



Toronto International Film Festival 2009

Sally Browning (Investment Manager), Susan Boehm (Development Manager)

In a bold move, and in a break with tradition, the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival opened with *Creation*, a non-Canadian movie adapted by Australian John Collee and directed by Jon Amiel.

Though Toronto does not have a formal market and Screen Australia does not occupy a stand or booth, the importance of having a presence there cannot be overestimated. The festival has a strong international presence and is considered an accessible place where it's possible to meet the sellers, pitch your script and according to Sony Picture Classic's Tom Bernard " really connect with all the different parts of the Indie world".

It is well known that independent films from around the world use this festival as a launching pad into the North American market and to position films for the awards season. This year there wasn't the same heat and buzz around breakout films (eg, last year's Slumdog Millionaire) and only two films sparked any sort of bidding war and secured US distribution on-site – A Single Man (Dir Tom Ford) was bought by The Weinstein Company and Italian Venice festival pleaser I Am Love which sold to Magnolia and to several other key territories. But by mid-October Cameron Bailey, Co-Director of the Toronto International Film Festival was announcing what seemed like an impressive list of film sales resulting from their participation at the festival. High-profile films such as Creation, Chloe, Get Low, Micmacs, Lebanon and A Single Man all found top distributors in all major territories, including the U.S. More than 3,000 industry professionals attended the Festival as delegates of the Sales & Industry Office, which facilitates film sales and fosters relationships between accredited buyers, sales agents and filmmakers.

It was a buyer's market with most taking their time in coming to the table, even for films that had first been exposed at Cannes. Bob Berney from New York-based distribution Apparition (handling *Bright Star*) commented "You're not going to rush out and buy something right away, you are going to sit down and think about it." A good example is the sale of *Get Low* (Robert Duvall, Bill Murray) to Sony Picture Classics some time after the festival dust had settled.

We are in a sea-change and transitional time for the independent film industry – not only distributors but also producers worldwide are being forced to re-evaluate their businesses. Groundswell's Michael London (producer of *Sideways*) commented that companies like his are needing to think long and hard about making movies for a broader audience.



Digital and multi platform distribution was a key topic at the festival – there are conflicting views about the usefulness of these platforms and the capacity for them to produce financial results. But independent producer Ted Hope and Danish digital distributor Thomas Mei urged independent producers to investigate emerging financing models, cut out traditional distribution middlemen and offer pictures on multiple platforms.

A record 17 Australian films were selected for Toronto this year from over 4300 entries from 60 countries. Our films screened across every section in the festival including two films in retrospective as part of Dialogues: Talking With Pictures. A full list is available at

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/news_and_events/2009/mr_090821_toronto.asp

Jane Schoettle, one of the international programmers who handles both Australia and Israel, confided that because as part of a new festival program that focuses on one city – this year Tel Aviv - six slots became available in the main program and as 20 films were vying for those slots, she lobbied hard to include additional Australian films. It is unlikely will see a similar number of our films being selected in 2010.

Impact of the continuing Global Financial Crisis:

- No part of the industry is immune from the GFC from the majors through to studio specialty divisions to advertising and marketing, the middle ground has shrunk.
- We've seen major players disappear, most notably Miramax, and there
 are rumours that The Weinstein Company and Focus Features are in
 jeopardy despite recent press reports to the contrary. Sony Picture
 Classics and IFC are still major players especially IFC with its need for
 content to service its VOD channels for 50 million subscribers.
- With the absence of hedge fund money and capital financing for sales agents, presales have dried up and buyers have driven down prices radically on finished films. There is no urgency for purchase any more.
- The weakening of the US dollar has impacted on footloose and offshore
 productions which are choosing to stay in the US and take State tax
 credits and incentives. The cost of money for gap and bridging has
 increased through lack of availability of funds.

Objectives

Ruth Harley, Sally Browning and Susan Boehm represented Screen Australia this year and Mark Lazarus attended as producer of *The Loved Ones* which screened in Midnight Madness.

Our objectives included:

- Gathering market intelligence from a variety of sources including sales agents, distributors, international producers, screen agency counterparts such as Telefilm and UK Film Council, talent and packaging agents and this year we had a particular interest in meeting with some key players in the US digital distribution landscape.
- To identify and meet sales agents/distributors/ financiers and talent
 agents who may have yet to become involved in Australian films as well
 as check in for updates with those sales agents selling our films, whether
 the films were screening in the festival or not.



- Support each SA film by ensuring that one of us attend key screenings and the film's social event.
- Get our filmmakers and their films on the radar for selection at major festivals and markets which makes being at an international festival such as Toronto a key opportunity to meet with a wide selection of programmers including those from Sundance, Cannes, South By Southwest (SXSW) and Cinemart.
- Promoting the aims and objectives of Screen Australia as an agency to the global film industry through individual meetings and a dedicated Australian event.
- Preparing our filmmakers attending Toronto and the International Film Financing Forum by holding an introductory briefing at which panelists shared past experiences, tips and knowledge on how to exploit the festival to its fullest.

Outcomes

- This year for the first time a festival strategy session was held for those producers and filmmakers attending Toronto to focus and prepare them with on-the-ground strategies to maximize all opportunities. A panel was organized and moderated by Susan Boehm and consisted of Ashley Luke (Screen NSW, and former sales executive at Fortissimo), Sandie Don (domestic distributor Hopscotch), director Jon Hewitt (Acoloytes, screened at Toronto 2008) and Sally Browning (SA Investment manager and TIFF 2008 attendee). The panel gave specific tips and advice from different perspectives designed to inspire the filmmakers to leverage their exposure whilst in Toronto. The briefing was well attended with feedback that the session was very useful and appreciated and should be replicated for other festivals and markets in the future.
- The Australian High Commission/Screen Australia event was held on Monday 14th September at downtown Toronto at Brassaii, the same venue as last year. Marketing sent invitations to around 300 guests including all the major sales agents, filmmakers attending the festival, buyers and distributors, other screen agencies, actors, festival programmers and co production partners. Our filmmakers attended and some higher profile guests included Geoffrey Rush, Fred Schepsi and Sam Neill.

Possibly due to the large number of Australian films in Toronto this year, the event was well attended with 150 to 180 guests at any one time. Whilst the high turnout was positive, the venue proved insufficient for our needs this year particularly in reflecting Screen Australia's stature when compared with the functions hosted by UK Film Council and the Israeli Film Fund.

• We met with Trevor Groth (Senior Programmer, Sundance), Frederic Boyer (Artistic Director, Director's Fortnight, Cannes), Marit van den Elshout (Cinemart), Jane Schoettle (International programmer, Toronto) and Janet Pierson (Head of SXSW).

Trevor Groth provided us with an update on some recent and relevant changes to the festival. There will still be an International Competition focusing on new emerging filmmakers, particularly those who have had shorts selected previously – currently he has his eye on Australians David



Michôd, Luke Doolan, Julius Avery, Sean Byrne, Leon Ford and Warwick Thornton. The Premiere section will continue to showcase bigger films that are international premieres. A new section called Spotlight will program films they love, regardless of whether they have played at major festivals or not with the exception of those in the US. Trevor attended the Australian reception and was introduced to all of the fimmakers with films in the festival. He said John Cooper would be coming to Australia next year.

Frederic Boyer noted Australian films he had seen and enjoyed – *Bran Nue Day, Last Ride, Samson and Delilah, Blessed,* and *My Year Without Sex.* The focus of Director's Fortnight is first time directors whose films take risks and push boundaries. We pitched David Michôd's *Animal Kingdom*, Leon Ford's *Griff The Invisible* and Julia Leigh's *Sleeping Beauty* as films he should track. Frederic confirmed that Director's Fortnight will now include theatrical documentary.

Janet Pierson attended the Australian event and was introduced to the filmmakers and on the spot, in talking with Mark Lazarus, invited *The Loved Ones* to SXSW; and talked at length with others.

Jane Schoettle will see films at an early stage and if submissions are late or from another festival they will be programmed later in the festival. A supporter of Australian film she is actively tracking films now for her consideration in January.

Marit van den Elshout (Head of Cinemart) looks for projects with budget ranges between €100,000 and €1.2m. Projects will need a director attached and they look at the previous work and the producer status. Not interested in mainstream film – looking for visionary directors. Cinemart runs concurrent with the Rotterdam Film Festival.

 A long meeting with Telefilm representatives – CEO Wayne Clarkson, National Director Investment Portfolio Michel Pradier, National Feature Film Executive, English Market Stephanie Azam - provided crucial information regarding budget, infrastructure, program funds, database and decision-making structure for funding. Telefilm recognizes that all their co production treaties are out of date and need to be brought in line but currently this is not a priority for their Minister. It will happen slowly over time.

Telefilm has a feature film fund of \$100m annually for both development and production with admin costs running at 8.9% which coincidentally is about the level of recoupment each year; a \$15m new media fund which is more intensive in admin at 15-20%; CTF television fund of \$250m of which Telefilm staff are responsible for \$125m (staff for the CTF is 100 people with 3% admin internally because the broadcasters make the decisions);

Applications to the feature film fund are limited to \$3.5m and there are 'envelopes' for successful producers whereby there is no creative filter but it has to meet all other market requirements. Envelopes reward success at the domestic box office (\$500,000 minimum BO) and/or festival performance.

Telefilm can finance 75% of the distributor's marketing costs for theatrical releases.

English-speaking Canadian films have only 1.3% of the box office. French



Canadian films are more robust.

We attended a Canadian cocktail event to which many of our producers were invited, some of which were participating in the International Financing Forum, a two day event with meetings between producers, sales agents and financiers – it proved to be a good opportunity for the producers to be introduced to their Canadian counterparts.

• Sally Caplan, Head of the Premiere Fund, UK Film Council reported that in April the separate funds will be merged. Currently Sally is left to her own devises in terms of selection. Head of Production Finance runs the numbers on the deals, there are weekly committee meetings with the fund Heads and others. Creatively it is either her or Lennie Crooks who is head of the New Cinema Fund that decide on the projects to be funded. They will often meet with the director as part of their process.

A new greenlight process is under discussion whereby Sally can be challenged on her selections at the committee level and reading the script will be a mandatory component of that challenge. New plans may include senior creative executives being responsible for £2m per year and there are plans to have more emphasis on first and second time directors. Also under discussion is the idea to have three strands dealing with Lower Budget, Experimental and Big Budget. Creating an innovation fund; cutting the distribution and exhibition funds and tightening overheads. A possible reduction in funds due to the Olympics.

Digital Distribution: we met with two key players in the digital distribution space.

• The Auteurs is the brainchild of Efe Cakarel who established the company in 2007 with backing from Celluloid Dreams, The Criterion Collection and Costa Films and is supported by the Media Programme of the EU and is the exclusive partner of Martin Scorcese's World Cinema Foundation. It is a curated site for both contemporary and classic films and their biggest asset is their audience comprising 120,000 members. His distribution costs are almost zero and often after exposure on the site, the films find sales. There are no digital distribution rights management at the moment that distributors are comfortable with so streaming is the only option currently. He has an editorial staff in Berlin and New York.

He establishes an individual presence in each region and is very interested in all the territories that do not sell theatrically. He believes there are only 100 films per year that warrant a big window between theatrical and on-line/DVD. He says there is no evidence that online/dvd presence reduces theatrical audiences. He has just closed a deal with Hopscotch for ANZ. He sees himself as a marketing partner for prerelease of theatrical and uses the Big Mac index to determine pricing in each territory (i.e. no streamed film will cost you more than the price of your local Big Mac). Prior to Mao's Last Dancer's release in the US for instance, he will work with the distributor on marketing the film.

He has the capacity for four times the amount of information as You Tube. He utilizes Facebook and Twitter for one-click transfer of traffic and is negotiating a deal with Play Station which would give him access to 28 million consoles.

At the time of our meeting he had 2000 films on his site. Pricing structures include a monthly access fee of \$18 or on average in a major territory, \$5

per view. He believes transparency is important and reports are available on line for his clients. Commission is 50% - nil costs as he provides the encoding.

www.theauteurs.com

 We met with Paula Freccero, President of Distribution and Liz Ogilvie, VP Marketing for b-side.

b-side provides websites to over 250 film festivals in North Americda. As part of those sites, audiences can rate the films they've seen, share information on those films with friends and get recommendation from other film-goers. More than four million fans have passed through b-side's websites primarily in the UK, US and Canada to date. Founded by Chris Hyams, a software developer, he was interested in the correlation between audience and access to data. B-side's early days were in data collection for film festivals including applications from filmmakers and audience responses so consequently, they have data on 4m festival goers and 26,000 independent films. Data includes gender, name, email address and the ability to opt into a 200,000+ mailing list. This info reveals what audiences want and can provide targets for client success in two areas: marketability which is how interested is in the audience in seeing the film before they see it; and playability – what happens after they see the film. b-side try to answer the following questions: how do we find every person who may be interested in 'x', where do they hang out, what blogs do they read, which social network do they use; how do we use the data?

Exhibition on Demand – like the DVD house parties of the 90s, this is an all digital marketing campaign run by the audiences themselves. b-side treat theatrical (for some films) as a marketing tool for sales in ancillaries. The film's website is the centre and members are urged to take action for a film they like – share it, buy it, watch it. The idea is to use core champions for individual films to promote word of mouth (WOM). 50/50 with no costs off the top (as costs are minimal) so producer makes money from first dollar.

b-side do not have the same view on piracy as the rest of the industry and are considered somewhat unconventional with their 'share, share' attitude. Have not yet penetrated the UK and Australian market as they are currently concentrating on North America.

b-side have just acquired their first Australian film – the feature documentary *Salute*.

www.bside.com

Cinetic Media/Film Buff

Based in NY, Cinetic Media has long been a leader in sales of independent film to distributors in the US. Recently they have moved into digital rights management, have acquired a curatorial cable VOD channel called **Film Buff** which is in 20 million homes. **John Sloss** and **Matt Dentler** at Cinetic are searching for content and is prepared to take VOD rights only on some titles. John Sloss believes English language films is where the revenue is for VOD – minimal costs for set up, one-off 25% commission, 15% commission for libraries. Currently they have deals with Virgil, Kino, Palm Pictures and New Yorker Films and are negotiating with



studios for old libraries. They are interested in social documentaries, thrillers, horror and cast-driven titles; three month runs with a capacity of 5-12 titles per month and refreshing of content by 50% every month. Sloss believes viewers are loyal to their chosen platform whether that be Netflix, itunes etc and so there is little cannibalization of audience.

Cinetic have handled the US sales of *Japanese Story, Jindabyne and Somersault*. Cinetic are keen to talk to Australian producers about carving out the US VOD rights and will consider back catalogue projects.

Players new to the Australian market

- Jerome Duboz at William Morris Endeavor came from the William Morris side in their recent merger with Endeavor. He is assigned to cover international writers and directors instead of covering and tracking a studio. He wants to get his clients attached to great projects so is keen to talk to Australian producers both for their knowledge of upcoming projects and to pair them with his writer/director talent. He is interested in new directors. WME has taken the US rights for The Loved Ones and is interested in tracking its director. WME represents Baz Lurhman, Jonathan King amongst others. He met with Australian producers we suggested to him at Toronto. He is sincere in his enthusiasm to connect and help Australian filmmakers.
- Brian Kavanagh-Jones and Micah Green from CAA are not only
 interested to meet with Australian producers but want to know how to
 leverage the Offset. Micah Green believes that new media models
 emerging will favour independent films creating a potential explosion of
 value. He thinks in the digital future ancillary revenue for true specialty
 films could wildly exceed what this type of film is currently seeing in brickand-mortar stores.
- Josh Braun is a Producer's representative with a company called Submarine Entertainment based in NY. He co-reps with the talent agencies and Cinetic Media in selling films. He said clearly that the moment to sell a film may not be five days after the premiere and he has even waited nine months for a decent sale. He believes you can recreate moments to sell a film, post-festival His focus is on the US and North American territory and he works extensively on docs and has relationships with HBO, A&E and the Sundance Channel and gave detailed information about pay structures. He told us that Submarine an output deal with Participant Pictures, a significant relationship that Australian producers could take advantage of.
- Australian Bec Smith is a UTA talent agent focusing on writers and directors and reps David Michôd, Julius Avery, Julia Leigh, Joel Anderson, Amiel Courtney-Wilson and others. Paramount have bought the remake rights for low budget Australian film Lake Mungo, directed by Joel Anderson whom she believes may be up to directing the US version. She is an aggressive supporter of Australians and is always on the lookout for signing our talent for US representation.
- Studio Canal's Leonard Glowinski (previously with Pathé) is keen to increase the level of their international production. Studio Canal has deals with Kinowelt in Germany and Optimum in the UK. Interested in any budget levels but if higher budget level, official and non-official co productions, Leonard needs to see cast attached. He pointed out that there is a €4m French tax break for foreign production when there is no



presale for TV. Studio Canal will read treatments in all genres and smaller edgier films are acceptable. They will take some territories or all international rights. The studio has an imperative to release 18-20 films per year with a tent-pole film every 18 months. Has an output deal with Working Title. We introduced him to a number of Australian producers at Toronto.

- Sebastian Chesneau's Rezo Films is a Paris-based sales agency handling 10 films (down from 14) a year. Currently has three big projects at \$10m but will look at some smaller films if they have a hook, they are trying to balance their risk. Can finance if there is a director who can attract cast or if there is cast already attached. Co-financing will depend on the ability to pre-sell. He is in the process of trying to set up a fund which would finance DGs for foreign sales. His view on VOD was to not be exclusive and believes the best result comes from multiplicity of exploitation (itunes, Hulu, Netflex, The Auteurs). VOD is currently illegal in France. Interested in talking to Australian producers.
- Daniel Baur, K5, based in Germany and UK, co-produced At World's
 End and Separation City with Australian producer Cathy Overett. K5 Film
 is involved in production and K5 International does sales. Budget ranges
 of films is US\$5-\$15 million, mainly English language films. Only financing
 a few projects each year but interested in Australian work. K5 had Get
 Low at Toronto which was one of the films to find a US sale.
- Ryan Kampe and Sylvain Tron from New York based Visit Films have signed Ivan Sen (Beneath Clouds) for world sales for his next film.
 Interested in director-driven festival films with budgets between US\$2-3m but will look at budgets of US\$5m. Ryan attended the 2009 edition of 37 South and is very interested in Australian films.
- Natalie Brenner, Ealing Studios has come on board to the upcoming musical Goddess.com for ROW sales. Ealing are commercially driven with a focus on thrillers and rom-coms taking on about six films a year, no more than two or three being their own. They require a marketing plan to indicate where the project can be positioned. Will act as both producer and sales agent and produces one adaptation every few years, can develop from the ground up and interested in remakes. Their own production Dorian Gray screened at Toronto. In the pipeline they have a US\$15m thriller with Dustin Hoffman, a US\$20m comedy with John Landis and an US\$8m production from the team that made "Men Behaving Badly". Need to pre-sell for its own financing. Ealing eventually will have its own fund for financing to be used for MGs. Natalie was emphatic that they are not interested in gritty local drama.

Sales Agents/Distributors/ Financiers currently attached to Australian films

• Icon's Mark Gooder felt that there was still an identifiable divide between big films and arthouse; and he felt that most Australian producers are quite isolated from the market, and have a reputation for only bringing 'another drama' to the market. For films to travel they need to be unique, not generic, tied to a brand (i.e. A Single Man by Tom Ford). Hard to engage an audience when there is nothing to sell – need a book or a hook (eg Mao's Last Dancer). To understand marketing and how high concept works he suggests reducing the idea down to what would appear in a TV spot – identifying what the film is truly about at the core. He



believed the media ad market is depressed so there are better deals for advertising films. He said on-line advertising was a good option because of its wide reach but it still carried costs. Better still is embedding and integrating the promotion via games, X-Box and Facebook, Daily Telegraph site etc, in other words go to where the traffic is. Media consumption is fragmented so it is still important to do word of mouth screenings, ads in papers. Icon is very material-driven with an interest in the broader bigger films. Icon reps the following SA films: *Oranges & Sunshine, The Boys Are Back*. Mark believes *Oranges & Sunshine* has huge editorial options due to it being a true emotionally charged story, and Emily Watson is an excellent marketing tool.

- Content's Jamie Carmichael reported a disturbing incident that proved the buyer's market theory: a film they rep but he didn't name was in competition in Cannes and failed to sell despite much interest from a US distributor. Nine months later at Toronto the US buyer circled the project again and when they only offered \$20,000 for all rights, Jamie confessed to an involuntary laugh that nearly lost him the sale. Welcome to our world he said in a start reality check. Content are repositioning their slate with the intention to have fewer high quality festival films (and only those that are in main competition) and 2-3 genre films, 2-3 high profile docs and some films with US stars budgeted US\$10m-\$15m. They are leaning towards commercial films, genre in particular and states that filmmakers should commit to the genre, He believes there is no appetite for a second-tier festival film, even if it is in competition.
- Kirk D'Amico, Myriad Pictures represents a number of SA films including *The Cup*. Myriad have a deal for US only with Paramount for DVD, PPV and VOD and are actively looking for films that could go through this system. Have started a distribution company in Vancouver and will eventually acquire up to six films a year for Canada only. Myriad is acquiring eight to ten films overall per year.
- The Work's Carl Clifton spent most of our meeting on his blackberry closing hot deals for I Am Love. He said there was so much interest in the film because buyers could see a very clear audience for it. Carl also believes it was a buyer's market and he couldn't see many buzz films at Toronto it is brutal out there. The Works represents Beautiful Kate. Carl thought the reviews were very positive and was hoping sales would follow.
- Our meeting with Michael Werner and Chris Paton at Fortissimo
 focused on discussion around the SA film Griff the Invisible for which they
 have offered a DG. Interested in continuing to work with producers with
 whom he has a history Liz Watts, Jan Chapman, Leah Churchill-Brown,
 Sue Maslin, Emile Sherman, Clara Law, Anthony Anderson. Michael
 Werner attended SPAAmart.
- Gary Hamilton, Arclight, represents a number of SA titles including The Loved Ones at Toronto; and is also involved as a producer on the upcoming project Bait.
- Mark Horowitz, H2O is a US-based sales agent with an office in London.
 Previously he was President of Atlantis Alliance and consultant at
 Endgame and First Look. He is representing *The Waiting City* which was
 featured as a 'must watch' in the Hollywood Reporter's Toronto report,
 thanks to the diligence of his publicist Alison Dewar. He handles eight
 films a year, two to three per market and is more interested in an



- Australian project if it has SA investment but he doesn't put up MGs. His favourite genre is film noir. Involved in European co production.
- Charlotte Mickie and John Hamilton from E1 Entertainment met to talk about the Australian projects they represent: South Solitary, Animal Kingdom and Sleeping Beauty. Due to the huge success of Twilight, E1 is experiencing more financial stability than some other independent distributors. As a result the parent company can now expand E1 UK from VOD to theatrical which will provide another UK distribution opportunity for Australian producers.
- Paul Brett, Prescience is interested in a few Australian films. Following
 Toronto Prescience launched its own sales arm, Metropolis International
 Sales, and has announced a joint venture with Timeless Films, led by
 former Odyssey chief Ralph Kamp. Metropolis will handle all genres
 except family and children, which will be Timeless' specialty. Kamp and
 Prescience managing director Tim Smith will lead Metropolis and
 Prescience will underwrite the business.
- Phil Hunt, Hilary Davis and Stephen Kelliher from Bankside are huge supporters of Australian film and represented Blessed and Bran Nue Day at Toronto. They also have Lou, Accidents Happen and Coffin Rock on their slate.
- Dylan Leiner, Sony Picture Classics is pre-buying and will deal directly
 with producers. He is tracking a number of Australian projects. When prebuying he prefers to see stills and footage in addition to the script. Most
 recent involvement in Australian films has been The Children of Silk Road
 and Jindabyne but he is very interested to re-engage with our films going
 forward.
- Sue Bruce-Smith of Film Four is set up to work with independent producers but is undergoing huge changes because of the GFC and change in viewing habits.
- Aramid's Lucinda Englehart reported they are not interested in first and second time directors and they want to work with projects that are packaged robustly. Their lending criteria requires a strong sales agent attached Hanway, Wild Bunch, QED, Pathé and Ealing Studios are currently favoured. Two to three major presales are required, and they also cashflow presales, tax credits and gap. 35 films a year, from \$500,000 documentaries to high budget features they are the money behind the LA based Incentive Filmed Entertainment fund.

We also caught up with **Matt Brodlie** (Paramount), the full **Bankside** team, digital/dvd distributor in the US **Richard Lorber**.

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