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Secret Cinema heads for Gotham

Future Cinema eyes Hollywood pic releases

By LEO BARRACLOUGH

LYON, France

Blighty's Future Cinema is set to export its Secret Cinema venture -- events that combine live performances involving audience participation with the screening of a classic movie -- to New York and major European cities.

The company is also in talks with Hollywood studios to stage similar bespoke events for theatrical releases.

Speaking to Variety at the annual conference in Lyon of Europa Distribution, which reps 125 independent European distributors, Future Cinema topper Fabien Riggall said that he would launch Secret Cinema in New York early next year, followed by Paris, Berlin, Moscow and, potentially, Athens.

He said that the events would be co-ordinated and share creative direction, but would be adjusted to suit local tastes.

Riggall set up Future Cinema in 2005 and the first Secret Cinema event took place in London two years later. One-offs have already unspooled in New York, Berlin and even Kabul, Afghanistan, but Riggall now intends to make a sustained effort to roll out the venture internationally.

A recent Secret Cinema event that centered on Carol Reed's "The Third Man" at a disused factory in Central London is typical of the approach.

Inside the venue, various sets from the film had been recreated, populated by actors posing as characters from the film, who re-enacted scenes with the participation of the audience. This was then followed by the screening of the film. Nearly 19,000 folk attended during the six-week run, paying £45 (\$72) for the experience.

Critically, the name of the film is never released before the event and the audience is sworn to secrecy so that the surprise is not spoiled for future viewers.

The company has recently staged similar events for new releases, with one devoted to Ridley Scott's "Prometheus" earlier this year. Thirty of these special screening events took place over a month, attracting 25,000 admissions.

Riggall said he is in talks with the Hollywood studios to stage four to five events a year linked to new movie releases. Deals with independent distributors for releases may follow, after the company staged an event linked to a screening of the documentary "The Imposter."

He also said Future Cinema aims to set up partnerships with a number of traditional and

non-traditional venues in London that could serve as locations for events, which could include combine music gigs, interactive and immersive live performances, and film screenings.

A recent example of such an event was the screening of Mathieu Kassovitz's "La Haine" in North London this year, which was accompanied by perfs by street dancers and hip-hop artists.

One of the key elements of Future Cinema's activities is to build online communities around the events, he told delegates at the three-day Europa Distribution confab, which wrapped Saturday.

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