

ARTHOUSE CINEMA IN ITALY FICE FOR CICAIE ASSEMBLY IN CANNES 2016

Italian market recorded an increase in both box office and admissions in 2015, compared to the two previous years. Cinetel data (representing 90-95% of the full market) is **99.3 million admissions** in 2015, + **8.56%** compared to 91.5 million in 2014. Full market data will be available by June: in 2014 SIAE registered a total amount of 98.2 million admissions and in 2015 about 107 million admissions are estimated.

Films distributed in 2015 have grown: 473 overall, with a congestion of key films between October and March and a few national and arthouse cinema productions between June and August. If it were not for Cannes Film Festival, in May too there would be a decrease in Italian releases. Success comedies, representing the biggest share of national cinema box office income, are released within a few months, preventing exhibitors to fully exploit their potential. As a consequence, summer still represents a problem for cinema. Italian films distributed in 2015 have also increased from 171 to 187, but the average production budget has decreased.

The **national market share** in 2015 is 21.35%, a sharp drop on 2014 which recorded 27.76%. This is the signal that the prevailing kind of movies - the unpretentious comedy films - are proving redundant. USA films represent 60% of the market, non-national European cinema 15.50%.

2016 started with the great success of Checco Zalone: "Quo vado?" was distributed on January 1st (the most important date for the Italian market: in the last years the box office champions have been released on New Year's Day) breaking all box office records (65.2 million Euro) and totalling 9.3 million moviegoers. Thus, national market share in 2016 is mainly due to the outcome of this film, but at least two other titles that we could call "quality films" have proven quite successful and won the David di Donatello: the choral comedy "Perfetti sconosciuti" (Perfect Strangers) exceeded 17 million Euro (more than 2.6 million admissions), and "Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot" (They Call Me Jeeg Robot), a very ambitious first film (associating the superhero aesthetics and a study of the deprived suburbs) exceeding 4.5 million Euro.

The period **January-April 2016** has recorded a box office increase of 13.6% compared to the first four months in 2015 (admissions: +14%). The Italian cinema market share is 43% (for the above mentioned reason), against 46% of USA's.

The national production, which on one hand enjoys much support from the State and is mainly focused on the prevailing theme of the comedy, on the other hand is witnessing the success of many authors at international festivals, recently with documentary maker Gianfranco Rosi, who won the Golden Bear at the latest Berlinale with "Fuocoammare" (Fire at Sea). In Cannes, notwithstanding the lack of Italian films competing, there are three Italian filmmakers at the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs (Bellocchio, Virzi, Giovannesi), Mordini at Certain Regard, Del Degan among Special Screenings and Comodin at the Semaine de la Critique: a reassuring group (at least a couple of them with good commercial ambitions) that we hope will get to the audience of our theatres the way it greatly deserves.

Arthouses in Italy are undergoing regulatory changes. The Ministerial decree concerning Art theatres was modified last February, with a view to improve it and also to include rules that for ten years have regulated the Ministry Special Project "Quality Theatres" (Schermi di Qualità). The latter provided for higher incentives to programming Italian and European quality cinema.

The law of 2004 is still in force for 2016. However, the Senate is examining the new government bill about Cinema and Audiovisual reform, which will come into force in 2017. The first drawing lacked due attention to our sector. Thanks also to contributions set out by FICE, we have caught full attention from the

draftswoman at Senate and from the Minister himself. Rules for arthouses activity will change, and hopefully – as promised by the Minister – resources will increase and will be more efficient, benefiting both theatres as a whole and arthouses.

With the new law, automatic contributions shall increase – for national production too – and it remains to be seen how the status of “arthouse film” will be awarded – today it is a commission of experts appointed by the Ministry who awards it. In 2016, the fund for **arthouse bonus** has raised from 2.2 to 5 million Euro, but this increase derives from the cancellation of the fund (3.2 million in 2015) destined to “Quality Theatres”. Given the rules in force in 2016, 40% of the fund is automatically assigned to cinema theatres having fulfilled percentages required by law and minimum days of annual activity, the remaining 60% goes to theatres implementing more advanced activities for spreading arthouse films: intensive programming of Italian and European art-films, films produced in Europe or by less known Countries having been awarded the certificate of “Excellence” or being prize winners at main festivals; art-film programming for schools, first run art-film programming during the summer.

In Italy, the arthouse cinema sector is undoubtedly less dynamic than a few years ago, owing to a lack of generational replacement of the audience - following digitization, many exhibitors are catching up reviewing their programming and communication policies (with more flexibility). With regard to relations with the film distribution sector, contractual logics are often the same as blockbusters', impairing the flexibility needed to programming both first-runs and films requiring time to catch on. Plenty of new films are released every week, and it is difficult to give them due screening. As mentioned earlier, there is a great gap between films distributed according to professional standards and independent works having difficult access to cinema theatres, that arthouse exhibitors try to distribute by setting up – for instance – event-screenings with the directors. Furthermore, some of the most important independent distributors have diversified their activity – a reduced number of arthouse films are imported for the Italian market, as their broadcasting on tv and pay tv has fallen.

In 2016, arthouse cinemas of Cinetel sampling represent about 16% of the total number of moviegoers. Their role as art-film promoter is however essential. If very successful films such as “Perfetti sconosciuti” (Perfect Strangers) represent 18% of the total audience in our film theatres, “Fuocoammare” (Fire at Sea) accounts for 74%, and “Non essere cattivo” (Don't Be Bad) - submitted for the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film - for 77%. FICE associated cinema theatres are 370, with 428 arthouse screens and 679 screens as a whole.

FICE's main promotional activities, featuring greater dialogue with Authors, Festivals and other cinema categories, are as follows: **VIVILCINEMA**, an art-film magazine distributed in 50 thousand copies in more than 300 arthouse cinemas, **INCONTRI DEL CINEMA D'ESSAI** (arthouse meetings) gathering in Mantova, in October, 600 cinema professionals (the 16th edition will take place from October 3rd to 7th with previews, screenings for the general public and for students, workshops, **FICE AWARDS** for a year of art-films, meetings with film directors and actors), **CORTOMETRAGGI CHE PASSIONE** concerning a selection of the best Italian short films and distributed for free in the associated theatres, initiatives to support documentary films and art-films during the summer. And last, but not least, the cooperation to the **CORSO DI FORMAZIONE CICAIE** (CICAIE's Training Course) in San Servolo.

Finally, FICE adheres to and shall promote the **European Art Cinema Day** next October 9th.

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