

INTERNATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

EUROVIEWS

European News Notes *by Francesca Dinglasan*

LEAD STORY: BAC MAJESTIC EXITS EXHIBITION

PARIS—Beleaguered French film company Bac Majestic has unloaded its 35 percent share in Elysees Biarritz, a multiplex located in the center of Paris. Vivendi Universal's local television outfit Canal Plus is reported to have purchased the stake for 580,000 euros (US\$582,000), making the company part-owner of one of Paris' most high-profile theatres. Prior to the sale of the Elysees Biarritz, Bac Majestic sold its domestic circuit with the intent of focusing its efforts on the company's distribution and production businesses.

DANISH FILMS FARE WELL DOMESTICALLY

COPENHAGEN—According to findings released by the Danish Film Institute, local films garnered an approximate 28 percent market share in Denmark last year, matching the record set by domestic releases in 2001. The DFI's report indicates that Danish product sold nearly 3.6 million tickets in the territory, with total admissions equaling 13 million, compared with the previous year's 11.9 million. "Previously, Danish ticket sales hinged on the performance of a single film, which boosted total theatre visits for a single year," notes DFI spokesperson Jimmy Bredow. "In 2002, [there was] a very broad distribution between eight Danish films that were seen by over 200,000 moviegoers."

BRITISH ADMITS STATIC IN OCTOBER

LONDON—October proved a rather average month at the British box office, with admissions during the four-week period equaling 13.4 million, approximately the same as October 2001's totals. According to a report released by local industry watcher the Cinema Advertising Association, the highest-grossing films in release during the period included "XXX," Disney's "Lilo & Stitch" and "Red Dragon." However, while year-on-year results were stagnant, October 2002's turnstile turns improved by 26 percent over the previous month, bringing total tickets sold for the January-October period to 143 million—a 13 percent upturn compared with the same timeframe in 2001.

IMAX PLANS EUROPEAN EXPANSION

LONDON—Large-format film specialist IMAX Corp. will intensify its efforts to expand throughout the Continent, having unveiled plans to focus on European cities with one million people or more. Company co-CEOs Richard Gelfond and Bradley Wechsler have revealed that while IMAX theatres already exist in 25 of the 74 European metropolitan areas with the target population count, the Toronto-based outfit's "goal is to enter them all by 2005." IMAX's European holdings at the end of last year totaled 44 sites in 16 countries, with 16 new projects in development.

LONDON THEATRE GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE

LONDON—London's Greenwich Cinema, which closed down last August, looks to be reopening. British moviehouse operator City Screen, which primarily runs theatres in university towns, is reported to have reached a deal with the Greenwich Council to lease the shuttered single-screener. Although a date for the cinema's relaunch has yet to be set, City Screen has indicated its intent to update the Greenwich, with plans to possibly include the addi-

tion of one more screen. The Greenwich Cinema was formerly operated by local exhibitor Film Network Ltd., which was forced to close the theatre after accumulating more than £900,000 (US\$1.3 million) in debt and back rent.

CINEPLEX COMES TO TEUTONIC TOWN

FREIBURG, GERMANY—The municipal government of the town of Freiburg has approved plans for a new multiplex by a 49-to-12 vote. Tentative blueprints call for the theatrical complex to hold seven auditoriums and comprise nearly 2,500 square meters. The project is expected to take two years to complete, with local officials optimistic that the cinema will help revitalize the community's downtown area.

SPECIALTY MOVIEHOUSE TO OPEN IN LIVERPOOL

LIVERPOOL—The British community best known as the birthplace of The Beatles will soon be the site of a new cinema. The U.K.'s largest indie theatre operator Promoter Picturehouse has revealed plans to bow a three-screen theatre, to be part of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology Centre. Organizers indicate that programming will include late-night screenings of cult and revival films as well as kid flicks every Saturday morning. Slated to open at the end of February, the Liverpool movie theatre will be the only venue in the area with a wide-screen auditorium.

MEGAPLEX BOWS IN TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV—The largest theatrical complex in the Middle East recently opened just outside of Tel Aviv. The 21-screen megaplex, dubbed Cinema City, was constructed by NLC, a partnership among Paris-based outfit Metropolitan Filmexport, Israeli film distributor and exhibitor United King Films and Iris Investments. The partners, which invested an estimated \$70 million in the complex, will jointly operate Cinema City.

IMAX FEELS HUNGARY

BUDAPEST—Anchoring the recently redeveloped entertainment and retail complex known as the Duna Plaza in the heart of Hungary's largest city is a new IMAX theatre. Estimated to comprise nearly 2,000 square meters, the large-format specialty venue is one of the dominant attractions housed within the 15,000 square meters of floor space added to the Duna, Budapest's first Western-style shopping center. Outlook for the IMAX theatre is promising, with the Duna Plaza expecting to attract between 20,000 to 30,000 people on a daily basis.

ON THE MOVE

Scandinavian exhibition powerhouse Sandrew Metronome has announced the appointment of Morten Kongrod as its new CEO. Kongrod, who currently serves as the company chairman of the board, is replacing Klas Olofsson, who announced his plans to retire several months ago. Kongrod will take his post in March.... Longtime Italian exhibitor Carlo Bernaschi has been reappointed president of ANEM, an organization that represents the interests of multiplex operators throughout the Boot. ANEM, which represents such theatrical giants as Warner Village Cinemas and UCI, is one of the two major exhibition associations in Italy. Bernaschi's latest term will last until 2004.