

Membership of the Circuit entitles theatres to benefit from the training and information services provided by MEDIA Salles, including the web pages which, as well as including a specific section on the promotion of European initiatives and events dedicated to cinema for younger audiences, contain the European Cinema On-line Database. The "Euro Kids" search key gives direct access to a vast selection of European films for children and young people.

Occasions for meeting and exchange are also arranged, such as the annual meeting of the Circuit members, which will take place this year in Como (Italy) on 16 and 17 October and during which exhibitors will be able to obtain the latest information on the sector of the cinema exhibition market intended for young people.

Further information is available from the MEDIA Salles offices (tel.: +39.02.66984405 - fax: +39.02.6691574 - e-mail: eurokids@mediasalles.it).

Multiplexes in Europe: number of sites at 1st January 1999

	8 screens	9 screens	10 screens	11 screens	12 screens	13 screens	14 screens	15 screens	16 screens	17 screens	18 screens	19 screens	20 screens	23 screens	24 screens	25 screens	Total
A	4	1		1	2												8
B	3		2		4		4			1					1	1	16
CH	1		1														2
CZ	1																1
D	23	20	13	3	4	3	3		1		1	1					72
DK		1								1							2
E	20	14	11	3	4	1	1	2			1		1		1	1	60
F	22	7	3	6	16		7	6	1	2	1	1		1			73
FIN			1														1
GR	1	1	1														3
HU		1	2	1													4
I	1	4	2								1						8
IRL		2	2	1	2												7
L			1														1
N	3					1											4
NL	3	1															4
P	1	1	2	1									1				6
PL	1																1
S	6	3	3		1		1		1								15
UK	24	20	22	8	18	5	13	1					2	1	2	2	113
Total	114	76	66	24	51	10	29	9	3	4	4	2	4	1	2	2	401

term multiplex cannot properly be used unless the complex has at least 8 screens. This practice is based on the results of the study carried out by London Economics on behalf of MEDIA Salles and published in the White Book of the "European Exhibition Industry" (second edition, 1994, vol. II, p.48).

On the basis of an econometric study, London Economics states that the multiplex effect is not fully achieved unless there are at least 8 screens.

This approach, which aims at evaluating chiefly the efficiency of the multiplex formula (in terms of the degree to which the facilities are utilised), seems preferable to an approach based on the presence of a series of qualitative features (not only the previously mentioned car parks and refreshments, but also screen size, steeply tiered seating, distance between seats, space in the foyers, air conditioning, quality of sound, etc.), which might also be found in theatres which are not multiplexes; moreover these are features that may not be considered equally necessary for the definition of a multiplex as such.

Without entering into further detail, it will suffice to reflect on the difficulty of evaluating qualitative features, such as the space in a foyer, for statistical purposes. As J. Ph. Wolff points out in his Introduction

to the MEDIA Salles European Cinema Yearbook (1998 edition), complexes with at least 8 screens do prove to have similar qualitative features, which make the category homogeneous and therefore more easily distinguishable.

It seems more problematic, however, to agree on a definition of the megaplex.

In a talk at Eurovisioni 1995, J. Bert (Bert Claeys Group) suggests using this term for multiplexes with at least 15 screens. Without proposing the adoption of specific terminology, MEDIA Salles has begun, in the 1998 Yearbook, to subdivide the multiplexes originally grouped together in the category of theatres with 8 or more screens, into further categories.

It is interesting to note that around 95% of the 401 sites identified in Europe up to 1st January 1999 fall into the 8-11 screen or 12-15 screen categories.

It would therefore seem reasonable to establish the dividing line between multiplex and megaplex at 16 screens.

This proposal also meets with the agreement of the UNIC (Union Internationale des Cinémas), which discussed the subject in its 1998 General Meeting.

Whilst we await more detailed research into the matter, an observation of the complexes with 16 or more screens shows that, in these cases, company strategy plays a decisive role.

The decision to build this type of complex, rather than the more traditional multiplex, depends on elements linked to the considerable dimensions of the investments and management involved. It will suffice to take into account the choice of site, on the basis of the potential market, as well as the availability of adequate infrastructures, the relationship between the cinema and business activities that are considered to be in synergy with it, or the supply of films. It seems to be no coincidence then, that some complexes of a size still considered exceptional today have been conceived as self-sufficient structures - that they are not integrated into a shopping precinct and that they are situated in suburban areas, where the cinema becomes an engine of growth or is integrated into other offers of entertainment, rather than into shopping facilities.

As regards questions linked to management, it might be interesting to analyse how far exhibiting companies that have extended their activities to distribution have been influenced by their role as managers of complexes with a large number of screens, entailing a regular and varied supply of products.

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