

U30

FINAL REPORT

The third edition of the U30 program took place from Friday August 5th to Sunday August 7th, 2022.

U30 is Locarno Pro's industry event dedicated to a new generation of film professionals. Its goal, in a period of seismic changes for our industry - and our society - is to hear the voices of those called to shape them in the near future.

The participants were 10 industry professionals chosen among various profiles through a selection process, following three criteria: being aged under 30; being alumni of one of the Locarno Industry Academies around the world; having already proved their skills in various branches of the film industry, whether working as sales agents, distributors, producers, exhibitors, film festivals programmers, film curators etc.

The program acted as a think tank aimed at stimulating the exchange of views and promoting analysis of where the film industry is going, in all its aspects. For this reason, the participants were involved in a 3-day program that comprised panels, masterclasses, and five U30 sessions. Each session was moderated by a tutor, each one coming from a different branch of the industry, to tackle various topics and present a multi-faceted scenario. Five of the participants acted as notetakers for each session.

The following is a report of what's been discussed among the different activities, from the very hand of one of the U30 participants, Pedro Tinen.

SCHEDULE

Working language for the whole event: English without translation

DAY ZERO: THURSDAY AUGUST 4

23:00-02:00 Locarno Pro Opening Reception co-hosted by SWISS FILMS
BLU Restaurant & Lounge

DAY ONE: FRIDAY AUGUST 5

10:30-11:00 Introduction & Participant presentation
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Magnolia

11:00-12:30 Session 1: Film Festivals
Tutor: Carlo Chatrion (Artistic Director, Berlinale)
Notetaker: Clément Chautant (Festivals & Sales, Indie Sales)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Magnolia

12:30-14:30 U30 Lunch
Hotel Belvedere

15:00-16:30 Panel: Heritage Online
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda

17:00-18:00 Masterclass with Christine Vachon
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda

18:30 - 20:00 Locarno Pro Meet & Greet
Davide Campari Lounge

DAY TWO: SATURDAY AUGUST 6

10:00-11:00 Panel: Original Language Film Distribution in the US
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda

11:30-12:30 Panel: Film Financing Today
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda

12:30-14:30 U30 Lunch
Hotel Belvedere

15:00-16:00 Masterclass with Katriel Shory
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda

16:30-17:30 Session 2: Film Markets
Tutor: Marge Liiske (Head of Industry, Tallinn & Baltic Event)
Notetaker: Wambui Gathee (Screenings Manager, Docubox EADFF)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Mimosa

18:30 - 20:00 Locarno Pro Meet & Greet
Davide Campari Lounge

DAY THREE: SUNDAY AUGUST 7

- 10:30-11:30 Session 3: International Sales
Tutor: Marcin Łuczaj (Head of Acquisitions, New Europe Films Sales)
Notetaker: Maria Lanfranchi (Festival Manager, Intramovies)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Mimosa
- 11:30-12:30 Session 4: Film Production
Tutor: William Horberg (producer, Wonderful Films)
Notetaker: Francisco Zambrano (International Sales Coordinator, MK2 Films)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Mimosa
- 12:30-14:30 U30 Lunch
Hotel Belvedere
- 15:00-16:00 Masterclass with Lucius Barre
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Granda
- 16:30-17:30 Session 5: Film Distribution
Tutor: Mac Simonson (Distribution, A24)
Notetaker: Rachele Parietti (Exhibition and Programming, Modern Films)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Mimosa
- 17:30-18:00 Wrap-up & conclusions
Notetaker and author of the final report: Pedro Tinen (Independent Professional)
Hotel Belvedere, Sala Mimosa
- 18:00-20:00 Locarno Pro Meet & Greet
Davide Campari Lounge
- 23:00-03:30 Locarno Pro Closing Party
Blue - Via Respini 9, Locarno

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Locarno Pro's U30 Final Report

by Pedro Tinen

Presentation

During three days of activities, the ten Locarno Pro U30 participants delved into dynamic discussions about the film industry and its future. Coming from different regions of Europe, Africa, and Latin America, and from different professional backgrounds, from sales to festival programming, the selected participants were representative of a young, international, and diverse cohort.

Figuring among the various topics debated were the private sessions about film festivals (with Carlo Chatrian, Artistic Director, Berlinale); film markets (with Marge Liiske, Head of Industry, Tallinn & Baltic Events); international sales (with Marcin Łuczaj, Head of Acquisitions, New Europe Films Sales); film production (with William Horberg, Producer, Wonderful Films); and distribution (with Mac Simonson, Distributor, A24).

These debates were also enriched by Locarno Pro's networking activities, as well as by the masterclasses – which included conversations with Christine Vachon, Katriel Shory, and Lucius Barre – and by the panel discussions – which addressed the subjects of distributing original language movies in the United States, the circulation of heritage and specialty films in different mediums, and film financing.

Before the start of the program, participants were asked to present their own ideas to the question “What are the most critical aspects of the film industry that you feel must change in the near future”? This underlying theme of change and transformation was present throughout the activities and helped inform our objective of tackling the future of the film industry.

In this sense, the report's guiding image of Connecting the Dots is reflective of the need to pursue integrative solutions when envisioning the future(s) for cinema. From bridging generational divides, connecting the different sectors of the industry, to building new audiences for cinemas, films, and festivals, the constellations of challenges that are faced require multi-faceted approaches.

This report compiles a multitude of notes, ideas, conclusions, but most importantly, of questions raised in the course of the program. These findings reflect the collective and collaborative spirit of the discussions and are not representative of the opinions of specific individuals.

An Age of Exploration

The issue of the industry's old and new worlds – the old and new technologies, financing models, distribution strategies, and audiences, for instance – was a recurring theme throughout the discussions. However, the separation between past and future does not seem as clear-cut as the

language might imply when assessing the future of the sector. By itself, it is important to acknowledge the present as a transitional period for film culture and to approach change in a more descriptive than predictive way.

Yet, film history is traversed by a sequence of technological transformations – like the advent of sound, video, and digital – that compel changes to the economy and culture of cinema. So the matter of old and new could be more fittingly framed within a framework of ruptures and continuities that aren't so easily defined. Such networks of change, of the disruption and survival of models, raise the necessity of bridging the gap between the various sectors of the industry – from production to distribution – while promoting a reflection about the state and future of cinema as a business of significant cultural value.

A better question to “what is the future”? would then be “what is the future that we want”? and it is in this regard that crisis can be perceived as an opportunity to foster a more equitable, inclusive, less-competitive, and sustainable industry. Notwithstanding the fact that the sector may not afford to move towards a different direction, as that is where audiences are. Delving into the future is a matter of imagining a path forward.

Envisioning Film Festivals

Film festivals have always had and play an increasingly important role in film culture and markets, particularly concerning arthouse, independent, and specialty films. The idea that festivals can function as alternative distribution networks isn't necessarily new, but has been intensified by the transformations of the theatrical ecosystem. For audiences, festivals can offer an eventified filmgoing experience, a sense of being part of a community and a sentiment of discovery, but festival audiences can also be highly specific. They could be made up of industry insiders and film enthusiasts whose gaze and taste aren't always reflective of the larger public. Therefore, connecting the festivals and theatrical audiences is one of the many challenges faced by distributors after a festival premiere. Defining festivals and their role is nonetheless a difficult endeavor, as each event carries its identity, history, and programming outline. The question isn't so much about what a festival is, but what is its mission. On one hand, the market value of a film might change with the stamp of a festival, but on the other, not all selected films can find commercial success, as festivals provide a space for transmission and curation, unlike mainstream streamers. The matter of programming then becomes about examining the experience that is provided when selecting a film.

Likewise, festivals face their own set of pressures and challenges which are not exclusively determined by the pandemic. The issue of digitization remains open, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach regarding hybrid models and what works for one festival won't necessarily work for others. All the while, younger audiences, including festival audiences, seem more open and engaged in the virtual film communities.

As platforms for film culture and markets, fast-changing viewing habits also impact festivals. In some cases, there are types of films that were used to perform in ways that are no longer predictable. Smaller windows for theatrical and VOD distribution may play a role in this, but some cases show healthy coexistence of digital and cinema screenings. Ultimately, festivals are interested in providing the best and most appropriate conditions for screening their titles, and encouraging a less-competitive environment between them benefits the entire sector.

Film Markets and Film Forums

Film markets were significantly impacted by lockdowns and restrictions between 2020 and 2022 and markets face their own challenges for the future. From an underdeveloped infrastructure for global and emerging markets to provide a sustainable space for gathering and negotiation, the need to lobby funders and the public sector to establish paths of support for markets, to the lack of diversity for professionals in the industry, the film markets are also sensitive to the pressures that affect the whole of the industry.

The need to foster a more integrated program and the relation between festivals and markets are likewise in the interest of the industry. Besides being a space for negotiating films and rights, film markets provide a privileged space for networking and gatherings by hosting training programs, panels, masterclasses, co-production meetings, and many other activities. Therefore, the importance of markets isn't limited to the economic sustainability of film – as crucial as that is – but is also linked to its ability to provide a forum for professionals to debate the industry, its policies, and its future.

As such, by building networks, markets can help to make the festival and event attendance feel less fragmented, allowing for more interaction between participants; they can provide and stimulate more inclusion in order to foster a more diverse landscape for professionals and audiences; they can engage in infrastructural change with the goals of becoming more efficient spaces for distributors, exhibitors, sales agents, buyers, and programmers; they can be cognizant of attendance cost for professionals coming from the Global South; be active in the programming of activities and discussions that are relevant for younger generations and the sustainability of the sector.

Selling to and Reaching International Audiences

International sales have been observing major changes in their business models far earlier than the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Thus, strategies have shifted significantly as agents broaden their roles and venture into production, financing, and in some cases, distribution.

With the increase in production and the reduction of windows (TV and theatrical), sales agents are becoming more flexible and agnostic to gain more space to absorb risk. Combining different models of financing, co-production, and negotiating rights allows more freedom for companies. From

minimum guarantees to equity, and from classical co-production funds to private investors, this flexibility allows agents to be more involved from funding to assuring circulation and availability for audiences and to have more control over the value chain in a moment when rising costs and inflation create a time of uncertainty.

Festivals and sales are important partners for the premiere of a film, and film festivals can help build up the profile, coverage, and recognition of a title. These relationships also have much to gain by cultivating dialogue and cooperation.

The Crossroads of Film Production

Polarization in the film market between big budget productions and smaller independent projects puts considerable pressure on arthouse producers. Likewise, the rapidly rising production costs, which reflect inflation and Covid protocols, create a more challenging landscape for the financial viability of original independent titles.

The diminishing numbers in theatrical attendance, for markets across the globe, have also pushed producers to become more dependent on large platforms for funding their projects. Titles that started as arthouse feature film projects have found success when adapted to a limited series format. However, as much as this avenue provides a faster and less bureaucratic path from development to distribution, a question can also be raised about retaining rights and control over the project.

Demands for safer and more inclusive sets have been accelerated by a younger generation of workers and by the pandemic. As Christine Vachon stated in her masterclass, it is the responsibility of the producer to ensure the safety of people on sets, and that the notion of inclusion must be considered in all senses of the word.

Distribution Landscapes

Whether distributing films in theaters, platforms, home-video, or cultural institutions or approaching “fast-burn” or “long-tail” models, distribution strategies gain when individually designed for each film. One of the most important tasks of the distributor is to let the film speak for itself, to recognize its artistic and cultural resonance, and only then devise a campaign for media, territories, and target audiences.

A major challenge – at least to more broadly appealing titles – is to reach beyond the film enthusiast communities and access larger audiences. Successful releases are those that can travel along territories and compel different communities to decide to visit the cinema.

Raising awareness and mobilizing the public is also key, and that could be achieved through different strategies, like balancing traditional and social media campaigns, and by “platforming” the release – i.e. making the film travel in distinct cities in different weeks. Media coverage and reviews are also of great importance, especially for the long-tail model. The lifecycle of a film depends on a case-by-

case basis and can be enhanced by event screenings – such as live scores, open airs, and grassroots campaigns.

However, exploration of distribution strategies isn't limited only to new releases but also encompasses the initiatives to re-release, screen, and create access to heritage films. Funding for film archives and their mandates for preserving, restoring, and circulating film history is of crucial significance for the vitality of the industry. Cinematheques, distributors, and digital platforms develop their own restoration and digitization programs and provide access to historic titles to audiences. Cinemas may choose to program more heritage films to foster a community of cinephiles in its theaters, and home video can still provide unique curation and programming for niche consumers.

Towards a Sustainable Future

Overscreening, overproduction, overbuying, and overpaying were a few words that were shared throughout discussions. The question they ultimately raise is the sustainability of the industry, as recent data from the Focus 2022 Report shows that film production numbers in Europe have reached pre-pandemic levels, while cinema attendance remains at a slow recovery.

Yet, the path toward a sustainable future isn't clear-cut, but it will require a larger comprehension of the different modes of sustainability we're aiming for. While also acknowledging that interdisciplinary approaches are needed. Our awareness of these times' uncertainties is not limited to cinema itself. It is also a reflection of larger social concerns and can be framed in the conjuncture of climate emergence, economic insecurities, and geopolitical crises. Cinema is not unique in its confrontation with change.

Envisioning a sustainable future for the film industry is therefore also about imagining a sustainable future for societies. This means thinking about carbon emissions, funding for all different sectors, reframing policy and regulation, building the next generation of filmgoers, inclusion and diversity, and much more. Multiple and continuous dialogues are key for this. Between older and younger generations, policymakers and producers, and the various sectors are debated in this report. The conversations we had throughout the program show that there is still plenty to debate and work on, but show the commitment of people in continuing the conversation.

U30 TUTORS



CARLO CHATRIAN

BERLINALE

Artistic Director

Since 2020 Carlo Chatrian is the artistic director at the Berlin Film Festival. Prior to the Berlinale he served as artistic director at the Locarno Festival for six years. He has been a programmer for Alba Film Festival, Florence Festival dei Popoli and Visions du Réel. As a journalist, author and programmer, he collaborated for several magazines and published essays and monographs on filmmakers such as Nanni Moretti, Errol Morris, Frederick Wiseman. He served as Juror in Buenos Aires (Bafici), Jeonju, Morelia, Sarajevo, Paris (Cinema du Reel), Sundance, Tokyo.



MARGE LIISKE

TALLINN & BALTIC EVENT

Head of Industry

Marge Liiske has held various positions in film business since 1990, such as programmer of a film festival, coordinator in Europa Cinemas network, production assistant, project manager at the Estonian Public Broadcaster, or Head of MEDIA Desk Estonia. After working as Managing Director of the Estonian Film Foundation (main film financing body in Estonia), she became the CEO of Baltic Event, the largest co-production market in the North-Eastern Europe in 2013, and a few years later the Head of Industry @ Tallinn & Baltic Event, one of the fastest growing industry platforms in the winter season, taking place annually during the Black Nights Film Festival. Marge is an EAVE graduate, and also member of the Board of the Estonian Film Institute.



MARCIN LUCZAJ

NEW EUROPE FILMS SALES

Head of Acquisitions

Marcin works for Warsaw-based sales and production company New Europe Film Sales, overseeing the company's acquisitions & development. Marcin was named Screen International's Future Leader in Cannes 2020. The company slate includes such films like LAMB (A24 release US), CORPUS CHRISTI (Oscar nominee), RAMS (Cannes winner), THE DISCIPLE (Venice winner, Netflix original), SUMMER 1993 (Berlinale's Crystal Bear) and SWEAT (Cannes) to name a few. He graduated in Film & Media Studies from the University of Lodz and in Cultural Studies from the University of Warsaw. Marcin also worked as a consultant for a financing company Anton.Corp and part of a selection committee for IFFR's Cinemart and Trieste's When East Meets West co-production forum. He is an alumni of EAVE & TFL's ScriptLab and used to be a programmer for film festivals such as ZUBROFFKA and Warsaw Film Festival.



WILLIAM HORBERG

WONDERFUL FILMS

Producer

William Horberg is the founder of Wonderful Films. He recently produced *Flag Day* (Sean Penn, 2021), *The Burnt Orange Heresy* (Giuseppe Capotondi, 2019), and the most-watched scripted limited series in Netflix history, *The Queen's Gambit* (Scott Frank, 2020), winning the Emmy Award as well as the Golden Globe. As President of Production at Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, he executive produced *Lars and the Real Girl* (Craig Gillespie, 2007) and *Synecdoche, New York* (Charlie Kaufman, 2008). He was also executive producer on Focus Features' *Milk* (Gus Van Sant, 2008) and produced *The Kite Runner* (Marc Forster, 2007) for Dreamworks and Paramount Vantage. Prior to forming Wonderful, he partnered with Academy Award-winning filmmakers Sydney Pollack and Anthony Minghella in their film and television production company, Mirage Enterprises, producing among others, *Cold Mountain* (Anthony Minghella, 2003), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999), and *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998). Horberg was formerly a Senior Vice President of Production at Paramount Pictures, and is the Chairman Emeritus of the Producers Guild of America, East.



MAC SIMONSON

A24

Distribution

Mac Simonson has worked at A24 since 2016 on releases including Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* and *Showing Up*; Paul Schrader's *First Reformed*; Joanna Hogg's *The Souvenir Part II*, and *The Eternal Daughter*; Claire Denis' *High Life* and *The Stars at Noon*; and Valdimar Jóhannsson's *Lamb*. He lives and works in New York.

U30 PARTICIPANTS



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HAKKA
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Assistant

Tunisia



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Festivals & Sales

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SUISSE

