

## CASE STUDY : « JUST A KISS » by Ken LOACH

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### **BELGIUM DISTRIBUTEUR: Stephan DE POTTER, CINEART**

Cineart releases for a very long time the Ken Loach's films. Therefore the question of the acquisition was directly dealt with the producer of the film.

The film is quite atypical in Ken Loach's carrier: after *The Navigators* and *Sweet Sixteen*, *Ae Fond Kiss* is a social comedy more commercial. The Belgium press was a little less inclined to support the film than usually. The film has been selected in Berlin, where it was unnoticed, and furthermore there has been the Cannes Film Festival before its theatre release, which is a handicap.

However Ken Loach has a faithful public and faithful theatres that are ready to support it. Cineart thus decided to stress on the aspect "romantic comedy with a social background", and programmed the film in art house theatres as well as in multiplexes (the market share of the multiplexes is 77% in Belgium). The strategy succeeded, since the film stayed 5-6 weeks in those multiplexes, and then it continued in art houses theatres. The film ended up to 45,000 admissions.

A lot of work has been done with schools and associations. Educational files have been made, relayed by some theatres such as "Le Parc Churchill" in Liège. This work allowed to make 10,000 additional admissions.

The release at the beginning of July in France by Diaphna was not a good option for Belgium. The release was made at the beginning of August, which was a real advantage for the film: it was released just before the "big" art house releases, and after all the summer blockbusters, of which the public gets tired. Cineart releases the film on the same day that *The Village*.

### **AUSTRIAN DISTRIBUTOR: Hans KÖNIG, POLYFILM**

This release was in Austria a good example of collaboration among Swiss, Austrian and German distributors. Concerning *Just a Kiss*, it was decided, to put in common the expenses made for the film, to release the film in Austria 2 months after its release in Germany, and to release it in Switzerland 2 months after its Austrian release.

The idea was to use in Austria the prints that would not be used anymore in Germany, which would save 50% on the prints, i.e. € 17 000.

But the release was a failure. First of all, the most important Austrian critics did not like the film. The date chosen for the release was a mistake: the film was released in Austria at the beginning of 2005 whereas the competition was hard (*Ray*, *Alles auf Zucker...*). But the commitment made to the German and Swiss distributors did not allow changing it. From the 4<sup>th</sup> week onwards, it was difficult to maintain the film in the theatres.

In the end, that strategy appears as a mistake, because what was saved on prints was lost in launching the film in January. Furthermore, the choice of the international poster, which they do not really like, was an error. But it was unthinkable, for financial reasons, to make their own poster. It is only after the release that Polyfilm heard about the French poster that they liked better, because it was more romantic.

Hans Koenig regrets the lack of collaboration among European distributors.

## **DISTRIBUTEUR ITALIEN : Antonio MEDICI, BIM DISTRIBUZIONE**

Bim has supported Ken Loach for a very long time, as Cineart.

*Ae Fond Kiss* is a turning point, because from that film onwards, Bim also coproduced the films of Ken Loach (before, Bim made pre-buys). The coproductions allow to have more national subsidies.

For the films of Ken Loach, there are from now on 4 co-producers (Great-Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy) and 4 distributors that put big MG (Belgium, France...), it is thus quite easy to finance a Ken Loach film.

As Cineart, Bim had the feeling that this film was atypical and that it would be difficult to communicate towards the faithful audience of Ken Loach. At the same time, *The Navigators* and *Sweet Sixteen* were failures as far as their theatrical release is concerned.

Bim decides not to put important P&A budgets on the film. The poster outlines the romantic aspect of the film; the trailer is shown before the other films of Bim in the theatres of Circuito Cinema (which are owned by independent distributors), two months before the release. The public reactions to the film are positive; the public appreciates the fact that a romantic comedy could also be an intelligent film. The release is scheduled on January 2005.

The film is released with few prints (37), without any big TV or outdoor promotional campaign. But in the end, the P&A budget is € 400 000 for 85 prints, which is quite a lot for a release of a Ken Loach's film. But the film was really appreciated by the public, by word of mouth. The film was only released in the art houses theatres, the multiplexes are also less developed in Italy.

The film was supported by the MEDIA Program, and totally reimbursed, except for the subtitles. The film was dubbed in Italian. Everything is translated in Italy, it is a cultural question, if you only release a subtitled version, you are sure to make very few admissions... Only 2 prints were released in original version.