



STEPIN 2022:

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER IN A POST-PANDEMIC PUZZLE

On Thursday August 4th, an international group of 50 prominent executives chosen among various profiles for their experience in different branches of the film industry, assembled for the Locarno Festival' tenth edition of StepIn.

The event took place from 11.00 AM to 6 PM and was divided in 3 parts.

The following is a report of what's been discussed.



THE TOPIC

*"We shouldn't enshrine the past and try to preserve, it's not going to hold.
The future will present itself, whether we want it or not."
Guillermo Del Toro (Cannes Film Festival, 2022)*

Now that the worst moments of the global pandemic seem behind us, and after a Cannes Film Festival in full gear, the film industry is questioning its future.

Between optimists and catastrophists, one thing seems certain: it's unlikely things will return to the pre-pandemic "normal" for a number of reasons, starting with the fact that what happened in this couple of years was a big wake-up call for all of us, and allowed us to put in discussion that so-called "normality". Last year we deliberately decided to take a year off from business talks to focus on mental health and try to envision a healthier workplace for the film industry. The road ahead is long, which is why, even though this year we will tackle many business topics and economic issues that are vital to our industry, one of the round-tables will continue to focus on social impact and gender equality. It's our way of saying that we need to keep the spotlight on these issues until things really change. Besides, social change can benefit our industry also from an economic point of view: audiences around the world are demanding a better, more inclusive and nuanced representation of our world, and a transparency in how things are handled. The so-called niches have a reason to exist and perhaps they are not such a minority as the establishment wants us to think.

But a thorough reality check must take into account an honest look at the main sectors of our industry. For this reason, the other 3 round-tables will touch on the theatrical eco-system, the new opportunities in film production and financing, and, last but not least, the changes in the world of film festivals and film markets.

The theatrical eco-system in particular has been the one most affected by the pandemic and the rise of global streaming platforms. We cannot deny the struggle suffered by exhibitors, distributors and sales agents in this couple of years, just as we cannot imagine a film industry without its theatrical components. To be fair, the crisis dates back long before Covid hit. Already in 2010, for example, after two decades of booming independent cinema worldwide, the collapse of the so-called specialty divisions in the US, the branches of the Hollywood Studios dedicated to independent cinema, was one of the most telling symbols that something was changing. And in the years that followed, the ability to finance an entire film through worldwide pre-sales became rarer and rarer. Over the past five years, many prominent filmmakers have taken refuge in streaming platforms, which have given some of them huge budgets and carte blanche – a habit which is already changing. A number of them have switched to TV series. The most bankable authors might still get supported by Major Studios, but we are talking about an infinitesimal percentage. For the rest, putting together their next film in the current landscape is a challenge. And we are talking about awarding-winning, recognizable names. We can imagine how complicated it is for newcomers. In a world where it's becoming increasingly difficult to finance an independent film, and where the theatrical eco-system is struggling, cinema as an art form is at risk. We all believe in the importance and power of the theatrical experience, but what can be done to recreate a healthier eco-system between sales agents, distributors and exhibitors? And how can we make sure arthouse cinema remains relevant also to the younger generation, having to compete with other types of entertainment and easier distractions (just take a look at the number of hours spent by the new generations playing video games or watching videos on YouTube, Tik Tok and other social networks)?

As for producers, there's no denying that filmed content production is booming, thanks to the opportunities offered by streamers and broadcasters, and we can certainly speak of a production renaissance, as there has never been so much content being greenlit and filmed, but some analysts are wondering if the tipping point is near, and see clouds gathering on the horizon, for example after Netflix released its financial results for the first quarter of 2022 or after the recent news that HBO Max will halt its original content production in Northern and Central Europe after the merger with Discovery. Is there

too much content being produced? (To be fair, and to put it into the perspective, also in the mid-'80s film distribution executives used to complain that there were too many movies, back then driven by the thriving home entertainment market, but TV wise, broadcasters used to commission pilots before greenlighting entire seasons). And what about the fact that rising costs in production, coupled with the difficulty of finding available talent, writers and crews, are making it harder for the independent sector to compete with larger budget international productions - as outlined, for example, by a recent, alarming report on the status of the UK independent film sector commissioned by the British Film Institute? And above all, will platforms and broadcasters be interested in true independent and auteur cinema?

Last but not least, we want to take a look at the shifting world of film festivals and markets, the key places where all the different sectors of the industry get together, interact and make business. Film festivals and markets also took a hit during the pandemic and the so-called digital and hybrid era raised serious questions about their validity and sustainability. And yet, once again, a particularly buoyant Cannes Film Festival this May has restored faith and confidence in the importance of physical gatherings.

We are living interesting times, full of contradictions that point in different, sometimes opposite directions. We do not pretend to have answers but by gathering key executives from all the different sectors of the industry for a whole day to look each other in the eyes and address these issues, we hope we can start drawing a map which will direct us towards the future.

Marcello Paolillo
StepIn Project Manager

OUT-OF-THE BOX INTRODUCTION

From 11:00 AM to 11:45 AM

*Open to all Press, Professional and Industry accredited on site
and available in Locarno Pro Online from the following day*

Considering the topics to be discussed this year, we decided to start with an out-of-the-box and thought-provoking introduction, held by someone who is used to study and analyse consumers' trends, perceptions and behaviours inside and outside of the film industry. A way to put our industry in perspective, and reconsider assumptions that we take too often for granted.

"The global pandemic brought on significant changes, accelerating already existing trends, reorganizing some priorities, and pushing social tensions to the forefront of global conversation. But where exactly do we stand on now? And, perhaps even more relevant, where do we go from here? Through an overview of a wide array of cultural, economic, political, commercial, and marketing trends - pieces of a post-pandemic puzzle - a framework that goes beyond polarization is presented. It is an invitation to build on plurality and the common good through synthesis and its articulation with memory and creativity – a proposal that can contribute to the debate necessary to ensure that more people can enjoy more and better films." (Guido Lara)

Lara's wide-ranging presentation looked at global consumer trends and how they can apply to the film and TV industry.

Here are a few key considerations he made, that provided food for thought:

- Concentration of wealth: since 1995 the top 1% have capture nearly 20 times more of global wealth than the bottom 50% of humanity.
- Worldwide the average person spends 3.25 hours, looking at a mobile screen. In Europe that number goes down to 2.51 hours a day.
- Supply exceeds demand.
- The box office share of films based on original scripts, rather than based on comic books, is shrinking.
- Star talents that command eyeballs now live in different galaxies. No longer the big screen, but rather the streaming or social media or sports arena like Kim Kardashian, Kabane Lame, and Ronaldo.
- In Modern Society we are losing the importance of rituals. Rites generate a community without communication, while what predominates today is communication without community.
- The opportunities of long tail economics: so far, the focus has been on dozens of markets of millions, but we should start taking into consideration than millions of markets of dozens. As MUBI said: "Our film library is brimming with visionary films that wouldn't fill a single cinema in Belgium for a week – not even a day. But if you searched the world (all of it), you might just find an audience of a thousand for these rare cinematic treats. And we don't think a thousand people should be ignored just because they happen to live in different time zones or far away from Belgian cinemas."

- Even pre-pandemic streaming had overtaken theaters: already in 2018 Netflix and Amazon Prime Video globally generated \$42.6 billion USD. The global movie box office was \$41.1 billion. People were already spending more on these streaming platforms than on movie tickets.

Speaker:



GUIDO LARA
Founder & CEO
LEXIA Insights & Solutions

PhD. Guido Lara is founder and CEO of LEXIA Insights & Solutions.

He has directed hundreds of projects, including presidential campaigns, media content analysis, brand positioning applying Human Insights to the generation of Film & TV projects, marketing, and communication.

His agency LEXIA studies the perceptions and behaviours of consumers, the public and audiences. They have collaborated with Televisa, Altavista Films Netflix, Discovery, Canal Once, Warner, Disney, among others.

They have worked with more than 20 films seeking to enrich the creative process of directors and producers with feedback from audiences, and when the film is finished, they contribute to find its best positioning and promotional angle.

He was the leader responsible for the creation of the Mexico brand.

He is Doctor Summa cum laude, from the Complutense University of Madrid. He graduated in Communication from the Universidad Iberoamericana. He is member of the board of directors of the Market Research Institute International.

PART I - OPENING KEYNOTE

From 11:45 AM to 12:45 PM

*Open to all Press, Professional and Industry accredited on site
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Moderated by Variety correspondent Nick Vivarelli, the opening keynote introduced the main topics of StepIn 2022 through the points of view and experiences of three remarkable panellists.

Here a summary of the opening keynote by Nick Vivarelli:

Neon head of distribution Elissa Federoff, who has been instrumental to Neon grossing more than \$180 million over the past five years at the U.S. box office with premium art films such as Bong Joon Ho's multiple Oscar winner "Parasite," gave an overview of the state of specialty theatrical distribution in the U.S. and underlined the enduring value of theatrical in a film's life cycle despite the streaming boom. Basically, Federoff's take is that, going forward, people might watch movies in different ways, but those who like watching films in cinemas will continue to do so.

Sejin Croninger, who leads the worldwide acquisitions group at Paramount, including its Paramount Players label and also its Paramount+ streamer, pointed out that historically the U.S. studios have been "kind of limited in terms of the bar or the needle that you want to thread."

"But these days for a studio and streamers – and anyone in the content and distribution business – the rate of change is so much more rapid," Croninger noted. She also pointed out that studios and streamers are increasingly linked, Paramount being a case in point, and that this presents producers who engage with them with a wider range of distribution channels for their product.

It later emerged in the New Opportunities for Film Financing and Production round table that Croninger attended that at the Hollywood studio there is now an acquisitions model in place that is becoming increasingly flexible and enabling the studio sector to participate in films, including non-U.S. indie films, that might not be financially viable for them to produce outright, but still have a place within their production pipelines.

In terms of what genres the U.S. studios consider financially viable, aside from films based on comic books, Croninger said there was not clear trend to use as reference.

Danielle Turkov Wilson, founder and CEO of Think-Film Impact Production, a Brussels-based outfit that works on the cusp between film production and social change, said one trend that is becoming clear in the "post-pandemic" world, is that "Millennials and Gen Z have a spending power of over \$360 billion in disposable income and make up the largest audience for VOD content."

They also have a desire for "authenticity and responsible filmmaking," noted the chief of Think-Film, which shepherded and mounted campaigns for award-winning titles such as "The Cave" by Feras Fayyad and Todd Haynes' "Dark Waters."

Wilson also pointed out the "impact value in diversity," citing the fact that, by her count, "eight of the top ten theatrically released films in 2021 featured casts that were greater than 30% minority."

Keynote Speakers:



SEJIN CRONINGER
Executive Vice President of Worldwide Acquisitions
PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Sejin Croninger is a veteran Acquisitions and Production Executive currently serving as the EVP of Worldwide Acquisitions at Paramount Pictures. In this role Ms. Croninger oversees the Global Content Acquisitions business where she is responsible for setting content strategy and acquiring films for domestic and international theatrical release and distribution across multiple platforms including streaming and digital, as well as remake rights for the studio. Since joining the Studio in 2020 she has acquired titles such as “Orphan: First Kill”, “80 For Brady”, “Assassin Club”, “Little Dixie”, “The Infernal Machine” and “Sheroes” among many others. Prior to joining Paramount, she was SVP of the Content Group- North America for Universal Pictures. There she worked with senior leadership to build an indie content studio overseeing content strategy, marketing, PR and distribution. Prior to Universal Pictures, she was the SVP of Worldwide Acquisitions for Entertainment One where she worked on securing hundreds of titles for the multi-territory company. Ms. Croninger started her entertainment career in acquisitions and distribution at New Line Cinema. She attended UCLA in the Master’s Program for Film, Critical Studies and holds a BS degree in Political Science from UCI. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, daughter and Portuguese Water Dog.



ELISSA FEDEROFF
President of Theatrical Distribution
NEON

Elissa Federoff is the President of Theatrical Distribution for NEON and has been with the company since its inception in January 2017. Federoff oversees the company's release strategy across all its titles, positioning NEON as a major theatrical player with both the commercial chains and art circuits. She previously held stints at The Orchard, boutique label RADiUS, Oscilloscope Laboratories and Lionsgate. In just five years, Neon has garnered 18 Academy Award nominations, 5 wins, including Best Picture, and has grossed over \$180M at the box office. The company is perhaps best known for its dark comedy *Parasite* from filmmaker Bong Joon Ho, which recently made history as the first non-English-language film to claim Best Picture, while winning out in three additional categories. Most recently, the company acquired North American rights to Ruben Östlund's buzzy satire, *Triangle of Sadness*, following its world premiere in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. The film went on to win the Palme d'Or making it the third Palme d'Or winner in a row that NEON will release. The company has also acquired Kore-eda Hirokazu's *Broker* and Mark Jenkin's horror *Enys Men*. This Fall Neon will release Brett Morgen's *Moonage Daydream*, chronicling the career of David Bowie.



DANIELLE TURKOV WILSON
Founder & CEO
THINK-FILM IMPACT PRODUCTION

Danielle is the Founder & CEO of Think-Film Impact Production, an impact media organisation operating at the cutting-edge intersection of film and social change. Danielle and the Think-Film team work at the highest levels of policy and governance to use film as an inspiration and driver to make meaningful, measurable change that lasts for communities.

She forged the business from nothing, and in just over five years has brought in contracts with Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning films and achieved hugely influential real-world change. Impact credits include *The Territory* (NatGeo 2022), *Navalny* (CNN Films 2022), *The Scars of Ali Boulala* (Sisyfos Film 2021), *The Cave* (NatGeo 2019), *Dark Waters* (Participant Media 2019), *iHUMAN* (UpNorth 2019).

Keynote Moderator:

NICK VIVARELLI

Variety | Italy and Middle East correspondent

Born in Florence to an American mother and an Italian father, Nick Vivarelli has spent plenty of time in both countries. After studying comparative literature at New York University, he dabbled as a literary translator and art gallery organizer before venturing into journalism and film. Since then, he has worked for several media outlets, including The Associated Press and Newsweek. A regular on the international festival circuit, he is currently Italy and Middle East correspondent for Variety. He is also the author of "Slalom," a Tuscany-set thriller published by Manni Editori in Italy and co-director of the documentary "Life As a B-Movie: Piero Vivarelli" that went to Venice and won Italy's Nastro D'Argento 2020 for best doc on cinema.

PART II - ROUND-TABLES SESSION

From 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM

StepIn Participants Only

After the opening keynote, the participants were divided in 4 different round-tables, each one with a Moderator and a Notetaker, to discuss specific issues related to the main topic of the event.

TABLE 1: The Theatrical Eco-System

Moderator: Elissa Federoff (Neon)
Notetaker: Irene Musumeci (MUBI)

TABLE 2: New Opportunities for Film Financing and Film Production

Moderator: Susan Newman-Baudais (Eurimages)
Notetaker: Carlo Dusi (Endor Productions)

TABLE 3: Film Festivals and Film Markets in the Hybrid Era

Moderator: Vanja Kaludjercic (International Film Festival Rotterdam)
Notetaker: Marge Liiske (Tallinn & Baltic Event)

TABLE 4: Gender Equality & Social Impact in the Film Industry

Moderator: Danielle Turkov Wilson (Think-Film Impact Production)
Notetaker: Amy Shepherd (Think-Film Impact Production)

**TABLE 1:
The Theatrical Eco-System**

Moderator	Notetaker		
Elissa Federoff NEON President of Theatrical Distribution USA	Irene Musumeci MUBI Director of Marketing (Europe) UK	Dan Berger Oscilloscope President USA	Mike Chang Andrews Film Managing Director Taiwan
Andrea Ciria Fil Rouge Media General Manager Italy	Fatima Djoumer Europa Cinema Head of International Relations France	Daniel Goroshko A-one Films CEO & Head of Acquisitions Russia	Andrew Jiyong Kim AK Entertainment President South Korea
Miranda King Bleeker Street Director of Acquisitions and Co-Productions USA	Victor Paz DUPLEX Cinema (Ferrol) Film Critic and Programmer Spain	Katarzyna Pryc Rialto (Katowice) Manager Poland	Mac Simonson A24 Distribution USA

**TABLE 2:
New Opportunities for Film Financing and Film Production**

Moderator	Notetaker		
<p>Susan Newman Baudais</p> <p>Eurimages</p> <p>Executive Director</p> <p>France</p>	<p>Carlo Dusi</p> <p>Endor Productions</p> <p>Managing Director</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Farhana Buhla</p> <p>Film 4</p> <p>Senior Commissioning Executive</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Adi Cohen</p> <p>The APX Group</p> <p>Chairman</p> <p>USA</p>
<p>Sejin Croninger</p> <p>Paramount Pictures</p> <p>Executive Vice President of Worldwide Acquisitions</p> <p>USA</p>	<p>Laura Davis</p> <p>FilmNation Entertainment</p> <p>Director of Acquisitions</p> <p>USA</p>	<p>Katie Ellen</p> <p>BFI</p> <p>Senior Manager, International Distribution and Commercial Strategy</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Patrick Fischer</p> <p>Creativity Capital</p> <p>Managing Partner</p> <p>UK</p>
<p>Alexandra Lebrat</p> <p>European Producers Club</p> <p>Managing Partner</p> <p>France</p>	<p>Corinna Marschall</p> <p>Mediadesk Suisse</p> <p>Managing Director</p> <p>Switzerland</p>	<p>Wolf Osthaus</p> <p>Netflix</p> <p>Director Public Policy DACH</p> <p>Germany</p>	<p>Giovanni Pompili</p> <p>Kino Produzioni</p> <p>CEO & Producer</p> <p>Italy</p>
<p>Malte Probst</p> <p>BLUE</p> <p>Chief Production Officer - Fiction</p> <p>Switzerland</p>	<p>Christine Vachon</p> <p>Killer Films</p> <p>Producer</p> <p>USA</p>		

**TABLE 3:
Film Festivals and Film Markets in the Hybrid Era**

Moderator	Notetaker		
<p align="center">Vanja Kaludjercic</p> <p align="center">International Film Festival Rotterdam</p> <p align="center">Festival Director</p> <p align="center">Netherlands</p>	<p align="center">Marge Liiske</p> <p align="center">Tallinn & Baltic Event</p> <p align="center">Head of Industry</p> <p align="center">Estonia</p>	<p align="center">Maud Amson</p> <p align="center">Marché du Film - Cannes</p> <p align="center">Sales & Operations Director</p> <p align="center">France</p>	<p align="center">Simone Baumann</p> <p align="center">German Films</p> <p align="center">Managing Director</p> <p align="center">Germany</p>
<p align="center">Margaux Fournier</p> <p align="center">Cineverse</p> <p align="center">Business Development Representative</p> <p align="center">France</p>	<p align="center">Wendy Lidell</p> <p align="center">Kino Lorber</p> <p align="center">Senior VP - Theatrical Distribution and Acquisition</p> <p align="center">USA</p>	<p align="center">Demetri Makoulis</p> <p align="center">Film Movement</p> <p align="center">VP of Sales</p> <p align="center">USA</p>	<p align="center">HUH Moonyung</p> <p align="center">Busan International Film Festival</p> <p align="center">Festival Director</p> <p align="center">South Korea</p>
<p align="center">John Nein</p> <p align="center">Sundance Film Festival</p> <p align="center">Senior Programmer</p> <p align="center">USA</p>	<p align="center">Thorsten Ritter</p> <p align="center">Beta Cinema</p> <p align="center">EVP - Acquisitions, Sales and Marketing</p> <p align="center">Germany</p>	<p align="center">Nicola Ruffo</p> <p align="center">Swiss Films</p> <p align="center">Managing Director</p> <p align="center">Switzerland</p>	<p align="center">Jeremy Zelnik</p> <p align="center">Les Arcs Film Festival</p> <p align="center">Head of Industry</p> <p align="center">France</p>

**TABLE 4:
Gender Equality & Social Impact in the Film Industry**

Moderator	Notetaker		
<p>Danielle Turkov Wilson</p> <p>Think-Film Impact Production</p> <p>Founder & CEO</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Amy Shepherd</p> <p>Think-Film Impact Production</p> <p>COO</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Yolonda Brinkley</p> <p>Diversity in Cannes</p> <p>Creator</p> <p>USA</p>	<p>Matthias Bürcher</p> <p>Federal Office of Culture</p> <p>Head of Specialist Unit Distribution and Diversity</p> <p>Switzerland</p>
<p>Marta Fernandes</p> <p>Cinema Ideal (Lisbon) / Midas II Cinemas</p> <p>Head of distribution / Programmer</p> <p>Portugal</p>	<p>Anadil Hossain</p> <p>UNHCR</p> <p>Principal Communications Advisor to the High Commissioner</p> <p>UK / Switzerland</p>	<p>Melanie Hoyes</p> <p>BFI</p> <p>Head of Inclusion</p> <p>UK</p>	<p>Jodi Johnson</p> <p>Film Lincoln Center</p> <p>Senior Manager – Strategic Initiatives</p> <p>USA</p>
<p>Jean-François Lamarche</p> <p>Cinéma du Parc (Montréal)</p> <p>Directeur Général Adjoint</p> <p>Canada</p>	<p>Dennis Ruh</p> <p>European Film Market (EFM)</p> <p>Director</p> <p>Germany</p>	<p>Rafael Sampaio</p> <p>BrLab / Klaxon Cultura Audiovisual</p> <p>CEO / Producer</p> <p>Brazil</p>	<p>Kelly Teh</p> <p>Spotify</p> <p>Global Lead, Comms Digital Studio</p> <p>UK</p>

PART III – WRAP-UP SESSION

From 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM

*Open to all Press, Professional and Industry accredited on site
and available in Locarno Pro Online from the following day*

During this conclusive session, moderated by Variety correspondent Nick Vivarelli, all participants gathered together once again, as the four notetakers from the previous session presented a brief summary of what's been discussed during the round-tables, and offered their conclusions.

Here's a summary by Nick Vivarelli:

At the session on **The Theatrical Eco-System**, moderated by Neon's president of theatrical distribution Elissa Federoff, it was pointed out that "many theaters in the U.S. are just expecting people to come back and not doing enough to bring them back," the session's notetaker, MUBI director of marketing Irene Musumeci, said, presenting their conclusions. And the theatrical situation in Europe is similar. "In France, cinema has replaced the church but even there the market share is now minus 20%; in Italy it's minus 60%. It's a catastrophe! Basically, the core audience in Europe, which is aged over 55, has not come back," Musumeci said one participant pointed out.

Similarly to the U.S., in Europe blockbusters have also recovered very well at the box office; but the arthouse sector remains very difficult. Audience trends are changing and it "definitely feels that OTT is a threat," she said.

Federoff during the session, and also during her keynote prior to the round table, struck an upbeat note saying that "there have been enormous changes, but they are cyclical. Everything eventually will come around again." Basically, Federoff's take is that, going forward, people might watch movies in different ways, but those who like watching films in cinemas will continue to do so. That said, it's inevitable that the theatrical footprint will be much smaller in future. "In essence we shared that we think the theatrical space will change and possibly shrink a bit, but it won't die!" Musumeci concluded.

At the session on **New Opportunities for Film Financing and Production** a key takeaway that emerged is that rules of engagement between U.S. studios and streamers and European producers are starting to change. "The old model that the global streamers used to apply of 'all or nothing' and wanting to own everything forever has really now developed into a much more flexible approach," said Carlo Dusi, head of London-based Endor Productions, who was the session's notetaker.

They are now open "to look at ways in which to acquire or co-commission against multiple territories, taking licenses instead of ownership in perpetuity [and] sharing rights and revenues in more flexible ways," he added. Which of course does not mean there isn't plenty of room for improvement.

"We talked a lot with our U.S. studio representative [veteran acquisitions and production exec Sejin Croninger, who is executive VP of worldwide acquisitions at Paramount Pictures and was also among the event's keynote speakers] about the fact that there is an acquisitions model that is becoming increasingly flexible and enabling the studio sector to participate in films that might to be financially viable for them to produce, but still have a place within their production pipelines, particularly as those pipelines are developing across theatrical, television platforms, and streaming," Dusi went on to add.

Wolf Osthaus, who is Netflix's director of public policy for Germany, Austria and Switzerland, was also among this closed door session's participants.

"That said, as producers, we do benefit from having a wide array of choices as there are certain cases in which taking your content to a one-stop shop can allow you to finance something really quickly, rather than undergoing the pain and the costs of a multiparty transaction," Dusi also noted.

Dusi also pointed out that "all participants in the global content ecosystem have confirmed how essential the independent production sector is to the success of their business, and acknowledged that the ability to create and own IP is an essential element in the creation of a sustainable independent industry." Furthermore, "all parties are clearly committed to supporting the independent community and have committed to the essential values of creativity, flexibility and adaptability in their business

dealings as ways to ensure that independent content – and therefore the global content business – continue to thrive,” he said.

At the **Film Festivals and Film Markets in the Hybrid Era session** “the overall feeling was that hybrid is the future,” reported notetaker Marge Liiske, managing director of the Tallinn and Baltic event which is the industry side of the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival.

“But it’s not going to work the same way for every festival because every festival and market are different,” she added.

Liiske pointed to one very alarming piece of data, according to which “roughly 80% of films screened at a festival do not reach theatrical distribution. Therefore, many physical festivals are the only way the filmmakers can meet their live audiences,” Liiske said.

So, even after the pandemic, virtual or hybrid screenings being set up by festival brands “are cultivating new audiences,” she said, which is a definite positive.

Another interesting observation that emerged is that festival audiences are ageing. “There are signs that more than half of festival goers are over 60 years of age,” Liiske said. “Festivals and markets have to work with younger people by bringing more young people onto their teams. Only the young generation can understand how to reach and attract the TikTok generation.”

The Gender Equality & Social Impact Roundtable moderated by Think-Film Impact Production chief Danielle Turkov Wilson, who was also a keynote speaker, underlined that not only is there an internal skill gap that needs to be filled, there is also an external audience demand on the part of millennials and Gen Z who have a spending power of over \$360 billion, by her count.

Think-Film’s Amy Shepherd, who was this session’s notetaker, pointed out that “Data is inherently biased in the way that it is collected and presented. Even some of the reports that exist around gender equality or what audiences want are missing a vital piece of the puzzle.”

Furthermore, “there is also a gap in that we need straightforward implementation of legal provisions that already exist,” she added.

This group also came up with the drastic and controversial proposal that one way to fill this gap, in its various forms, are quotas, which could be a viable way “to redress an imbalance that does exist,” she said. These quotas could “range from behind the camera personnel, to quotas for film festival inclusion,” Shepherd specified. “We all want film festivals to be showcasing the best of the artistic quality; but if there is such a small amount of films submitted to festivals that are directed by women – for example – then there is always going to be an imbalance,” she noted.

“So there needs to be a quotient at festivals to have a certain number of productions from female directors, so that they [films directed by women] can get off the ground in the first place,” Shepherd added, cautioning that “this is something that requires a much, much deeper conversation.”

Wrap-up Speakers:

IRENE MUSUMECI

MUBI | Director of Marketing

CARLO DUSI

Endor Productions | Managing Director

MARGE LIISKE

Tallinn & Baltic Event | Head of Industry

AMY SHEPHERD

Think-Film Impact Production | COO

Wrap-up Moderator:

NICK VIVARELLI

Variety | Italy and Middle East correspondent

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