



ECFA-Diskussions about Screening Fees

Discussion between Producers, Sales Agents, National Film Institutes and the Festivals. / Children's Film Festivals are especially concerned.

Screening Fees to Pay for Children's Film Festivals

The discussion came up again when ECFA started to prepare the conference of children's film festival in Poznan last summer. Many festivals have to pay more and more screening fees for certain films. Also at ECFA's general assembly some weeks ago several participants suggested that ECFA should lead this discussion, which already has been started many years ago. When we look at the subject from different points of view it is hard to come to a valid conclusion. Therefore ECFA invites everybody who is involved, producers, sales agents, national film institutes and festival organizers, to contribute to our discussion.

Probably the first were producers and sales agents from France at least ten years ago whose arthouse films were invited to many festivals. They started to ask for screening fees from some of the festivals who wanted to present their films. At the same time more and more festivals were founded, mostly between 1980 and 1995. So the demand for film copies for festivals definitely increased significantly during these years.

Of course only the smaller festivals are asked to pay screening fees. No producer or sales agent would ask the international A-festivals like Berlin, Cannes or Venice for screening fees. It is mostly the smaller events which have to pay, those which guide the attention to these special films which are not so well present at the market, like ... for example ... high quality films for children and young people.

Most children's film festivals are so-called B- or C-festivals and often they are the only ones which screen high quality films for children. Compared to the prestigious festivals their budget often is small and they have to calculate carefully if they can afford to invite some of the directors whose films they have in their programmes.

But what counts in the end is the promotion value that festivals bring to the film. There is an audience to conquer, there are awards to win, directors to talk to, journalists who write about the films and maybe there are even buyers for their film. Producers or sales agents have to compare this promotion value of a festival to the costs they have (organisation, PR-material, filmcopy, transports etc.). So some festivals easily fulfill the producers' or sales agents' expectations, who are glad that their films were selected. Other festivals fulfill these commercial expectations only sometimes or only for some films or maybe not at all. Exactly these festivals have to pay these screening fees more often. But it also happens that screening fees are asked in principal without regard to the festival (except the very big ones, of course).

From the producer's or sales agent's point of view: Can it be such a problem for a festival to pay a fee of 100 or 150 Euros per screening when they use a subtitled festival copy which costs a few thousand Euros? We all know how a copy is used after ten festivals! But meanwhile also different amounts are in discussion, up to 1.000 Euros per festival and not only asked from arthouse distributors, but from national film institutes as well. Do they see festivals as a new way to distribute films?

Here we can only give a short summary of these different opinions with the aim to help understand each other's situation and to find the best possible solution to promote high quality films for children.

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