

EUROPEAN DISTRIBS



LINDA POTYONDI

Hungary

As a nonprofit, Hungarian distrib Cirko Film has a different agenda than many of its competitors, explains the company's Linda Potyondi, though its challenges are just as great.

"We like to distribute the so-called 'difficult' film, the ones that attract small audiences — we think it is important to show them in Hungary."

Even so, Cirko Film managed admissions of 6,000 in the first eight months of 2008 — an impressive number these days in Hungary for arthouse pics — with a slate including laffer "Adam's Apples," "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days," "Persepolis" and "After the Wedding." (A high-water mark was set by Manuel Gomez Pereira's steamy 1999 thriller about sex addicts, "Between Your Legs," with 13,000 tickets sold.)

Aside from a knack for backing praiseworthy niche pics, Cirko Film sets the bar for efficiency: With just



POTYONDI

three full-time employees, aided by volunteers, says Potyondi, "We do programming, festival organizing, press, national and international media tenders — literally everything!"

The Open Society Institute and Budapest Autumn Festival help financially, with a bit more coin from the National Cultural Fund and the Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary, but, Potyondi says, "It isn't a question of money, but human resources."

What keeps morale high, she says, is Cirko Film's rewarding agenda of helping promote understanding for what she calls "disadvantaged groups." Pics must have artistic merit but will often focus on gay issues and struggles by Roma, religious minorities, disabled people and victims of domestic violence. — *Will Tizard*



GRETA AKCIJONAITE

Lithuania

When it comes to niche pics, Greta Akcijonaite of the Skalvijos Kino Centras in Vilnius knows her stuff. A member of a small team that runs Lithuania's only arthouse cinema as a charitable concern — a combination of acquisition, distribution, and children's and youth cinema education — Akcijonaite looks for European films that are both highbrow and entertaining enough to be audience pleasers.

The cinema programs films for exhibition runs that "last as long as people still want to buy tickets," Akcijonaite says. Danish film "Adam's Apples" underscores her philosophy. Pic is still running after its February 2007 bow and is the reason why she is unsure to say how many admissions "Irina Palm" — released in June — is likely to amass.

"We are a small cinema with just 80 seats (and) over the year we average 60,000 admissions," Akcijonaite says. "We prefer European titles because we can apply for Media Program distribution funds."

The cinema entered the distribution biz nearly two years ago to address demands of its audience in a country where up to 80% of weekly programming at Lithuania's 40 or so cinemas is U.S. fare. Upcoming titles include Estonian film "The Class" and French Palme d'Or winner "The Class" (Entre les murs) — *Nick Holdsworth*

JAKUB DUSZYNSKI

Poland

Like many independent distributors in Eastern Europe, Jakub Duszynski, head of acquisitions at Warsaw's Gutek Film, works mostly with European indie and arthouse fare.

In a country where local romantic comedies and big American blockbusters are box office kings, Jakub's aim is to find strong, challenging and original films with a clear directorial imprint.

"Gutek Film mostly releases director-driven films. That's easy when you get a new Almodovar, Lynch, von Trier or Jarmusch, but when the competition is faster or risks more, you have to challenge yourself and your audience and pick up films you believe in, even though no one has heard of them in Poland," Duszynski says.



Although his ideal pick-up is "two or three bigger arthouse films with potential to attract between 100,000 and 200,000 admissions, plus four or five midrange arthouse titles good for up to 50,000 — such as this year's 'Control,' 'Once' and 'Caramel,'" there is nothing rigid in his approach to business.

Recent hits for Duszynski — who also has his own boutique distribution company that "releases, for sheer fun, many Asian gems on DVD" — include "Perfume" with 500,000 admissions and "Volver" at 265,000.

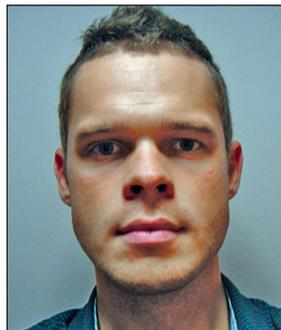
With Poland's own indie cinema on the move, Duszynski's fall slate has added three local arthouse films, including "4 Nights With Anna," from Jerzy Skolimowski. — *Nick Holdsworth*

OSKARS KILLO

Latvia

The key to working as a distributor in a small country is to know your market, says Oskars Killo, a distributor for Riga-based SIA Acme Film in Latvia.

"In Latvia the same principles work as everywhere else — majors have the biggest box office with family films, action and comedy — so we do niche and art films and also mainstream (genre): Horror films almost always work for us," Killo says. Working mainly with



foreign product acquired by Lithuania-based parent company UAB Acme, Killo concentrates mostly on smaller indie and festival films.

Good relations with French and other licensors and U.S. companies that include Lionsgate, Summit and Lakeshore give Acme access to American product such as "The Strangers" and "Nim's Island."

Although Acme mainly works with foreign films, Killo will release a locally made family comedy, "Mazie Laupitaji" (Little Robbers), next year.

With a small domestic industry, there are few opportunities for international distribution of local product, although that could change, he says: The national film center is working with Estonia and Lithuania via the Baltic Films platform and actively promoting pics.

"I see opportunities and growth in Latvian filmmaking — recently some local films had good response at many international festivals," he says. — *Nick Holdsworth*