

TPR – 31 JANUARY 2006

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- Sundance: *13 Tzemeti, Into Great Silence*
- Spain: *The Secret Life of Words, Tapas*
- Sweden: *Nina's Journey, God Save the King*
- Switzerland – Solothurn: *Mein Name ist Eugen*
- Bavarian Film Awards: *Das Leben der Anderen, Sommer vorm Balkon, Into Great Silence*
- Trieste Film Festival: *The Death of Mr Lazarescu, Mistrz*
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TPR – 31 JANUARY 2006

RECENT AWARDS

- **USA – Academy Award Nominations for the Best Foreign Film**

La Bestia nel cuore (*Don't tell*, Cristina Comencini, IT), *Happy Christmas* (Christian Carion, FR), *Paradise Now* (Hany Abu-Assad, NL), *Sophie Scholl* (Marc Rothemund, DE), *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood, GB/South Africa)

- **USA – Sundance**

13 Tzameti (Gela Babluani, FR): **World Cinema Jury Prize : Dramatic**

Into Great Silence (Philip Groening, DE): Special Jury Prize of the World Cinema Documentary Jury

- **Spain – Goyas 2005**

The Secret Life of Words (Isabel Coixet): **Best Film, Best Director, Best Original Script**, etc.

Tapas (Jose Corbacho): Best New Director, Best Supporting Actress

Match Point (Woody Allen, GB): Best European Film

- **Sweden – Guldbagge 2005**

Nina's Journey (Lena Einhorn): **Best film, Best Script**

God Save the King (Ulf Malmros): Best Director

L'Enfant (Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, BE): Best Foreign Film

- **Switzerland – Solothurn**

Mein Name ist Eugen (Michael Steiner): **Best Film**

- **Germany – Bavarian Film Awards**

Das Leben der Anderen (Florian Henckel) : Best Script, Best New Director, etc.

Sommer vorm Balkon (*Summer in Berlin*, Andreas Dresen): Best Director

Into Great Silence (Philip Groening): Best Documentary

- **Italy – Trieste Film Festival (Central and Eastern Europe)**

The Death of Mr Lazarescu (Cristi Puiu, RO): Best Film

Stesti (*Something like happiness*, Bohdan Slama, CZ): Special Mention for the Direction

Mistrz (*The master*, Piotr Trzaskalski, PL/DE): Audience Award

www.triestefilmfestival.it

- **France – Gerardmer International Fantasy Film Festival**

Isolation (Billy O'Brien, GB/IE): **Grand Prix**, International Critic's Prize

Fragile (Jaume Balaguero, ES): Jury Prize, Young Jury Prize, Audience Award, 13^{ème} Rue Award

www.gerardmer-fantasticart.com

- **France - Angers Premiers Plans Film Festival (First and Second films)**

Stesti (*Something like happiness*, Bohdan Slama, CZ): Jury **Grand Prix Ex-Aequo**, **Audience Award** and Best Interpretation for the Entire Cast

Een Ander Zijn Geluk (*Someone else's happiness*, Fien Troch, BE): Jury Grand Prix Ex-Aequo

Schläfer (Benjamin Heiseberg, AT): Special Jury Prize

Pavee Lackeen (Perry Ogden, IE): Special Mention from GNCR (Groupement National des Cinémas de Recherche)

www.premiersplans.org

MEDIA PROGRAMME

- **Launch of the second evaluation of MEDIA Plus**

The European Commission (Information Society and Media DG) has awarded the second mid-term evaluation of the MEDIA programme to the **APRIL/Media Consulting Group** consortium, experts in the European scheduling industry, in partnership with the company **EUREVAL-C3E**, a specialist in the evaluation of government policies. This evaluation, requested by the European Parliament, is to be delivered to the Commission in July 2006. It will cover all the activities of the MEDIA PLUS and Media Training programmes

during the period 2003-2005 for the 25 Member States of the EU, as well as for Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Bulgaria.

The results of this evaluation, close to the official end of MEDIA PLUS, will be taken into account during the implementation of the future MEDIA programme for 2007-2013.

(...) Professionals may now make contact with the evaluation team to register their interest in participating in detailed discussions and case studies and to bring useful information to the evaluation.

To this end, the consortium will very rapidly make available on the Media Consulting Group website (www.mediaccg.tv) an online questionnaire for European professionals, whether beneficiaries of the programme or not, so as to collect a wide range of information and views on the programme. (...)

Source: adapted from the Newsletter of MEDIA Desk Belgium, 19 January 2006 (Excerpts)

● **Switzerland's return to MEDIA**

With 2006 bringing Switzerland's return to the MEDIA programme, **MEDIA Desk Switzerland** became operational on 1 January. It is the successor to the previous Euroinfo office which managed the 'MEDIA compensatory measures' on behalf of the Federal Office of Culture.

As the MEDIA programme's national Swiss antenna, MEDIA Desk Switzerland has now been restructured. Its function continues to be to link the Swiss film industry with Europe and **Rachel Schmid** and **Nicole Messerli** remain on the staff, as director and assistant respectively.

MEDIA Desk Switzerland is part of a great support network for the European audiovisual industry, comprising over forty information offices spread across the 30 countries which are members of MEDIA. There you will find all the important information on the wide range of support offered by the MEDIA Programme.

Professionals interested in a partnership with their Swiss opposite numbers may also seek specialist advice from MEDIA Desk Switzerland: Rachel Schmid and Nicole Messerli, MEDIA Desk Switzerland, Neugasse 6, 8005 Zurich, Tel +41 43 960 39 29, info@mediadesk.ch, www.mediadesk.ch

Source: adapted from the Newsletter of MEDIA Desk Belgium, 20 January 2006

GERMANY

● **German cinemas in crisis – catastrophic year for multiplexes**

Last August the Kosmos closed, due to the insolvency of its managing company, FTB Riech & Co KG. It was built in Berlin in 1996 and was the biggest multiplex, with 10 auditoria and 3,400 seats. Three months later, Hans-Joachim Flebbe made alarmist remarks at his group's general meeting. '2005 will remain one of the most catastrophic years in the history of the multiplex,' the CinemaxX AG's chairman concluded in front of shareholders dumbfounded by the mediocre half-year results, which showed a fall of 12% in turnover (to 69.8 million euros). And the official figures for the third quarter published by the German Federal Film Board (FFA) drove the nail home by revealing a spectacular 27% drop in admissions compared with the same period in 2004. Of all Western countries, Germany was the most sharply affected by the disappearance of the viewers. A disappointing selection, the increase in power of DVD sales (...) and piracy, which the authorities have always had trouble fighting, are, according to Mr Flebbe, the main causes for this decline, which is forcing exhibitors to invest in costly local advertising campaigns or to reduce ticket prices since competition is too fierce. At CinemaxX, as at CineStar, the first label owned by the Australian Greater Union (97 sites and 600 screens), the closure of the least profitable multiplexes is no longer ruled out, nor even the removal from schedules of the films whose prints would cost too much to hire from distributors; the latter have undertaken to apply 'reasonable rates' to prevent a chain reaction harmful to everybody.

Cinemas in stagnation. For three years now, the number of cinemas in Germany has remained constant, at 4,870 film theatres. While between 2000 and 2002, 910 auditoria were inaugurated, compared with 693 closures each year, multiplexes (27% of total cinemas, representing 45% of admissions) are now the worst affected by a crisis which would have been even worse had the operators CinemaxX and CineStar not been purchased by Tele München Gruppe (TMG) and Greater Union Filmpalast (GUF). Oliver Fock, the managing director of GUF, hopes, furthermore, that the drop in admissions will be held to 14%, reaching a final figure of 134 million. Far from the 200 million expected annually when the first multiplexes appeared.

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 16 December 2005, Vital Philibert (Excerpts)

BENELUX

● **Benelux – Cooperation agreement for Paradiso and A-Film**

The Belgian distributor Paradiso Filmed Entertainment and the Dutch A-Film have just signed a cooperation agreement to bring together their cinema and video distribution activities, from 1 January. Each distributor will deal with the marketing, advertising and placement of film productions in their partner's festivals in their own country. 'Eight years ago,' explains Erik Engelen, director of Paradiso, 'we were able to open an office in

Holland. Today, it is a difficult market and the independents are eating each other alive. Our alliance with A-Film makes sense since we are working on the same films.' The line-up of independent works and films d'auteur to be distributed next year will include films such as *The Emperor's Journey*, *Good Night*, and *Good Luck* and *Grizzly Man*. (...)

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 16 December 2005, Vincent Le Leurch (Excerpts)

BULGARIA

• Nu Image acquires Boyana Film Studios in Bulgaria

(...) On January 13 the Bulgarian state privatisation agency finally approved the sale of 95 percent of Boyana Film Studios to Nu Image Bulgaria. The production company was one of three final bidders for Boyana, bidding \$7.6 million. (...)

Bulgaria had signed a draft contract with Nu Image in August 2005 but halted the sale when local filmmakers expressed fears that Nu Image would dedicate the film centre to foreign productions at the expense of domestic projects. Others raised concerns that a private owner would liquidate the studio and sell off its 100 hectares of valuable real estate. (...)

Under the terms of the sale, Nu Image is obliged to operate Boyana as a film studio, and is prohibited from selling or mortgaging the real estate 20 years after the sale. (...)

Source: Screendaily.com, 16 January 2006, Theodore Schwinke (Excerpts)

• Bulgarian Chosen for Jury Member in Forthcoming Berlin Film Festival

The Boyana Film Center Program Manager Vladimir Trifonov has been invited by the Europa Cinemas Network to become a member of their jury in the forthcoming Berlin Film Festival which will take place from February 9th to February 19th 2006, Boyana Film spokesperson informs. From March 2003 "Center" cinema has been managed by Boyana Film and for a very short time has become not only a part of a famous cinema chain which specializes in European films but has also been recognized as the leading art cinema in Bulgaria.

In 2004 Sofia Film Fest manager [and exhibitor of the Cinema House, also member of Europa Cinemas] Stefan Kitanov was the jury chairperson at Cannes Directors Fortnight program. (...)

Source: Focus News Agency, www.focus-fen.net, 11 January 2006 (Excerpts)

SPAIN

• New Spanish film festival to be held in June

International buyers of Spanish features have a new event to mark on their calendars: the Spanish Film Screenings of Madrid, to be held June 18-20. Dubbed "Madrid de Cine," the mini-market will fill the hole left by the cancellation of the Spanish Film Screenings of Lanzarote. (...)

Source: Screendaily.com, 31 January 2006, Jennifer Green (Excerpts)

• Spanish government launches action plan for film

Spain's Ministry of Culture has unveiled an "action plan" for Spanish film, including increased subsidies and the creation of a new mutual guarantee fund.

Presented in Madrid by Minister of Culture Carmen Calvo, the initiative targets production, distribution and exhibition.

The most significant measure is an increase to the 2006 budget of the Spanish Film Institute ICAA's Cinema Protection Fund, from \$40.2m (Euros 33m) in 2004 to \$78.8m (Euros 64.5m). (...)

Immediate industry reactions were tepid. "This money is nothing less than an updating of the Fund to the necessities of the industry," said Andres Vicente Gomez, CEO of Lolafilms. (...) For Gomez, the guarantee fund [Euros 6m] is too small to represent any serious help to individual companies. (...)

An automatic subsidy to exhibition chains programming mostly European and Iberoamerican cinema, subtitled films or a minimum number of short films each year is currently under consideration.

Meanwhile, the government opted against a change to the current screen quota system, which requires exhibitors to play one day of EU films for every three of dubbed non-EU films.

Finally, the Ministry has promised funds to the Ibermedia Co-production Fund, including \$0.36m (Euros 0.3m) for the creation of a new line of support for documentaries; increased aid for Spanish films travelling to international festivals; and the creation of a Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Spanish movies.

Source: Screendaily.com, 27 January 2006, Jennifer Green (Excerpts)

● French film triumphs abroad

A great year: after the poor harvests of 2003 and 2004, French films have had great results abroad - as much in terms of cinema admissions as in terms of takings. And what's more, for the first time ever there were more viewers abroad than within France, with box office takings being almost the same. In 2005, 73.6 million viewers around the world went to see French films, representing an increase of 49.2% over 2004. (...)

These results brought in 369 million euros, a little more than takings for films in France (around 360 million euros). (...)

A better year in the United States

But it must be said that no major work was able to arouse international enthusiasm in 2004, while in 2005 the seventh art in France did benefit from the success of feature-length films such as the *March of the Penguins*, *Transporter 2*, *Danny the Dog* and *A Very Long Engagement*. These films managed to claim international success, whether intentionally or otherwise. The ease with which a documentary such as *March of the Penguins* was able to adapt to different markets was undeniably a key factor in its success. Likewise, the fact that a producer such as Luc Besson considered *Danny the Dog* or *Transporter 2* to be international projects has played a deciding role in their success. (...) These three film productions appear to have thrilled French audiences rather less.

Another positive point which Unifrance made sure of emphasising was the emergence in 2005 of the American market which often shows reluctance towards foreign films. Never before have French films been so successful across the Atlantic, as box-office takings show, having reached 125 million euros. As well as the aforementioned films, the success of well-regarded but less popular art house films such as *The Beat that My Heart Skipped* or *Look at Me* is also noteworthy.

Nevertheless, it is Europe, with 50% of admissions, which remains the market of choice for French films, with four leading countries: Spain, Italy, Germany (...) and England. This European outlet deserves even better protection since progress in other continents is still uncertain. If China, with 1.5 million admissions to seven releases, is to become a country of importance to the French market, the disintegration of Japanese, Korean or even Russian markets is there to remind us of the fragility of success.

Source: adapted from Le Figaro, 23/01/06, Paule Gonzalès (Excerpts)

● Joël Augros, specialist in the economy of the cinema industry: 'They are great, but a drop in the ocean'

You're senior lecturer at Paris-VIII University, specialising in the economy of the cinema industry. What effect do the excellent results of French films in the United States in 2005 have on you?

They are great, but a drop in the ocean. (...) In terms of takings it is a tiny market since French films totalled 150 million dollars out of a total of 8 billion achieved at cinemas in the United States in 2005.

Paradoxically, the French film industry has achieved its success through films which have not necessarily appeared French in the eyes of American viewers. The international version of the most successful film, *The Emperor's Journey* (12.8 million admissions in the United States in 2005 and the 26th film at the box office), was totally revamped. The second most successful French film in the United States, *Transporter 2* (5.6 million admissions), was shot almost exclusively in English by British and American actors.

Is France condemned to produce 'hits' without ever establishing a more stable base in the United States?

Make no mistake: we speak of the success of French films as if it were a question of the success of French culture, but this is not the case. From 1960-1970, art house films were in fact shown a little in the United States. Today, Americans make their own independent films - they no longer need ours.

At best, it is French entrepreneurs who manage to sell films nowadays. These are hits which work well. It is not at all a case of selling whole film schedules or catalogues of works-in-progress: that is what the American majors do, to the point where it is impossible to buy just one individual film from an American studio. (...)

Do the difficulties arise from distribution?

Yes. Without a specific distribution network, you always have to sell films to American distributors who have no interest in opening up their market to a competitor. The Americans have understood this phenomenon for ages - they established themselves in Europe in the 1920s. (...)

Source: adapted from Le Monde, 21 January 2006, Nicole Vulser (Excerpts)

● Talent Group enters the European market

In association with Screenvision Europe, Talent Group intends to ease the purchase of space in Europe's 500 biggest multiplexes. (...) Olivier Bardolle's company has just joined with Screenvision Europe to create a new organisation which will allow distributors to purchase advertising space in 500 European multiplexes. 'Following the interest shown by certain American majors, we have decided to extend our French model to other European countries,' explains Olivier Bardolle. In France, Talent Group markets space at UGC, EuroPalaces, MK2, CGR and the biggest independent cinemas by way of subcontracts drawn up with Screenvision and Mediavision.

This initiative, created to reach first and foremost regular cinemagoers, was not without teething problems, with some distributors objecting to the requirement to pay for their trailers to be shown in cinemas. But the glut of releases, which naturally has an effect on film promotion, has been to the advantage of Talent Group whose clients include majors and independents. The European project is being piloted by Steve Rubin, former managing director of UFD (...). Moreover, Steve Rubin comments that 'the majors spend enormous sums of money conveying information about their films but they do not have control over the screening of trailers which remain the domain of exhibitors'. Hence the idea of making a global offer for pan-European releases. Firstly, Talent Group intends to facilitate the purchase of space in cinemas in France, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, Holland, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, that is, 285 multiplexes representing 2,500 screens. The company then hopes to extend to Germany, Italy and Great Britain. Olivier Bardolle's aim is clear: 10 campaigns in 2006, 50 in 2007 and 150 in 2008. The increase in worldwide and European releases on the same day or several days apart is undoubtedly likely to boost this project which should be completed at the end of the first half of 2006.

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 09 December 2005, Anthony Bobeau (Excerpts)

● **The Rex in Châtenay-Malabry: cinema ups the ante**

The cinema has always been at the heart of the town of Châtenay-Malabry, which lies just to the south of Paris. The town was, furthermore, one of the first in France to buy its cinema from the local exhibitor, in 1979. Today the Rex [a member of Europa Cinemas] is experiencing a second childhood, with the creation of a second auditorium of 146 seats with a 10m-wide screen in an extension to the original building. The work, commenced in June 2004, has allowed the entire premises to be reconsidered. The large auditorium, renovated, has retained its size and offers 404 seats in front of a lovely 12m-wide screen. The new entrance hall, 300 m², is fitted with a bar and an exhibition area. Marianne Piquet, director of the site, expects 70,000 to 80,000 spectators per year, compared with 50,000 previously. The Rex also offers the public an editing and filming room, for improved understanding of the cinematographic tool.

Source: adapted from Le Film Français, 09 December 2005, Anthony Bobeau

GREECE

● **Directors zoom in on cinema bill**

Top Greek filmmakers, including Costa-Gavras and Theo Angelopoulos, sent an open letter to the prime minister yesterday slamming the government's draft law on cinema and complaining they had not been consulted before it was drawn up. (...) The directors claim the bill only offers financial incentives to foreign filmmakers looking to shoot blockbuster movies in Greece. They want less state intervention in the film industry and ask for measures to help Greek movies flourish. (...) EES asked Karamanlis to withdraw the bill before it passes into law and launch a wider discussion with people from the film industry.

Source: www.ekathimerini.com, 25 January 2006 (Excerpts)

ITALY

● **Agreement-in-principal reached on windows**

The associations of exhibitors (ANEC and ANEM) and distributors (UNIDIM), respectively, have reached an agreement-in-principle on distribution windows. On the basis of this agreement, the period of time between the release of a film in cinemas and its subsequent exploitation by other media will be 15 weeks for important films and 12 for less important ones.

For Managing Director of RAI Cinema, Giancarlo Leone, the agreement draft will have to go through further modifications. "We producers," said Leone to trade paper e-duesse, "have supported this agreement but we must discuss the entire range of the distribution of rights. We cannot exclude the possibility of intermediary areas between theatrical, home video, pay and free TV. Areas that are advantageous to the product, both for those who produce it and those who distribute and present it in cinemas".

UNIDIM president Paolo Pozzi has, in fact, fought for the implementation of a committee capable of following the market's quick changes and monitoring the situation as well. Says Leone: "This is necessary, precisely in order not to rigidify the commercial exploitation of films that, for reasons of box office intake or seasonal distribution, can be subjected to variations with respect to the established 15-week window".

Gianantonio Furlan, Multi-Cinema Director of ANEC, considers this agreement to be a compromise: "We exhibitors ask ourselves why we have to accept a window inferior to the one that exists in France and the US. The distributors say that we exhibitors pull films out of cinemas too quickly. We can easily respond to that. If they avoided releasing 7 or 8 films per weekend, the theatrical life of a film would be longer".

In order for the proposed agreement on a film's distribution window to be transformed into an operative agreement for all intents and purposes, the approval of the anti-trust board will nevertheless be needed, as was stressed by Davide Rossi, president of Univideo (the umbrella organization for all the main companies within the Italian home entertainment industry). "If the agreement intends to place on the same plane all forms of exploitation other than theatrical releases, including home video, our position before the anti-trust board will certainly not be enthusiastic". For Luciana Migliavacca, Managing Director of Medusa Video and Vice-President of Univideo, "It is only right that there be some protection of theatres, which undoubtedly play the central role in a film's launch, but it is necessary to create protection for the further exploitation of a film, which is home video". She is perplexed over the enforcement of a window for films with lower box office intake: "There are films that remain in cinemas for short periods of time and gross very little at the box office. In this case, waiting 15 weeks for the home video release seems absurd to me. All the more so in the case of most films that do not have great visibility, for which it becomes important to be able to take advantage of the theatrical marketing for home video as well".

Source: www.cineuropa.org , 18 January 2006, Camillo de Marco

● The MiBAC backs *Don't Tell*

The General Direction for Cinema of the Ministry of Culture (MiBAC), along with Cinecittà Holding, have approved special financing for the marketing of *Don't Tell* by Cristina Comencini. "This decision is all the more significant," said Cultural Minister Rocco Buttiglione, "in that it was made during a moment of serious financial difficulties and that, nevertheless, in this case, covers over 80% of the film's marketing costs ". Produced by Cattleya and RAI Cinema with the UK (Aquarius Film), Spain (Alquimia Cinema) and France (Babe Productions), with foreign sales behind handled by TF1 International, *Don't Tell* is the Italian nominee for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, the final list for which will be announced this January 31. Comencini's film will be distributed in the US by Lions Gate. (...) Cattleya producer Riccardo Tozzi had complained in an interview about the lack of international marketing support from Italy. (...)

Source: www.cineuropa.org , 12 January 2006, Camillo de Marco (excerpts)

LUXEMBOURG / AUSTRIA

● Luxembourg and Austria sign co-production treaty

(...) The agreement will recognise films made under the auspices of the treaty as national films and will allow Austrian and Luxembourg co-producers to benefit from all of the incentives available to the film industry in both countries so long as the financial participation of the co-producing partners is at least 20%. This is the fifth co-production treaty concluded by Luxembourg after similar agreements Quebec, Canada, France and Germany, while Austria already had six in place with Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy and Spain. Despite the absence of a formal co-production treaty a number of films have been made by producers from the two countries in recent years. (...)

Source: Screendaily.com, 24 January 2006, Martin Blaney (Excerpts)

CZECH REPUBLIC

● Creation of a new distributor: AeroFilms

AeroFilms, created (among others) by Ivo Andrlé, will distribute fiction and documentary films in Czech Republic and Slovakia, to cinemas, on DVD and on television. The first film distributed by AeroFilms will be *The Child* by the Dardenne brothers (released 12 January 2006 with two prints), followed a few weeks later by the documentary *Super Size Me*. AeroFilms is forecasting the release of one film a month, mainly recent and European works. Contact: info@aerofilms.cz

Source: *Informative letter from the audiovisual service of the French Embassy in Czech Republic, December 2005 (Excerpts)*

[Ivo Andrlé manages the Kino Aero in Prague, a member of Europa Cinemas]

● Multiplexes: unfair competition in Czech Republic

(...) Viewers in the city of Olomouc have been deprived of the most recent films for nearly 6 months. And the reason? The opening of the local branch of the CineStar chain of multiplexes has been delayed, but the chain has nevertheless retained sole rights to screen premières. 'Just a few titles have been scheduled on time, offered by the distribution company at the last moment,' says Jan Joukal, director of the company Olomoucka Kina (Olomouc cinemas).

Big guys in front

The Olomouc situation is the result of a widespread practice in the Czech Republic: attractive new films are given as priority to multiplexes and single-screen cinemas have to wait. (...) This behaviour is criticized by Jiri

Kralik, director of LFS (the Summer Film School festival) and until recently director of the Uherské Hradiste cinema (Hvezda cinema, a member of Europa Cinemas). According to him, cinemas are caught in a vicious circle: multiplexes obtain the new films because they achieve higher takings, but these are higher because they have the new films. (...) 'Conditions are different from the start: 90% of the films screened in multiplexes are new releases and their contractual conditions are more advantageous. Multiplexes return 30 to 40% of their takings to distributors while single-screen cinemas return around half of their takings.'

At the beginning of the 1990s there were around 1,300 cinemas across the country. At the end of 2004 (...) there were only 544 left. At the same time 15 multiplexes were built, totalling 137 screens (but a certain number of traditional cinemas active before the Velvet Revolution did disappear even before the multiplexes were created).

Jan Bradac, director of the company CineStar, does not believe that multiplexes have destroyed the Czech cinematographic landscape. According to him, these film theatres are not managing to succeed in a competitive environment. Exhibitors at small cinemas do not agree but are afraid of speaking out. 'If someone protests, distribution companies see to it that his life becomes difficult, (...) ' states Kralik, who thinks that multiplexes are aware of their privileged position and sometimes behave in an arrogant fashion. 'On Thursday 15 December we did not screen a film because the distributor did not provide the print of *Harry Potter* as planned.' (...)

The company Olomoucka Kina has seen two of its cinemas disappear and now runs only one. (...) The closure of the two cinemas was decided on following the announcement of the opening of the CineStar multiplex, postponed until December.

The CineStar company has prompted other closures in the towns in which it has opened branches. Two cinemas have closed and just one is still open, in Hradec Kralove (where only Kino Central, a member of Europa Cinemas, remains) and in Ceske Budejovice (similarly, just the Kino Kotva, a member of Europa Cinemas, remains open), and the city of Plzen, in Western Bohemia, may well suffer the same fate. The multiplex has not yet opened but the cinema in Dobrany, 10 km from Plzen, recently closed. 'The Dobrany cinema was under greater threat than the cinemas in the centre of Plzen, since the town is near the motorway, like the multiplex,' explains Radek Uhlir from the company Filmak, the exhibitor at this cinema. His other cinema, the Kino Eden (member of Europa Cinemas in Plzen) has announced its closure in the autumn but it is continuing to operate (until February 2006). The planned opening of a multiplex is, furthermore, causing concern to Karel Muzak, in charge of two cinemas in Liberec (...).

It is impossible to survive without support

Cinemas located near multiplexes and remaining open are attempting to compete with the multiplexes by scheduling art house films for a more exacting audience and films for children. (...) According to Mr Joukal, most cinemas cannot survive without (council) support. Subsidies are to the tune of several hundred or several tens of thousands of Czech koruna, depending on the size of the town. So the town of Kyselka (700 inhabitants), in the Karlovy Vary region in the northwest, receives 3,000 € while the town of Uherské Hradiste receives 27,000 € (35,000 inhabitants, in the southeast of the country).

According to Kralik, a change in the system would be of great help: for example, in France, a large part of the 10% levied on admissions is redistributed to small cinemas. In the Czech Republic, cinemas contribute 1 CZK (0.03 €) for each admission to the national fund for the support and development of cinematography, which reinvests most of the money thus collected in new films. 'A derisory amount is left over for cinemas,' confirms Jana Kalvodova, representative of this fund. 'Just ten or so projects are supported.' In 2005, the amount destined to support technical development and the modernization of cinema equipment represented 4% of the total subsidies granted by the fund – 84,000 €.

In January, the Czech parliament will study the amendment which would see the contribution levied on admissions rise to 3% of the admission price (the average price for a ticket is now around 3 €). But the amendment does not deal with the question of support for small cinemas and the position of the Ministry of Culture has yet to be established.

Source: adapted from Tyden, 02/01/2006, Petra Pospeschova (Excerpts), translated from Czech by Marketa Colin-Hodouskova

UNITED KINGDOM

• UK Film Council offers P&A support to new releases

The UK Film Council has announced some of the latest recipients of funding from its Print and Advertising Fund. Among January's theatrical releases in the UK, the P&A fund is providing Redbus with \$351,920 (£200,000) for its release of Michael Winterbottom's *A Cock and Bull Story*, Icon \$93,258 (£53,000) for Woody Allen's *Match Point* (...). The Film Council noted that for the release of *A Cock and Bull Story*, the P&A funding helped Redbus increase the number of screens from 60 to 150.

The fund, which was re-launched in June 2005 with an annual budget of \$3.5m (£2m), aims to support broader releases of specialised films in the UK. Previous releases supported by the P&A fund include *March of the Penguins*, *Broken Flowers*, *Guy X*, and *Mad Hot Ballroom*.

Source: Screendaily.com, 11 January 2006, Wendy Mitchell (Excerpts)

ALGERIA

• First European Film Festival in Algeria

From 18 to 27 January the Ibn Zeydoun Riadh El Feth cinema in Algiers welcomes Algeria's first European Film Festival, organized by the Delegation of the European Commission. Following the first French Film Festival last December, the creation of this event reinforces the idea that the Algerian market has rediscovered a certain dynamism. This impression is shared by Mohammed Latrèche, a young distributor and producer alongside Boualem Ziani at the company Sora Productions. For example, he has ensured the distribution of the latest film by Costa-Gavras, *Le Couperet*, and is shortly to release *La Demoiselle d'Honneur* by Claude Chabrol. Sora Productions is responsible for artistic direction, logistics and communication at this first European Film Festival in Algeria. Mohammed Latrèche gives us a brief introduction.

On what basis did you set up the programme?

Along with the Delegation of the European Commission we wanted to reveal the diversity of European cinema successes. This diversity may be found both in the scale of the success of the films screened and also in the subjects and genres of the films. Generally speaking, we wanted to show Algerian viewers that films, as well as reflecting national reality, can also affect people directly. And we are sure that all the films selected can communicate with Algerian audiences.

What is the situation with European films in Algeria?

Very few films are released at the moment. Some distributors release a few French films come what may, but that's all. However, some embassies are very active so we were able to see a week of Italian film in Algiers recently and remarkable efforts have been made by the Spanish and the Germans. (...)

Are you also showing short films?

We are also showing a selection of European and Mediterranean short films which have been widely distributed in Europe. And we are very pleased to show two selections of shorts for children. (...)

Source: www.europa-cinemas.org, 11 January 2006 (Excerpts)

MOROCCO

• El Jadida without a cinema

With the closure of Le Paris cinema in 2003, El Jadida has, sadly, become a city without a cinema. A place of lights and dreams *par excellence*, the film theatre was established in El Jadida nearly a century ago and has left deep traces and unforgettable memories in the minds of my generation, the generation of Independence.

The question to be asked is this: how come the city of El Jadida, which had four cinemas for a population of around 100,000 people before 1990, went on to have just one cinema for a population of over 140,000 people, and finished up with none at the end of 2003?

(...) With television, video recorders, the Internet and satellite dishes able to receive hundreds of channels at once, attendance at cinemas has fallen catastrophically.

Chronologically, Le Paris cinema, owned by Mr Nègre and then by Mrs Dufour, was the first to open in El Jadida, at the beginning of the 20th century. It was followed, firstly, by the Metropole cinema (Rif), then by the Marhaba, built by the Nicolas Paquet shipping company in 1953, and finally by the Malaki cinema, situated very far from the city centre. (...)

Source: adapted from *Libération (Casablanca)*, 14 December 2005, Mustapha Jmahri (Excerpts)

• Morocco endows itself with a cinema school

In September 2006 the College for Visual Arts, ESAV, will open in Marrakech. It will train school-leavers in the different elements of the cinema industry. The course, of four years including one of general art teaching, will culminate with the presentation of a personal creation to a panel of professionals. (...)

Vincent Melilli, an overindulgent cinema-lover, was behind the creation of ESAV. During the four years he has officiated as the head of the French Institute of Marrakech, film has had the lion's share of the schedules. (...)

'With the exception of French people resident in Marrakech and of a few of the city's middle-class residents, the films screened attracted nobody. I was particularly disappointed to see that young people were impervious to the cinema,' Vincent Melilli explains. (...)

Hence the launch of workshops on scriptwriting, to which the filmmaker Hassan Legzouli cooperated with success. The initiative worked well since no less than 80 accomplished scripts have appeared in three years.

(...) 'These workshops have given young people a taste for the cinema. But, to me, they don't seem enough (...)'. Equipped with his plan, he went to knock on the doors of potential sources of finance. He found one door open: that of the Dar Bellarj foundation, which, since November 1999, has devoted itself to the influence of the lively culture in Morocco. Children's workshops on music and the plastic arts have been set up there. The

generous idea of founding a school of visual arts could not fail to rouse the support of its president, Susanna Biedermann. (...)

Provided with the undertaking by Dar Bellarj to take a substantial share in the project (it holds 80% of the capital of 300,000 dirhams of the ESAV limited company), Vincent Melilli then set about finding Moroccan partners. The Cadi Ayyad university in Marrakech showed great interest (...). It holds 20% of the capital.

Source: vision-maroc.com, 13/12/2005 (Excerpts)

TUNISIA

• African Cinema Days in Tunis

The Tunisian association for the promotion of cinematographic appreciation, known for its liking for African cinema and cinema of the South generally, is organizing African Cinema Days during the second week of the year, from 5 to 8 January, at the Ibn Khaldoun cultural centre. (...)

Source: www.villedetunis.com, Asma Drissi (Excerpts)

Programme includes: *Darwin's Nightmare* (Hubert Sauper), *Drum* (Zola Maseko), *Waiting for Happiness* (Abderrahmane Sissako), *Fools* (Ramadan Suleman) and *Promised Land* (Amos Gitai) as well as several short films.

NIGERIA

• Nollywood, African cinema conquering the world

'Nollywood'. A contraction of Nigeria and Hollywood, this term designates one of the biggest cinematographic sectors in the world: over 2,000 feature-length films per year, a turnover of 100 million euros and an industry which supports 300,000 people in this country of 120 million inhabitants, the most populated country in Africa.

Among the 40-odd films produced weekly are ultra violent thrillers but also melodramas and musical comedies. Less than a month after their production, these films are on sale from Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria, to New York via London and Cotonou, Benin.

The Nollywood productions have seen great success since they appeared about ten years ago. 'I buy several a week,' confides Tunde, a lawyer in Lagos. 'We no longer go out at night for safety reasons. Cinemas, theatres and concert halls have shut. So the most popular leisure pursuit is to watch videos at home.' (...)

Some films such as *Living in Bondage*, by Chris Obi-Rapu, have sold over 400,000 copies. While two thirds of the population lives on less than 1 dollar a day, 70% of Nigerians have, despite everything, access to a collective video recorder, the family one, the neighbourhood one or the village one. The cassettes are all the more successful since they are sold for barely 350 nairas (2 euros). This cheap rate prevents, above all, the appearance of a pirate industry. Furthermore, Nigerian filmmakers have not tried to emulate Hollywood scripts. 'We shoot African images for Africans. Sociopolitical satires, stories of jealousy, witchcraft and religion,' explains the filmmaker Claude Balogoun. One of the secrets of the success of these films is also their low production costs. 'On average, shooting lasts one or two weeks. A film is produced on a budget of around 3 million nairas (19,000 euros),' states Izu Ojukwu, a prolific filmmaker. Distributed by the Ibo ethnic group, whose dispersal has given them a very commercial presence throughout Africa, and also North America and Europe, these films are experiencing increasing success in countries with large black communities. For improved market penetration, most shooting is now in English rather than in Yoruba or Ibo.

Fortified by their success, filmmakers are also shooting in Benin, Ghana and Great Britain. A South African television channel recently specialized in the distribution of Nigerian films. Real stars have emerged including in first place Genevieve Nnaji, whose fees reach 17,000 euros per film. A fortune in a country in which the average income does not exceed 330 euros per year, according to the World Bank. To force this star to reduce her fees, filmmakers have even issued an order to boycott her. (...)

Despite its dynamism, this dream industry still has one challenge to face: improving technical quality. 'For the moment, we put up a poor show at festivals. But a new generation of very gifted filmmakers is getting itself the means to produce quality. Before long they will be carrying away international awards,' predicts Steve Ayorinde, cinema critic in Lagos. (...)

Source: adapted from www.lexpansion.com, 26/12/2005, Pierre Cherruau (Excerpts)

• Brazil to keep the same screen quota system from 2005

The Brazilian National Cinema Agency (Ancine), an organ of the Ministry of Culture, will keep the screen quota system in place to protect local production against Hollywood hegemony in 2006. The system will ensure that a local film theatre with one single screen shows Brazilian movies for at least 35 days of the year – with the quota increasing according to the number of screens per complex. Even though Ancine kept the quota from last year, the decision has been criticized by the exhibitor sector that expected a reduction after the Brazilian films attendance dropped from 16.4m to 10.7m admissions in 2005. (...)

A 6-screen theatre, for example, is required to show Brazilian films for 378 days, with a minimum of 6 different films. For a ten-screen complex, the numbers go up to 455 days and 10 titles. According to this system, 30% of the quota has to be accomplished in the first semester of the year. The theatres that do not respect the minimum days of showings will be subjected to penalty taxes. (...)

Last year *Two Sons of Francisco* (Columbia), (...), sold 5.3m admissions and grossed \$16.2m (R\$ 36.7m), becoming the most successful film overall at the box office. But this was an exception for a Brazilian film (...). Despite the phenomenon of *Two Sons*, the local market share dropped from 14.3% to 12% in the past 12 months. (...)

According to the latest research conducted by Filme B, (...), the country has 1.997 screens for a huge population of 181,581,024. This translates to a very low density of 90,927 people/screen. Mexico, a comparable country, has a screen for every 32,000.

Source: Screendaily.com, 24/01/2006, Elaine Guerini (Excerpts)
