



## MOVING PICTURES INTERNATIONAL

26, Soho Square,  
London W1V 5FJ  
Tel: (44) 71 494 0011  
Fax: (44) 71 287 9637

IN SAN SEBASTIAN:  
Teatro Victoria Eugenia,  
Plaza Oquendo,  
20080 San Sebastián  
Tel: 43 11 75/43 06 75/  
43 10 84/43 03 57 (Editorial)  
43 03 82 (Advertising)  
Fax: 48 12 62

IN MADRID:  
Avenida de Burgos 39, 4 izda,  
28036 Madrid.  
Tel: (91) 383 82 04  
Fax: (91) 383 86 71

Managing director John Campbell  
Executive publisher Mike Downey  
Editor John Hopewell  
Kate Bull  
Managing editor Claire Wrathall  
Desk editor  
Contributing bureau chiefs  
Christian  
De Schutter  
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Design  
Sub-editor Migo Muñoz  
Office managers Jesús Torquemada  
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Sylvia Montes  
Ranier Maki Bekiki

Advertising  
Director Barry Burchell  
Head of sales (Spain) Anañel Aragoín  
Production manager Cliff Moulder

Printed by Litográfica Danosa s. Coop.  
Lda, Polígono Urdulazeta s/n, Oyarzun  
(Guipúzcoa).  
Tel: (34 43) 49 12 50.  
Fax: (34 43) 49 16 60.

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is published every Thursday  
by Moving Pictures International Ltd  
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ISSN NUMBER: 0009-6991

## Buyers ignore Screenings row

Ninety-one buyers from 27 countries attended this year's Screenings Donostia which took place from September 14-18 at the Palacio Miramar. "What is most important is that, despite all the difficulties, the event was able to take place," said Mikel Ibarondo, president of Screenings Donostia.

"It is too early to give reliable figures about how many hours of product have been sold," he continued. "We presented more than 400 hours of programming. Buyers from all over the world saw a lot of interesting product here, were able to get in touch with the producers and negotiations will continue at home. Contracts are usually signed after the market."

The conflict between the Screenings Donostia Association and EuroAIM, which organised both the 1989 and 1990 edition of the screenings, resulted in some of last year's buyers deciding not to attend. "But we also welcomed important new ones, like for example people from Japanese NHK and Carolco Pictures," Ibarondo continued.

"The buyers and producers haven't really had anything to do

with these internal problems," said BRTN's Prosper Verbruggen. "What buyers need is a sufficient amount of product and the opportunity to get in touch with sellers. Next to this, I also received the same warm reception as last year. I just feel good in San Sebastián. I hope the organisers will be able further to develop the screenings, because they work."

Producers were struck by the relaxed atmosphere in which they were able to make contact with both buyers and colleagues. "You don't have the same struggle here as you have at markets like MIP," said producer Caroline Hartman.

"We're here to work, not to be involved in politics," said another European producer, who did not want to be named. "It's a pity that certain parties, which were created in order to support small independent producers, wanted to boycott this event in order to fight out a personal conflict."

Next year's edition will again be organised by EuroAIM (Moving Pictures, September 19). A date for next year's event will be announced before the end of the month.

•Christian De Schutter

## The jury convenes...

To stand in judgement of art is not the easiest of tasks, though it is often the case that directors find it a problem to have their work in competition with creations by other artists. "I hate to have my films compete," German director Werner Herzog once remarked. "I am not a racehorse."

But the financial incentives offered to competitors at this year's San Sebastián Film Festival make the work of this year's jury an even more delicate job than normal - it is not merely a question of honour, it is a question of money. There is a serious difference between a festival with a cash prize and a festival that merely offers exposure.

Probably the best-known of this year's jury members is Paul Leduc - no stranger to San Sebastián having had his film *Frida*, a biography of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, screen here in the Open Zone section back in 1983. His most recent film is *Latino Bar*, made last year.

Madrid-based director Fernando Colomo is also a regular at San Sebastián and one of the pioneers of the New

Madrid Comedy and New Spanish Cinema. His last official selection appearance in San Sebastián was with *La línea del cielo* in 1983.

Bringing a Teutonic touch to the jury is Munich-based film critic Bodo Fründt, best known as a contributor to *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Also on the panel is Janusz Morgenstern, winner of the best director prize at the 1967 festival here and former assistant to Andrej Wajda. He is currently head of a Polish studio which has produced more than 90 films so far, including many works by Wajda.

Actor Xavier Elorriaga, a Basque who has spent much of his life in Venezuela, but has now returned to Spain is also on the jury. His latest work, *Para Elisa*, is a 16-part television serial produced by TVE.

And last but not least, there is Karen Shakhnazarov, whose *Assassin of the Tsar* screened in the official selection of this year's Cannes Film festival, is the leader of the Kurier movement, which has its own showcase at this year's festival.

•Mike Downey

## French films struggle to reign in Spain

PARIS. According to Unifrance, the French film industry promotion and sales organisation French films drew Ffr8.38 (\$1.4 million) at the Spanish box office in 1988 and Ffr9.41 million in 1989, indicating an upward trend for Spanish films in France.

Since the beginning of the year *Las edades de Lulú*, *Boom Boom* and Pedro Almodóvar's *Laberinto de pasiones* have appeared on Parisian screens. The first, released by Bac Films, took 29,127 tickets after eight weeks on release and the latter, handled by Colifilms, drew 39,920 punters in 24 weeks. On the whole, of the major Spanish directors, it is only really Almodóvar who is a genuine box-office attraction.

Between now and the end of the year, four French distribution companies plan to release six Spanish features or co-productions: *Ay Carmela!*, *A solas contigo*, *Central Station*, *L'Homme qui a perdu son ombre*, *Amelia*, and *Une femme infidèle*.

French productions in Spain tend to do less well. Companies find that they can eventually make sales, but on average it takes a little more time than usual. Gaumont had a good deal of trouble selling *Nikita* to Spain. "We finally did it," says Gaumont's Michel Schmid, "but just like *La Gloire de mon père* and *Le Château de ma mère*, it took time."

According to Les Films du Scorpion president Alan Katz, "Spain is the playground of the US majors and it is difficult for French films to find their place."

Co-productions are a better bet. Since the beginning of this year, Classic Films has invested in José Luis Cuerva's *La vida del Capitán Estrada*; Impala Jet Productions is involved in the Virginie Thévenet project *Sam Saffi*; Tornasol Film and Chrysalide are co-producing with Paolo Branco Luis Filipe Rocha's *Amor y los delitos del pie*; and Origen has invested in Jorge Paizo da Costa's *Adieu Princesse*.

This compares well with last year, which saw five French/Spanish co-productions: Gilles Béhat's *Dancing Machine*, Xavier Castaño's *Bienvenido a Veracruz*, Antonio Ceri's *L'Anare* (Vallarde Films), Valeria Sarmiento's *Amelia Lopez O'Neill*, and Antonio Zocillo's *El invierno en Lisboa*.

•Gwen Douquet