

# Implement the Cineville Subscription Model to Germany

## Interview with Matthias Damm, Casablanca Filmkunsttheater (Nürnberg, Germany) by Birgit Heidsiek

Cineville goes German.

15 Fifteen years after the introduction of Cineville in the Netherlands and, following the successful introduction of Cineville in Belgium (2021) and in Austria (2022) in the framework of Collaborate to Innovate, this monthly flat-rate subscription model for arthouse cinemas will also be launched in Germany. Matthias Damm, Theater Manager of the Casablanca Filmkunsttheater in Nuremberg, shares the project's ambitions.

### **What considerations come into play in adapting the Cineville model for the German cinema market?**

We are just convinced that it will work here too, even if the Netherlands is a bit different and more urban than Germany. We're going to start up in bigger cities and in university towns that have several cinemas as well as a young student audience. It's important that as many arthouse cinemas as possible participate, so that the subscribers have a choice of different cinemas to visit and a large number of films to choose from. Our aim is to cover many regions in order to create a nationwide presence. We are confident that we will convince German audiences, too.

### **When are you going to launch it?**

We'll start with a beta-testing phase in four cities and make subscriptions available, but we won't roll out a nationwide marketing campaign just yet. We need time to test our technological interfaces because various systems have

to interact. We are licensing the Cineville software, which has to be connected to the ticketing systems. All these interfaces have to function flawlessly. We are starting in four cities: Hamburg, Cologne, Nuremberg, and Freiburg, and we will start the subscription model in our own cinemas.

### **When do you plan a bigger roll-out?**

We hope to create a presence in more regions by next spring. In Germany, there are only four big ticketing system companies. Due to the certification process required by distributors a few years ago, there was a huge market shake-out. For this reason, most cinemas work with one of these four ticketing systems. Our goal is to connect these four ticketing systems as soon as possible and in a way that makes things as easy as possible for our subscribers and for the cinema staffs – even if there are signs that this might be easier said than done. Therefore, we need the beta-testing phase.

### **Which cities will be targeted?**

We already have more cinemas on board than our original seven project partners. In Nuremberg, for instance, the arthouse cinemas Metropolis and Meisengeige operated by the Weber family are on board, as well as the Europa Cinemas members in the neighbouring cities of Fürth and Erlangen. In Hamburg and Cologne, many more cinemas will also join. We're trying to open up entire cities and regions. Berlin is an interesting case. The Yorck Cinemas already have their own subscription model, but there are many other film theatres. We're also co-operating with Indiekino Berlin, which supplies us with the text materials we will use for our marketing.

### **Will Cineville also provide content?**

We don't see Cineville merely as a payment system; it is also a co-operative organization for cinemas. It makes sense to provide cinemas with film text and other materials for small



© All Rights Reserved

films that have a tiny marketing budget. There are many small but good films that are released by small distributors which don't perform as well as they could because they lack marketing power. We can give these films a boost by producing content, such as interviews or presenting video clips online, which enhances visibility. We also plan to organize Cineville events. It might be possible, for example, to collaborate with distributors to preview great films exclusively for member cinemas, and thus promote them nationwide.

#### **How is the distributor's share calculated?**

The subscription fees are collectively collated because the subscription is made with Cineville Germany. Cineville makes sure that all the moneys from this account will be distributed to the cinemas each time a subscriber attends a screening, the cinema receives a fixed amount. This amount is re-calculated on a regular basis to make sure all moneys, with the exception of a small

fee which is used for the cost of the Cineville platform, is given back to the participating cinemas. Cineville guarantees cinemas a fixed revenue per ticket. The distributor gets its usual percentage, as for any other tickets. The accounting is much more transparent for all parties involved than in any other subscription system.

#### **How much does a subscription cost?**

Cinema-goers under the age of 26 will pay €22 per month; those over the age of 26 pay €24 per month. The minimum subscription period is four months and an annual subscription costs €240. The Cineville pass provides access to all screenings, including 3D films as well as those with an extraordinarily long running time. An additional fee may be required for film festivals or special screenings that include live performances. People can attend as many screenings as they wish. The system calculates for an average of two to three cinema visits per month, which

turns out to be the standard case for any subscription system. The more subscribers we have, the more stable the system becomes. We need about 15,000 subscriptions to break even. Cineville may also provide add-on elements for the cinemas, such as when a subscriber is accompanied by another person who needs to purchase a ticket. We want to make going to the cinema a normal part of life for our subscribers – a big club of cinema fans!

#### **Partner cinemas:**

**Casablanca Filmkunsttheater**,  
Nürnberg (Coordinator)  
**Filmhaus Nürnberg**, Nürnberg  
**Odeon Lichtspieltheater**,  
Köln  
**OFF Broadway Kino**, Köln  
**Abaton-Kino**, Hamburg  
**Zeise Kinos**, Hamburg  
**Harmonie-Arthaus**, Freiburg