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Senator grabs take in A Company

Move underscores aggressive growth strategy

By **ED MEZA**

Senator Entertainment is buying a 25.1% stake in Berlin-based Eastern European distrib A Company with an option to take full control of the group.

Move underscores Senator's aggressive growth strategy, giving the company a foothold in a key, fast-changing market, and signals the producer-distrib's expansion into international distribution.

In its five years of existence, A Company and its subsidiary, Eastern European Acquisitions Pool, have extended their film, TV and homevid licensing biz throughout Eastern Europe by working closely with local distribution partners. A Company handles sales in Russia, the CIS States and Poland, while EEAP covers the remaining territories, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

A Company was set up by chairman and CEO Alexander van Duermen, who once headed Kinowelt Medien's expansion into Eastern Europe before that group disintegrated along with Germany's scandal plagued Neuer Markt in 2001.

Retaining his key contacts, van Duermen rebuilt the former Kinowelt Intl. network via A Company and EEAP.

EEAP's other shareholders and regional partners include Munich-based Romanian distrib ProRom and Slovenia's Cinemania Group, which operates throughout the former Yugoslavia.

Senator's acquisition follows its recent pact with France's Wild Bunch, which took a 50% stake in Senator's distrib unit Central Film.

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