

Kinoabo Austria

Interview with Martin Kitzberger and Wiktoría Pelzer, Stadtkino (Vienna) by Birgit Heidsiek

Arthouse cinemas in Austria will get a boost from the Collaborate to Innovate Kinoabo project. The subscription model for a monthly flat rate is aimed at young cinema-goers. Martin Kitzberger and Wiktoría Pelzer from Stadtkino Filmverleih and Kinobetriebsgesellschaft offer insight into the project.



Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus © Viennale

What inspired you to create the Kinoabo project?

Wiktoría Pelzer: The huge success of the collaborative cinema project Cineville in the Netherlands and their impressive numbers inspired us to create the Kinoabo project in Austria. The challenges we face as arthouse cinemas were already there, before Covid – but the pandemic made it even clearer: we need to attract younger audiences – and the older, more vulnerable audiences might not go to the cinema as often as they used to. This needed to be addressed with new, innovative ideas – and a commitment to work more closely together among arthouse exhibitors. We received initial support from the Federal Ministry for Arts and Culture in Austria for the development of the project in 2020.

Martin Kitzberger: With the support we commissioned market research to know if the Cineville model would also work in the Austrian market. Indeed, there is a great demand for it, but it must be adapted to our national needs.

From the start of the project, it was clear that our work must be transparent. We talked to exhibitors as well as distributors and production companies to get wider support for the project.

What is the approach of Kinoabo?

WP: Kinoabo offers a monthly paid flat rate subscription. For 22 euros per month, cinema-goers receive unlimited free access at all the participating cinemas in Austria. The economic model is structured in such a way that it is beneficial across the entire value chain.

MK: The idea is that independent arthouse exhibitors collaborate in order to reconnect young target groups with the cinemas by offering them a flat rate ticket. It is also a marketing tool for the arthouse cinemas, to create a positive public image. In the Netherlands, Cineville was launched 13 years ago, and it attracts around 55,000 members who attend the cinema, on average, 2.5 times per month.

Cineville members now represent a substantial portion of the audience in participating movie theatres in the Netherlands.

How can this model be applied to the theatrical market in Austria?

MK: According to our market study, in which 330,000 people expressed their interest to buy the ticket, there is huge potential in Austria. The study also showed that many young people are planning to visit cinemas less often now than they did before Covid-19. Therefore, we need to offer an innovative model for these younger groups that will encourage them to attend arthouse cinemas more often.

WP: In the development of the model, we were aware that Austria has a different socio-economical structure than the Netherlands – for example it is not so densely populated – and Vienna is the urban centre for cinema culture, so this had to be taken into consideration while planning the project.



Film Casino, Vienna

nonstop

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Where are the Kinoabo member cinemas located?

MK: About half of our twenty member cinemas are based in Vienna, while the other cinemas are located in smaller cities such as Innsbruck, Graz and Linz.

How will you communicate Kinoabo to potential cinema-goers?

MK: We will launch a campaign for “nonstop – Dein Kinoabo” in February 2023 with a website for the cinema subscription service, social media channels and marketing activities across participating cinemas.

Our main focus is to address audiences between 18 and 30 years of age, who are used to streaming services. We want to create a brand for arthouse cinemas which is colourful, loud and pop-cultural.

WP: Our aim is to give arthouse cinemas an image boost without changing their film programmes. It is all about communication. We need to create an urge to be a member of this “cool” cinema club and community.

What are your expectations?

WP: Pretty high. Kinoabo is the biggest innovation since the digitization of the theatrical market. Besides the image boost, the collective marketing activities can strengthen the collaboration of the arthouse cinemas. We also want to attract audiences to attend regular shows and not only focus on events which require a lot of staff. Essentially, we are using the logic of streaming platforms – but on a more personal level with a hand-picked programme instead of an AI curation.

What might its impact be at local and national levels?

MK: We are confident that cinema culture will be strengthened on a local level if cinemas work closer together. On the national level, we hope to sustainably attract young people as well as cinephiles.

Partner cinemas:

- Stadtkino,** Vienna
- Burgkino,** Vienna
- Top Kino,** Vienna
- Schikaneder Kino,** Vienna
- Votiv Kino,** Vienna
- City Kino,** Vienna
- Filmcasino,** Vienna
- Filmhaus,** Vienna
- Cinema Paradiso St. Pölten,** St. Pölten
- Cinema Paradiso,** Baden
- Kino im Kesselhaus,** Krems an der Donau
- KIZ RoyalKino,** Graz
- Movimiento,** Linz
- Cinematograph/Leokino,** Innsbruck
- Das Kino,** Salzburg