

CASE STUDY: « DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE »

SALES AGENT: Sébastien CHESNEAU, CELLULOID DREAMS, FRANCE

The film was put forward in Cannes and in Venice, and it finally got selected in Venice. It has had an incredible carrier, in the duration, which is extremely rare for a film of that kind.

The interest of the buyers grew from Venice to Toronto, going through Montreal, creating a real "buzz" around the film, which is always sought by the distributors. Time has helped the film, which is quite rare.

The film was at first a popular success; the public really took over the film. It is on that strategy that Celluloid orientated its sales, seeking to show the buyers that the public was right.

Hubert Sauper supported his film in all the festivals during one year and a half, which also really helped and made a difference.

The film was sold to more than 30 territories, it was presented in several festivals (more than 20 major awards). Celluloid itself has released the movie in the USA through International Filmcircuit (no distributor wanted to buy the movie à that file).

FRENCH DISTRIBUTOR: Arthur HALLEREAU, AD VITAM

When they first saw the film on DVD, they just realised that the film was only about things people did not want to hear about... They bought the film because they've liked it a lot, but had no conviction regarding a potential commercial success.

The minimum guarantee for the film was € 20 000 (exhibition and TV rights). The film was bought at the very beginning. The previsions were 50 to 70 000 admissions, with a P&A budget of € 90 000, i.e. a small release for France.

Little by little, the P&A budget grew, since the film was working very well among exhibitors and in the different festivals.

The strategy of Ad Vitam was that as many people as possible see the film before its release. It created a good reputation to the film, by word of mouth.

A month and a half before the release, the P&A provisional budget is € 130 000 for 20-25 prints (included 4 prints in Paris).

The director made around 40-50 debates in France, a comprehensive work with NGO and associations (ATTAC, etc.) has also been done. 15 previews have been organised. When the film was released, the press was extremely enthusiastic (the film has made the first page of *Liberation*, a daily newspaper).

The poster was made by a French illustrator, JP Delomme. The team of Ad Vitam decided not to use the international poster, made with pictures of the films, because the themes and pictures of the film are extremely rich, whereas the quality of the pictures that may have been used is quite poor.

After the release, most of the job has consisted in dealing with the exhibitors' will to get the film: they went from 25 prints during the first week up to 66 in the tenth week. Nine months after its release, the film made again 25 000 admissions during the "Télérama Festival" (a festival organised by the magazine "Télérama" that shows again in theatres the best films of the year).

Which leads to 420 000 admissions, with P&A costs of € 228 000, i.e. a receipt of € 830 000 for the distributor.

GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR: Harald BAUR, ARSENAL FILMVERLEIH

The film was bought in Toronto, with exhibition and video rights – the TV rights were already reserved for ARTE which helped producing the film.

The press was very positive. Concerning the promotional elements, Arsenal used the international poster and the French drawing for the flyers, which were given in cafés.

There has been a close collaboration with the Austrian distributor, who made 40,000 admissions. Arsenal also worked before the release with NGO, associations. The public echo before the release was positive.

However the results have been extremely disappointing: Arsenal expected 70,000 admissions, but the film only made 32,000. In Austria and in the German part of Switzerland, they have had better results.

HUNGARIAN DISTRIBUTOR: Gabor CSURDI, BUDAPEST FILM

We saw the film first at MIFED in 2004, but we refused to buy it there. Later we were convinced by the good festival and box office results, so we bought it in 2005. We had also early interest from Hungarian TV stations, who wanted to buy the film.

The minimum guarantee was € 3 000 theatrical, TV and video rights. The budget of release was about € 7700, 40% marketing costs, 60% production costs (ie subtitling, cost of prints, trailers etc.)

Hungary is a very small market, with about 10 million inhabitants, and about 12-14 million admissions a year. The ticket price for the cinema is around 3-4€ in Hungary, which is still quite expensive regarding the cost of life.

The Hungarian Motion Pictures Fund (MMK) supported the release of Darwin's Nightmare, which made it possible for Budapest Film to release the film.

The film was released on 2 prints. 90% of the admissions resulted from one print playing in Budapest in one theatre, and the last 10% were made with the other print that circulated around the country. However, except in Budapest, there are very few art house cinemas in Hungary.

Budapest Film is also a video distributor. However the release in DVD of the film does not appear as profitable, indeed in Hungary we could expect around 200 DVD units to be sold, which is definitely not enough.

The film has made 3,500 admissions, whereas Budapest Film expected around 5,000. The result is thus quite disappointing. However the film has been sold to two public channels, which will allow Budapest Film to balance the budget.

BELGIUM DISTRIBUTOR: Christian Thomas, IMAGINE FILM

Christian Thomas reminds the fact that he had bought the film at the very beginning, when it was still being produced (Belgium is one of the co-producer of the film).

He released the film in Belgium and the Netherlands. But it was extremely difficult to convince the exhibitors, it was a real battle to manage to have 3 copies circulating in the whole Belgium! At the end, the total of the admissions was 22,000.

It is to be underlined that the success was mainly in the francophone part of Belgium.