

Distribution Focus Group 5th May 2009

Distributors in Queensland:

- Gil Scrine Films
- Intertropic Distribution
- Galloping Films
- Magna Pacific. Cross genre. Beyond has bought them out, so best contact is Michael Borgland out of Sydney
- Marcom Projects. For educational
- Luke Wheatley, ex Magna Acquisitions, then AMC

Need to bring them in to the mix to maximise opportunities and share knowledge with Queensland producers.

Gil Scrine Films is the main dedicated distributor in Qld. He focuses on theatrical documentary and niche films. Also subcontracted by the bigger distributors (eg Madman) for films that need his specialist skills.

Phil Avalon (Intertropic Distribution since 1976) has 60 Australian films + 3-4 others in their catalogue. Gets a sale, even if only \$1,000 and gets them out on DVD.

Galloping Films (Carlos Alperin) began targeting certain countries, eg in South America, where he still has strong links, but now works as a traditional international distributor and sales agent.

Magna Pacific has been one of Australia's major DVD producers and distributors and moved into theatrical distribution. Mainly commercial US films. Recently bought by Beyond after going into receivership.

Marcom Projects is an educational distributor, very strong on DVD distribution for documentary et al

Traditional distribution

Distributors say the problem with Australian films in Cinemas lies fundamentally with the Exhibitors. The Exhibition industry has been hijacked by the US Majors. Studio films come packaged and with marketing, and established bookers, so put bums on seats and fill the schedules. We can't compete with that. Australian films get what's left, which are 1-week runs and off-peak times of year. Yet Exhibitors complain that Producers have no idea of their end of the chain.

Need to rebuild from here, but how?

Gil suggests by putting on films. Finding spaces that are available and going back to basics, figuratively, though in a more sophisticated way, taking the station wagon with a portable screen around the country.

In rural areas, always get a roll out. There is little other entertainment to compete with.

In the city, even at cinematek at Goma, they are programmed months ahead.

This discussion continues further under the co-op and philanthropic distribution below.

NZFC had a fund to assist distributors of NZ films. Needs a fair chunk of money.

Needs to be part of the production budget and able to be subsidised from the tax system

Current system sets us up destined to fail. Producers believe the problem also lies with the Distributors.

Right now, a distributor is locked in from the beginning, not necessarily the right distributor for the film. Plus, they only need to sell it enough to recoup their costs and make a little money on top, because they have their next film to go out and fill the cinemas. No reason for them to maximise sales on an individual film which would see returns to the investors and producers.

We need to reverse the process. To make our film, knowing we have marketing money for release within the production budget/tax system, then put it out to the best distributor for the film and producer to distribute in a joint venture with the distributor.

Why are French films still successful? Language, culture, subsidy.

- No US film is allowed to be advertised on TV
- They put large amounts of money into script development
- There is a tax on foreign films which is put back into the domestic film industry

Cost of releasing – even for a 1-state release you need \$100,000. Need to spend \$360,000 P&A to gross 1.1m

Recommendation:

- That we advocate a session to bring Producers, Distributors and Exhibitors together at the Movie Convention to share experiences and promote understanding and co-operation. Suggest PFTC, Screen Australia, SPAA to organise/finance.
- That we input to Screen Australia policy suggesting changes to existing funding by:
 - Requesting the ATO to include distribution marketing expenses as eligible for Producer Offset Rebate
 - That distribution marketing expenses be attached to the production and quarantined for release
 - With the above in place, that DGs no longer be a requirement of preproduction financing, allowing producers to find the best distributor for the job after the film is complete.
- That Screen Australia asks government to impose a tax on US films at the Australian box office, to be returned for the benefit of to the Australian film industry.
- That we advocate PFTC look at a fund for filmmakers to have P&A, also financial support for marketing materials.

The new breed of distributor

- Jumpstreet
- Titan View
- Australian Film Syndicate

These distributors are more focused on Australian films, giving personalised attention to individual films and maximising viral marketing techniques.

A Distribution co-operative

These worked in Sydney and Melbourne in the 70s and gave rise to filmmakers like Phil Noyce and Peter Weir.

All in one building, they had a commercial cinema, administration, room for production meetings. They pooled equipment, film stock (most short ends, 16mm). So they collaborated, made films, screened them, and personally distributed them from those premises, physically sending out reels for other screenings and educational. Schools would book, \$50 fee, co-op takes out costs, balance to the filmmaker.

Advantages of this is it encourages collaboration, guarantees some form of distribution and connects the filmmaker with their audience from the beginning. Encourage writers into the same space.

Possible venues in Brisbane (need to include a bar/candy bar): The Loft at QUT, or the cinema at their Gardens Point campus. The Globe in the Valley. Needs to have a regular booking to build a following. Can't go offline for university usage. Metro Arts.

Gold Coast Film Fantastic has a portable screen that could be used. Swinging Safari could be a good venue on the coast. Already operates as a creative drop in centre with book readings.

"End Credits" in Cairns, Warrina in Townsville.

Collaboration with BIFF.

Recommendation:

- that we advocate the set up a film co-operative of this nature in Brisbane, bringing QPix into the mix as the film resource.
- That the model is promoted for regional centres, possibly tapping into university resources on the Gold Coast and in Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns
- That whilst resources may be augmented by educational entities, the heart of the concept lies in independent and collaborative filmmaking, not education and training.

Philanthropic distribution

Gil has set up a philanthropic distribution company, "Cinema Ventures". It began with the documentary Hope, about a refugee to Australia. This was funded by philanthropists. They went back to the same philanthropists to ask for help in getting it out.

Approached relevant community groups in rural areas to put on a screening. CV supplied publicist, the community group raised the audience and catered. A film hire fee is paid, plus \$250 to the director for talking at the event, the community group keeps the balance of the box office taking. Has played 6 times, to full houses every time. Never in cinema, always a hall (church or school)

He suggests translating that model to local situations to help organically growing the film industry. For small philanthropists, it's a tax deductible donation: \$2 - \$100. Raise enough of a fund that you can then take it to a larger philanthropist to match the funds, and then to PFTC/ScrAust to match that. Could raise enough money to rent a building and run for a year.

Has been running outdoor cinema on Stradbroke Island under this model. Local businesses contribute the funds to run it in the showground (\$40,000). There is nothing else to do over the summer, so well subscribed. Box Office goes into a trust for improvements on the island, eg Indigenous art, bushwalks. Hoping to build the success so they can keep it running over the winter for the locals.

Maximising sales/income across genres and around the world

Adjourned to a further session. To discuss on-line, multiplatform delivery, repackaging.

Recommend:

- *Create opportunities for knowledge sharing*
- *PFTC*