

MEDIA Salles 2015 DigiTraining Plus, Prague

I'd like to say how very happy I am to be here with you, in Prague.

Thank you dear friends from the Czech Republic!

This is the first time I have been present at the DigiTraining Plus course as President of MEDIA Salles.

I see young people here and this is a great thing for me, a man of sixty-three.

My story is the story of one of the oldest families in the history of cinema in Italy. At the beginning of the XXth century (1904) my grandfather was a supplier of the Lumière brothers' projectors and two years later he became the first exhibitor in my town in Northern Italy (Mantua...perhaps you know it?...near Verona - the city of the Gonzaga Dukes and Rigoletto...).

Before the arrival of sound in the cinema my grandfather and his brother Pietro were also local film distributors for regular cinemas but also for the Italian royal family!

Before the second world war he became a supplier of new Ernemann projectors. His life was always dedicated to cinema and theater in Mantova and small towns nearby, especially after the end of the war. And with my grandfather, his two sons (one is my father...) also opened cinemas in other towns like Bologna and Rimini.

My uncle had experience in production and distribution while my father (and myself) only have experience as exhibitors.

I was born with a classic 35mm projector and together with this machine I worked until the end of the XXth century, experiencing only small differences in sound with the birth of Dolby Stereo (spectral recording – sony sdds etc.) and some tests with 3D glasses, the red and green ones. There were more differences in automatism, in the position for 35mm (vertical or with big plates) but the essential technological system was the same for 40 years.

Not until 2008 was the first professional digital projector installed in our cinemas (I had seen the first one in Las Vegas in 2000).

In 2009 my first two digital projectors with 3D came, in 2011 another eight.

This year we experienced the need to change the first two projectors and replace them with two second generation ones.

WHY THIS LONG STORY?

Not to congratulate myself or leave a text for my obituary, but to share with you the current huge, differences in the business model for exhibitors in the new age of digital life.

In the XXth century we had to change our technical equipment every 20 years.

When the digital projectors first appeared on the scene, we believed they would last about ten years...no! My real experience says about 5/6 years.

It is therefore not possible to look to the future...without a new business model.

Digital is a great opportunity...a great chance for the screening of added content, it gives flexibility to our job, but we cannot afford to change technology every five or six years.

And this problem is a European problem, so we need to have a common strategy for our future. We need to have consistent European policies and therefore it is fundamental for all exhibitors to be united.

It is not possible for our theatres to meet future challenges without rules and agreement concerning windows and internet downloads. (Vod...Netflix...Piracy...)

Woody Allen said a few days ago that the cinema is dying out with the victory of internet over big-screen theatres...but we know that it is our job that will make it possible to give long life to the cinema.

Without our theatres, things would in fact be very different – perhaps we would go on producing images and even inventing new ways of viewing them but this would not be cinema!

Thank you for your passion and for your great love for cinema!

Paolo Protti

Premiere Cinemas Hostivař Kino, Prague

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