

I wish to receive, free of charge, the next issues of the "European Cinema Journal"
 Please alter your information on my personal details as follows
 To be completed and returned to MEDIA Salles (Via Soperga, 2 - 20127 Milano - Italy - tel.: +39.02.66984405 - fax: +39.02.6691574)

Name Surname
 Company Function
 Address ZIP code Town
 Ph. Fax
 E-mail

I authorise MEDIA Salles to use the data given above in order to send me documentation relevant to its activities.

Signature Date.....

EUROPE LOOKS TO AMERICA - AMERICA NEEDS EUROPE

*the trade panel on European cinema distribution in the United States
 organized by MEDIA Salles at Cannes Market 1999*

The Americans are not distinguished by their love of foreign countries. This, at least, is the impression they give, seeing that only 8% of them have a passport. It therefore goes without saying that their interest in the culture of the rest of the world is just as slight.

With this remark, on 18 May last, Geoff Gilmore, co-director of the "Sundance Film Festival" opened the Cannes trade panel "Europe Looks to America, America needs Europe", organised by MEDIA Salles in collaboration with Film Finders and Cannes Market, which was attended by 200 European operators interested in the American market. The session, chaired by Sydney Levine, president of Film Finders, and introduced by Jérôme Paillard, director of Cannes Market, and by the president of MEDIA Salles, Romano Fattorossi, aimed at giving an overview of the distribution of foreign language films in North America and at highlighting the opportunities for European productions. At first sight these are opportunities that do not seem promising, considering that the 32 000 commercial cinemas which show domestic movies at breathtaking rates in the United States are counterbalanced by a mere 500 dedicated to alternative products and the latter are, in turn, divided between independent, low-budget American productions and foreign language films.

Although traditional American distribution channels do not offer bright prospects for European cinema, positive signs can be seen in the new communication channels: through cable TV (Sundance Channel, Independent Feature Channel etc.), DVD and home videos, European cinema, addressing itself to specific audiences, seems to have



Geoffrey Gilmore, co-director of the Sundance Film Festival and Cary Jones of Landmark Theatres

found the way to penetrate to the heart of America. The building of new cinemas, such as the Sundance Chain, the development of Landmark Cinemas and alternative distribution channels through festivals, universities and institutions, such as those set up by Cowboy Booking, are creating a new and more varied audience, open to proposals from the Old Continent. Of course the major box office phenomenon as with "La vita è bella" remains a beacon, but the message from North American distributors at the panel tends not so much to involve the search for "record box-office sales", as to the preparation of a more fertile ground for growth in the market for foreign language films with greater international appeal. Moreover, not everything from abroad is really "foreign" in America: the Canadian Dan Lyon, vice-president of distribution and marketing for Motion International, pointed out that, in Canada, French is spoken at home by a quarter of the population. If we add to this the fact that the country is opening up to international co-productions, we can certainly speak of an important link - although one that has not yet been used to the full - between Europe and America. There are, then, the conditions and the means for wider distribution of European cinema on the other side of the ocean. What is needed is action by producers and sales agents abroad in the promotion of these films in the USA: the presence of actors and directors, for example, would capture the attention of the press, which is essential for making the public more aware of these films on the North American market. More thorough knowledge is also required of

the mechanisms of the American market and the real opportunities it provides. It was the intention of MEDIA Salles, Film Finders and Cannes Market to make a contribution towards filling this gap: a list complete with the names, addresses and profiles of all the American distributors of European films, a list of the 20 foreign films most widely seen in America in the nineties, "Focus 1999 World Market Tendencies" and the MEDIA Salles research on cinema exhibition in the United States, together with a report on its "Focus on Europe" initiative in the USA, conceived for the promotion of European films on an international level, were amongst the material supplied to those who attended the panel. Europe now is truly looking towards America.



The audience

The following people took part in the Round Table:

Geoffrey Gilmore - Co-director of the Sundance Film festival
 Sande Zeig - Artistic License
 John Vanco - Cowboy Booking
 Milos Stehlik - Facets Multimedia
 Sofia Sondervan - Independent Pictures
 Don Krim - Kino International
 Cary Jones - Landmark Theatres
 Amy Israel - Miramax
 Dan Lyon - Motion International
 Joe Revitte - Fine Line
 Susan Wrubel - New Yorker Films
 Michael Nash - Paramount Classics
 Gregory Hatanaka - Phaedra Cinema
 Dylan Leiner - Sony Pictures Classics
 John Gerrans - Strand Releasing
 Bobby Rock - Trimark Pictures
 Richard Lorber - Winstar Multimedia

Chairman: Sydney Levine, President of Film Finders



Romano Fattorossi and Jérôme Paillard presenting the panel