says Erlend Jonassen of the Norwegian Film Institute.

Source: *scene to screen, Autumn 2005*

● Éclair Group to launch a new D-Cinema initiative

Éclair Group announced today the creation of Éclair Digital Cinema, a new venture dedicated to D-Cinema. This subsidiary will be led by Jean Mizrahi (President), Gwendal Auffret (C.E.O), Thierry Henkinet (C.F.O) and Alexandre Brouillat (C.O.O). Auffret, Henkinet and Brouillat were formerly partners of AvantiDigital, the D-Cinema consulting firm. (...)

Source: www.dcinematoday.com, 4 October 2005 (excerpts)

● XDC boosts international development by starting XDC France

Source: www.xdcinema.com, press release, 29 September 2005

• Interview with Jean Labé [President of the FNCF] and John Fithian [President of the NATO]

Last July the DCI, which brings together several American studios, published its recommendations on digital projection. Do these meet your expectations?

JF: Digital projection is the first topic on which all the exhibitors of the world are working in unison. Several years ago a group of federations, including the NATO and the FNCF, drew up a common declaration to request the creation of standards for digital projection. This step was taken into account by the DCI which took on board very many of our suggestions in its recommendations. For a start, it should be known that exhibitors will not go down the road of digital technology if the technology does not offer projection better than 35mm. Now, the quality standards desired by the DCI are very high. This is satisfying for us. Secondly, exhibitors should not lose control of their activity. Technological development should not challenge their prerogatives, whether these consist of the showing of trailers or of the choice of auditoria capacity granted to films. This postulate has been put as a top priority in DCI's recommendations (...).

Does that mean that these recommendations mark the beginning of the real transition to digital technology?

JF: (...) We now have to find a viable economic model. It is not a question of exhibitors financing the transition to digital technology themselves (...).

JL: Apart from the problem of the economic model, which is key, many problems, both strategic and technical, remain to be resolved. For example, I am thinking of the reliability and durability of the material. (...)

Is there an economic model which could suit both exhibitors and studios, at the same time?

JF: While there is no miracle solution, the basic schema does consist of a common fund to which studios contribute, thanks to the economies achieved by the disappearance of prints. This capital would allow all the cinemas to complete the move to digital technology. But it must be emphasised that such a system is easier to implement in the United States, where studios provide 98% of films to exhibitors. It is less easy in Europe, where the market is more fragmented and where there are more distributors.

So will there be a long period of transition?

JL: Perhaps five years or, indeed, ten. But we still need to establish whether there is an economic model (...).

JF: (...) If we find an acceptable solution this year, at least in the United States, we will carry out tests next year in one or two medium-sized cities in which we will install digital equipment in all the cinemas. That will give us a clearer understanding of the stakes. The experiment could then be extended to other cities from 2007. Then, as Jean Labé said, it would take five to ten years to equip all cinemas. *We know that most American studios are in favour of digital technology. What is the position of French distributors and producers?*

JL: (...) We have said that it is not a subject of immediate concern to French distributors, insofar as the number of prints they make wouldn't give them reason to hope for the economies of scale expected by the American studios. I do know that Véronique Cayla [Director General of the French Cinematographic Centre, CNC] intends to follow the matter closely. Bearing in mind the management of the cinema industry in France, a general discussion between professionals and public authorities will be inescapable. (...)

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 23 September 2005, Interview by Anthony Bobeau (excerpts)

GERMANY

• *White Masai* takes top spot at German box office

The White Masai, directed by Hermine Huntgeburth, has become the second local film this year after Til Schweiger's *Barefoot* to take the number one spot at the German box-office.

The love story between cultures between a Swiss businesswoman and a black Masai warrior had been primarily targeted by distributor Constantin at female audiences, although the Euros 7m production has also received positive responses from male cinemagoers at test screenings. The film is an adaptation of Corinne Hofmann's best-selling autobiographical novel of the same name.

Released on September 15 after successfully premiering at the Toronto Film Festival the previous day, Huntgeburth's film attracted around 50,000 admissions on the first day of release and sold a total of 301,265 tickets from 385 prints over the first four days. (...)

Source: www.screendaily.com, 20 September 2005, Martin Blaney (excerpts)

BELGIUM

• Four new cinemas in Liège in 2007

The opening of four new film theatres in Liège city centre (...) should take place in 2007. (...) The construction of the new cinema complex should begin in February or March 2006. According to Jean-Marie Hermand, the project's founder, the specification has now been finalised and the tender will shortly be put to companies.

The investment, 25% of which will be covered by FEDER subsidies as part of the Objectif II Meuse-Vesdre programme, will be to the tune of 5 million euros. The purchase of the land is financed half by the city of Liège as part of the federal plan for large cities, and half through a loan. The French Community and the non-profit making organisation Les Grignoux, which initiated the project, will pay the balance. Les Grignoux will favour the scheduling of art house films rather than hard and fast commercial films. 70% of films scheduled at the current cinemas are European films, while 80% of films shown at megacomplexes are American.

Jean-Marie Hermand has also stated that all plans for the project have been finalised. The building will be modern and imposing. As well as the four auditoria with a capacity of 300, 100 and two lots of 200 seats, it will have a bar and a large interior garden. (...)

Source: adapted from www.rtl.be , 22 September 05 (excerpt)

[Jean-Marie Hermand is the exhibitor at the Churchill and Le Parc cinemas in Liège. He is also treasurer of Europa Cinemas.]

SPAIN

• Spain in B.O. blues. Receipts drop 16.1%

Spain's box office plunged a dramatic 16.1% through Sept. 15, compared with the same period in 2004, reaching just E401 million (\$493.3 million).

Exhibitors don't expect to make up the shortfall during the rest of the year, and to explain the implosion, they're beginning to talk of other reasons beyond the lack of product, such as the videogame boom, Internet usage and rampant piracy.

Figures were revealed at the San Sebastian Festival by Jose Manuel Pimenta, general manager of Nielsen EDI in Spain, during a presentation of BOB, a real-time box office data bank to be launched late this year by Nielsen EDI and exhibitors body Fece.

"The figures underscore that the B.O. recovery in 2004, following two years of decline, was an exception," Pimenta told Daily Variety. "We may be looking at a change in Spaniards' leisure habits," he added. (...)

Source: www.variety.com , 22 September 2005, Emiliano de Pablos (excerpts)

• Torrente 3 smashes Spanish box office records

Torrente 3: The Protector, the third instalment in the hugely successful local comedy franchise, made history on its opening weekend in Spain.

The film was released September 30 on a gargantuan 465 copies by UIP, which reported a record-making Euros 7.2m grossed off 1.38m admissions.

The figures mark the biggest opening ever for a film of any nationality in Spain, surpassing prior record holder *Star Wars: Episode III's* Euros 6.14m. *Shrek 2* followed with Euros 6.1m. The biggest Spanish opener to date was *Mortadelo & Filemon's Big Adventure* with Euros 5.1m. (...)

So far this year no local film has earned more than Euros 5m at the box office except Ridley Scott's *Kingdom Of Heaven*, a Spanish co-production which has earned Euros 11.6m but whose inclusion in the government statistics for local cinema has caused controversy.

Without *Heaven* and Breck Eisner's *Sahara*, another Spanish co-production which has earned Euros 3.67m in Spain, local films' market share would fall well below the current 13.3% tallied through September 5.

The first two *Torrente* films are among the top grossing Spanish movies of all time (...).

Wild Bunch has international rights.

Source: www.screendaily.com, 03 October 2005, Jennifer Green (excerpts)

FRANCE

• Attendance: very varied situations

The drop in attendance which we are currently noticing, in France around 15% or 16% compared with last year, is being experienced by many countries. The reason most frequently given by exhibitors – a lack of interest in films – is more of an economic explanation than a structural one and is not, therefore, a permanent one.

Yet this is currently underlying different situations depending on the type of exhibition - for example, small-scale exhibition is experiencing an often greater decline: the French National Cinema Federation, FNCF, has discovered that the drop is of 20% or more. The economic explanation has a strong effect on this market sector: fewer popular films being billed means less success overall. The decline is all the more notable since, in successful years, small-scale exhibition increased more than the average level indicated. (...)

Source: Ecran Total, 28 September 2005, F.D. (excerpts)

• What is the answer for the cinema?

The 60th Congress of the FNCF, which is taking place in Deauville from 27 to 29 September, will be striking for more than one reason. The majority of cinema professionals agrees that the 16% drop in attendance at French cinemas since the beginning of the year is due to the lack of either French or American blockbusters. The change in the attendance structure does, however, raise questions: in 2004, the position of under 25s in the percentage of viewers and admissions had dropped by 2%. Without doubt, the continuously increasing proportion of over 50s for over 30 years has compensated for this figure. But this figure does make you wonder about the future. All the more so since the some 170 million filmgoers we shall probably achieve in 2005 has been obtained from cinemas which have cost, collectively, more than in 2003 (173 million viewers) and much more still than in 2000 (165 million viewers). It is also difficult to establish whether the development of broadband internet and mobile phone use are rivals to the cinema in terms of budgets and the leisure time of young people, indeed of the French population as a whole. Certainly, every time cinemas have had to face competition in the past (commercial TV, video, then pay-as-you-go TV), they have been able to react by finding an appropriate response: visually spectacular films, larger cinemas and multiplexes. Could digitalisation be a counter-attack to the raising of the stakes? (...) It follows that this technological development will bring greater flexibility in scheduling and a drop in circulation costs for distributors. But not to the point of changing the economic model of the cinema industry. Furthermore, in the opinion of the specialists, it will take ten to fifteen years to come into general use. Moreover, the film theatres should prepare themselves to face competition from high definition at home, for both television and video. (...) It is imperative that cinemas find an innovation which will give them a lead over home cinema. But the development of cinema should also, without doubt, involve the films themselves, their subjects and their methods of financing. Each time in the past it was many years before the cinema implemented the solution to its problems, even when the solution was right there. We should also remember that it took a good ten years for exhibition to be launched at multiplexes, despite the success of the Kinopolis in Lille.

Source: adapted from Ecran Total, 28 September 05, Serge Siritzky (excerpts)

• Art house films being launched at Les Navires in Valence

All cinema lovers knew about the work of Les Navires [member of Europa Cinemas since 1997], in Valence. The four auditoria greeted up to 80,000 viewers annually. Bursting out of its seams, the team decided to expand by investing in the six auditoria of the Palace, a generalist city-centre complex in difficulty since the opening of the Pathé multiplex. So, from 7 September, the cinema took the group's name. While awaiting more major works in summer 2007, the film theatre has been rejuvenated and the seats changed in two auditoria. The objective is to achieve a figure of 140,000 admissions per year, notably by offering more films and by attracting people beyond Valence. Limited to its capacity of 320 seats, the former Les Navires did not necessarily have access to the successful art house films, at least not during their national release. Fortified by two additional auditoria, including one with 300 seats, this new Navire can, from now on, lay claim to a broader programme. (...) The purchase of the assets of the Palace (...) was made possible by the creation of a cooperative bringing together Les Navires and the Palace in Aubenas, the Eden in Crest, the 7^{ème} Art in Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, the Cinéma in Pierrelatte and, of course, Les Navires in Valence. This initiative in effect allowed larger funds to be raised to bring about the transfer of activity from Les Navires to the former Palace. The transfer had

already been contemplated in 1999 before being abandoned in favour of the construction of a fourth auditorium at the former art house complex which, logically, has ceased to trade.

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 16/09/05, Anthony Bobeau (excerpts)

ITALY

• Alarm Over FUS Cuts

The Financial Law passed last week by the Council of Ministers and currently under examination by Parliament has proposed a cut to the Visual Arts Fund (FUS) of approximately 164m euro per year, for the next three years, which lowers FUS funding to less than 300m euro annually. If approved, cinema, which received an overall 84m euro per year, will receive little more than 50m euro under the new law. "This figure is below the threshold of decency, if one considers that a country like France invests approximately ten times that amount in its film industry," reads a press release issued by ANICA (Italian Association of Cinematographic Audiovisual and Multimedia Industries) and API (Association of Independent Producers). "The FUS cut destroys any and all potential growth and recovery for industry companies, which have already been suffering serious financial difficulties for some time, and will have grave repercussions in the job market." The alarm has also been sounded by AGIS, an umbrella group for all the associations and organizations that work in the entertainment industry: "Between cuts to [FUS] and a reduction in the quota of Lotto proceeds allocated to show business, the Italian entertainment industry is going to come up against, with the recently presented Financial Law, a cut in public resources of at least 40%," affirmed President Alberto Francesconi. "If Parliament were to approve such a massive cut," continues the AGIS President, "a large number of companies that work within various sectors of the industry would simply be pushed out of the market, creating profoundly negative consequences for approximately 200,000 industry workers. Over the last several months, we have drawn up a realistic and innovative reform of the FUS that we are about to present and that, if accepted, will simultaneously allow us to obtain an adequate increase of the FUS and a significant reduction of the state's financial commitment."

Source: www.cineuropa.org, 03 October 2005, Camillo De Marco

NORWAY / GERMANY

• Berlin screens Norwegian films

Today a large retrospective series on Norwegian film will open in Berlin. The series is made on initiative by Freunde der Deutschen kinematek initiated by two of Europe's most respected film curators, Erika and Ulrich Gregor.

The series will open with a screening of Liv Ullmann's *Trolösa* in the presence of Lena Endre and will continue with two silent film classics: *The Great Bergen Express Robbery* and *Laila*. The post-war era is represented by *The Battle for Heavy Water*, *Death is a Caress* and *Nine Lives*, while Erik Løchen's exceptional modern film *The Hunt* represents the sixties.

The curators in Berlin have earlier shown great interest in the women film from the early eighties and the three most representative films from this era, *Wives*, *Growing Up* and *Betrayal* will all be screened together with Unni Sraume's *Music for Weddings and Funerals*. Modern classics such as *The Pathfinder* and *Junk Mail* will also be part of the series. The recent wave in Norwegian cinema is represented by *Cool & Crazy*, *Kitchen Stories*, *Elling* and *Uno*. (...)

The series will be screened in the modern Arsenal theatre next to Deutsches Filmmuseum in Potsdamerstrasse between October 6 and 31. The Norwegian Film Institute will do introductions and lectures in connection with the screenings.

Source: Norwegian Film Intitute, www.nfi.no, 06 October 05 (excerpts)

NORWAY / FRANCE

• **Factotum and Uno premieres in France this fall**

Bent Hamer's film based on Bukowski's book by the same name: *Factotum* and Aksel Hennie's directoral debut *Uno* will be screened for the French audience this fall and winter.

Both films will have a preview screening in connection with the **Norwegian film week "Nouveaux regard sur la Norvège" at Espace St. Michel** [member of Europa Cinemas] in the Latin Quarter in Paris. *Factotum* will premiere in the cinemas on November 23rd, in 60 copies, 14 of which in the best cinemas in Paris. Its UK premiere is the week before, while Germany will see it open in cinemas on December 8th. (...) *Uno* on the other side will premiere in France in the beginning of January.

Among the films to be screened during the Norwegian film week in Paris are the classic *An-Magritt* and more recent films such as *Aberdeen*, *Dragonflies*, *My Jealous Barber*, *Utopia* and *Music for Weddings and Funerals* as well as the documentary *All About my Father*. The film week will also show films that already are available in France, amongst others *Cool & Crazy* and *Kitchen Stories*. There will also be an European launch of Nour-Eddine Lakhmari's film *Le Regard* in this event. (...)

The film week is supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Paris as a part of the celebrating of Norway's 100 years as an independent nation. The celebration also includes a film program at the festivals in Clermont-Ferrand, Rouen, La Rochelle and Caen.

Source: *Norwegian Film Institute*, www.nfi.no, 30 September 2005 (excerpts)

NETHERLANDS

• **Paradise reigns in Dutch market**

Multicultural comedy *Schnitzel Paradise*, a contemporary Romeo and Juliet style story, is riding high at the Dutch box office. (...)

In ten days, *Schnitzel Paradise* has grossed Euros 800,000 on more than 110,000 admissions. On a limited run of 50 prints, the screen average stands at Euros 8,500. The audience – mostly youngsters between 13 and 23 – as well as national critics have unanimously applauded the modern fairy tale about the love between a Moroccan kitchen help and a wealthy Dutch girl.

Director Martin Koolhoven previously delivered the critically acclaimed but commercially poorly performing films *Amnesia* (2001), *The Cave* (2001) and *South* (2004).

Last year, *Shouf Shouf Habibi!*, another comedy about a Moroccan youngster trying to find his way in prejudiced Dutch society, was the best performing Dutch language feature, generating 320.000 admissions. (...)

Source: www.screendaily.com, 21 September 2005, Robert Blokland (excerpts)

POLAND

• **Cinema City watches Romania and Warsaw stock exchange**

Cinema City International (CCI), the operator of multiplex cinemas, which has invested EUR 100m and has 16 of them in Poland, is thriving in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

"Our development strategy in Central and Eastern Europe in the years 2006-08 provides for EUR 50-70m of investments", Mosche Greidinger, CCI managing director said.

Within two years, the majority of those funds will be spent in Poland. CCI is going to launch movies in Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Rybnik, Lodz and Katowice. But in longer-term, more and more investments will be located in other countries of our region.

"We are analysing the possibility to enter new markets. We think about Romania, although in 18-month prospective", Mosche Greidinger said. At least part of funds will be raised in the Polish stock market GPW. (...)

Source: www.pulsbiznesu.pl, 04 October 2005 (excerpts)

SWEDEN

• **Three local films in the Top 5**

When times are tough, creativity is often at its best...This could be the case of Swedish cinema, currently enjoying a record three titles at the Top 5 of the domestic box office while local film financing is going through a tough time until the new Film law comes into effect early 2006.

The three local hits of the week that take respectively the third, fourth and fifth position of this week's local chart are Martin Asphaug's *Kim Novak Never Swam In The Lake of Generaset* released last Friday with 75 prints by Svensk Filmindustri, Ulf Malmros' *God Save The King* released two weeks ago by Sandrew Metronome and Josef Fares' *Zozo* released a month ago by Sonet Film and now in the lead of local hits for 2005. (...)

Source: www.cineuropa.org , 28 September 2005, Annika Pham (excerpts)

• **New Film agreement finally announced**

After two years negotiations between the Swedish government and the local film and audiovisual industries, the new Film Agreement that will regulate the whole sector for 2006-2010 has just been announced by the Swedish Cultural Minister Leif Pagrotsky.

The good news is that the Swedish film industry as a whole will get almost SEK 100 million (€ 10.7m) extra resources per year, from the current SKK 430m (€ 46m) to SKK 528m (€ 56.5m), with the Swedish state alone contributing SEK 310m (€ 33m - up 32%). Twelve partners in total signed the Film Agreement with the Swedish government, with three new TV partners on board: the broadcasting conglomerate Modern Times Group MTG, owner notably of the Metro newspaper group, the leading Nordic pay TV entertainment provider C More Entertainment (owned by Luxembourg- based SBS Broadcasting), and Kanal 5, the third most watched TV channel in Sweden. Together with Swedish public broadcaster SVT and popular commercial channel TV4, already partners in the previous Film agreement, the five TV companies will invest a total of SEK 50m (€ 5.4m) per annum into the Film Institute responsible for allocating the total film grants, as well as SEK 58m (€ 6.2m) for the co-production, co-financing and acquisition of Swedish films.

As in the 2000 Film agreement, the allocations will go mainly towards the production of quality Swedish films (around 30 each year) and their distribution both domestically and internationally. The new funding initiatives are the SEK 5m (€ 0.54m) annual grant to fight the illegal trade of film copies on any format and another extra SEK 5m (€ 0.54m) put aside to support the export of Swedish films. Furthermore, the Swedish state will now support directly some national film-related cultural activities such as film festivals, the film house, film training at schools, and regional support to film production, details of which will be disclosed next week.

But for the Swedish Film Producers Association that took part in the negotiations, the bad news for the local film industry is that the new Film Agreement is still under-financed, and another SEK 100m (€ 10.7m) would be necessary to really secure the best conditions for film-making in Sweden over the next five years. For Christer Nilson, spokesperson for the Producers Association, these extra allocations could for instance be provided by the video, DVD companies and broadband operators that have not taken any part –so far– in the new Film agreement. A position share by the Swedish Cultural Minister who said at the press conference announcing the new Film Agreement: "All the parties here present have all taken full responsibility over the Swedish film industry, but we are disappointed by the fact that the video, DVD and broadband sectors have not been involved. We have written in the Agreement that they are welcome to join" he added.

Source: www.cineuropa.org , 20 September 2005, Annika Pham

VENEZUELA

• **Venezuela decides not to remain stranded: a law is to be adopted promoting national production**

The history of the Venezuelan cinema industry lies fifteen kilometres to the east of Caracas. Its past resembles that immense space which is almost a wasteland. Yet many hope that its future is there too: the Villa del Cinema is supposed to be opening there in early 2006. The building site allows a glimpse of what the building will be like: two enormous cubes will welcome studios of 400 m², equipped with the most modern postproduction material. Venezuelan filmmakers will no longer have to leave their country to finish their films. This project has been supported by Francisco Sesto, the architect who fell in love with the cinema and last year became the first minister for Venezuelan culture.

For the time being, Venezuelan cinema is something like this multiplex, several cables' length from the wasteland. Lovely auditoria, but ones in which 98 % of the films screened are Hollywood blockbusters. (...) And in the country's 350 film theatres, takings are more often from sales of pop corn and drinks than from cinema tickets. There is only one way to see other things: go to the Cinemateca and the three art house cinemas in Caracas. Or rush to the annual French and Spanish festivals. (...)

In this context, it is difficult to live off modest national production, which currently produces two or three full length films annually. During the 70s, the years of the Venezuela oil boom, the State had the money and financed around fifteen projects a year but, with the crisis of the 80s, production fell dramatically, as Alizar Dahdah, president of the Cinemateca Nacional, explained. So for thirty years filmmakers and producers struggled to obtain favourable legislation. In 1993, the first law enabled the National Autonomous Cinematographic Centre, CNAC, to be created but, under pressure from large American companies, prohibited taxing distributors and exhibitors. But, now, a second law has just been approved by parliament. It only needs the signature of president Hugo Chávez, which should be given shortly. (...)

Rare in a country which always suffers from confrontations between supporters of the ruling party and the opposition, the law was reached by very wide agreement. (...)

The new arrangements provide for a quota of 20 % of Venezuelan films to be billed. Quantitatively, this will not be possible immediately: the deficit could be made up by independent American films or productions from other countries, particularly European and South American ones. 'This law will benefit everybody. We are currently editing a co-production with Chileans, who are all interested in coming here, knowing that we will show their film in our country,' stated Philippe Toledano [a French producer living in Caracas, and one of the initiators of the project]. Furthermore, a tax of 5 % on box office takings for exhibitors and distributors and of 1% for producers will be paid into a newly created support fund. From the 40,000 euros in the fund now, industry financing should reach 800,000 euros annually.

It is clear that exhibitors are rather unhappy. 'The big mistake is believing that you can see, for example, Chinese films, but the audience does not like them and it is the audience who decides,' maintained John Parra, president of the Venezuelan exhibitors' association. (...)

In the historic centre of Caracas, a sea of street vendors stretches as far as the horizon. Among their number are many who offer pirate DVDs for 2 euros. As a cinema ticket costs around 3 euros, these stands are taken by storm. As in the video-clubs, you can return the film once you have seen it and get a reduction on the next one. And you can get films there a month before their release. 4,000 units of a (generally American success) will sell in official shops. But some informal vendors also offer classic and foreign films, unavailable in typical shops. 'The political will to take on the parallel circuit is lacking,' noted Alejandro Bellamme, president of the National Association of Filmmakers. 'But this is not the only problem. There is no real training in the craft of the cinema, nor is there a distribution network.' A project on this subject is on the backburner at the National Council for Culture, CONAC, as well as a network of alternative cinemas throughout the country. 3 out of 24 Venezuelan states have no screen.

In the meantime, the biggest success of the year in Venezuela is... a Venezuelan film. *Secuestro Express*, an effective but conventional whodunnit on kidnappings in South America, has already achieved nearly 600,000 admissions and will be the first film to be distributed internationally – to France in early 2006. But everybody wishes to see in this success the beginnings of a brighter future for national cinema.

Source: adapted from Libération, 21 September 2005, François Meurisse (excerpts)

BURKINA FASO

• The spring of Burkina Faso cinema

The era of digital technology heralds the spring of Burkina Faso cinema. With televised series being shown at popular cinemas, producers and directors are in the process of succeeding in reconciling the people of Burkina Faso with their own imagination.

It is Monday 12 September 2005. It is 8.40 pm at the Ciné Espoir in Tampony, swarming with people both inside and outside. At this time, long lines of cinema lovers have formed in front of the ticket offices to see the evening's second screening of *Ouaga Zoodo*, in Mossi. (...)

After this the film is expected at other cinemas in the capital, before touring the regions. In the meantime, cinema promoters in Ouagadougou and cinema lovers are piling up to see the film, the former to schedule it and the latter to see it. 'This is unheard of,' stated Abdramane Zampaligré, manager of Ciné Espoir, on the craze created by *Ouaga Zoodo*. 'We are having problems selling our admission tickets given the crush in front of the cinema. This situation has brought prosperity to the ticket touts who increase the ticket price,' he added. For Mr Zampaligré, in two days of projection the film achieved between 700 and 800 admissions per evening.

Many other activities have been set up around the cinema: an increase in the number of people free running, people selling water, etc. 'People have even come from surrounding villages to see this film,' noted Mr Zampaligré. By way of illustration, he spoke of projection in two screenings of a Hindu film, a

film prized by the city's residents, which only had around a hundred admissions on Monday 5 September, the day before the arrival of *Ouaga Zoodo*. Before being shown at Ciné Tampouy, the film had been to Ciné Nerwaya, Ciné Burkina, Ciné Kadiogo, Wentenga and Pissy (...).

In one week of screening at Emergence Cinéma in Wemtenga, in August, Zakaria Gnégéné, the manager, announced that there had been 8,082 admissions including over 1,000 per day. 'I would like to bill the film again unless the producer, Charlemagne Abissi, refuses us,' said Mr Gnégéné, whose cinema shows only films from Burkina Faso. 'At the moment we have Boubacar Zida's *Cité Pourrie* in the schedule. Before *Ouaga Zoodo* we screened Boubacar Diallo's *Sofia* and *Dossier Brûlant*, films from the Dromadaire film company,' he explained. In 2004, *Traque à Ouaga* and *Sofia* were top of the bill.

Boubacar Diallo is a pioneer in this area and his example is being followed by Savane Communication. There is no shortage of films which have met with popular success in Burkina Faso. From *Tasuma* (2004) by Kollo Daniel Sanou to *Me and my White Man* by Pierre Yameogo, released in 2003, and *Ouaga Saga* by Dani Kouyaté, the people of Burkina Faso have taken over their own history, films 'filling' the cash registers and nourishing debates and the imagination. (...).

Source: Lefaso.net / Sidwaya, 20/09/05, Souleymane Sawadogo (excerpt)

[The Espoir, Nerwaya, Burkina, Kadiogo, Wentenga and Pissy (Emergence) cinemas are supported by the Africa Cinemas programme. *Ouaga Zoodo* has achieved over 45,000 admissions in the country.]

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