

'Fireflies' alighting all over Europe

By Scott Roxborough



Essential Entertainment signed all rights deals for "Fireflies" in Cannes with See "FIREFLIES" on page 64

Just 48 hours after wrapping principal photography, the Julia Roberts' starrer "Fireflies in the Garden" has virtually sold out in Europe.

Reign, pain in Spain

Euro rivals absconding with best films

By Pamela Rolfe

The boom in Spanish-language film worldwide has become a mixed blessing for Spanish sales companies.

While the films are generating boxoffice revenue and international awards, the companies no longer have the field to themselves as European rivals swoop down to cherry-pick the hottest properties — a problem other European industries don't suffer.

"Often an American producer will look to us because they know we'll take better care of their films than a bigger American company would."
— 6 Sales executive Marina Fuentes

Insiders offer a spectrum of reasons, ranging from a Spanish inferiority complex to a tougher market, but the fact remains that all six of the Spanish films in the Cannes official lineup are being handled by sales companies outside the Iberian Peninsula.

"It doesn't help the image of all the sales agents operating out of Spain when all the films selected are non-Spanish sales agents," KWA president and Madrid-based veteran See SPAIN on page 64

High cost of business at mid-market

By Stuart Kemp and Scott Roxborough

A handful of sought-after titles, big prices putting off those without deep pockets and the return of concerns about a weakened dollar are having an effect on the business levels at this year's Marche du Film.

See MID-MARKET on page 65



The cream of the director crop takes center stage Sunday.

'To Each His Own Cinema'

The great fun of "To Each His Own Cinema" (Chacun Son Cinema) is to see exactly how each of the filmmakers involved chooses to "own" his cinema. This anthology film was commissioned

by the Festival de Cannes on its 60th anniversary as a tribute to the magic of the movie house.

More reviews on pages 6, 8, 58.

Festival president Gilles Jacob asked 35 directors from five continents and 25 countries to make 33

films lasting three minutes each. No more. (If you are doing the math, brothers Ethan & Joel Coen and Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne count as two directors each.)

It may take more than 35 lawyers to figure out how to get this film distributed to cinemas around the globe, but See "TO EACH" on page 65

Meirelles takes crack at 'Love'

By Scott Roxborough

Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles will switch gears after wrapping the dark drama "Blindness" by directing a romantic comedy based on the novel "Love's Labors Lost" by Brazilian screenplay writer See MEIRELLES on page 64

Michael Winterbottom See page 24.

Gus Van Sant See page 46.

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Mid-market

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Buyers agree that the breakdown between top, middle and dreck level project prospects has seen a slight swelling at the high end of the market — but prices are upscale too.

"There does seem to be more high-end, sought-after titles this year," one U.K. buyer said. "But the sellers know it, and the prices for U.K. and Germany, for instance, are right up there."

Another marketgoer noted just how late cast was being added at the quality end. "It's unusual for casting to actually be added just as you are about to go into a meeting, but that is happening now," the buyer said.

"There are two actors starring in every big film being sold here, TBA and TBC," quipped Alexander von Duermen of East European acquisitions group EEAP.

Jerome Blich, president of International Film Distribution Consultants, a company that analyzes each film's asking price versus an assessment of script quality, talent and potential marketability, said the weak dollar has been a drag on the market.

"There has been such a drop in the business. The euro exchange is a plus for the Europeans, but prices were already inflated by 30%. Some prices just don't make sense," Blich said.

But it certainly seems that if you have the product, buyers will come, with sales houses including Summit, Dreamachine, Focus Features, Capitol Films and Relativity Media mentioned as quality outlets.

Summit closed a major deal with Germany, selling Roman Polanski's "Pompeii" to Munich indie giant Constantin Film. Germany's Concorde Filmverleih also bought a Summit title — "Get Some" — as well as picking up "Pathology" from Lakeshore.

And the market is abuzz with the prospect of Focus Features set to sign within days a major German deal for its entire Cannes slate in a bundle, with at least three Teutonic distributors in the bidding.

At the Spanish stand, things have been generally quiet. One exception has been the bustle around Latido Films, which has sold a number of territories on Carlos Saura's upcoming "Fados" as well as Juan Carlos Tabio's "Horn of Plenty."

"Ten years ago at the Cannes market, about one-fourth of the space here was dedicated to world cinema," Latido chief Max Saidel said. "Now more than two-thirds is dedicated to world cinema. There's a lot of competition, and buyers are very selective."

On the U.S. acquisitions front, all the usual suspects are chasing the same couple of films.

"Everyone was focused on (James Gray's) 'We Own the Night,' and now we're moving on to (Gus Van Sant's) 'Paranoid Park,'" Overture's Danny Rosett said one day after Columbia grabbed "Night." "There are no surprises — people are going slowly and being cautious. It's not disappointing; people are still hopeful and it's still early."

Tatiana Siegel, Gregg Goldstein and Pamela Rolfe contributed to this report.

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— Alexander von Duermen, EEAP

'To Each'

Continued from page 1 —



BY KIRK HONEYCUTT

the bottom line There are 33 good reasons to see this movie.

the film truly deserves a wide audience. It speaks to the communal experience of watching movies and dreaming in the dark. If ever a film demonstrates the love of movies across all cultures, this is the one.

You can quarrel with Jacob's choices. How in this day in age can you justify only one female director? And how can you not ask at least one filmmaker from the country making the most films annually, India, not to contribute?

The problem here is that Jacob went with Cannes favorites rather than reaching out to a wider, more populist demographic. So the shorts tend toward the arty and in a few — fortunately, only a few — cases self-indulgent.

The theme that dominates many shorts is the actual experience of the movie house, be in Raymond Depardon's "Open Air Theater" at the University of Alexandria or a home-made video theater in the heart of the Congo in Wim Wenders' "War in Peace," where after decades of war everyone watches a war movie. Malfunctioning projectors prove to be a common experience in films such as Takeshi Katano's dryly amusing "One Fine Day" or Chen Kaige's wonderful "Village," where young boys figure out how to hook the projector to their bicycles so they can laugh at Charlie Chaplin.

Problems or disputes inside theaters prove another common theme in Ken Loach's "Happy Ending," where a father and son cannot decide which movie to see while holding up the ticket line, and Bille August's "The Last Dating Game," where a young man's translation of the dialogue for his Moslem date irritates a group of men. Roman Polanski pushes over a fine joke in "Cinema Erotique."

Two of the more deeply effecting are Hou Hsiao Hsien's "Electric Princess Picture Palace," a tribute to an old movie house, and Abbas Kiarostami's "Where Is My Romeo?" which captures the emotions of women watching the final tragic moments of Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet." Nanni Moretti's "Diary of a Moviegoer" pays tribute to the eternal movie fan.

The film collectively is dedicated to Fellini, and indeed, two films pay tribute directly or indirectly to the Italian master. Andrei Konchalovsky's "In the Dark" watches people watching "8 1/2." Theo Angelopoulos' "Three Minutes," starring Jeanne Moreau, is actually a tribute to Marcello Mastroianni, but how can you separate the actor from his greatest muse and director?

Some filmmakers are unable to resist paying homage to themselves. Youssef Chahine's "47 Years Later" concerns his winning an award at Cannes 47 years after his second film was ignored. Claude Lelouch in "Cinema Around the Corner" pays tribute to his movie education from when he was in his mother's womb to his international hit, "A Man and a Woman."

Walter Salles' "8,944 km from Cannes" pays tribute to the festival itself with a lively musical number performed in front of an aging village movie house. This proved the most popular short of the collection at the initial press screening. Finally, it's grand to see the ageless Manoel De Oliveira up to his wry old tricks in "The Meeting." How fitting that the 98-year-old De Oliveira contributed a piece. After all, he was born not long after the first nickelodeon opened.

TO EACH HIS OWN CINEMA

Credits: Directors: Theo Angelopoulos, Olivier Assayas, Bille August, Jane Campion, Youssef Chahine, Chen Kaige, Michael Cimino, Ethan & Joel Coen, David Cronenberg, Jean Pierre & Luc Dardenne, Manoel De Oliveira, Raymond Depardon, Atom Egoyan, Amos Gitai, Hou Hsiao Hsien, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Aki Kaurismaki, Abbas Kiarostami, Takeshi Kitano, Andrei Konchalovsky, Claude Lelouch, Ken Loach, Nanni Moretti, Roman Polanski, Raul Ruiz, Walter Salles, Elia Suleiman, Tsai Ming-Liang, Gus Van Sant, Lars Von Trier, Wim Wenders, Wong Kar Wai, Zhang Yimou; Conceived and created by Gilles Jacob.

No MPAA rating, running time 118 minutes.

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