

June 30

**Distribution – UK
Tartan goes out of business**

A pall of gloom was cast over the sunniest weekend of the summer with the news that well regarded UK distributor Tartan Films has gone “into administration,” according to board director Alan Partington, ending 26 years of being a player.

All of the company’s 22 London based staff members have been made redundant. Tartan’s iconoclastic head Hamish McAlpine was unavailable for comment.

The closure of the company was not wholly unexpected. The company recently closed down its US wing Tartan Video USA, set up in 2004, and auctioned off its 100-film library to film print and advertising financing company Palisades Media.

In addition, senior staff has been leaving in droves. 2007 saw Managing Director Laura De Casto and Head of Acquisitions Jane Giles quitting, while publicity maven Sarah Bemand left recently.

McAlpine founded the business in 1982. Tartan, with a brief marriage with Metro Pictures in 1992, released over 300 films in the UK, including *The Cooler*, *Super Size Me*, *Capturing the Friedmans*, *Secretary* and *The Triplets of Belleville* [trailer]. The company was best known for its Asian horror titles released through its Asia Extreme label. Tartan is widely credited for popularizing J-Horror and K-Horror in the West.

The company announced a £3m rescue investment package in November 2007, which did not ultimately materialize. Their next release, the documentary *Crazy Love*, has been cancelled ahead of its July release.

Home entertainment sales house World Cinema Ltd, which handles Artificial Eye and ICA amongst others, will lose the lucrative Tartan home video slate. It is thought that McAlpine holds a 50% stake in World Cinema.

Naman Ramachandran

June 20

**Distribution – France
French wave sweeps UK**

Traditionally considered a difficult territory for non-English speaking films, the UK has seen French titles enjoy new-found success over the last three years, confirmed by this summer’s programming of around ten French features of very different genres.

Having begun last week with the theatrical release of Pierre Salvadori’s *Priceless* (distribution Icon Film Distribution), the wave gathers speed today as Abdellatif

Kechiche's *The Secret of the Grain* (distribution Artificial Eye) and Sandrine Bonnaire's documentary *Her Name Is Sabine* [trailer] (ICA) hit UK screens.

Backed by Unifrance, this French summer wave is set to continue with Jean-Paul Salomé's *Female Agents* (distribution Revolver - June 27); Lorraine Levy's *London Mon Amour* (Pathé UK - July 4); Olivier Assayas' *Summer Hours* (Artificial Eye - July 18); Cédric Klapisch's *Paris* (see interview – Optimum, July 25); François Ozon's *Angel* (Lionsgate - August 29); Eric Rohmer's *Romance of Astrea and Celadon* (Artificial Eye - September 12); and Philippe Claudel's *I've Loved You So Long* (Lionsgate - September 26).

For the occasion of these releases, all the directors have travelled or will travel to the UK, along with some of the actors (including Audrey Tautou, Sophie Marceau, Kristin Scott-Thomas, Virginie Ledoyen, Deborah François and Vincent Lindon).

The line-up of films will also include Luc Jacquet's *The Fox and the Child* [trailer] (set to be released by Pathé this summer), Claude Chabrol's *The Girl Cut In Two* [trailer] (Artificial Eye - August) and Eric Besnard's *Cash* (Tartan Films - September).

The last quarter of 2008 is also shaping up to be a booming season for French film in the UK, with several releases by Artificial Eye (Agnès Jaoui's *Let It Rain* on November 7, Erick Zonca's *Julia* on November 28, and Palme d'Or winner *The Class* by Laurent Cantet), as well as Michel Hazanavicius' *OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies* (ICA), *Nés en 68* ("Born in 68") by Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau (Peccadillo Pictures), the documentary *Animals in Love* (Revolver) and Xavier Gens' *Frontier(s)* (Optimum).

A further two titles are set to be launched by Metrodome Distribution with release dates yet to be confirmed: Safy Nebbou's *Mark of an Angel* and collective animated film *Fear(s) of the Dark*.

Last year, the 52 French films released in the UK attracted 2.93m viewers, amassing €20.86m in box office takings and accounting for 2% of the market share. From 1998- 2004, figures for French films in the UK varied annually between 600,000 and 1.3m admissions. The turning point came in 2005 when figures shot up to 2.39m admissions and remained stable in 2006 with 1.92m.

Fabien Lemercier

June 9

Distribution – Sweden

A dozen new pick-ups for SF

Rasmus Ramstad, CEO of Scandinavian major Svensk Filmindustri AB (SF), said that his company picked up over a dozen new titles during the Cannes Film Festival.

For Scandinavia, SF acquired Terrence Malick's *Tree of Life*, starring Brad Pitt &

Sean Penn, and the sci-fi thriller *Pandorum* from Summit Entertainment.

From Focus Features, the company acquired *Milk*, starring Penn; Sam Mendes's new film *Hamlet 2*; the Coen brothers' *Burn After Reading*, starring George Clooney and Brad Pitt (selected for Venice); and the upcoming *A Serious Man*.

From Pathe, SF pre-bought the horror film *The Descent 2*, Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire*, as well as Danis Tanovic's *Triage*, starring Colin Farrell. *Brideshead Revisited* sold by Handway, and the sci-fi film *District 9* produced by Peter Jackson and sold by QED, were acquired just before Cannes.

Michael Moore's sequel to *Fahrenheit 911* was acquired from Paramount Vantage, together with *Humboldt Park*, while the US animated feature film *Alfa & Omega* and *Why Did I get married* were purchased from Mandate.

SF's theatrical market share is around 18% in Sweden and 25% in the other Scandinavian territories, where the company also handles 20th Century Fox titles.

The company is enjoying the current release in Sweden of the local film *Wolf*, directed by Daniel Alfredson and starring Peter Stormare (number eight at the box office with over €902,430 grossed in nine weeks), and is expecting healthy returns from *Sex and the City*, opening on June 21.

SF's biggest production to date, the sequel to the epic film *Arn: The Knight Templar* (over 1 million admissions at home), will open in Sweden on August 22.

Annika Pham

June 6

Distribution – Sweden Three buyers of foreign films get SFI support

Folkets Bio, NonStop Entertainment and Atlantic Film are the first three independent arthouse distribution companies to receive support from the Swedish Film Institute (SFI) as part of the institute's overall strategy to strengthen the import of quality films in Sweden.

Folkets Bio was awarded SEK1.230.000 (€132,000), NonStop SEK1.000.000 (€107,300) and Atlantic Film SEK 700,000 (€75,000). The support will go towards the distributors' P&A costs based on the number of foreign titles acquired and the companies' track record in arthouse in Sweden.

"These are three distributors that have a clear quality profile and work creatively with distribution and marketing," said Linda Zachrisson, head of the SFI Audience Department. "They also have the obvious ambition to make films available to new audience groups and cinemas outside the bigger city centres."

Last November, the SFI announced its plan to strengthen quality distribution and

exhibition in response to a fast evolving film landscape. Among the key changes introduced was the allocation of a P&A grant on a yearly basis instead of a film by film basis. Johan Hansson, deputy managing director for Atlantic Film said: "The support is very important for us. This support lowers the risk. In the end it gives the public a better variety of films."

Folkets Bio CEO Marie Booberg also commented: "I can now act faster when I buy films because I know I have this annual financial support, and I can work more freely, without all the paperwork hassle. Plus, the grant is higher than before."

Folkets Bio, whose line-up is one-third Swedish and the rest foreign, just picked up in Cannes the critically acclaimed, animated docu-feature *Waltz with Bashir* by Israel's Ari Folman, French film *A Christmas Tale* by Arnaud Desplechin and the German/French animated feature *The Three Robbers* by Hayo Freitag.

Folkets Bio was also awarded an extra SEK 850,000 grant from the SFI for the distribution of Swedish shorts and documentaries.

Annika Pham

May 30

Distribution – Scandinavia NonStop Picks up Palme d'or

The Stockholm-based Scandinavian distribution company NonStop Entertainment has picked up its second Palme d'or in a row, *The Class* by **Laurent Cantet**, as well as six new titles at the last Cannes Film Festival.

Jakob Abrahamsson, NonStop head of Distribution in Sweden told Cineuropa why he was totally seduced by Cantet's film: "We saw *The Class* in an early screening at the market and were most of all struck on how different it was from any other film in the competition. The actors, especially the kids, were so incredibly real that I had to double check the program to see if it really was a fiction film. In the end we bought it since it was such a touching, thought provoking and not the least entertaining film experience, something unlike anything else we've seen in a long time. That we also got the chance to follow up on Laurent Cantet (we also handled *Heading South* and that we also got our second Palme d'or in a row are of course welcome add-ons. "

NonStop also picked up for the five Nordic countries the Grand Prix winner *Gomorrah* [trailer] by Italian filmmaker Matteo Garrone, sold by Fandango Portobello, the French film *Johnny Mad Dog* (TF1 International) by first timer Jean-Stephane Sauvaires, winner of the Hope Award at Un Certain Regard, Olivier Assayas' French family drama *Summer Hours*, sold by MK2, and *The Private Lives of Pippa Lee* by Rebecca Miller, sold by the Salt Company.

Nonstop also bought for Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, Mark Tonderai's thriller *Hush* sold by Pathe International, and Na Jong-Jin's Korean thriller *The Chaser* was bought for the Nordic and Baltic countries.

“With the critically acclaimed Palme d’or winner *The Class*, the praised *Gomorrah* and these high profile titles, we have had our best year ever at the Cannes Film Festival,” said NonStop Entertainment AB’s CEO Ignas Scheynius.

NonStop Entertainment Sweden is currently playing Daniele Luchetti’s *My Brother and Only Child* and will release on June 5 *Angel* by François Ozon.

Annika Pham

May 29

Distribution – UK Pathe, BSkyB team up for *The Cottage*

British comic horror film *The Cottage* will enjoy a simultaneous release on DVD and on satellite broadcaster BSkyB’s Pay Per View (PPV) service Sky Box Office and online Video On Demand (VOD) service Sky Player.

The film is directed by Paul Andrew Williams, who had earlier made the acclaimed *London to Brighton*.

The Cottage will be available for a four-month period and will be available to BSkyB’s 8.8 million subscribers for £3.99. Earlier this year, BSkyB had paired with Artificial Eye to release Fatih Akin’s *The Edge Of Heaven* simultaneously in cinemas, pay TV and VOD. They had also tied up with Momentum for the simultaneous DVD/PPV release of *Vegas Baby*.

Pathe UK Managing Director Cameron McCracken said, “As the on-demand market evolves, we have to evolve, too. Testing the waters with a day-and-date DVD/PPV/VOD release for a mainstream title like *The Cottage* will hopefully enable us to draw the conclusion that the narrowing of windows can enhance rather than undermine commercial returns.”

Sky Movies and Sky Box Office Director Ian Lewis added, “This deal with Pathe is another move in the right direction. This can only be great news for our customers, who are increasingly able to see titles like ‘The Cottage’ much closer to their theatrical release. There have been a number of positive steps recently within the U.K. film industry toward compressing the current windows, and this deal with Pathe is another move in the right direction.”

Naman Ramachandran

May 16

Distribution – Sweden

SF closes three-year deal with Memphis Film

Svensk Filmindustri CEO Rasmus Ramstad announced yesterday in Cannes that he has closed a three-year distribution deal with one of Sweden's leading production houses, Memphis Film, headed by Lars Jönsson.

The deal covers theatrical and DVD distribution of Memphis' upcoming productions (including Lukas Moodysson's *Mammoth*, starring Gael Garcia Bernal and Michelle Williams) and its 25-title library. Sandrew Metronome will keep distribution rights in the other Nordic territories, and TrustNordisk international distribution rights.

From the Scandinavian Terrace, 55 la Croisette, Ramstad also told Cineuropa that just before Cannes he bought Terrence Malick's new film *Tree of Life*, starring Sean Penn and Brad Pitt, sold by Summit; the Coen brothers' *Burn After Reading*, starring George Clooney and Brad Pitt, and their upcoming *A Serious Man*, both sold by Focus Features.

SF also acquired for Scandinavia Danis Tanovic's *Triage*, starring Colin Farrell, and *Brideshead Revisited*, both in the Hanway Films line-up.

"There is a lot of product out there, but very few titles that we are going for. The market is more and more polarized with bigger films getting bigger. Niche films can work, but the middle films are getting really difficult," stressed Ramstad.

Annika Pham

May 14

Distribution – Norway

Reprise gets Miramax Release

Norway's 2006 multiple-award winning film *Reprise* by Joachim Trier will have its North American premiere in New York and Los Angeles on May 16.

The film will be distributed by Miramax in conjunction with Netflix's Red Envelope Entertainment, and US producer Scott Rudin (*No Country for Old Men*). Produced by Karin Julsrud (4½ Production), *Reprise* was sold to 25 territories by Nordisk Film International and has opened in a dozen territories, including Denmark, the UK, Germany and Australia.

Malavida in France will launch *Reprise* on 20 screens on June 11.