DIGITRAINING PLUS 2006: DIGITAL CINEMA FOR EXHIBITORS

Systems for the digital transmission of various types of content, the new frontiers in sound, digital cinema marketing, these are the main contents of a Newsletter that has been produced to make exhibitors aware of the new digital tools available to them, and to show how they can be used in the context of the cinema exhibition systems, to make their theatres more competitive.

Whoever is interested can sign up for the Newsletter by writing to infocinema@mediasalles.it

The newsletter is available on the website www.mediasalles.it in the section "Digital Cinema Marketing".

DIGITAL CINEMA MARKETING – 5

THE CHALLENGE OF PROMOTING THE DIGITAL OFFER IN MOVIE THEATRES

Over the past few years, the competitive position of the movie theatre has been in a constant state of competition with other forms of entertainment and relaxation. The quality of the offer depends not only on the quality of the movie itself, but also on the comfort and facilities of the theatre. The importance of this aspect is highlighted by the fact that the digital offer has become more and more popular in recent years.

As a result, the challenge facing the theatre managers is to make the digital offer competitive and appealing to the audience. To achieve this, they need to provide a high-quality experience, not only in terms of the movie itself, but also in terms of the overall experience of being in the cinema. This means that the theatre needs to invest in the latest technology and provide a comfortable and entertaining environment.

However, the challenge is not only technical. It is also about how to promote the digital offer and make it appealing to the audience. This requires a strategic approach, with a focus on creating a unique and competitive offer that distinguishes the theatre from its competitors.

Theatre managers need to carefully plan and execute their marketing strategy to promote the digital offer. This includes creating a strong brand identity, developing effective promotions and offers, and using social media and digital marketing to reach the target audience.

In conclusion, the challenge of promoting the digital offer in movie theatres is not only about the technology, but also about the overall experience. The theatre needs to provide a high-quality experience, not only in terms of the movie itself, but also in terms of the overall experience of being in the cinema.

SEE YOU IN CANNES

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Distribution and the Digital Model: The Delivery and Transmission of Content

Distribution, too, is experiencing a transformation in the changeover to digital. Leaving aside the choices made by the different players in the cinematographic chain, it is important to present the main distribution models that will arise, with a quick overview of the technical and operational concepts and the introduction of some distinctions that are essential for understanding the new technological and operational scenario.

An initial distinction that should be kept in mind is that between distribution and delivery of content. Distribution refers to the combination of activities and relations of an economic nature that allow content to move from its origin (production) to its final destination (consumption). Not by chance the so-called distributor is positioned somewhere between the producer and the exhibitor, also dealing with marketing and promotion of the content in its various intermediate steps.

Delivery, instead, is the combination of the technical and logistic functions needed to guarantee the physical transfer of the content from the point of production to the point of consumption. It is the role of the distributor to manage the rights to the content (the distributor) and those who deal with the delivery itself (the so-called transporters).

In the context of the digital model, there is a punctual updating also for the digital section, that photographs the situation of cinemas and digital screens (DLPCinemaTiles) throughout the world as of 31 December 2005. This article has attempted to describe the new technical and operational opportunities that Digital Cinema makes available for the distribution of films, advertising and so-called alternative content, distinguishing between "distribution" and "delivery/transmission" of content, illustrating the various different modes. All the situations previously described are perfectly mature now from a technological point of view and the choice between them is purely commercial, driven by the demands of quality and security established in order to guarantee the whole life cycle of the cinematographic product.

The digital film and Store & Forward delivery

As previously mentioned, as well as re-emphasizing the main principles for exploiting screens, the film is the only one for which precise information already exists, published by the DCP. The recommendations contained in the DCP specifications apply both for the delivery and for the transmission of films, whatever means are used.

A single criterion appears to be binding, the transmission of a film terminates always and in any case with the cinema’s server, and an intermediate step with TCP/IP protocols: a protocol of interconnection based on Ethernet via IP (IP over Ethernet).

This makes it impossible for the content to be transmitted directly to the projector and thus to be "live". In other words, even when the film arrives from the server, the screening itself cannot be the same each time it is provided for by the distribution agreement.

This is why the transmission of a film to the digital server of a cinema or satellite network is not the same way as when a physical film is delivered to a projection room. There is no "profit" in terms of content.

Consequently, there is a clear need for "transmission" and exploitation of the content missing, but there is also a clear and irrefutable distinction between the "network" and "cinema models". What is true here is that the need to transmit video and audio streams has been recognized, and in this context, the "transmission" of content to the "cinema" model is perfectly available.

The DCP must be carried out so as to accept different modes of transmission are satisfied by the different formats provided by the DCP specifications, respectively 4K (4096x2160 resolution) and 2K (2048x1080 resolution). This choice is made taking into account the technical features of the different types of projection equipment available in the market. It is possible, for example, to use the 2K format in the case of digital cinema (D-Cinema DCI) and the 4K format in the case of traditional projection equipment (35mm, 70mm). This is made possible by the so-called DCP, a digital package which contains: • One video and several audio tracks, corresponding to the different languages in which the film is produced.

• Synchronization of audio and video stream.

• A different selection of scenes according to the different markets it is destined for, with more or less cuts not all countries see exactly the same scenes.

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DISTRIBUTION IN THE DIGITAL DOMAIN: THE DELIVERY AND TRANSMISSION OF CONTENT

Distribution, too, is experiencing transformation in the changeover to digital. Leaving aside the projection side, which will be the subject of a separate article, it is clear that, in the transition model, the possibility of delivering films on a worldwide scale, the number of cinemas and digital screens during the second semester of 2005.

As every year, MEDIA Salles has returned to AT THE BERLINALE 2006

The key aspects in this context are

- The concept of "digital cinema" as the name indicates, referring to the transition to digital. The technical and operational opportunities that Digital Cinema makes available for the distribution of films, advertising and so-called alternative content, distinguishing between "distribution" and "delivery/transmission" of content, illustrating the various different modes.

- Conclusions

- Synchronisation of audio and video.
- A different selection of scenes according to the different markets it is destined for, since not all countries see exactly the same scenes.

- Transmission and delivery: the use of broadband technologies increases the speed and quantity of information that can be transmitted in a single transmission, with the exception of satellite, it is of a "one to one" nature, i.e. each delivery goes to one screen only.

- High definition" cable transmission

- Utilizable for any type of content, with potentially unlimited coverage, already experimented in various fields of application and transmission.

- The DCP must be carried out so as to accept different types of content and distinguish clearly between the "principal" and "alternative" content, at least in the movie theatre, i.e. the screening of films, and the new forms of exploitation which open to theatres by digital technology, such as concerts, sports events, educational events, etc.

- Brief mention will be made of the provision of digital delivery of "alternative" content (not of other content in the specifications published by the DCI (Digital Cinema Initiatives)). It should immediately be said that this is, it is yet to be seen whether the only "remaining" is being totally rejected, as one of the four delivery/transmission phases, as the demands of quality and security established in order to guarantee the whole life cycle of the cinematographic product.

The digital film and Store & Forward

As previously mentioned, as well as remarking the principal means for exploiting screens, the film is the only one for which preserving its value has been established by the DCI. The recommendations contained in the DCI specifications apply both for the delivery and for the transmission of films, whatever means is used.

A single concept is being applied: the transmission of a film terminates always and in any case with the cinema's server. The first one, that of the theatre, which manages the rights to the content (the distributor and those who deal with the delivery of screens), and the second, that of the theatre, which manages the right to show the films. Hence, the digital theatre, and also opens up new and important forms of exploitation of the cinema to the Exhibitor's advantage.

Live transmission

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This is why the transmission of a film to the "store" and, from there, to the satellite or television network, is not the same thing as and must not be confused with (or be connected to) the so-called "streaming" typical of the world of the Internet. Not only is the requisite for "contemporary" transmission and exploitation of the content missing, but there is also a clear and unsurmountable distinction between "television" quality and "cinema quality"; the latter to be preserved from the specifications set down by the DCI standards.

The Store & Forward method is the most versatile and, in fact, the only one that can be used to ensure the best quality and its security, as well as correctly addressing the need for a reception according to agreements established between those who distribute the content and those who exploit it, under the agreements which the owner of the content guarantees, i.e. of the "client-agent" of what is to be sent.

In the case of films produced and distributed under DCP specifications, in the so-called "store" of Source of Store & Forward delivery and distribution (the so-called DCP (Digital Cinema Package), which contains: the video and in several audio tracks, corresponding to the different languages in which the film is produced.

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Over the past few years the competitive position of traditional cinema houses has been weakened by the rise of television, the internet, entertainment and relaxation and the pre-emption of time, rather than at home have been challenged by the digital offer. This offer has been addressed to a large number of people which have developed a large number of digital products, a major part of which are not spread out in specific places, but are accessed online by the help of digital cameras, digital video cameras, LCD and plasma display and通過 the home access to decoders and satellite con-nections, as well as the increasingly use of the technolog-ical supremacy which, unlike cinema, is not an exclusive offer, but a competitive edge compared to the home entertainment market, relying on the core attributes of its offer.

Today movie theatres are faced with the ne-cessity of responding to the digital challenge to regain their leading position on the entertainment market. In this respect, fitting cinemas with digital projection systems can bring new life to these still unchallenged advantages both in terms of screen size and power of the sound system, and in terms of the total immersion in the atmosphere of leisure and relaxation that this creates for spectators.

Nevertheless, digital screening systems alone are not a competitive edge for the movie theatre: to achieve this, there will be a need to make the changeover to digital in their cinemas to not only bring an improvement of the image quality. The core of this policy should consist in the ‘promise of quality’ offered to the spectators as a spectrum of quality that regards not only the technological aspect connected to the type of vision and sound experienced thanks to the digital projector, but also and above all the experience of the film during the week for specific screenings.

The presence of attractive exhibitions which link the character of the film (for example cartoon board-cuts of the film’s heroes) to the digital technol-ogy (for example the presence of displays with images of well-known figures from the world of cinema alongside digital projector or inside digital theatres as qual-a- tion of a total quality promise to spectators, in of-fering them a unique cinema-going expe-rience that is truly competitive.

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Systems for the digital transmission of var-ious types of content, the new frontiers in sound, digital cinema marketing; these are the main contents of a Newsletter that we would like to present to you; it is meant to be a useful tool from several points of view.

For the exhibitors meeting at the moment at the Rocco Forte Hotel in Palermo to discover the new frontiers regarding the theatre’s services, the type of programming, the quality of the cinema-going experience and the show viewed, giving spectators the opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions for im-proving the theatre offer.

For the exhibitors the need for a training in all the aspects of the technology that is peculiar since we have had digital audio in cinema for over 10 years. Digital Cinema Audio is a more im-mersive and entertaining experience than they can anywhere else. This is what has always made cinema special.

Dolby Laboratories, Inc.

Mike Vickers, Treasurer of MEDIA Salles

DIGITAL PROJECTIONS OF EUROPEAN MOVIES ON THE BIG SCREEN

At the Cityscape cinema in Roeselare, for participants at DGT 2006

Mike Vickers, Treasurer of MEDIA Salles