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FESTIVALS – AWARDS (EXCERPTS)

- **Athens International Film Festival -** <http://www.aiff.gr>
 - *Falkenberg Farewell (Farval Falkenberg)*, Jesper Ganslandt, SE/DK): Best film
 - *The Bothersome Man (Den Brysomme Mannen)*, Jens Lien, NO): Best direction
<http://www.bothersomeman.com/>

- **Copenhagen International Film Festival -** <http://www.copenhagenfilmfestival.com>
 - *12.08 East of Bucharest (A fost sau n-a fost?)*, Corneliu Porumboiu, RO): Best film, Best script
 - *Along the Ridge (Anche Libero va Bene)*, Kim Rossi Stuart, IT): Best director, Best cinematography

- **Edinburgh International Film Festival -** <http://www.edfilmfest.org.uk>
 - *Brothers of the Head* (Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe, GB): Michael Powell Award (Best British film)
<http://www.brothersofthehead.com/splash>
 - *London to Brighton* (Paul Andrew Williams, GB): New director Award - <http://www.l2b-themovie.co.uk/>

- **Gdynia Polish Film Festival -** <http://www.fpff.pl>
 - *Saviour's Square (Plac Zbawiciela)*, Krzysztof Krauze, Joanna Kos-Krauze, PL): Grand Prize, Award of the President of the Polish Republic, Best actress (Jowita Budnik) and Best score (Pawel Szymanski)
 - *What The Sun Has Seen* (Michal Rosa) and *Extras (Statyści)*, Michal Kwiecinski): Special Jury Prize
 - *We Are All Christs (Wszyscy jesteśmy Chrystusami)*, Marek Koterski): Best director

- **Locarno International Film Festival -** <http://www.pardo.ch>
 - *Das Fraulein* (Andrea Staka, CH/DE, Bosnia-Herzegovina): Golden Leopard for the best film, Junior jury's first prize and FICC Don Quijote Prize
 - *Le Dernier des Fous* (Laurent Achard, FR): Best directing and Special mention of the Ecumenical Jury
 - *Body Rice (O Céu Que Nos Impede)*, Hugo Vieira da Silva, PT): Special mention
 - *L'Année suivante* (Isabelle Czajka, FR): Best first film
 - *Verfolgt* (Angelina Maccarone, DE): Golden Leopard Filmmakers of the Present
<http://www.verfolgt-der-film.de/>
 - *Nachtflattern* (Carmen Stadler, CH): Golden Leopard, New Swiss Talent
 - *The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)*, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, DE): UBS Audience Award - <http://www.movie.de/filme/dlda/>

- **San Sebastian International Film Festival -** <http://www.sansebastianfestival.com>
 - *My Son (Mon fils à moi)*, Martial Fougeron, FR): Golden Shell for Best film and Best actress (Nathalie Baye)
 - *Half Moon (Niwe mung)*, Bahman Ghobadi, Iran/Irak/FR/AT): Golden Shell for Best film
 - *Vete de mi* (Victor García León, ES): Best actor (Juan Diego)
 - *The Art of Crying (Kunsten at græde i kor)*, Peter Schønau Fog, DK): Volkswagen Youth Award

- **Sarajevo International Film Festival -** <http://www.sff.ba/2006>
 - *Das Fraulein* (Andrea Staka, CH/DE, Bosnia-Herzegovina): Best film, Best actress (Marija Skaricic)
 - *Mum'n'Dad* (Faruk Loncarevic, Bosnia-Herzegovina): Special Jury Award
 - *The Paper will be blue (Hirtia va fi albastra)*, Radu Muntean, RO): Special Mention
<http://www.thepaperwillbeblue.com/>

- **Toronto International Film Festival -** <http://www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/2006>
 - *Reprise* (Joachim Trier, NO): Diesel Discovery Award - <http://www.reprisefilm.no/>
 - *Death of a President* (Gabriel Range, GB): Fipresci Prize
 - *Takva* (Ozer Kiziltan, TR/DE): Swarovski Cultural Innovation Award - <http://www.takva.com.tr/>
 - *Khadak (The Colour of Water)*, Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth, BE/DE/NL): Honourable Mention
<http://www.khadak.com/>

- **Venice Film Festival-** <http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema>
 - *Private Fears in Public Places (Coeurs)*, Alain Resnais, FR/IT): Best director
 - *Golden Door (Nuovomondo)*, Emanuele Crialesi, IT/FR): Silver Lion revelation
 - *Dry Season (Daratt)*, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Chad/FR/BE/AT): Special jury prize
 - *The Queen* (Stephen Frears, GB): Best actress (Helen Mirren), Best screenplay (Peter Morgan)
 - *DarkBlueAlmostBlack (AzulOscuroCasiNegro)*, Daniel Sanchez Arevalo, ES): Europa Cinemas Label
<http://www.azuloscurocasinegro.com/>

• *Dark Blue* floats to the top at Venice

Arevalo's debut pic scores Europa Cinemas prize
Spanish helmer Daniel Sanchez Arevalo's comedy *Dark Blue Almost Black (Azul Oscuro Casi Negro)* has scooped the **Europa Cinemas Label**, which is awarded to the best European film in the Venice Days section of the Venice Film Festival.

Arevalo's pic about how people struggle against their pre-ordained destiny was selected by four Europa Cinema exhibitors who praised the film's "delightful light touch." (...)

The prize runs deeper than a few giddy minutes on the podium for first-time director Arevalo: the pic will receive extended theatrical exposure and beefy promotion on the Europa Cinemas network — 1,562 screens in 664 cinemas in 59 countries.

The network, instituted in 1992, provides financial support to cinemas that commit themselves to the programming of a significant number of non-domestic European films and to the organization of promotional activities concerning European films for young audiences.

Sogepaq is selling *Dark Blue Almost Black*, which is a Tescela Producciones Cinematograficas production.

Source: *Variety.com*, 8 September 2006, Archie Thomas

• Venice, Giornate Degli Autori

(...) This year the "Venice Days" (Giornate degli autori) – similar to the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes – bring together a dozen films which, in their extreme diversity, confirm the importance of this showcase for new talent. The sidebar is only in its third year, and this outing marks the debut at the helm for the renowned Italian critic Fabio Ferzetti, of the newspaper *Messaggero*, paired with the organisational talent of Sylvain Auzou, a Frenchman based in Rome. Comparisons with the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes or the Forum in Berlin are far from misplaced, given that all three events are affiliated to the **Europa Cinemas Label**, which aims to encourage the circulation and diversity of European cinema. To this end, the Giornate not only show films but organise innumerable meetings, dinners, debates and surprise screenings of historical curiosities (...).

"The spirit of the Giornate is an extension of that behind the defunct 'Window on Images' section," explains Fabio Ferzetti, who was a collaborator on the latter for four years. He professes a passion for real eclecticism: "We want to mix documentary and fiction, introduce audiences to new filmmakers and, above all, show films which will make a difference."

• Sogepaq books multiple deals for *DarkBlueAlmostBlack*

Spain's Sogepaq has closed a string of sales on well-received Venice Days entry *DarkBlueAlmostBlack (AzulOscuroCasiNegro)* which screens in Toronto's Visions programme.

The sales, closed in Venice, were to Arsenal for Germany and Austria, Frenetic Films for Switzerland, Cineart for Benelux, Budapest Film in Hungary, Strada in Greece and Arthouse Traffic in Ukraine. The company is fielding interest in France and Italy.

The debut feature from award-winning short film director Daniel Sanchez Arevalo screened to repeated applause last Monday as part of Venice Days. Yesterday it was announced that the film had won the Europa Cinemas Label at the festival. The label is voted on by four Europa Cinemas exhibitors.

The film has had an extended play in Spanish theatres through distributor Alta Films after taking three top prizes at the Spanish Film Festival of Malaga in March. It has taken close to \$1.1m (Euros 850,000) off 157,000 admissions.

DarkBlueAlmostBlack is about a young man forced to take over his father's menial job when the latter suffers a stroke, putting his own desires on hold but learning much about himself and his real objectives in the meanwhile.

Source: *Screendaily.com*, 9 September 2006, Jennifer Green

This certainly holds for a film such as *Farewell Falkenberg*, the debut by Swedish director **Jesper Ganslandt**. The audience follows the emotional and existential ups and downs of two adolescents, oscillating between vivacity and ennui in the small town of their childhood. (...)

Another debut feature – and surely one of the best to come out of Spain in many a year – is *DarkBlueAlmostBlack*, by **Daniel Sánchez Arévalo**. Despite the slight confusion and overloading with ideas often displayed by first films, this urban drama – cast in a strangely nordic, cold blue light – is brimming with confident and sophisticated charm. Slightly skewed and elusive, analytical, ironic and almost Cartesian (that is, French) in its form and morals, it follows an exemplary group of emotionally retarded youths as they go through their identity crises. Two brothers, their friend and a woman become embroiled, displaying all the touching clumsiness of their age. (..)

Source: adapted from *Libération*, 6 September 2006, Olivier Séguret, Excerpts

• The Goudineau Report Sparks Further Debate on Digital Cinema in France

The French national film institute, the Centre national de la cinématographie, recently published the report “**Goodbye Film? The Implications of Digital Projection**”, compiled by Daniel Goudineau. Here are the 14 recommendations it makes.

- Recommendation 1: Financial aid for the installation or upgrading of digital equipment in cinemas should be restricted to projectors of at least 2K resolution conforming to French AFNOR industry norms.
- 2: Cinemas equipped with projectors of less than 2K resolution should not be excluded from CNC financing as long as digital screening is secondary to 35mm.
- 3: Financial assistance should not take into account the compression format used in systems. It is preferable to encourage flexibility in servers.
- 4: Committees giving grants should consider adopting as a criterion the diversification of individual cinemas.
- 5: The Technical Standards Council should be given the task of reviewing plans to install digital projection systems, checking the operational compatibility of the various items the cinema would like to buy.
- 6: Producers should be obliged to ensure that by 2009 or 2010, all French films are available for distribution in a digital format.
- 7: The European Commission should be persuaded to facilitate the expansion of digital post-production on European films.
- 8: There is urgent need for an annual guide giving a neutral, technical appraisal and rating of the digital projection equipment installed in each cinema.
- 9: The CNC must immediately begin considering a tender for an independent technical body which will – on the CNC’s behalf – generate and manage the security key codes needed to read the films. (...)
- 10: The CNC should consider, together with regional authorities, how to integrate cinemas into new technology networks.
- 11: Work must be done to organise the mechanism for payment by distributors of an extra key fee via the body which will generate and manage the key codes.
- 12: There needs to be a study of the feasibility of creating a pool of investors – guaranteed for example by the IFCIC – which will assist independent exhibitors in re-equipping their cinemas.
- 13: The CNC should consider altering the financial grant system, or setting up a special fund, to give greater support to cinemas which are at greater risk, for example those with only one screen.
- 14: The CNC should consider altering the financial grant system, or setting up a special fund, to give greater support to less secure distributors, particularly those who will mount small-scale releases on both 35mm and digital formats.

The entire report is available in French at the CNC website, www.cnc.fr

• Digital Cinema Looks Set to Take Over

Exponential Growth Forecast for the Next Five Years

(...) 2006 is likely to be a year for negotiations and signature of contracts with wide-scale rollout happening from 2007. Hollywood will drive the market forward and the key factors in the switch to digital cinema are cost savings to distributors, the economic imperative of controlling piracy and the need to maintain the experience gap with regard to home cinema and HDTV.

On the back of the Hollywood studios releasing their technical specification for d-cinema in June 2005, there was explosive growth in the number of d-cinema screens globally during the second half of last year, with numbers doubling in a six month period. (...)

Key findings from the report:

- We forecast that there will be more than 17,000 d-cinema screens in the world by 2010.
- The number of d-cinema screens globally doubled in the second half of 2005. There were 849 d-cinema screens by year end 2005.
- 97 titles were released globally in d-cinema standard during 2005.
- Of the top 5 leading cities by number of digital screens deployed, four are in Asia and one is in the USA.
- Christie dominates the market for d-cinema projectors in the US market, whereas Barco holds a majority of market share in Europe and Asia.
- North America is the leading region for d-cinema screens, followed by Asia then Europe.

Source: Businesswire.com / [Research And Markets](http://ResearchAndMarkets.com), 13 September 2006, Excerpts

CZECH REPUBLIC

• Will the monopolies commission come to the rescue of smaller cinemas?

For the past 7 years, small cinemas and multiplexes have been vying for audiences, a battle which is becoming more and more embittered. In a bid to survive, **the Scala cinema in Brno** [member of Europa Cinemas] decided to ease rivalry – by approaching the cartel office. The Scala has requested an enquiry into whether distributors are dealing unfairly by not offering it films until weeks after their initial release.

"Sometimes we don't receive prints until 6 weeks after the film's launch. By then, most people have already seen it in a multiplex. So we aren't operating under the same conditions as the multiplexes. We are calling for the cartel office to re-examine the situation," explains Daniel Zasmeta, the Scala's director.

The situation in Brno is no exception – it highlights a standard practice by distributors. The Vesmir theatre in Nachod generally receives new films two weeks after their release, which director Zdenek Duba already views as a big success. Other cinemas have to wait much longer.

Distributors say they are not out to penalise anybody. They say their guideline is to send prints first to screens with higher admissions. "Sometimes suburban multiplexes in Prague won't receive a print until after a more popular single-screen theatre. I can't say any more. The official response to the cartel office report will come from our head office in London," says Martin Malik, regional head of Warner Bros.

Exhibitors complain that prints of desirable films are sometimes sent to cinemas in other towns and don't return until several weeks later. "We suspect that there are tacit agreements between some distributors and multiplexes. We think this amounts to unfair competition, but distributors insist that they are only following usual commercial practice," said one exhibitor, who chose to remain anonymous so as not to damage relations with distributors.

The cartel office in Brno is still pursuing investigations. It is studying the contracts between distributors and exhibitors. "We are looking for a solution together with specialists in competition law. We will soon be holding further discussions with the Exhibitors' Association and the Distributors' Union," says Martin Svanda, the office's spokesman. Anna Cerna, of the Distributors' Union, would only comment, "Lawyers will have to look into the situation. We will have to discuss the matter further."

Source: adapted from Pravo, 31 July 2006, originally translated from the Czech by Marketa Colin-Hodouskova

FINLAND

• Sandrew Metronome sells its cinemas to Finnkin

The distribution and production company, Sandrew Metronome, which is now fully owned by the Norwegian media group Shibsted, has just sold its Finnish network of 10 cinemas to Finnkin, Finland's biggest exhibitor. The latter owns 15 cinemas (70 screens) in nine Finnish cities. Last year, Sandrew Metronome sold its network of Swedish cinemas to a group including Triangel Film, which renamed it Cinemas Astoria. In May 2006, Nordisk Film acquired Sandrew Metronome's cinema network in Copenhagen.

Source: adapted from Les Écrans Nordiques, French Embassy in Sweden, 18 August 2006

FRANCE

• Success of the Danish trilogy, *Pusher*, in Paris

The simultaneous release on 26 July of the three parts of the *Pusher* trilogy was a little success and further proof of the potential of European thrillers and gangster films. The three films were seen by 4,548 people in their first week at the UGC Ciné Cité les Halles multiplex. (...)

Pusher was the first spontaneous film by a young director, **Nicolas Winding Refn**, aged 26, who was influenced more by the golden age of the American whodunnit and by horror films than by the great European filmmakers. Although a great success in Denmark (nearly 190,000 admissions), the film was only distributed commercially in Finland, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom. The filmmaker was then carried away by a desire to make less commercial films and produced *Bleeder* in 1999 (90,000 admissions in Denmark and also distributed in Norway and Sweden), then *Fear X* in 2003, whose relative failure encouraged him to make a sequel to his very first film. In debt due to this film, he then followed up *Pusher* producing, successively, *Pusher 2* (2004) and *Pusher 3* (2005).

Each part works separately, following with a hand-held camera a central character whose bad decisions plunge him into problems. But the homogeneity of the production, the space given to amateur actors, the importance accorded to the description of a social universe and the development of the director, whose style progresses, from one film to the next, to increased disillusion, gives meaning to the idea of trilogy. (...)

Source: www.europa-cinemas.org, 7 August 2006, Excerpts

• European films perform well at the french box-office this summer

Changement d'adresse, A Cock and Bull Story, Armenia, The Passenger and Violent Summer were among the European films doing well this season. (...)

This summer's crop included several films premiered in Cannes in May.

The first was **Changement d'adresse** (Directors' Fortnight). This comedy, directed by Emmanuel Mouret, had a 79-screen release on 21 June and, to date, has managed to draw 126.400 admissions (1.600 per print). The film hits Belgian theatres in the coming days; releases are also planned in a number of other countries. **The Right of the Weakest** (*La Raison du plus faible*, Competition) – Lucas Belvaux' gripping milieu thriller whose taut direction recalls US genre classics – opened on 19 July on 150 screens and has already done more than 171.000 admissions. It too opens shortly in Belgium.

9 August saw the release of **The Page Turner** (*La Tourneuse de Pages*, Un Certain Regard) on 200 screens, with a parallel outing in Belgium. For the film's second week, the number of screens was increased considerably, and it is already approaching 600.000 admissions. Audiences in the Netherlands, the UK and Finland will get their chance to see the film from November.

More recently, **Taxidermia** (Un Certain Regard), the shocker by Hungarian director György Palfi, opened in about twenty screens and made a small-scale splash by attracting 17.000 filmgoers in just two weeks. Success on a rather different scale was only to be expected from this year's Palme d'Or winner, **The Wind That Shakes the Barley** by Ken Loach. After a 250-screen opening, it drew 475.000 admissions in the space of two weeks. Already one of the director's best-performing films in Ireland, the film looks set to have a long-running international career, with releases scheduled in a long list of countries. Bruno Dumont's latest film has been doing well, with 32.300 admissions in its first week. **Flanders** – awarded the Grand Prize by the Jury in Cannes – is showing on 75 screens.

Last week's releases included **How I Celebrated the End of the World**, the wonderful debut feature by Romanian director Catalin Mitulescu which garnered the Best Actress award in the Cannes sidebar Un

Certain Regard for Dorothea Petre. Though not a flop, it performed more slowly than expected, with only 8.300 admissions in one week for 30 screens. It is continuing showing on 27 screens, most of them members of the Europa Cinemas network.

But these weren't the only successes; summer smiled on a good number of other European productions this year.

After being presented to exhibitors at the last network Conference in November 2005, **A Cock and Bull Story** took a long time finally to reach screens. Given a 63-screen outing on 5 July, Michael Winterbottom's comedy performed very well, with more than 100.000 admissions. Released at the same time was **Manuale d'amore** by Giovanni Veronesi, which also managed a healthy 65.000 admissions on 48 screens. This too was a good late showing from a film which was originally released in Italy in March... 2005!

But the real success of the summer – albeit on a much more modest scale – was the **Pusher** trilogy, which was screened by one sole multiplex, the UGC Ciné-Cité les Halles in Paris. The three films by Nicolas Winding Refn attracted 10.691 filmgoers, an average of 3.564 per print.

Two re-releases also did impressively well on the repertory circuit. **The Passenger** (*Professione: reporter*, by Michelangelo Antonioni) drew 18.370 admissions on 5 screens and a 4-screen outing for **Violent Summer** (*Estate violenta*, by Valerio Zurlini) managed 15.000 admissions.

Finally, this brief overview would not be complete without a mention for two French films which proved hits in their respective fields. **Them** (*Ils*), a horror by directors David Moreau et Xavier Palud, managed to set a new benchmark as a genre film welcomed by aficionados and critics alike, doing 251.000 admissions on 150 screens. Catering for a more art house audience, the travel essay **Armenia** (*Le Voyage en Arménie*) by Robert Guédiguian reached 246.000 admissions. After an original 174-screen release on 28 June, the film was still showing in 49 cinemas on 6 September!

Source: www.europa-cinemas.org,
8 September 2006

• Alain Marty, director of the Jean Vigo in Bordeaux: "At Cinésites, we see powerful reactions and leave strong memories."

Since 1993, the directors of the Bordeaux repertory cinema Jean Vigo have been staging free open-air film screenings in unusual places, ranging from villages with just a few dozen inhabitants to locations in large cities. Since its beginnings in the countryside of the Gironde and Charentaine, the idea of these Cinésites – finding a location, staging events and screening a film with some relation to the site, its history, people, architecture and mythology – has been spreading across Europe over the past three years. Nine countries are on board for this 14th season, including Belgium, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Two teams, one technician and one projectionist handle the running of the programme, which extends from July to mid-September. Audiences vary between a hundred and a thousand, depending on the location for the screening. **Alain Marty, director of the Jean Vigo Centre** [member of Europa Cinemas] and the festival's founder, talks about its development and the future of open-air cinema.

In the era of downloadable films and home cinema, is there really still an audience for open-air cinema? Today, cinemas are the location for only a small proportion of film viewing. Our Cinésites attract not only regular cinemagoers, but those who never go to the movies any more – it is no longer part of their leisure activities – as

well as those who have never gone to the cinema at all – in rural areas, for example, where there are no cinemas. Our screenings are a novel experience for them, as can be seen in young people's reactions: often, children will be dancing round the projection booth or the big screen. (...) The technical conditions really allow the film's mythology to unfold and strike a chord with the audience's imagination. (...)

Have audiences evolved over the years, and does open-air cinema have to conform to certain preconceptions, about the origin of the films, their age, aesthetics or themes?

Audiences have become more demanding over the years. The fact that they are guests at the screenings – all of them are free – often makes them more discerning. Now, even the simplest village worker gives his opinion on the film. No-one feels excluded. Audiences join in, because they have been schooled in the reception of images by television. To me, television is a way of understanding the world, opening it out.

This schooling, however, doesn't give us carte blanche to show any kind of film. We rarely show foreign-language films that aren't dubbed as we often have many families in our audiences and young children don't understand foreign languages and have difficulty in following subtitles. As a rule of thumb, you have to find a balance between the type of audience, the location, its history, sociology and heritage, and the demands of the collective. This is even more true abroad, where I have felt a real need and desire for demanding open-air programmes. Undeniably, cinema is a universal language, but the demands on and function of that language vary from country to country.

Is the decline of this approach to cinema inevitable?

On a national level, the number of people attending cultural events is on the decline. In our case, we are examining this question. We are monitoring attendances at this year's screenings very closely. There is no such thing as a miracle – whatever the quality of the films, the Cinésites wouldn't work without the agencies organising other events around it (concerts, meetings, open-air dinners etc.). For example, it was thanks to the programme of events at the Château d'Agassac, in the Médoc, that we managed an audience of more than 500 for Jacques Demy's *Once Upon a Time*.

Whatever way films are distributed in future, I'm sure the collective experience of big-screen projection will not be done away with. But even if attendance figures do continue to rise, it will be necessary to take into account audiences' saturation with images, and the way images become banal as a result. In ten years, cinema practice will have changed. It will have to incorporate other aspects, such as live performance. That's something we've started to do in the Gironde, with our Cinéconcerts. There, musical groups of various styles reinterpret, often rework the music to films live on stage.

Source: adapted from Le Monde, 13 August 2006, Claudia Courtois

A full programme of events is available at www.cinesites.tm.fr

• The new Méliès opens in Saint-Etienne

On 2 August, the Méliès cinema in Saint-Etienne [member of Europa Cinemas] moved to the town centre, in Place Jean Jaurès, a few steps from the Gaumont multiplex. The art house cinema, which now numbers four screens and 630 seats, is located in a renovated industrial building (...). This operation cost the Méliès cinema 3.5 million euros (...). The cinema will break even with 170,000 admissions. A reasonable target, says Alain Cramier, who recalls that the former Méliès cinema, with two screens, achieved on average 95,000 to 110,000 admissions per year. (...)

Source: adapted from Ecran Total, 6 September 2006, FD, Excerpts

GERMANY

• German box office up 8.9% over first half of 2006

Despite Germany's hosting of the World Cup and sweltering temperatures from late May, German cinemas have reported marked increases in box-office takings and admissions for the first half of 2006 over the same period last year, according to figures collated by the German Federal Film Board (FFA).

The FFA reported that box-office takings had increased by 8.9% from 2005's \$452.4m (Euros 352.6m) to \$492.9m (Euros 384.1m), while admissions climbed from last year's low point of 60.3m to 65.1m for the first six months of 2006.

The figures for the first three months had been lower than for the same period in 2005, but this changed dramatically in April and May with a number of strong releases. Thanks, in particular, to the US animation feature *Ice Age 2*, exhibitors and distributors had their best April for the past 15 years, with admissions up a staggering 96.1% on the same month in 2005.

Altogether, there was a 12.2% year-on-year increase in box-office takings to the end of May, but the World Cup and the heatwave in June saw business at the cinemas drop 16.3% compared to June 2005 - consequently leading to the overall single digit increases for the half-year.

Meanwhile, **German films** are going from strength to strength on the nation's screens: the 12.8m tickets sold and 19.9% domestic market share were the highest levels reached halfway through the year by local fare since 1997. Three local films were seen by more 1m cinema-goers each: **The Wild Soccer Gang** (2.1m), **The Lives Of Others** (1.3m) and **Wild Chicks** (1.1m) - and other box-office successes included **The Robber Hotzenplotz**, **Felix 2**, **Into Great Silence**, and **The Elementary Particles**.

The German films' market share could even surpass 20% by the end of 2006 since a number of potential local box-office hits will be released in the coming weeks, including Tom Tykwer's much anticipated **Perfume - The**

Story Of A Murderer, the 7 Dwarfs sequel **7 Zwerge - Der Wald Ist Nicht Genug**, the animation feature **Oh, Wie Schoen Ist Panama**, and the Til Schweiger drama **Wo Ist Fred?**

Source: Screendaily.com, 31 August 2006, Martin Blaney

● **Perfume seduces German auds**

More than 250,000 moviegoers see pic on opening day.

"**Perfume: The Story of a Murderer**" is savoring the sweet smell of success after more than 250,000 moviegoers turned out to see the film on its opening day Thursday (Sept. 14).

Tom Tykwer's adaptation of Patrick Sueskind's best selling gothic novel, about a hyper sensual but amoral young man who stops at nothing to create the most wondrous scent imaginable, appears to have benefited from a major marketing campaign and glitzy premieres in six major cities last week, including Munich, Berlin, Vienna and Paris. (...)

Opening on 703 screens, the film has played to packed houses across the country and is sure to top the box office this week-end. (...)

Pic, which may show significant cross-over appeal, is playing in both mainstream multiplexes and arthouse venues.

Source: Variety.com, 15 September 2006, Ed Meza, Excerpts

● **Kay Pollak in German Heaven**

Kay Pollak's *As It Is In Heaven* was voted Best Foreign Film at Leipzig's Gilde Awards last Thursday, beating Hollywood films *Brokeback Mountain* and *Walk the Line*. The film has obviously struck a right note in Germany, where people have come in flocks to see the story of a famous orchestra conductor who comes back to his old village after an illness and decides to conduct the local church choir. Released last autumn by Prokino, the Swedish film has passed the magical mark of 1m admissions in Germany.

The 2004 Swedish Oscar candidate for Best Foreign Language Film also broke admission records in Sweden, where it was seen by over 1.4m people, the highest number in over 15 years. Kay Pollack's first return to filmmaking after an 18-year absence was produced by Anders Birkeland and Göran Lindström for GF Studios in Sweden, in co-production with ASA Film in Denmark. The film was distributed domestically by Sonet Film and internationally by Pathé International.

Source: www.cineuropa.org, 18 September 2006, Annika Pham

NETHERLANDS

● **Verhoeven's *Black Book* wins boxoffice award**

Paul Verhoeven's World War II drama ***Black Book*** has been awarded the Dutch Golden Film Award for topping 100,000 admissions in the Netherlands. It is the first time a Dutch film has reached this benchmark in just four days, according to the Dutch Film Festival, organizer of the award. *Black Book*, Verhoeven's first Dutch film in 23 years, is expected to attract at least one million ticket sales, according to producer San Fu Maltha. The film, about a Jewish fugitive (Carice van Houten) who joins the resistance and seduces a Nazi officer (Sebastian Koch), had its world premiere this month at the Venice Film Festival. It also is this year's Dutch entry for the best foreign-language film Oscar.

Source: TheHollywoodReporter.com, 19 September 2006, Ab Zagt

ROMANIA

● **Anim'est International Animation Film Festival: Top names in animation presented in Bucharest**

The most recent films by some of the biggest names in international animation - *Life in Transition* by John Dilworth and *Guide Dog* by Bill Plympton - will be screened in Bucharest for the first edition of the Anim'est International Animation Film Festival that will take place between September 22 and October 1. (...)

The festival will comprise around 200 short animated films together with 13 recent feature-length films and a retrospective of Romanian animated films. (...)

The short films in the festival are grouped into several sections: international short films, a focus on Czech animation cinematography, a program of British animation, a series of Iranian animated films, programs of Polish short films and a retrospective of Romanian animation through five programs of short films offered by the National Film Archive.

According to the Estnest Association, the organizer of the festival, Romanian animation is going through a period of crisis that has lasted for over 15 years. It is not only a crisis of production, but also of distribution, because the majority of animated films shown in Romanian cinemas do not reflect the diversity in the domain.

The first edition of the Anim'est festival will take place in three cinemas in the capital - **Europa, Union** and **Corso**. [Europa and Union are members of Europa Cinemas]

Source: Bucharest Daily News, 12 September 2006, Dana Milea, Excerpts

SPAIN

• *Alatriste* still reigns over Spain

Spanish swashbuckler has netted \$18.1 mil on home turf

Augustin Diaz Yanes' 17th-century Spanish swashbuckler "Alatriste" still rules the roost at the Spanish box office four weeks after its release.

The Viggo Mortensen starrer has grossed \$18.1 million, eclipsing the perf of Pedro Almodovar's "Volver," which grossed \$12.6 million in Spain. (...)

"'Alatriste' has become that uncommon phenomenon of a film loved as much by the critics as the moviegoers," said one booker. "The film can easily reach \$20 million."

Pic picked up \$1.6 million over the weekend, a 36% drop from the previous frame. (...)

Source: *Variety.com*, 27 September 2006, *Esther de Prado*

UNITED KINGDOM

• Cinema City in Norwich: A groundbreaking 40 years of cinema

(...) The 40th anniversary of the founding of what was one of the first regional film theatres outside London is being celebrated today with the showing of four classic films.

When it was first established the Norfolk and Norwich Film Theatre moved between three homes – the Noverre cinema at the Assembly House, UEA and the Central Library.

In the late 70s it moved into a permanent home at the Stuart and Sucking Halls in St Andrew's Street, and became known as Cinema City [member of Europa Cinemas].

As Pat Scott, who was the film theatre's promotion organiser ("which meant I pretty much ran it"), explained, it was set up as part of a National Film Theatre initiative to enable people to see art and foreign films that didn't get a full commercial release - this, of course, was long before video players and dedicated non-stop film channels. (...)

Pat worked hard to promote it by putting posters up around the city, started to take films up to the newly-opened university and set up an education scheme for schools organising screenings of films of their set texts such as Shakespeare plays.

Because it was a film theatre, it meant that, in principal at least, censorship wasn't a problem. But some of the films they showed did prove controversial.

"It meant I could show Ulysses," said Pat. "I got 400 extra members that week, because you couldn't see it anywhere else. The Killing of Sister George had a lesbian theme. Some French films were quite controversial. There was a tremendous amount of letter-writing about it at the time," she said. (...)

Cinema City opened in spring 1978 and director Joseph Losey, who made the *Go-Between*, which was filmed in Norfolk, attended the launch for a special screening of his film *Mr Klein*.

"To have an international director coming down for the opening was really something," said Brenda.

"Jim Mearing did a brilliant transformation of the auditorium of the Stuart Hall to make it a very comfortable and pleasant cinema," she added. (...)

It's a registered charity, manned by volunteers, with a paid director - currently **David Litchfield** is in the role. It's had three other directors over the years - Peter Broughan, Dick Catt and Kinglsey Canham. Funded by Screen East, the East of England Development Agency, Arts Council, Norwich City, Broadland and Norfolk County Councils and Europa Cinemas, Cinema City has temporarily moved to the Playhouse in nearby St George's Street while a £3.5m revamp to turn it into a three-screen cinema, which will secure its long-term viability, is carried out. After some delays it's due to move back home next year. (...)

"I used to run the children's matinees on a Saturday afternoon. That was great fun. On children's birthdays they would get a Cinema City badge - it was all rather old fashioned," said Brenda. Through Cinema City she became a regional British Film Institute governor, representing the city at a national level - and she got to meet and have her picture taken with Clint Eastwood - a memory which still leaves her weak at the knees.

"We had some great events. One week we showed all Buster Keaton's films - they were on all day every day for a week and we had live pianists who improvised along to the films," added Keith. Norwich is a great hub for the media - "It's full of people with talent and that's reflected in Cinema City. It's one of the jewels of the crown of Norwich," said Brenda.

Source: www.edp24.co.uk

(*Eastern Daily Press*), 23 September 2006,

Emma Lee, Excerpts

Website: www.cinemacity.co.uk

• Viva el cine español! at the Ciné Lumière

The London Spanish Film Festival (September 8-20) is taking place for the second consecutive year at the Ciné Lumière [member of Europa Cinemas], bringing Londoners a selection of contemporary Latin films and paying special homage to Spanish star actress **Carmen Maura**.

A dozen new and recent Spanish features are part of the programme as well, for the first time, documentary and animation titles. The latter include **Mercedes Alvarez's** moving documentary about rural Spain, *The Sky Turns*, and *Olentzero and the Magic Log* by **Juanjo Elordi**, the animated screen version of a classic Basque folk tale.

Last weekend, Argentinean actress Natalia Verbeke took to the stage to present **Marcelo Pineyro's** Goya-winning film *El Método* which opened the festival. Established filmmaker **Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón** presented his *Virgin Rose* and Catalan director **Jol Sol** presented *The Taxi Thief*.

Tomorrow, filmmaker **Joachim Oristrell** will present his award-winning *Unconscious* before the film's UK release through Maiden Voyage Pictures on September 15. (...)

The London Spanish Film Festival is organised in collaboration with the Cultural Office of the Spanish Embassy, the Institut Français and the Instituto Cervantes in London, with support from the national lottery through the UK Film Council and Film London's Audience Development Fund.

Source: www.cineuropa.org, 11 September 2006, Annika Pham, Excerpts

• Releases: Zidane, Johanna...

Zidane: A 21st Century portrait, carrying the Artificial Eye logo, will try to fight off strong competition from nine other new titles opening today, including four European films.

The experimental sports documentary film about French football star Zinedine Zidane is being released on **15 prints and four digital copies**, carried by a TV campaign, press ads, an upbeat trailer expressly put together by the distributor and a website. (...)

On a smaller scale, the Hungarian/French film *Johanna* by the young maverick Kornél Mundruczó is being platformed at the ICA Cinema by Tartan. The modern version of the Passion of Joan of Arc toured numerous festivals since its successful launch at Cannes 2005's Un Certain Regard.

Krišana by German filmmaker **Fred Kelemen** is an existential, B&W fable set in Riga. The German/Latvian co-production is being launched by BFI Distribution at the French Film Institute's Cine Lumière and at the Tate Modern as part of the first London retrospective dedicated to the filmmaker's work at the London museum.

Source: www.cineuropa.org, 29 September 2006, Annika Pham, Excerpts

MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

• Biennial of the Arab World Institute. The cinema, another window into the Arab world

The 8th Biennial of Arab Cinema, organised by the Arab World Institute (IMA) in Paris, has just ended. An opportunity to give the results of this production which is progressing in terms of quality but still appears to be a prisoner of the same evils.

(...) While the jury presided over by Yves Boisset has just decided on the prize-winners, awarding its highest prize to the Egyptian film *Yacoubian Building* (**Marwan Hamed, 2006**), several trends are appearing.

Exile, whether physical or internal, holds an important place among the subjects dealt with, particularly in Lebanese films, in which certain dialogues, given the current context and images of refugees fleeing Lebanon, stand out, strikingly. But subjects also include conflicts of all sorts which mark out the contemporary history of the Arab world: the resistance of Kurdish peshmergas in Iraq and Iran at the end of the 70s (*Narcissus Blossom* by **Hussein Hasan Ali and Masoud Arif Salih**) or even the 'black decade' in Algeria, the decade of the civil war, dealt with by **Djamila Sahraoui** in a very realist manner in *Barakat!* As for old standbys, **Selma Baccar's** *Fleur d'Oubli* has shown the originality of Tunisian films while Egypt, bolstered by its cinematographic industry (the only one in the Arab world, even if it has lost some of its former lustre), remains the spearhead in this field. Having accustomed filmgoers from Morocco to Kuwait to the Cairo dialect for over 50 years, only films from the Nile appear to continue to be able to attract large audiences. As proof, *Yacoubian Building*, an adaptation of the global bestseller by Alaa El Aswany, evoking a contemporary, fragmented Egypt, in the realist style of Naguib Mahfouz, was one of the only films to have filled the theatre during its screening at the IMA. Finally, on the subject of great surprises, the promising emergence of films from the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen) is noteworthy.

In an irritating refrain, the fact remains that, generally, Arab cinematographies, while they indicate an increasingly controlled style, get too often lost in scriptwriting. The result is films which either do not stay the course or favour intellectual debate destined for a handful of converts, failing to recount a story and thus leaving a large part of the audience to one side. (...)

Another hackneyed view of these films is their lack of openings – at a time when the IMA organised, on the fringes of the Biennial, a colloquium on the 'conditions necessary for the emergence of a Euro-Arab market'. With the lack of a sizable local market, producing a film in an Arab country is a real battle, giving rise to the increase in coproductions with European countries or Canada (half of the feature length films in the selection). Exportation to Europe turns out to be even more complicated (...). But more seriously, Egyptian films excepted,

these cinematographic works have problems finding outlets among their Arab neighbours, despite the cultural proximity (just one inter-Arab coproduction in the selection). But there is a positive note: critics unanimously emphasised the quality and diversity of the short films by a generation of young filmmakers who, injecting a breath of fresh air, augur a promising future.

Source: adapted from Marianne, 2 August 2006, Skander Houdi, Excerpts

MOROCCO

• Closing of the Mediterranean Short Film Festival

Serious or poignant 'loudmouth' films awarded in Tangier

Apart from any debate on the reduced quality of films shown during the short week of screening, the Mediterranean Short Film Festival in Tangier (which took place from 11 to 16 September) has allowed a glimpse into the state of production in the countries of the South (as they are universally known), as well as an interesting panorama of the themes and preoccupations of each Mediterranean country. (...)

The 'nationality' of the 37 short films on the list, or their provenance from the northern or southern shores of the Mediterranean, was easily identifiable by their themes, even and particularly in films without words.

The Moroccans showed, in addition to three films in the official competition, a panorama of 60 short films produced during the year. The films dealt in different ways with the big theme of internal upheaval caused by changes in society, as in Ali Benkirane's *Casa*, which follows the journey of a young Rif man to the big city of Casablanca in search of a better future, or Tala Hadid's *Your Dark Hair Ihsan*, twice awarded, with the special jury prize and with the best actress award. The film is a moving story of a young Moroccan's return to his roots following separation from his mother at a very early age and exile in Europe.

The Lebanese productions, post-war films (if we can talk about 'post'), focused on the state of youth in Lebanon, for example, being torn between two identities (*A Plus* by Fouad Alaywan), disorientated by the chronic instability in the country (*Badkoun Shi...t* by Badih Massaad) or having trouble communicating, amid sweeping changes to society (*Le Premier Étage à Droite* by Rana Salem), etc.

Palestinian films continue to focus on attachment to the homeland: despite exile, as in Ula Tabari's *Diaspora*, or despite humiliation, as in *Yasmine's Song* by Najwa Najjar.

The works by filmmakers from the 'European' side of the Mediterranean (France, Spain, Italy, Greece, etc.), although dealing with less collectively political subjects, more personal and intimate, nevertheless have a pessimistic feel, caused by the state of the world: solitude, divorce, drugs, inability to communicate, disintegration of family ties, madness, etc.

In this vein, *Devoir en Classe* by the Italian Daniele Cascella won the prize for best screenplay, a prize largely deserved for the virtuosity with which it deals with the weighty subject of incest. The best actor award was given to Edmond Budina, the star of the film *Flocons de Neige*, by the Albanian Robert Budina, an interpretation of a fine man of about 50, immersed in grief at seeing his seriously ill wife pass away before his eyes for lack of being granted a visa to have an operation abroad. (...)

A real 'loudmouth' by two very young filmmakers, *Aile Soixante 6* by Angélique Muller and Gatheleen Tanti, shows an internal view of the world of madness, a label describing any deviation from the shackles of society, using careful screenwriting and direction, with black and white shots and a voice over expressing the thoughts and feelings of a young woman accused of being mad. This work was produced as part of a graduation film by two fledgling filmmakers, 'with very little money and the free contribution of actors,' according to the prize-winners.

The Mediterranean Short Film Festival in Tangier is still in its infancy. As a result, it must not be compared with the Clermont-Ferrand festival (...).

Morocco, the biggest producer of short films (with nearly 100 works produced annually, it receives assistance for production from the Moroccan Cinema Centre), has for all that not yet set up a screening policy via the television or cinema preview screenings. As everywhere, with a few, rare exceptions, short films continue to be confined to festivals. And that is a real shame, since the short film is clearly far from short of ideas!

Source: adapted from L'Orient le Jour (Lebanon), 19 September 2006, Zéna Zalzal, Excerpts

LEBANON

• Post-war Beirut festival welcomes 40 international guests

Ayam Beirut Al Cinema'iya, the first festival to take place in Lebanon since the war, wrapped Sept 23 after a nine-day festival that opened with the world premiere of **Michel Kammoun's *Falafel***, and screened 40 features, shorts and documentaries, mainly from or about the Arab world.

Now in its fourth year, the festival has gained a following among Arab cinephiles, thanks in part to its grassroots approach and support for regional cinema. This year, even though Beirut's airport is still not fully functional, 40 foreign guests made the trip. Unifrance's director of festivals Antoine Khalife, representatives from Arte, and journalists from Germany and France joined film directors James Longley, Ismael Ferroukhi and Egyptian actress Layla Alwi, among others.

"Most of the guests brought cameras with them, and some are considering making films about the situation," said artistic director Eliane Raheb. Palestinian-UK film-maker **Saeed Taji Farouky (*I See the Stars at Noon*)**,

for example, is using the festival as a starting point for a documentary on the "cultural reconstruction of Beirut". In between screenings, some of the guests attended Hezbollah's victory celebrations in southern Beirut. One of the most popular festival events was the screening of a collection of short films and videos made during the recent war. "It was a very sensitive issue, and we debated whether to do it," said Raheb. "But on the day, we had almost 500 people crowd into a 275-seat theatre." A debate about "the role of the filmmaker in a time of crisis" followed the films. Festivals in the Arab world and Europe have since expressed interest in continuing the programme.

"The festival itself was extremely well-organized and surprisingly well-attended," said Longley, who directed *Iraq In Fragments*. "As you might expect, the audiences were very engaged and there was a huge spectrum of political and aesthetic ideas represented -- that makes it an exciting place to show a film."

Many of the screenings took place in the Metropolis, one of a handful of arthouse cinemas in the Middle East, which opened on July 11, a day before the war started, and hosted refugees throughout the crisis.

Festival director and Metropolis founder Hania Mroue entertained the homeless families from southern Beirut with daily screenings from the archives. The cinema relaunches next week and hopes to be an outlet for independent film in the country, an approach endorsed by Khalife: "I am in discussions with the cinema -- the association between Beirut DC and the Metropolis will be very good for realising European and Arab films in Lebanon."

Run by film-makers' cooperative Beirut DC, Ayam Beirut Al Cinema'iyā (Beirut Cinema Days) started as a forum for regional cinema, but expanded into more international fare during 2004 and 2005 when the more established Beirut International Film Festival (BIFF) suffered consecutive cancellations. This year the BIFF returns as the MidEast Film Festival, Oct 4-10, with a programme of 20 international festival favourites, including **Pedro Almodovar's *Volver***, **Jafar Panahi's *Offside***, and **Stephen Frears' *The Queen***. The festival closes with **Marwan Hamed's *The Yacoubian Building***.

Festival director Colette Naufal said that prints are coming in but organising the event is "very tough" given local circumstances. "Industry representatives from Europe and the US think three times before going to Beirut," she said. Nonetheless, Naufal is expecting guests, including Venice festival director Marco Mueller, who helped launch the festival, along with the Make Films Not War campaign.

Beirut has further events planned for local and regional cinema: documentary festival Docudays is scheduled for Nov 3-11; local independent film and video festival Ne a Beyrouth, which was due to take place in August, has now shifted to early December.

Source: *Screendaily.com*, 28 September 2006, Antonia Carver

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