

# Live Stream Collaboration Network, Austria

## Interview with Michael Moser, Filmcasino

by Martin Blaney

This year saw Europa Cinemas launch the Collaborate to Innovate scheme to support outstanding innovative and collaborative projects initiated, developed and implemented by cinema-owners within the Europa Cinemas network.

Financed by Creative Europe's MEDIA sub-programme with a total budget of €1 million for 2021, the scheme selected 15 projects, representing 114 film theatres from 13 European countries, to develop new strategies for the cinema-going experience and audience development for European films.

The issues being addressed by the various projects range from customer management software, data analysis and streaming and multi-platform releases through digital marketing to green working practices.

As Europa Cinemas General Director Claude-Eric Poiroux pointed out, "the scheme was launched at one of the most difficult times in the history of cinema, at a time when the pandemic was forcing closures of film theatres across Europe. But the scheme really caught the imagination and inspired some really exciting entries."

We spoke with Filmcasino's Michael Moser about one of the selected projects, the Live Stream Collaboration Network, which he has established as project coordinator with partner cinemas Filmhaus (Vienna), Movimiento (Linz), Leokino (Innsbruck), and the Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus (Vienna).

### What was your motivation for applying for support from the Collaborate to Innovate scheme?

When the Covid crisis started, nobody knew if the audience would come back to the cinemas. However, we at Filmcasino didn't suffer too much from a reduction in attendance because our programming has been targeted at specific audiences and we tried to offer a wide variety of films, special screenings as well as discussions and panels. The idea therefore was to share our particular experiences with other exhibitors, so we looked for potential partners in other cities in Austria who were interested in offering an added value to their programming as a way of attracting audiences back into the cinemas.

### Have you worked with the partner cinemas previously on live streamed film events?

Yes, Filmcasino already collaborated with our partner in Leokino (Innsbruck), Movimiento (Linz), as well as other partners when we had the avant-premiere of Jasmila Zbanic's film *Quo Vadis, Aida?* on 24<sup>th</sup> June. The film was

shown in cinemas that evening and we organised a live online Q&A with the director who was attending the premiere in Vienna. The feedback of all partners was quite encouraging. However, it strengthened our vision for a more interactive approach. We continued the partnership with these and more partners at the premiere event of *Curveball. A True Story. Unfortunately* (Q&A with director Johannes Naber, streamed from Filmcasino) and the premiere of *Walchensee Forever* (Live Zoom talk with director Janna Ji Wonders, who couldn't attend the premiere in person). These premieres have been part of the learning phase for Live Stream Collaboration Network.

### What are you planning to do as part of the Collaboration Network and what is particularly innovative about your project?

We want to bring cinemas together through the possibilities of live stream technology. One example would be premieres where the director can't travel to all of the cinemas, but where we can still offer the audience the chance of having a dialogue with the filmmaker about their film. The aim is to give the audience the feeling that this is all happening right now, as if this was actually taking place in their cinema, and there should be the possibility for interaction between the audience and the filmmaker or with a panel of speakers on a particular topic.

In the past, the discussions after screenings via Zoom, didn't have much interaction with the members of the audience. You would have someone asking questions and the director then answering them, and then there would be a WhatsApp or SMS number where you could send your questions, but that didn't give the direct connection we want to create. In my experience, those written messages weren't usually passed on to the director as the moderator was asking all the questions. But the audience will feel that they can ask a question if there is a camera and microphone in the cinema connecting them with the director.



Filmcasino, Vienna

Our activities within the Network would not necessarily all be concentrated in Vienna with a premiere or panel only being streamed from one of the cinemas there. We want to break down the hierarchy of everything being Vienna-centric, so that the live stream could come say from Linz or Innsbruck and that could give us easier access to more guests.

#### What are you hoping to achieve with this initiative?

We want the partner cinemas to be in a situation where they have the technical equipment in place so that they can stream panels and discussions to each other without too much hassle, although we have faced some technical problems such as ensuring that there isn't any sound feedback during the streaming.

Looking to the future, we could see the project expanding to include other cinemas and this wouldn't just be

restricted to Austria as it is at the moment. For example, if a European film is opening in more than one country at the same time, the director might not be able to come to every country or city for the premiere, so we could connect the cinemas together through our Network and so give the audience the feeling that they are experiencing something rather special.

#### Partner cinemas:

Filmcasino (Vienna)  
 Filmhaus (Vienna)  
 Movimiento (Linz)  
 Leokino Innsbruck (Innsbruck)  
 Stadtkino im Künstlerhaus (Vienna)