



Ciné ■ Sud Promotion

Scenario
Films Ltd.

BABYLON

A European Film Development Initiative

Inaugural Launch
Press Conference and Round Table Discussion

Locarno Film Festival
14.30 Sunday 6th August 2006
Palazzo Morettini



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BABYLON
A European Film Development Forum
www.babylon-film.eu
(under construction)

INTRODUCTION

Film makers from Europe's minority communities are making a growing impact on our varied European screen cultures, telling stories that reflect their sometimes fractured identity and their often divided sense of belonging.

These stories vary from country to country and from one community to another, but their origins lie in similar experiences of being uprooted and resettled, of generational divisions and difficult rites of passage, of aspirations and alienations that tell us more about our wider societies through the oblique gaze of the newcomer, without whom our complex Europe is now inconceivable.

The experience of reaching Babylon, a metropolis of competing languages, interests and traditions, is repeated across Europe in different forms and between different cultures depending largely on our colonial histories, yet each European nation tends to treat its minorities proprietorially as "our own", depriving them firstly of access to Europe and secondly of the chance to speak to each other.

At a national or a European level, the current of interest runs consistently to the *outside* of the European Union, exporting large sums of development finance into neighbouring regions of the Mediterranean, the Balkans or Eastern Europe, while overlooking the fact that the European Union carries an important cultural debt to these regions within its own identity and a vital talent base concealed *inside* its borders.

Whether or not this is an unconscious control mechanism, it is time the pattern were challenged. Why should the European cultural exchange be dominated and controlled by the *Leitkultur* rather than shared with and by our various subcultures?

It is precisely this paternalistic control that BABYLON is designed to redress.

The history of our continent suggests that the majority fares best when minority interests are most recognized. Conversely, the denial of equal rights of self-expression deprives us all. Europe would be a richer and happier place had it not lost the magnificent Jewish culture that was once at its heart.

The emergence of such film makers as Fatih Akin in Germany, Karim Dridi in France and Gurinder Chadha in the UK heralds the arrival of our new minorities in the mainstream, but individual success does not imply equality of access, nor does it guarantee that other voices and alternative readings will get a hearing.

Naturally there are many film makers who will identify entirely with their European home and dispute that they owe any debt to another culture. Or who insist, correctly, that their cultural paternity is inherent to, and indivisible from, their European nation.

These choices should not serve as a blind motor of assimilation to the detriment of those who wish to create from a complex cultural base which has yet to emerge. Space must be created for aspirations to be recognized and cherished. It is just such a space that BABYLON aims to provide. A European space within which minority film makers can transcend the restraints and demands of their individual nationalities.

Of course there will be voices who from various motives will argue that this endeavour represents a kind of inverse paternalism, who would like to forget the true legacy of colonialism, namely indifference and repression.

We will be told that the free market now provides equal access for all and that such benefits are outmoded and anachronistic, conveniently overlooking the vast sums of public money spent on mainstream cultural causes.

We will be criticized either for creating a ghetto mentality or for exercising positive discrimination and probably for both simultaneously by the same people.

All these possible objections testify to an unease amongst the majority concerning the future of the continent, particularly in the light of recent historical conflict. This unease is entirely comprehensible and another reason why this programme is needed.

The aim of BABYLON is to bring the richness of our cultural experience to all, to open up the wealth of individual experience to the majority who otherwise are left with little idea of their neighbours.

Only in the context of their shared European identity do our minorities have a common experience to communicate, and that shared European identity involves us all. Our continent has everything to offer and much to boast about, which is why we are host to so many. Why should we deprive ourselves of that truth, even if it contains many counter-currents that are problematic and troublesome?

In last summer's attack on London, the much-vaunted tolerance of post-war, multicultural Britain was shown up to disguise ignorance and indifference at many levels. One instinctive and harmful response has been to close down the debate - to control, to deny - while precisely the opposite is now required of a democratic society.

A more open response, a more attentive ear, a more informed mind (on all sides), all these are necessary pre-requisites for progress, be it to confirm our multiculturalism or to encourage further assimilation, if indeed the two are mutually exclusive or if either ends up being the desired route.

Unless we build a cultural bridge, there is a danger that ghettos will truly emerge, confining our minorities to their own languages, their own neighbourhoods and own cultures (including film and television cultures) entirely beyond the reach of the European mainstream, dangerously isolated and confined.

BABYLON is therefore a programme which will in no way exclude the majority. How could it?

A thriving minority audiovisual sector will depend on its interaction and collaboration with an immensely powerful industry continent-wide. The first steps in this direction are already clear, and already some boundaries have been broken down.

One challenge of the programme will be to define its own parameters, since "minority" is a shifting term with varying connotations. But again, the task of definition should not obscure the very reality of the phenomenon.

Discussing, sharing, defining, debating – all these will be functions of the programme, a reason to proceed, not to hesitate. The aim of BABYLON is to provide an open forum for the film world, within which this exchange of ideas can proceed.

In the process it will serve as a think tank feeding into the work of various bodies both national and European, a sounding board for film authorities continent-wide through which the perceptions and experience of successful practitioners can be compared with those of newcomers, and a record kept of changing attitudes and achievements. A celebration of what has already been achieved and a spur to further progress.

STRUCTURE

The long-term goal is to form an autonomous, self-regulating network of European minority film makers designed to facilitate exchanges between writers, producers and directors across Europe, laying the foundation for co-productions, co-financing and shared distribution.

Activities of the BABYLON network will include:

- Screenplay development workshops
- Training initiatives for film apprentices

- Conferences
- Film festival events
- Canvassing of national authorities
- Press opportunities

However, the entire network cannot be created from one day to the next. With the long-term goal clearly stated, one must nonetheless start somewhere.

Following Locarno, the development schedule would run:

- September 06 - publication of the *appel d'offre*, aimed at a Europe-wide response
- November 06 - closing date for submissions
- November/December 06 - selection of the successful candidates at the Amiens Film Festival. Selection criteria will balance the need to produce results with the aim of providing access to new and inexperienced talent. Consideration will be given to:

the strength of the project
the promise of the applicant
the consideration of talent otherwise excluded
the possible routes to overcome that exclusion
mixed teams will be actively encouraged
no preference shown in terms of content and theme
the cultural diversity of each country recognized
no presumption in favour of or against assimilation

- February 07 - first full-scale BABYLON event, prospectively to coincide with the Berlin Film Festival

This event would include:

- A three-day project development workshop, the filmmakers working under the aegis of an experienced script and production consultant.
- A networking/pitching event designed to introduce the projects in development to potential producers, co-producers, distributors etc. The aim should be to introduce the films of our cultural minorities not just to each other but to the widest European and international audience, and to guide the most promising projects through an ongoing period of finance and production.
- A one-day conference on the state of European cultural inclusion in the film world, open to all participants in the Berlinale and others by invitation or application.

The award of development grants to jury-selected participants at the end of the event is under discussion.

Experience of comparable programmes has shown that the results of such an event depend on the aftercare on offer, which in the case of BABYLON should include:

- A follow-up session for the workshop candidates, to monitor their progress and study their new drafts. There is existing interest from the University of Cambridge and Screen East (the regional film body for the East of England) and funds in place to provide for such a session in Cambridge in November/December 2007
- The provision of onward mentoring by experienced figures within the minority film community
- A permanent liaison office facilitating continued contact between all participants and other interested parties
- A co-ordinating presence at the major European film events
- Exploration of creative issues, eg thematic feature films consisting of inter-related stories from each country.

PARTNERS

The funding of such a network requires that a number of European partners work together over a sustained period of time and our initial partners include:

- Scenario Films Ltd
- Cine Sud Promotion
- CNC (*Centre National de la Cinématographie*)
- Locarno Film Festival
- Amiens Film Festival
- bfm international film festival
- British Council
- Screen East
- University of Cambridge
- CRASSH (*Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities*)
- Goethe Institut (*Filmabteilung München*)

Gareth Jones/Fiona Howe May 29th 2006

Scenario Films Ltd

www.scenariofilms.com

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(*under construction*)

SCENARIO FILMS Ltd

Scenario Films Ltd is an independent production company based in London and active across continental Europe, wholly owned by company directors Gareth Jones and Fiona Howe who share a long career in the audiovisual sector as writer, director and producer.

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Son of a BBC foreign correspondent Gareth Jones was partly raised in India and Lebanon and his work has been marked by multi-cultural issues. SHALOM SALAAM (5x60mins BBC) told the story of adolescents coming of age in Leicester, home to the UK's largest minority population (*Best Actress and SACD Best Series Screenplay Awards, FIPA 1988*); AU NOM DU MEME PERE (3x60mins, Channel 4 and TF1, 1990) explored the fraught relationship between Christianity and Judaism; feature film BONHOEFFER – DIE LETZTE STUFE (ARD 2000) recognized the Nazi-resister and Jewish rescuer Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*Nymphe D'Or, Best Television Film; Deutsche Angestellengewerkschaft Writer's Prize; Bronze Worldmedal, New York*).

As producer of twice-weekly ALBION MARKET (1985/6) he was the first to create wide casting opportunities for actors from British minority communities. He has worked as script consultant for institutes and academies across Europe: for SOURCES every year since 1993; for the last four years with the Sarajevo Film Festival's Cinelink programme; this year adding Euromed's development programme for the south and east Mediterranean. He works, and has taught, in English, French, German and Italian.

Apart from its production and script-writing output, Scenario is currently co-producing with SOURCES (Berlin) a major eight-day workshop to be held in Cambridge in late March 2007 with finance from the University of Cambridge, Screen East, the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse and the European Union.

CINE-SUD PROMOTION

Ciné-Sud Promotion started life as a company designed to promote auteur cinema particularly (but not exclusively) of non-european origination and which has developed a production arm since 1999.

Ciné-Sud Promotion was founded on the initiative of Thierry Lenouvel who, in association with the distribution company *Les Films du Sémaphore* from 1983 to 1988, had distributed films by (amongst others) Pedro Almodovar, Jean Baronnet, Liria Begeja, Youssef Chahine, Benoît Jacquot, Gaston Kaboré, Piotr Kamler, Emir Kusturica, Philip Noyce, John Sayles and Shinji Somaï.

Ciné-Sud and Thierry Lenouvel participated in the organization of the Montpellier Film Festival till 1995, and since then of the Amiens Film Festival ; also in the creation and administration of the Script Development Fund (*Fonds d'Aide au Développement du Scénario*) for countries of the majority world awarded annually at the Amiens Film Festival.

Ciné-Sud Promotion has acted as public relations representative for, amongst others, Gianni Amelio, Vicente Aranda, Yamina Bachir Chouikh, Bassek Ba Kobhio, Rachid Bouchareb, Mario Camus, Jean-Michel Carré, Wang Chao, Malik Chibane, Jacques Davila, Guillermo Del Toro, Raymond Depardon, Djibril Diop Mambety, Flora

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Gomez, Omer Kavur, Christine Laurent, Miguel Littin, Christophe Loizillon, Francisco Lombardi, Goran Markovic, Rashid Masharawi, Julio Medem, Jafar Panahi, Manuel Poirier, Jean-François Richet, Arturo Ripstein, Paulo Rocha, Christophe Ruggia, Carlos Saura, Silvio Soldini, Bela Tarr, Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, Jean-Philippe Toussaint.

It has also been responsible for the promotion of numerous films at international film festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Venice) et public events (centenary of Jean Renoir, press conferences of Fonds Sud, Prix du Ministère de la Coopération lors du Festival de Cannes, Festival du Cinéma d'Animation d'Annecy etc).

Ciné-Sud Promotion's first production venture was as associate producer on two feature films produced by 3B Productions, **HARAMUYA** by Drissa Touré (France/Burkina-Faso)(Cannes 1995/Un Certain Regard) and **CONCERT DANS LA RUE** DU BONHEUR by Asma El Bakri (France/Egypt).

Feature films produced include: **L'OMBRE DE LA VILLE** by Jean Khalil Chamoun (France/Lebanon) – 2000/2001 ; **TIRANA, ANNEE ZERO** by Fatmir Koci (France/Albania/ Belgium) - 2001; **RACHIDA** by Yamina Bachir Chouikh (France/Algeria) – 2002 ; **AU FEU !** (Gori Vatra) de Pjer Zalica (Bosnia/Austria/Turkey/France) – 2003 **MUR** de Simone Bitton (documentary feature) – 2004 ; **MOOLAADE** by Sembene Ousmane (Sénégal) – 2004 ; **NOCE D'ETE** by Moktar Ladjimi (France/Tunisie) – 2004 ; **POSTE FRONTIERE** by Rajko Grlic (Bosnia/Croatia/Slovenia/Serbia/Macedonia/Kosovo/ Austria/Hungary/France) - 2005; **FALAFEL** by Michel Kammoun (Lebanon/France).

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