

Rome – October 21st, 2009 – symposium on digital cinema

Summary of the presentation by Antoine VIRENQUE, president of the EDCF

After having heard members of public institutions and some professionals, I would like to make some remarks, just before other professionals, mainly from the production and distribution fields, present their own views.

1. To view a film is a cultural fact, more particularly if it is done collectively. Going to the movies is the cheapest public performance offered to the viewers. That should not be forgotten during difficult economic circumstances.
2. The places where a public performance takes place are themselves cultural places. It is symbolic that the symposium would be in Rome whose civilisation was at the origin of many buildings still used more than two thousand years after they were built for the purpose they were built: public performances.
3. Any film is a cultural artefact. We should not try to determine what is 'cultural' and what is not: we would not agree together and the idea of criteria is surely not the best idea.
4. Of course we understand that there are budgetary limits in what public authorities may do: it is normal they would use selection processes, for example on the size of the companies, the work done by the exhibitors to make their programs more attractive, etc.
5. The real competition is between 'cinema at home' and 'cinema in cinemas'. The industry is committed to preserve and improve the 'cinema experience' with standards achieving this aim. The standards should be as universal as possible, as they do with 35mm prints.
6. The aim of EDCF is to provide information so that stakeholders could make their own decisions. The objective is that 'no film is left aside and no cinema left aside'. The question of films with few prints or with a limited market (for example in some countries) should be addressed: the potential savings for their distributors will be difficult to reallocate to pay for VPF.
7. Savings exist if there are no double costs: for digital releases and 35mm prints. Therefore the need for a transition period as short as possible. The VPF system proposed by some integrators is not adapted for some cinemas or for some small national markets where mutualisation is limited by the size of the film industry operators.
8. From these points comes the necessity of a support from public authorities, with the cultural perspective to legitimate their intervention. According to local particularities it may take the form of subsidies, soft loan, tax credit, etc.