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Celebrational diving

The big ones are celebrating, the small ones are close to fall dead, the foreign companies are mysteriously disappearing from the country. At the same Budapest film, a long-time leader of art-house movie distributor has been taken over by a German company. Since changing the communist regime the previously untouched cinema and film distribution market has been having its, maybe, biggest change at all time.

Celebration or tragedy? Depends how we see. At least with the Hungarian art-house market. The big Hollywood studios are talking about the rise of local distribution. They are right, at least the numbers show that.

According to the statistic of the cultural office the admission in cinemas rose by 142 thousand to 6,949 million in the first 8 months, while the BO was 7,35 billion FT which is 687 million more than in 2008. However the number of screenings changed to 289 thousand from 310, while the average ticket prices rose by 102 FT to 1121 FT. The numbers show that the multiplexes have a boom. The reason of that is definitely the launch of 3D movies and their ticket prices which are double (sometimes even more) than the normal.

The unspoken thing is in this big euphoria is however the revenues of the art-house movies are declining very fast. The distributors are in a hard position. The number and the quality of the licensed art-house films are shrinking as well the available number of prints. Therefore more than the half of the revenues generated is by re-screening.

It's no coincidence either that the Plaza cinemas are taking more and more art-house rated movies from art-house cinemas therefore most of the time the traditional country side cinemas need to wait averagely 3 months for the prints. The record holder is Slumdog Millioner with a 6 months waiting period.

In this system the only exceptions are the Cirko-Gejzír in Budapest and the Apollo Theater in Pécs. These cinemas buying movies individually on their own and can release some festival movies with averagely 2 prints. These examples however cannot help to the rest at least on a long term basis.

It is pretty obvious that the distributors are responsible for the dark future.

There maybe the biggest changes are happening on the film market at all time. Recently SPI International, the independent movie distributor is out of the market (its film library is taken over by Forum Hungary) and Best Hollywood is also hardly decreasing the number of releases while the local partners of the big studios release less and less art-house films. They say that the guaranty of government support by having art-house rate has become unpredictable.

In addition just recently the 51 per cent of Budapest film Kft has been sold to a German firm, A Company. This is also very harsh news in the light of this company used to be for a long period the biggest supplier for the art-house theatre network.