

**1<sup>st</sup> EUROPA INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE  
ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SALES AGENTS AND FESTIVALS**

To discuss common standards and best practices to optimize the key relationship between sales companies and festivals, focused around three core areas:

- standardizing information requirements for festivals
- harmonizing technical requirements
- optimizing the relationship between festivals, sales agents and talents

**I. ENTRY FORMS AND DATABASE**

State of entry forms

The key backdrop to the debate is the exponential increase in the number of film festivals taking place around the world, which participants estimated has doubled over the last 5 years.

Entry forms to fill in for each potential film for the festivals become a full-time job for sales agents:

- around 5 potential films for 1 festival, around 50 festivals per year
- entry forms require a lot of info - around 10 pages for 1 entry form

2 stages with the info required for entry form:

1. **Inscription of the potential films** = General info
2. **Selection of the film** = Technical info and Artistic info

3 categories of info for the entry forms:

- **General info** (premieres, number of releases, etc.): The festivals have an obligation to get minimum info about the film as they are eligible criteria for the festival's selection.
- **Technical info** (sound, format, etc.): Technical info are a tool for the organizing of the festival as the material and format will change the whole programming of the festival (cf. cinemas with HD Cam, with DCP etc.). Regarding the distribution (print traffic), the sales agents fill in the entry form 5 to 6 months before, so it is hard to be able to know the print traffic (where the film comes and where the film goes after).
- **Artistic info** (director, cast, etc.): The amount of info needed is maybe too high (especially list of people working on the film). Looking at the audience, they might not need it, and those info should be reduced. However the info for professionals are needed, specially regarding sales agents as they are the main contact for the festival and are sometimes not mentioned.

Sometimes there is no possibility to size the right info (some choices of data are not on the entry form cf. sound). The festivals usually get in touch with sales agents or producers anyway to get the right info and to double check. There is a need **to simplify the entry form** (multiple choices for main formats as 35 mm / DCP and a blank space where to enter the right info instead of multiple choices and boxes).

Hard core elements of the entry form are the same for every festival.  
To compare entry forms and to have a common section / standard sheet for sales agents and festivals.

Online database

The info required by the festival might be in various databases (cf. Cinando, Festival Scope, Without a box etc.). There is a need to use an open database, as the sales agents fill in the entry form for every database and the festivals are using those other database to pick up the info for their own database. However it is complicated to translate data from various databases (cf. suggestion to use only one data base with Cinando).

There is a problem with the translation process of all the data, and still a need to aggregate it in the own database of the festival.

Need to have something to easily translate and coordinate.  
To get in touch with Without a box to check if able to translate the data and info.  
Need to have a common database. Suggestion to extend an existing tool / database.

### Publicity package

Very often available and quite satisfying solutions today with online platforms access from sales agents website and online delivery tools (cf. Dropbox etc.).

### Conclusions

Sales agents and festivals should think about a festival information tool that would put all data related to pitching films to fests and filling in entry forms in one place, that can be accessed by fest programmers. The core requirements for this information database should be based on consulting the information requirements prevailing at the top A-list festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, Venice, Toronto and Sundance, which could then be adjusted to other fests. The key objective is to establish a standardized film submission system that top fests would sign up for.

## **II. RELATIONSHIPS BETW FESTS, SALES AGENTS AND TALENTS**

### Festivals invitations

After the world premiere of a film and within the next 6 months, sales agents receive festivals invitations from everywhere. The sales agents need to be the 1<sup>st</sup> interlocutor and the 1<sup>st</sup> contact with the festivals, before the filmmakers (producers and/or directors), as the sales agents need to prioritize which festival matches for their strategy.

Afterwards, with approval of the sales agents, the festivals can get in touch with filmmakers; letting the sales agents in the loop to be sure the sales agents have all the info (cf. info needed about travels of talents etc.).

In any case the sales agents are in touch with filmmakers regarding the strategy for the festivals' life, in order to exploit efficiently the film. For the filmmakers it is really competitive to have sales agent attached to the film, so they need to work closely with the sales agents, in respect of their work regarding the festivals. In exchange, the sales agents have to make sure that invitations from the festivals are communicated to the filmmakers in order to avoid a lack of communication and to put in touch filmmakers and festivals when it is needed.

### Festivals selections

Sometimes invitations by festival for a film are sent with no description about which selection the film is invited to. There is a questioning about the link between selection and invitation, if it depends on the attendance of talents, for a specific selection or opening of the festival for the film.

Importance of involving sales agents as the main contact in agreements inked between festivals and attending talents, since it feel that such deals must be set against the broader sales strategy for the film. To check the festivals' strategy for the invitations of film in selection and invitations of talents.

### Conclusions

The festival circuit constitutes a parallel market to the main commercial circuit, sales agents are also concerned that excessive screenings in festivals in some territories may eliminate the chances of signing a theatrical distribution agreement with local distributors – which thus means that extra care is required in terms of ensuring that festivals abide by the agreed screening limits.

## **III. DIGITAL DELIVERY**

### Post-production deals

Major festivals have deal with post-production companies (cf. Karlovy Vary with a server to upload the movie 1 month before, so no need of hard drive, reduction of costs and increase of trust). More communication about delivery facilities is required from festivals to sales agents. It would be for everyone interest in order to reduce costs and avoid technical challenges.

### State of DCPs use

Most sales agents have an in-house Festival Manager who is also handling DCP deliveries. They typically have 3-4 DCPs of recent movies travelling from festival to festival. (Ex: Up to 40 festivals to be delivered with 3 DCPs from August to December).

Every year getting better with digital and the use of DCPs, less screenings cancelled.

#### Encrypted or non-encrypted DCP / KDM

The sales agents are reluctant in having a non-encrypted copy for festival purposes. It depends of course on the films. But most of the sales agents send encrypted DCPs. The sales agents are not able to create and to always generate their own KDMs, they work with various labs (not only 1 but several).

Some sales agents often add a BluRay disk for backup purposes as they are facing many KDM issues especially in the USA, India, Asia, etc. The issue then is that BluRay format is not very reliable. Some sales agents are still using other formats, especially for some territories (cf. US and HD Cam specially for TV sales).

The fear about sending open DCP is not about piracy, but mainly about losing control of the release as the knowledge of number of screens, number of releases, etc. (Ex: They are fearing a festival asking for 2 screenings of a DCP and ending screening it 5 times).

Costs are double with the double production of encrypted DCPs and unencrypted DCPs. KDM fees are expensive as sold as single KDMs.

The idea of a Festival bundle (all screens, all festival duration) would make a lot of sense.

#### Festivals state of play

- Cannes gets in most cases a D-KDM for the duration of the festival
- Cannes / Berlin / Toronto are asking for DKDM i.e. almost open DCPs they can generate the key
- Berlin / Toronto are requesting CRU DX115
- Berlin expects unencrypted DCPs but the issue is that the unencrypted DCP will be used only for Berlin Fest and not for the other festivals (this is related to the question of trust with festivals, and it depends on the sales companies and its relationships with festivals)  
Berlin have request burnt-in subtitles which leads to huge costs for a single festival
- BFI London Film Festival gets 17 Venues / 17 different sets of equipment  
Equipped with Clipster now, Bought many CRUs in order to copy content from USB HDDs received (model coming from Edimburg who resells CRUs to producers/sales agents) to solve issues of self powered USB drives with Sony projectors
- Karlovy Vary using UPS Post-house servicing in Prague:  
Offer a digital delivery option = NAS server in Prague prior to start of festival which will be relocated in Karlovy Vary during festival, One central server connected to all festival venues via fiber

#### Print traffic

Some issues are related to the calendar for the print traffic. In autumn (from August to December) the sales agents have to deal with few DCPS for many festivals. The festivals should receive the DCP before at an early stage in order to ingest it and to send it afterwards and not to wait for the screening.

The problem with this from a festival perspective is server space which often does not allow to ingest DCPs early enough.

The issue of the shipping of material is also important as some material are really damaged during print traffic, and maybe there is a need to talk with labs about it. Some labs offer as a service to verify all HDDs when they transit back and to manage circulation to next festival.

#### Current challenges for sales agents from a technical perspective

- o Packaging other than pellicases (+missing cables, ...)
- o Broken HDDs
- o KDMs
- o Not enough time to verify DCPs in advance
- o Not enough storage capacity in order to load that many movies in advance in servers. (Apparently file corruption increases with the decrease of drive capacity)
- o DCP needs to be ingested and sent to next festival asap then its copy gets deleted from server/library
- o 24 hour support crucial for KDM issues worldwide
- o Wrong DCPs shipped back or to next festival
- o DCPs made with cheap software
- o Some chains apply new rules now (Ex: Pathé in NL refusing physical HDD deliveries, Nordisk ingesting only on Mondays otherwise you have to pay extra to hire one of their technicians)

#### Scandinavian model

Recent agreement inked with festivals, sales agents and producers in the Nordic countries, where a common standard based on open, unencrypted DCP masters has been agreed, and made the life of festivals and sales agents much easier.

To liaise with leading European festivals in order to establish the preferred hard drive specifications and standardized packaging requirements in order to avoid damage during transport.  
To write some guidelines / code of good conduct for the delivery of digital material to festivals.  
To establish a list of trusted festivals regarding the delivery of digital material (open DCPs).  
To study the progress of the Scandinavian model.

#### Electronic delivery

Dcinex (EI official partner) is using DSAT cinema for electronic delivery. Dcinex suggestion is to have a server and to be able to generate a KDM via a mobile phone.

Dcinex will provide detailed info about digital delivery for, in one hand, festivals and in an other hand, distribution, which are different depending on the costs and the volume of files to deliver.

Companies such as SmartJog (joint venture with Ymagis, using satellite) or Aspera (using web connection) are able to send the file via electronic delivery / no physical – dematerialize delivery, to download and upload the film very quickly, and to assure the screening for the festival and the sales agents.

However downloading speeds are not yet fast enough in order to enable films to be delivered online, although this may occur within the next coming years. The question of the production of the digital file is important, as this kind of file is not automatically produced by the producer. At present, online delivery is seen as a last resort, in order to resolve emergency situations.

#### Conclusions

To learn more about SmartJog and Aspera about their services and to check the possible options for EI members with Dcinex.

### **IV. GETTING FEEDBACKS FROM FESTIVALS**

#### Local distributors invitations

More and more distributors contact the festivals for suggestions about the films and screenings, and check if the sales agent is attending the festival. The issue is that most of festivals do not have budget to invite the sales agents.

To check the festivals' work with national distributors and invitations to the screenings.  
To make awareness about the need to mention the sales agents in catalogue and website's festivals in order to increase the visibility of sales agents and to facilitate exchange with potential local distributors.

#### Press

Sales agents would highly appreciate publicity and press coverage feedback for their films.

#### Screening fees

Should KDM costs always be included in screening fees from festival managers with sales companies in order to suggest a global price?

A lot of films have festivals' life, and the sales agents need to ask to the festival for some value, being the main reason of sales agents asking screening fees to the festivals. Some festivals are not allowed to pay screening fee because it is not in their regulations (cf. Munich Film Fest).

If the festival can not pay screenings fees, maybe the festival can, in one hand, make sure to invite most of the local distributors and, in other hand, send screening attendance reports to the sales agents. The report about the festival's activities (attendance, press coverage, box office, etc.) regarding the film is really important for the sales agents.

On a more global aspect, any kind of feedback from the festivals about general attendance, press coverage, etc. is welcome. This is linked to the FBO Festival Box Office project.

#### FBO Festival Box Office

FBO is an international platform collecting data from the festival: number of attendees, average ticket price, number of screenings, total % of sales ticket. This project is coordinated by Art & Popcorn / Soul Food (Misa Mogorovic production and sales companies). There is an interest from the sales agents to have this kind of tool in order for them to have a control about the screening (number of people attending the screenings etc.)

#### Sharing of experiences

For a broader understanding of best practices between sales agents and festivals, need to share experiences with companies such as Festival Agency (work for Pathé, StudioCanal, TF1 Intl, SND M6 among others) and Pascale Ramonda (work for Celluloid Dreams etc.).

Those companies are working with sales agents without Festival manager within the companies, or with producers without sales agents. They develop the festival's strategy for the film, giving the film the opportunity to circulate.

#### *Participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> roundtable*

##### Sales agents companies

FIMS BOUTIQUE, Valeska Neu, Festival Manager (Germany)  
DOC & FILM INTERNATIONAL, Hannah Horner, Festival manager (France)  
FORTISSIMO FILMS, Laura Talsma, Festival Services Manager (Netherlands)  
HANWAY FILMS, Jill Rosen, Director of Publicity and Distribution (UK)  
GAUMONT, Ariane Buhl, Festival manager, Digital Sales (France)  
LES FILM DU LOSANGE, Marine Goulois, Festival Manager (France)  
LEVEL K, Freja Johanne, Festival Manager (Denmark)  
MEMENTO FILMS INTERNATIONAL, Nicholas Kaiser, Sales Manager (France)  
URBAN DISTRIBUTION INTERNATIONAL, Arnaud Belangeon-Bouaziz, Festival & Marketing (France)  
THE MATCH FACTORY, Sergi Steegman, Festival Manager (Germany)  
WILD BUNCH, Esther Devos, Festivals & Markets Manager (France)  
WIDE MANAGEMENT, Matthias Angoulvant, Head of Festival (France)

##### Guests

BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL, Simon Duffy, Festival consultant & Film programmer (UK)  
COPENHAGEN FILM FESTIVALS, Thure Soldthved Munkholm, Head of Program (Denmark)  
DCINEX, Alexandre Weiser (France)  
KARLOVY VARY, Karel Och, Artistic director (Czech Republic)  
FILMAIR SERVICES, Olivier Maurice (France)  
MUNICH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Susana Borges Gomes, Programmer (Germany)  
THE FESTIVAL AGENCY, Leslie Vuchot (France)

##### Other participants

DANISH FILM INSTITUTE, Christian Juhl Lemche  
FINNISH FILM FOUNDATION, Jenni Domingo  
ICELANDIC FILM CENTER, Laufey Gudjonsdottir  
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