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THE FALL MARKET CIRCUIT: SURVIVE A NEVER-ENDING SEASON

Our fall season looks like a crowded agenda of events where everyone is trying to cross paths to get what they want. Co-producing or financing? Buying or selling? Films, series, documentaries or animation? Most threads come back with an OOO reply from someone somewhere in the world.

Is it worth it? Business-wise, the jury's still out (see our market reports on pages 10, 14, 16 and 24). On a personal level, it's the most stressful time of the year. We got back from Haugesund, Venice and Toronto and barely had time to sit at our desks before packing again: San Sebastián, Busan, Cannes, Rome, LA, Amsterdam, Cancún, Turin, London, Singapore, Sorrento, and London again. Who knows who's going where!

Is this fall never-ending? Still, we hope that by the winter holidays we'll have it figured out: what works in this industry? Someone says brands are the new black (see page 22), someone else says AI will save us all (see page 18). One thing is certain: we are still navigating these waters like Ulysses (read our Technology piece on page 26).

After all that, we're more than ready for the chill of Sundance and Berlin. Just don't tell anyone. Pull out that fancy scarf and complain until the next heat wave!

Federica Pazzano
Editor-In-Chief

DARO

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UN TRANQUILLO FUNERALE DI FAMIGLIA

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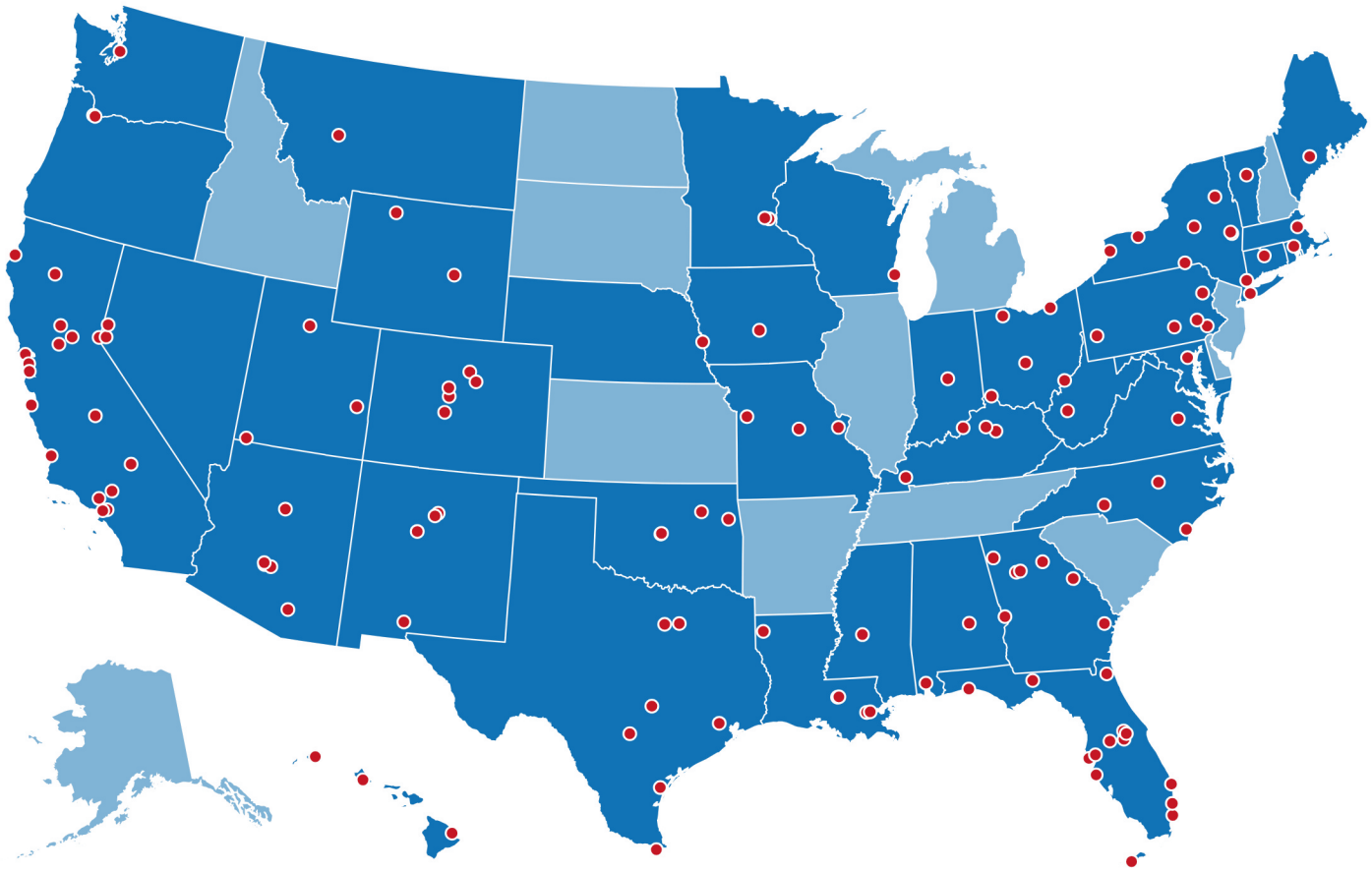
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DAL 29 OTTOBRE AL CINEMA

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Edoardo **Pesce**

con la partecipazione di

Claudio **Santamaria**

IL RUMORE DELLE COSE NUOVE

un film di **Paolo Genovese**

DAL 12 NOVEMBRE AL CINEMA



UNA PRODUZIONE LOTUS PRODUCTION UNA SOCIETÀ LEONE FILM GROUP CON RAI CINEMA IN ASSOCIAZIONE CON VICE PICTURES MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA L'OPERA È STATA REALIZZATA E DISTRIBUITA CON IL CONTRIBUTO DEL FONDO PER LO SVILUPPO DEGLI INVESTIMENTI NEL CINEMA E NELL'AUDIOVISIVO AIUTO REGIA JONATHAN DE MAN SUONO DI PRESA DIRETTA UMBERTO MONTESANTI COSTUMI GEMMA MASCAGNI CASTING DIRECTOR BARBARA GIORDANI (M.I.C.D.) CASTING BAMBINI VERONICA AMANN (U.I.C.D.) MONTAGGIO CONSUELO CATUCCI SCENOGRAFIA CHIARA BALDUCCI DIRETTORE DELLA FOTOGRAFIA FABRIZIO LUCCI (C.S.C.) MUSICHE DAPRINSKI CANZONE ORIGINALE IL RUMORE DELLE COSE NUOVE DI BRUNORI SAS SOGGETTO PAOLO GENOVESE SCENEGGIATURA PAOLO GENOVESE E IGOR ARTIBANI EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FEDERICO POLIMANTI E FRANCESCO POLIMANTI CREATIVE PRODUCER FLAMINIA LEONE PRODUTTORE DELEGATO CARLOTTA GALLENI PRODUTTORE ESECUTIVO PAOLO SCIARRETTA PRODUTTORE ESECUTIVO VICE PICTURES RICCARDO VOLPATO PRODUTTORE ASSOCIATO VICE PICTURES LEONARDO MARIA DEL VECCHIO PRODOTTO DA RAFFAELLA LEONE E ANDREA LEONE DIRETTO DA PAOLO GENOVESE

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MIA Wasn’t Built in a Day

Rome’s Audiovisual Market Expands Its Empire

by Antonio Bracco

There is something distinctly Roman about the way the MIA | Mercato Internazionale Audiovisivo has grown. MIA shows off its original identity by expanding it, territory after territory. The Roman Empire itself was built on the ambition to create something larger than the city from which it originated, extending across Italy and Europe, from the fog of Britannia to the sands of North Africa, from the Iberian peninsula to the deserts of the Middle East.

Its success was not based solely on military conquest. Roman expansion also brought infrastructure, architectural models, commercial networks and new forms of social and economic organization, while often allowing local populations to retain their traditions and customs. The result was a complex system in which different territories could preserve their own identities while becoming part of a larger structure.

From a Single Venue to a Diffused District

The analogy is particularly fitting for **MIA** as its 12th edition takes place in Rome from October 19 to 23, 2026, right in the middle of two other major film events: the **Rome Film Fest** and **Alice nella Città**, both running from October 13 to 25.

For its new edition, the market is expanding into a dedicated district stretching across **Palazzo Barberini**, **Piazza Barberini** and **Via Veneto**, with specialized hubs covering different stages of the audiovisual value chain, from development and financing to production, distribution and innovation. Rather than concentrating everything in a single location, MIA is turning a section of central Rome into an interconnected marketplace.

It’s a structural evolution, not just a cosmetic one. Growth doesn’t have to mean centralization. It can mean expansion that respects the character of each individual space while binding everything together under one recognizable name. By the way, it is still the *Urbs Aeterna* that we are talking about, as the poet Tibullus once described it, creating the occasion for XXI century industry professionals to meet at the intersection of the *Dolce Vita* in the *Eternal City*.

Twelve Years of Building an Empire of Trust

When MIA was created in 2015, the ambition was to establish in Italy a professional marketplace capable of connecting the national audiovisual industry with international partners. The market is jointly promoted by **ANICA** (Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche Audiovisive e Digitali), presided over by **Alessandro Usai**, and **APA** (Associazione Produttori Audiovisivi), presided over by **Chiara Sbarigia**, with **Gaia Tridente** at the directorial helm.

Behind them sits a web of institutional backing that mirrors the diplomatic alliances Rome itself once relied on: **Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation** through **Agenzia ICE/ITA**, the **Creative Europe MEDIA** program, the **Ministry of Culture**’s Directorate-General



for Cinema and Audiovisual, the **Lazio Region**, and the **Fondazione Roma Lazio Film Commission**.

The market has progressively expanded its scope across film, drama, documentary, animation and entertainment. Today, it functions as a B2B platform for co-production, financing, distribution and content development, bringing together producers, broadcasters, streamers, distributors, buyers, investors, institutions and creative talent.

Counting (numbers) on Each Other

The numbers of recent editions provide some context for how far MIA has travelled. More than 2,800 audiovisual professionals attended in 2024, with attendance remaining around that level in 2025, when participants came from 64 countries. But the figures that matter now are those of the 2026 edition. More than **530 projects** from **82 countries** were submitted to MIA this year, resulting in an Official Selection of 67 projects: 24 live-action feature films, 10 animated features, 11 feature documentaries, two docuseries, two TV one-offs, 18 scripted series, and 19 animated series. Another seven documentary projects join them through the new Doc Connect: One-on-One program.

The numbers also reveal the scale of the international network behind those projects. **The Drama Co-Production Market** alone brings together 18 series from 17 countries, evaluated by 22 industry professionals from ten countries. Among them are **Andrew Plotkin**, EVP and Head of Drama Development at Sony Pictures Television; **M-K Kennedy**, Managing Director Worldwide Television at STUDIOCANAL; **Lauren Stein**, EVP and Head of Creative Affairs at Sony Pictures Television Studios; **Steve Matthews**, Head of Scripted, Creative at Banijay; **Larry Grimaldi**, SVP Creative Affairs & Original Movies at FOX Entertainment Studios; **Claire O'Brien** of Universal Global Television; and former Netflix executive **Kelly Luegenbiehl**, now founder and producer at Shorties Studios. The committee also includes screenwriter and producer Tess Morris, whose credits include *Only Murders in the Building*.

The projects themselves bring another layer of recognizable names. **Krzysztof Zanussi** returns with *From Dust to Dust*; Emmy-winning producer and director **Douglas Mackinnon**, whose credits include *Doctor Who*, *Outlander* and *Good Omens*, presents *Burntime*; Emmy-nominated **Sara Goldblatt** brings the documentary *Get The F**K Out*; and the film selection includes **Alain Parroni**'s *Blue Souvenir*, written by **Damiano and Fabio D'Innocenzo**. **Francesco Bianconi**, frontman of Baustelle, makes his feature directorial debut with *Parabasis*, co-written with **Paolo Strippoli** (*The Spiral*), while animation brings projects from filmmakers including **Signe Baumane**, **Kim Nguyen** and **Ayçe Kartal**.

Forums, Showcases and Opportunities

MIA's 2026 expansion is not simply a matter of adding more projects. The program is increasingly designed around what happens to those projects before, during and after they are pitched. One of the most significant additions is the **European Investment Hub**, a new two-day platform devoted specifically to the financial architecture of the audiovisual business. The Hub will bring professionals, investors and institutions together to examine co-production and equity funds, guarantee and risk-mitigation mechanisms, completion bonds and insurance, public-private co-investment models and other financial tools. Rather than treating financing as an abstract conference subject, the program combines themed round tables with informal networking intended to connect companies directly with potential financial partners.

Other strands extend that approach into different areas of the contemporary audiovisual business. **MIA XR** brings immersive and extended-reality production into the market, while the **Book Adaptation Forum** creates another point of contact between publishing and audiovisual storytelling, placing intellectual property and the search for adaptable stories within the same wider business ecosystem.

On the distribution side, the **MIA Buyers' Club** returns as a dedicated meeting point for sales agents and international distributors. Its role extends beyond MIA itself: accredited buyers will have access to selected press and industry screenings from the Rome Film Fest and Alice nella Città, effectively connecting the three events taking place in Rome. The program also looks ahead through **Comin'UP**, where sales companies privately preview upcoming titles for buyers and festival representatives, and **C EU Soon**, which this year presents 12 films from 21 countries at an advanced stage of production or post-production and looking for international distribution.

The **MIA Development Award** will provide cash prizes to selected projects in the Co-Production & Gap Financing Market, while the **WIFTMI Award** will recognize a project with particular potential in gender equality and inclusion and the **Screen International Award** will go to one of the C EU Soon titles. In other words, the market is increasingly trying to shorten the distance between being selected for MIA and taking the next concrete step towards financing, production or international circulation.

What Happens After Rome

Perhaps the most useful measure of a market, however, comes when the stands have been dismantled and the meetings are over. Projects presented at MIA are not there simply to fill a five-day program: they arrive looking for partners, financing, buyers and a route towards production. The 2026 edition makes that practical purpose particularly visible, from the redesigned Co-Production Market and new gap-financing tools to Doc Connect, the Buyers' Club and the European Investment Hub.

That may ultimately be a better way to understand what MIA has built over twelve editions. Its real territory is the network of relationships that continues after everyone has left Rome.

An empire, after all, is easy to draw on a map. The harder part is making its roads lead somewhere.



Gaia Tridente



Alessandro Usai



Chiara Sbarigia

Rome's Busiest Time of the Year

One City, Three Major Events: One Market, Two Festivals. MIA | Mercato Internazionale Audiovisivo, Rome Film Fest and Alice nella Città turn the Eternal City into an October hub for the audiovisual industry.

by Antonio Bracco



Javier Bardem – Courtesy of Rome Film Fest

Academy Award winners Javier Bardem, Julianne Moore, Susan Sarandon, Taika Waititi and Yvett Merino are among the names heading to Rome this October.

October is once again an intense month for Rome's audiovisual scene. Alongside **MIA | Mercato Internazionale Audiovisivo** (Oct 19-23), the city turns its attention to the **Rome Film Fest** (Oct 13-25) and **Alice nella Città** (Oct 13-25), two events running simultaneously but with increasingly distinct identities. From **Hollywood stars** and **international premieres** to emerging filmmakers and major television launches, here are the highlights to watch this year.

The two festivals also have separate homes in the city: the Rome Film Fest is centered at the **Auditorium Parco della Musica Ennio Morricone**, while Alice nella Città takes place at the **Auditorium Conciliazione**, further emphasizing the independent identities the two events have developed over the years.

Who's Coming and What's Premiering at the 21st Rome Film Fest

Entering its 21st edition, the Rome Film Fest has spent much of its history searching for an identity of its own.

Launched in 2006 as Cinema. Festa Internazionale di Roma, the event subsequently adopted the more conventional name Festival Internazionale del Film di Roma before returning to the idea of a ***Festa***, literally a celebration of cinema rather than simply another stop on the international festival circuit.

Its timing has always been challenging. Coming shortly after Venice, Toronto and San Sebastián, and ahead of the Torino Film Festival, Rome occupies an already crowded stretch of the fall calendar. Successive artistic directors have experimented with different approaches, gradually turning the event into a valuable showcase for Italian films and television productions, complemented by international premieres, Hollywood stars, lifetime achievement awards and public conversations. Although an international competition returned in 2022, the audience-oriented character of the event remains central to its identity (the 2025 edition recorded an overall attendance of 116,503 people).

This year's biggest international honor goes to Oscar winner **Javier Bardem**, who will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award presented by Academy Award-winning director **Paolo Sorrentino**. Bardem will also accompany **Rodrigo Sorogoyen**'s ***El ser querido***, which arrives in Rome following its Cannes premiere.

Among the most recognizable Hollywood guests are **Jenna Ortega** and **Taika Waititi**, presenting ***Klara and the Sun***, the adaptation of **Kazuo Ishiguro**'s novel. **Jesse Eisenberg**, **Julianne Moore** and **Paul Giamatti** will attend with ***The Debut***, Eisenberg's latest directorial effort, which has already screened at Telluride, Toronto and San Sebastián. Rome is therefore another stop on the film's international festival tour, rather than its world premiere.

Other international guests include **Sandra Hüller**, **Tim Roth**, **Charlotte Gainsbourg**, **Louis Garrel** and **Camille Cottin**, while British producer **Tessa Ross** will receive the Industry Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by *Conclave* director **Edward Berger**.

Among Rome's confirmed world premieres is ***Le Fantôme de l'Opéra***, **Alexandre Castagnetti**'s new adaptation of the classic story, starring **Deva Cassel** and **Romain Duris**. **Tim Roth** will accompany the world premiere of **Bille August**'s ***Me, You***, based on **Erri De Luca**'s novel, while **Charlotte Gainsbourg** stars in **Philippe Parreno**'s ***Riverrun***, another world premiere.

Television will also occupy a prominent place in the program. **Marvel**'s ***Vision Quest*** will bring **Paul Bettany** to Rome for a special presentation featuring its first two episodes and a world-premiere preview of the third. Meanwhile, the second season of **Ryan Murphy**'s ***All's Fair*** will receive its world premiere, with **Kim Kardashian**, **Naomi Watts**, **Niecy Nash-Betts** and **Sarah Paulson** among the cast members expected on the red carpet.

Alice nella Città Steps Into the Spotlight With Stars, Premieres and New Voices

Running concurrently, Alice nella Città has developed a distinct identity of its own. Once integrated into the Rome Film Fest, the event is now an independent festival dedicated to younger audiences, emerging filmmakers and stories about childhood, adolescence and coming of age.

The opening film is ***Wildwood***, **Travis Knight**'s highly anticipated stop-motion fantasy from **LAIKA**, the animation studio behind *Coraline* and *Kubo and the Two Strings*. Based on **Colin Meloy**'s novel, the film will screen as a special out-of-competition event, accompanied by a dedicated installation.

Among the festival's most prominent guests is **Susan Sarandon**, who will present ***The Accompanist***, the feature directorial debut of *Silicon Valley* and *The Office* actor **Zach Woods**. Sarandon will also receive the Womenlands Excellence Award. **Barry Keoghan** is expected with ***Butterfly Jam***, directed by **Kantemir Balagov**, while **Jeremy Renner** will participate in a masterclass, receive a special award from the festival's Young Jury and present his memoir *My Next Breath*.

Alice's program also includes ***Making Marie Antoinette***, **Eleanor Coppola**'s documentary exploring the making of **Sofia Coppola**'s 2006 film, and ***Family Blend***, a miniseries in which **Francesca Scorsese** directs her father, **Martin Scorsese**. Oscar-winning Disney producer **Yvett Merino** will lead a masterclass and present the upcoming animated feature ***Hexed***.

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WHO IS HEADING TO LA?

The independent industry's global connections are clearly the way forward right now.

by Federica Pazzano

On the Western front, Americans are learning that independent films can find their first major international platform abroad before connecting with audiences and acclaim far beyond the US.

Anora headed to Cannes in May 2024 and won the Palme d'Or, then went on to win Best Picture at the 2025 Oscars. In between, it traveled to Telluride, Toronto, San Sebastián, New York, Busan, BFI and Rome Film Fest. After that, the list of US independent filmmakers, productions and distribution companies, choosing European festivals to introduce new work to an international audience got longer. The pattern continued in 2026. **James Gray**'s ***Paper Tiger***, a US-Brazil-Italy co-production (**AK Productions**, **RT Features**, **Leone Film Group**) that premiered in the Cannes Competition and is now heading to NY and São Paulo, and **Ira Sachs**' ***The Man I Love*** entered the Cannes Competition. **Jane Schoenbrun**'s ***Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*** opened Un Certain Regard, where Jordan Firstman's debut feature ***Club Kid*** also screened. At Directors' Fortnight, **Reed Van Dyk**'s American independent drama ***Atonement*** (shot between Dallas, TX and Jordan), had its world premiere. Later in the year, **Lance Oppenheim**'s ***Primetime*** and **Casey Affleck**'s Canada–US production ***Company*** premiered in Venice Competition. Together, these films show how European festivals remain a launchpad for American independent work seeking an international audience. The connections extend into production itself: ***Wild Horse Nine*** brought together the UK, US and Chile, while ***Ink*** joined partners from the UK, France and US; both launched at Venice in 2026. Meanwhile, US festivals such as Tribeca and Sundance are bringing carefully selected international films to American audiences.

The cultural distance between the Old World and the New World is narrowing as generations raised in a globally connected world come of age. **A24**'s ***Backrooms*** works as a perfect example: a story born from internet horror culture became a theatrical film with an audience already familiar with its unsettling world across borders. For these viewers, the cultural reference came first; the country where the film was made matters less.

Shared references may help a film cross borders, but reaching audiences still takes a network of people who can finance it, sell it and secure its release in each territory. That is where the festival circuit leads into markets like **AFM** or **Marché du Film**, and companies come together to work out what travels next—and how.

AFM's current participant tracking highlights 225 exhibiting companies already confirmed as of the end of September and more joining daily. The expected exhibitors' presence in Los Angeles from November 10 to 15 is particularly interesting for an analysis of who is betting on the independent industry right now. Europe will once again have a significant presence alongside major US sales, production and finance companies. Participating companies include **STUDIOCANAL**, **Gaumont**, **Charades**, **Pathé Films**, **mk2 Films**, **All Rights Entertainment** and **Playtime** from France, with **Unifrance** promoting the whole industry; **Beta Cinema**, **K5 International** and **Picture Tree International** from Germany; **Altitude**, **HanWay Films**, **Embankment Films**, **Protagonist Pictures** and **WestEnd Films** from the UK; **Film Factory Entertainment**, **Filmax** and **Latido Films** from Spain; **TrustNordisk** from Denmark; and **Anton** from Luxembourg. Italian participants are led by **Cinecittà** and followed by companies like **Minerva Pictures**, **FilmExport Group**, **IUVIT Media Sales**, **EDI Effetti Digitali Italiani**, and **Movimenti Production**.

The buying community is similarly global with 55 countries represented at the market and buyers already registered from across Europe, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and beyond. European participation is particularly strong from Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Italy, alongside buyers from the United States, Canada, Brazil, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and many other territories.

Seen from this perspective, the tighter collaboration between the AFM and Marché du Film – Festival de Cannes is a logical combination. The **Innovation Hub**, featuring emerging technologies, platforms, demonstrations and discussions, is brought to LA in collaboration with **Cannes Next**. Making its North American debut at AFM will be **Cinemas Club**, co-created by the Marché du Film and France's **Cine Group**, bringing exhibitors, distributors, producers and other leaders together to explore the future of theatrical cinema and the moviegoing experience.

Film commissions and location offices are also represented among AFM's exhibitors. The US contingent includes **Film Arizona**, **Film Santa Monica**, **Louisville Film Office**, **Orange County New York Film**, **West Kentucky Film Commission** and **West Virginia Film Office**. They are joined by **Film Commission Genova Liguria from Italy**; **Japan Film Commission** and **Tokyo Film Commission**; **Costa Rica Film Commission**; **Egypt Film Commission**; and **Thailand Film Office**. Through **LocationEXPO®**, these destinations become part of the conversation about where a project can be made and how producers can navigate local crews, services, incentives and regional funding.

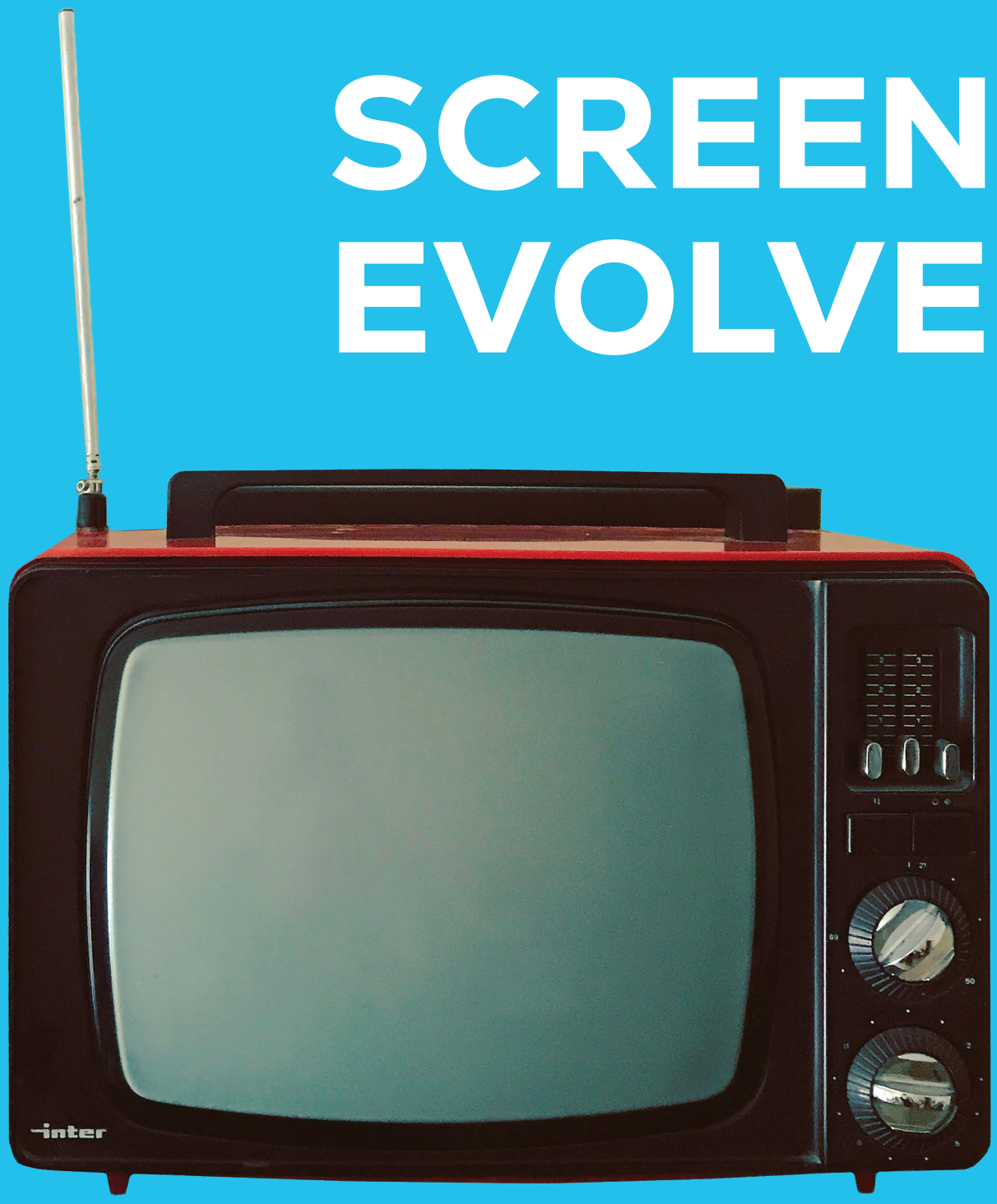
As locations increasingly shape production decisions from the outset, film commissions should seek a more structured presence at markets like AFM, with opportunities to meet producers early and explain how their locations, incentives and services fit into a project's financing plan. This is particularly valuable for European film commissions seeking to attract American productions.

Without a structured national public film funding and incentive system in the US, many independent producers struggle to close their budgets at home.

European locations and their associated incentives can therefore become part of the financing strategy from the outset. The bridge between the Old World and the New is no longer built at festivals alone, but at the tables where the next films are made.

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THE NORDIC MODEL
BUILT TO TAKE RISKS

by Davide Abbatescianni

At Haugesund, the "**Nordic Model**" looked less like a fixed formula than a system designed to absorb risk. Across **New Nordic Films** (August 25-28), projects moved freely between social satire, horror, fantasy, sci-fi, coming-of-age and politically charged genre work, suggesting an industry still willing to back singular ideas even as financing and distribution grow harder.

The slate was unusually bold. **Jens Lien**'s *Joe's Assignment* imagines a near future where automation has made human labor obsolete, using absurd comedy to ask what happens to identity once work disappears. **Nataša Urban**'s *Vagina Dentata* turns motherhood into body horror, while Finnish project *Elektra* explores ambition, power and inequality through a gaming environment. Danish-Norwegian-German *Anathema* probes belonging and the coercive logic of closed communities. **Vegard Dahle**'s zombie comedy *Grandmonster*, meanwhile, folds dementia, aging and horror into a nursing-home outbreak.

What makes such projects possible is not simply generous public funding, but the way Nordic structures can connect with financing systems elsewhere in Europe. **France**, this year's focus country, offered an especially revealing case study. Producers at Haugesund repeatedly described French and Nordic partners as culturally compatible, while also acknowledging the "Tetris" required to reconcile territorial spending rules, minority financing and multiple national funds.

Morten Tyldum's *Ibelin*, starring *Adolescence* actor-showrunner Stephen Graham and mounted across Norway, France, the UK, Belgium and the Czech Republic, showed how far that model can scale. The wider conversation around **CNC** support, **Eurimages** and minority co-production mechanisms pointed to a system whose strength lies precisely in its ability to combine national backing with international capital and production expertise, with panelists describing France as a particularly natural partner for Nordic producers — more so than established co-production territories such as Germany or Italy.

Distribution remains the harder part. A **Europa Distribution** case study contrasted the international success of **Joachim Trier**'s *Sentimental Value* with the more modest theatrical performance of **Hlynur Pálmason**'s *The Love That Remains*. The lesson was clear: the Nordic label still carries prestige, but festival acclaim alone does not convert into admissions. Local marketing, stars, release timing and long-term relationships with filmmakers remain decisive.

That tension may be the clearest definition of the Nordic model in 2026. It is not a machine for producing one recognizable kind of film. It is an ecosystem capable of financing creative risk, finding partners beyond the region and adapting each title to different markets. New Nordic Films itself opened with **Cristian Mungiu**'s Norwegian-Romanian *Fjord*, a co-production also involving France and other Nordic partners; fittingly, the market ended by rewarding *Grandmonster*, one of its most eccentric propositions. CV

"UN AVVINCENTE MIX DI IRONIA E AZIONE"

★★★★★
THE TELEGRAPH

"TAGLIENTE E PROFONDAMENTE EMOZIONANTE"
THE PLAYLIST

★★★★★
THE TIMES

"JOHN MALKOVICH E SAM ROCKWELL SONO SEMPLICEMENTE SUPERBI"
DEADLINE

★★★★★
TIME OUT



83
MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2026
Miglior Attore

JOHN MALKOVICH
SAM ROCKWELL
STEVE BUSCEMI
CON
TOM WAITS
E
PARKER POSEY

WILD HORSE NINE

SCRITTO E DIRETTO DA MARTIN McDONAGH



DAL **5 NOVEMBRE** AL CINEMA

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What the Future Holds for the Industry

YouTube Southern Europe Director Francesca Mortari on generative AI, creativity, and why technology can open new career paths.

By Valentina D'Amico

Think of Janus, the two-faced Roman god: looking forward while remaining firmly connected to its roots, riding the wave of artificial intelligence without abandoning tradition. That, in a nutshell, was one of the takeaways from the latest edition of the **Venice Film Festival**, which provided the setting for an unprecedented partnership between the **Biennale** (the organization behind the Festival) and **Google/YouTube**.

The collaboration included three days of meetings, events and announcements at the striking **Google Beach**, marking Google's first appearance as a sponsor of the historic festival.

"*We've been working with the film industry for a long time. When two organizations are in constant dialogue, it's only natural for that relationship to grow closer,*" explained **Francesca Mortari**, YouTube Director for Southern Europe. "*Especially when they share a common goal: developing the creative ecosystem. Following our presence at the Milano Film Festival and now Venice, we want to keep that conversation going. We're confident this will be the beginning of a long-lasting partnership.*"

The partnership between the Biennale and Google/YouTube marks something of a turning point: a "peaceful invasion" of one of cinema's most traditional spaces by the digital world. According to Mortari, however, the relationship developed organically.

"*YouTube plays a key role in the creative industry. And when we talk about the creative industry, cinema inevitably has to be part of the conversation. The connection between YouTube's digital world and the traditional world of the seventh art was inevitable. And, of course, we have to talk about artificial intelligence, which in this particular context can amplify the creativity of our content creators.*"

Google/YouTube's debut among the Biennale's sponsors is intended precisely to support this creative ecosystem, bringing cinema and digital media closer together while also addressing resistance to the use of **generative AI** with data.

In a survey conducted by **Public First** for Google in 2025—which measured businesses' views on AI, their use of it, and their plans to adopt it— researchers surveyed 2,348 businesses across 15 European markets:

> ***"YouTube is the world's largest digital stage. It gave rise to the creator economy, and without creators, the platform would not be what it is today."***

Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden. For Mortari, the study's most interesting finding concerns "*AI's ability to bring Italian content to international audiences. Italian cinema will no longer be constrained by borders because, thanks to AI and simultaneous translation, the visibility of Italian cultural content will increase by 540%, with an additional economic impact of around €2 billion.*"

After all, universality is at the heart of YouTube's identity. The platform's mission is "*to give anyone, anywhere in the world, the opportunity to tell their story. YouTube is the world's largest digital stage. It gave rise to the creator economy, and without creators, the platform would not be what it is today.*"

Cinema has also made extensive use of that stage, with a large number of movies now available on demand, either free or for a fee. But Mortari ruled out the possibility of YouTube moving into traditional film production, following the path taken by **Netflix**, **Amazon** and **Apple**.

"*Our business model does not include traditional production. We support creators through our platform and the tools we make available to them. In Venice, we presented two very important stories:* ***The Last Day of Ramadan*** *by* **theShow**, *which explores fasting in Italy and Morocco, and* **The Mad Honey of the Himalayas** *by Lati Umani, another original story revealing the existence of hallucinogenic honey in the Himalayas.*" These stories originate from human creativity, but their development and reach are being supported by the implementation of generative AI on a platform that continues to evolve.

And for those concerned about the potentially negative impact of artificial intelligence on employment, Mortari adds: "*There will be different kinds of jobs, jobs we can't even imagine today. The same thing has happened in the past: many jobs that are completely ordinary today simply didn't exist in 1945. I firmly believe that tomorrow we'll have the same opportunities for growth that we have experienced in the past, growth that has had a major impact on people's lives and on the economy. I'm optimistic. I believe AI will help us find new career paths.*"







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5 U.S. Productions Filmed in Italy

Italy as Hollywood for Major International Productions

by Monica Sardelli

The summer of 2026 belonged to The Odyssey, Christopher Nolan's epic about the adventures of Ulysses (played by Matt Damon) as he tries to return to Ithaca after the Trojan War.

His long journey is filled with trials—from Polyphemus and the Sirens to his encounter with Circe—before he is reunited, ten years later, with his beloved wife Penelope (Anne Hathaway) and their son Telemachus (Tom Holland).



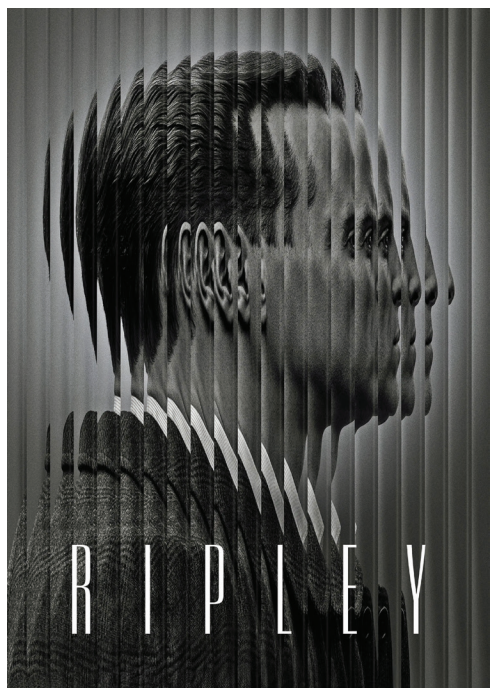
In 2025, Nolan filmed for 90 days over a period of around six months, working in six countries to recreate the settings of Homer's epic: the city of Troy in Morocco, the Cyclops' cave in Greece, the underworld in Iceland, as well as locations in Scotland, soundstages in California, and Italy. The production chose Favignana, in the Egadi Islands, to stand in for Ithaca, drawn by its wild, unspoiled landscapes, almost entirely free of modern buildings. Ulysses' home was recreated at Santa Caterina Castle, a 15th-century fortress approximately 314 meters above sea level, with panoramic views of the countryside and the Mediterranean Sea. With no road access, the fortress can be reached only on foot. The scale of the production was considerable: its crew included around 220 Italian and 250 international professionals. Filming also took place in the Aeolian Islands. Off Lipari are the rock formations of Pietra Lunga and Pietra Menalda—the "wandering rocks" of Book 12 of the Odyssey—and Pietra del Bagno, a shoal offshore where Ulysses' boat attempts to pass near the rocks of the Sirens.

HBO's ***The White Lotus*** (2022) chose a more glamorous side of Sicily. Set in a fictional resort chain, the series follows a new web of stories, intrigues, and mysteries each season. For its second season, the production moved



to Taormina. Its success with international audiences was such that tourists flocked to the luxury hotel featured in the series in the following months. The hotel is San Domenico Palace, a former Dominican convent founded in 1374 and expanded in 1896 when it was converted into a hotel. Its distinguished guests have included Oscar Wilde, King Edward VIII, Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, and Sophia Loren. Through the experiences of the hotel's guests, viewers also discover other parts of Sicily, from Noto and Palermo to Cefalù.

From south to north, we follow the enigmatic Tom Ripley (Andrew Scott) on his journey through Italy in **Netflix**'s adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. The book had previously been adapted



for the cinema in *Purple Noon* (1960), directed by René Clément and starring Alain Delon, and in Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), starring Matt Damon.

The story's expansion across eight episodes in ***Ripley*** (2024), together with its striking black-and-white imagery and Emmy-winning cinematography by Robert Elswit, allows time to take in the beauty of its settings: natural landscapes, city streets, and historic buildings in Rome and Naples. It is no coincidence that Dickie (Johnny Flynn), Ripley's antagonist and victim, prefers life in sun-drenched Atrani to returning to New York, as his wealthy family would like.

All information regarding the shooting mentioned and guidelines of Italian grants and tax credits are available on the Italy for Movies portal.
www.italyformovies.com

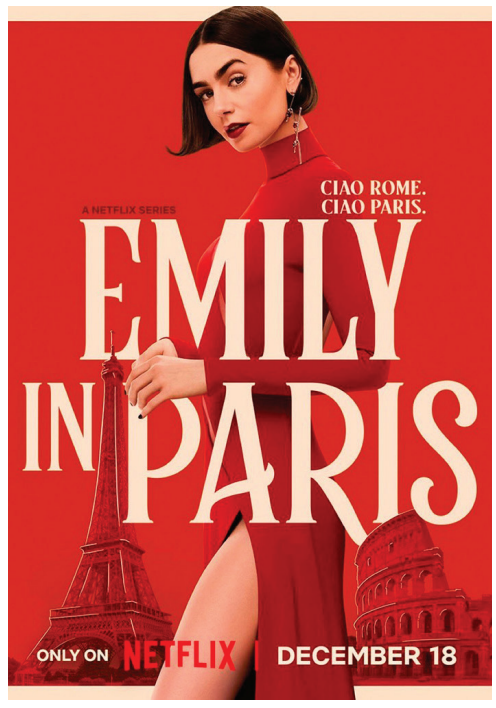
The series earned executive producer Enzo Sisti the **Italy for Movies Award** at the 2025 **Ischia Film Festival** for combining exceptional artistic quality with an appreciation of Italy's landscapes, architecture, and cultural heritage, helping strengthen the country's presence on the international audiovisual stage. The series moves through locations in Palermo, Atrani, Naples, Rome, Anzio, and Venice.

Italy is also a fashion capital. It was only natural, then, that **Meryl Streep**, **Anne Hathaway**, **Emily Blunt**, and **Stanley Tucci** would follow director **David Frankel** to Milan for the second installment of the iconic



2006 film ***The Devil Wears Prada***, arriving twenty years after the original. The Lombardy capital takes center stage through its Fashion Quadrilateral, the Brera Academy, and even a recreation of the interior of the Museo del Cenacolo Vinciano. Here, too, the production's ability to showcase Italian locations earned executive producer Enrico Ballarin (Mestiere Cinema) the **2026 Italy for Movies Award**.

From Paris to Rome: that is the journey taken by **Lily Collins** as Emily, the young, ambitious marketing executive from Chicago at the heart of ***Emily in Paris***. In the fourth season of the **Netflix** series, Emily takes a



Roman holiday worthy of Audrey Hepburn, visiting the Colosseum and some of the capital's most iconic sites. In the fifth season, however, Rome becomes a more permanent part of her life. Emily takes charge of Agence Grateau's new Rome office and faces fresh professional and romantic challenges as she adjusts to life in the capital. Through successes and setbacks, heartbreak and obstacles at work, she continues to live her own Italian "dolce vita," which also takes her to Venice.

These major Hollywood productions and international series show how Italy continues to offer far more than a remarkable variety of landscapes, cities, and historic sites as filming locations. Film and television also create new images of the country, bringing places and destinations to the attention of international audiences. This wealth of locations continues to generate opportunities for local communities and reinforce Italy's appeal as a destination for international audiovisual productions.

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The Branded Slice of the Pie

When Marketing Money Becomes Production Money

MIPCOM Cannes (October 12-15, 2026) is launching MIP BrandWorks, an initiative built around three main pillars: **Brand Showcase** will feature high-impact sessions connecting brands as commissioners directly with producers and creators; the **Curated Matchmaking** focusing on areas including microdrama and vertical series, another hot-topic market; and the **Brand x Creator Pitch Fest**, a live development marketplace that pairs global brands with top production companies and creators.

by Federica Pazzano

For an audiovisual industry struggling to make its financing and revenue models work, the arrival of a new source of capital is a big deal. That's probably why everyone is attempting to talk about it. The problem is understanding exactly what the boundaries are of the presence of a brand in an audiovisual product, as the line is thin - and sometimes very confused - between product placement, branded entertainment, creator-brand partnerships which also get in the middle of vertical entertainment formats, and brands that are currently investing in audiovisual products, the latter being the juiciest piece of the pie. Let's make some distinctions.

The main distinction is primarily economic. In branded entertainment, the content remains primarily a marketing tool: the brand pays for a story, film, series or creator-led project because it wants to communicate its identity, values or products to an audience. The return it seeks is largely marketing value — visibility, engagement and cultural relevance.

When a brand invests in entertainment, the relationship can be different. Its money enters the actual financing structure of a film, series or entertainment property, potentially alongside producers, distributors, platforms and other investors. The brand may participate in development, acquire rights, share ownership of the IP or have a stake in future revenues. The line between the two models is not always clear, and a project can contain elements of both. But the fundamental difference lies in the role of the money: is the brand paying to communicate, or is it investing in an entertainment asset?

The real significance of brands moving into entertainment may therefore lie less in their desire to become media companies than in what they can bring to producers: money. As broadcasters reduce commissioning, streamers become more selective and independent producers look for increasingly complex combinations of financing, brand investment could add another piece to the financing puzzle. Marketing budgets have traditionally sat outside the entertainment financing ecosystem, in the simple form of product placement; if even a fraction of that spending begins to flow into the development and production of films, series and original IP, brands could emerge as a new class of commissioner, financier or co-production partner.

Saint Laurent has effectively entered the film business through **Saint Laurent Productions**. *It is the first fashion house to count the full-fledged production of films among its activities*. The division, envisioned by the fashion house's Creative Director **Anthony Vaccarello**, is in line with *Vaccarello's assured steering of the brand into the future, while echoing the cinematic breadth and nuances of his collections*. ***Father, Mother, Sister, Brother*** by **Jim Jarmusch**, Golden Lion winner at Venice 82, is a Saint Laurent production. ***The Fence*** by Claire Denis, distributed by Goodfellas is also. And more, **Almodóvar**, ***Wong Kar Wai***, **Abel Ferrara**, **Sorrentino**, **Cronenberg**, **Audiard**, the list goes on. Vaccarello embarked on a trajectory into film production that shows the same good taste that the artistic director has demonstrated in luxury fashion. But is this enough to call it a success and replicate the model? Would such a refined film production company have a solid enough business model without the giant company behind it that generates billions in revenues from fashion product sales? The revenues of SL Productions don't look as shiny as the parent company logo. But who cares if they are bringing in a slice of that pie, right?

For sure, part of the return lies somewhere beyond the box office: in a form of cinematic brand building where the product is not shown off like a can of Coca-Cola in an 80s blockbuster, but the name Saint Laurent becomes associated with elevated storytelling, prestigious filmmakers and the cultural value of cinema itself.

Back to the point, is this a trend or a confused line with branded entertainment and content-creator partnerships?

Prada is playing the game too with the **Fondazione Prada Film Fund**. Another valid example that makes us hope for a better cinematic future. It supports 14 projects every year without any limitations in terms of geography, topics and languages for an annual allocation of €1.5 million. We would call it a little boost for independent films that fosters artistic freedom in the form of patronage, with the brand remaining completely in the background. The projects funded come from different regions of the world and span a diverse range of genres.

Chanel, **AMI Paris** and **Dick's Sporting Goods** are some of the other brands trying to play this game that we are still attempting to understand.

Are brands seeking new ROIs, trying to please a more refined audience with a discerning eye, or educating the audience of the future? We do not know yet. And perhaps, for an industry looking everywhere for new financing, that is not even the most urgent question. The interesting part is that some of that money is making its way into films. How big that branded slice of the pie can become is what remains to be seen.





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Who Gains Access at Toronto's New Market?

Industry voices share how TIFF: The Market's first edition opened doors to financing, co-production and international partnerships.

by Davide Abbatescianni

Backed by a C$23 million federal investment, the inaugural **TIFF: The Market** unspooled September 10-16, 2026, aiming to connect films, series and immersive projects with financing, production partners and international distribution.

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre was the main business hub, complemented by sales suites at the InterContinental Toronto Centre and Ritz-Carlton, and screenings at TIFF Lightbox and Scotiabank Theatre. TIFF's closing figures put Market attendance at close to **7,000 delegates**, against 5,000 industry attendees in 2025. The ambition was not merely to bring more people to Toronto, but to make the festival's established networks more accessible.

For **Niccolò Tubini**, Toronto's business potential extended well beyond selling films. The sales and acquisitions manager at **K+** returned with inquiries about production services in Italy, potential minority co-productions and conversations about the company's sales slate. International producers, including Canadians, had sought its expertise on medium- and high-budget productions, while K+ explored projects across film and television. Those discussions were not all concluded agreements. They nevertheless illustrate the range of work an industry gathering can generate. Interviews with producers, filmmakers and organizations suggest that its value depended not simply on attending, but on finding the right route into relevant conversations.

Tubini located that value both inside the market, through organized access, and outside it, through informal encounters across TIFF. He also saw the festival's engaged audiences as a way to assess a film's prospects: "*You can already get a concrete feeling of what, why and how a specific title could work!*" For a company spanning production services, co-production and sales, the opportunities were correspondingly varied.

For **Gaetano Maiorino**, head of international co-productions and a producer at **Tramp**, a selected project provided a more defined path. The company's series ***The Last One Standing*** participated in the International Financing & Project Market, giving him a full meeting schedule and useful feedback. "*The majority of my meetings were quite useful*," he said. His generally positive verdict was tempered by a venue that felt less crowded than expected and a desire for stronger connections between the festival and market.

Filmmaker **Anne Kmetyko** described a different experience. She did not feel the new setup had substantially improved her access to producers, financiers or other prospective partners, although she preferred it to the previous Hyatt arrangement. She wanted more filmmaker-focused meetings or pitching opportunities, clearer signage and scheduling, and fewer conferences competing for attention at the beginning of the event.

The contrast does not establish a universal divide between selected projects and other attendees. It does identify a practical question for the next edition: how readily can a filmmaker turn accreditation into a meeting relevant to their project? Maiorino's experience demonstrates the usefulness of a structured program; Kmetyko's raises the question of how accessible comparable opportunities are beyond it.

Jakob Abrahamsson, CEO of **NonStop Entertainment** and **Mylla Films**, offered another example of the production value available alongside acquisitions. Mylla's latest production, a surreal sci-fi comedy titled ***Arne Goes to Space***, played in the Discovery sidebar of the gathering. "*For Mylla we've had some really good meetings with Canadian producers*," he told us, noting an improvement on previous years. He wanted TIFF to develop those co-production opportunities between Canada, Europe and other territories, while making meetings fit more closely around screenings rather than competing with them.

DEALS ANNOUNCED DURING AND AROUND TIFF

We monitor the industry to stimulate international circulation of films and series titles during industry events.

by Federica Pazzano

River, Joshua Giuliano's horror film selected for TIFF's Midnight Madness, secured a reported $10 million-plus deal, with Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Atomic Monster acquiring rights from Independent Film Company and Shudder.

The Surgeon, Roshan Sethi's action thriller starring Michelle Yeoh, selected for TIFF's Centrepiece program, was sold by 193 and WME Independent to Sony Pictures, which acquired rights for North America, Latin America, Italy, China and Hong Kong following its festival premiere.

All About Corinne, Marc Fitoussi's comedy starring Isabelle Huppert, selected for TIFF's Gala Presentations following its Locarno premiere, was sold by Indie Sales to Cohen Media Group for US distribution.

Thirteen in Gaza, Hosam Abu Dan's drama selected for TIFF's Centrepiece program and represented internationally by MAD World, secured a deal with Watermelon Pictures for all North American rights following its premiere. The film also won TIFF's NETPAC Award.

Rapinoe, Rebeca Huntt's documentary selected for TIFF Docs, was sold through UTA Independent Film Group to HBO, which acquired North American television and streaming rights after its premiere.

Babies, Lauren Miller Rogen's comedy starring Anna Kendrick and Seth Rogen, selected for TIFF's Gala Presentations, secured international sales.

Ignition, James Erskine's thriller starring Maisie Williams, was sold by WestEnd Films to Saban Films for North American distribution.



His practical suggestions included restoring more frequent press-and-industry screenings and finding additional screening space near the existing venues. The point was not to separate the festival from its business functions, but to organize them around how participants actually work. For someone operating across distribution and production, watching films and finding future collaborators are connected reasons to be in Toronto.

For **Anne Lajla Utsi**, managing director of the **International Sámi Film Institute**, access also requires resources and preparation. Working through the **Indigenous Cinema Alliance**, the institute brought animated feature ***Saajve***, in production, and fiction projects ***Máttáráhkká*** and ***Porslin***, in development, to the market. Utsi reported useful connections and interest, but distinguished those first conversations from the financing and distribution opportunities they might eventually produce.

"*Participation also needs to be financially accessible,*" she said, pointing to travel, accommodation and accreditation costs for smaller companies and organizations. Better-prepared meetings with decision-makers whose resources match a project's needs, followed by sustained contact after the festival, would make that investment more meaningful. She also wants more Sámi and other Indigenous projects in the market's central financing activities and more filmmakers participating in its development labs.

This is not solely a question of increasing attendance. Utsi argued that Indigenous professionals should help shape the market's priorities and have access to its core financing and sales work. The right partners also need to understand language, cultural context and creative ownership. "*The real challenge now will be to see whether these connections lead to funded and completed films or co-productions,*" she said.

A more continuous route between events is already taking shape in the documentary sector. **Diana Sanchez**, president of **Hot Docs**, said its team used TIFF to meet international funding and promotion agencies and secure new delegations for the 2027 Hot Docs Forum. For Canadian documentary filmmakers, she sees the benefit in expanding the pool of potential international partners, not simply adding another date to the calendar. Sanchez also outlined the organizations' collaboration for 2027, presented during this year's market. Hot Docs will work with TIFF: The Market to select documentaries for its financing forum, while TIFF: The Market will co-host a networking event at the 2027 Hot Docs Forum. The arrangement connects two established communities through specific activities rather than treating them as competitors for the same projects and participants. "*The TIFF Market adds a pivotal layer,*" Sanchez underscored, offering filmmakers another point in the year to find support. She sees documentary's future in co-productions and partnerships, with both events helping bring the necessary people together. The proposed collaboration is therefore one concrete way to extend the work begun at a market beyond its closing day.

For companies such as K+ and Mylla, Toronto offered conversations spanning services, production and rights. For a selected project at Tramp, it offered a prepared agenda. For filmmakers seeking entry to those networks, the experience could be less straightforward. These accounts suggest that a larger market should be judged not just by how many professional groups it brings together, but by how effectively it connects their different needs.

The next stage is practical: clearer routes to relevant meetings, manageable participation costs and partnerships that continue between festivals. Toronto does not lack reasons for the industry to gather. Its new market's longer-term value will emerge when the projects discussed there secure partners, move into production and reach audiences. CV

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TECHNOLOGY

Cinema's Race for the Ultimate Image

From IMAX 70mm Film Grain to Pure Pixel Light

by Antonio Bracco

"As Nolan intended" was repeated so frequently online in recent months that it became a meme, but behind the joke was a significant phenomenon.

Christopher Nolan's ***The Odyssey*** turned **IMAX 70mm** into a global obsession. More than $66 million of the nearly $1.7 billion the film grossed worldwide comes from the 41 existing IMAX 70mm theaters. For months, Nolan turned going to the movies into something remarkably similar to the journey undertaken by his own Odysseus. Audiences were actively searching for a particular technology in order to experience a film. Film grain, the response of photographic emulsion to light and the physical scale of 70mm had become selling points again in an industry dominated by digital images.

At the other end of the spectrum is the attempt to bring the digital image to its maximum technological expression, moving from film grain to pixels and pure light. Resolution is only one part of that evolution. The real advances concern brightness, contrast, color, blacks and the consistency of the image across the entire screen. The objective is not simply to produce a sharper picture, but one with greater depth and a wider range between darkness and light.

And today this development is following two principal paths: increasingly sophisticated digital projection and cinema screens that generate the image themselves.

Projectors: from film grain to pure light

4K RGB laser projection represents one of the most advanced versions of the first approach. Instead of traditional lamps, these projectors use dedicated red, green and blue laser light sources, offering audiences brighter and more consistent images, richer colors and improved contrast. Manufacturers such as Barco and Christie are developing systems for both conventional auditoriums and Premium Large Format screens, while Dolby Vision pushes laser projection further towards HDR, expanding the difference between deep blacks and bright highlights.

The benefit for the viewer is immediately understandable without knowing what is happening inside the projector: dark scenes can retain more detail, bright areas can have greater impact and colors can appear more vivid while the image remains consistent throughout the screening. It is still cinema projection in the traditional sense — light travels across the auditorium and reaches a screen — but technologically it is a very long way from illuminating a strip of film.

Screens: when there is nothing left to project

How about removing the projector entirely? Direct-view LED cinema systems such as Timewaying HeyLED, Samsung Onyx and LG Miraclass turn the screen itself into the source of the image. Millions of pixels generate their own light rather than reflecting light coming from a projector, allowing for very deep blacks, high brightness and particularly effective HDR images. For audiences, this can mean stronger contrast, greater clarity and an image that remains bright and uniform across the screen.

For exhibitors, it also opens up new possibilities in auditorium design because there is no projection beam and potentially no traditional projection booth. These technologies are still far less widespread than conventional digital projection, but installations are appearing in different international markets as cinema operators explore premium experiences capable of distinguishing theatrical viewing from increasingly sophisticated home displays.

The Investment Is the experience

This is ultimately where apparently opposite technologies converge. Around the world, exhibitors are investing in Premium Large Format auditoriums, laser projection, HDR-capable systems, direct-view LED screens and upgraded sound, not simply to advertise better specifications but to reinforce the value of going to the cinema.

Nolan's IMAX 70mm belongs to one extreme and an HDR LED cinema screen to the other. One celebrates a physical strip of film and its grain, the other transforms digital data directly into pixels of light. Yet both make the same argument for theatrical exhibition. Cinema continues to be rewarded when technology increases the immersiveness and distinctiveness of the experience. Whether that image comes from film grain or pure-light pixels, what matters is that when the lights go down, the screen can still offer something worth leaving home for.

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ANIMATION

Closing Financing Gaps and Seeking Distribution

This year, **MIA | Mercato Internazionale Audiovisivo** presents a brand-new **Animation Series Gap Financing Market**, open to animated series projects from all over the world that are already supported by broadcasters or commissioners and have significant financing in place. The program includes Decision Makers from **BBC Studios**, **ZDF Studios**, **France Télévisions**, **Gulli/M6**, **RTS – Radio Télévision Suisse**, **DR Børn**, **RTBF**, **Paramount**, **RAI**, **YLE**, **Blue Ant Media**, **DeAPlaneta**, **Federation**, and **Studio 100**.

For preschoolers, the selection includes ***Coco Yoko***, produced by Pipeline Studios and Zumbastico, a Canadian-Chilean co-production that encourages children to observe nature with curiosity and respect and learn to coexist with other living creatures; ***What's Up Eesha?***, a French-Belgian production by TeamTO Films and Umedia, centered on an independent young penguin and the comic adventures she shares with her friends; ***Cloudy & Stormy***, produced by Laniakea Pictures, a dialogue-free comedy about two kawaii-style puppy sisters with very different personalities; and ***Mini Missions***, produced by 20 Pictures to Midnight, which brings children closer to nature through scientific explorations of plants, animals and the ecosystems around them.

For school-age children and family audiences, the selected projects are **Barry Loser**, produced by BL Entertainment, part of Big Little Fish Television, an animated British comedy based on Jim Smith's bestselling books; ***Doggyworld***, produced by Pipeline Studios and Zumbastico, a Canadian-Chilean co-production that explores city life from the perspective of a country dog; ***Stories On The Road***, produced by La Sarraz Pictures, an animated journey through Italian myths, traditions and folklore; ***Little Heroes***, a French-Spanish co-production by Fabrique Fantastique and Peekaboo Animation in which two siblings travel back in time to meet notable historical figures as children; and ***Pet Pals in Dragon Land***, produced by Gruppo Alcuni, a fantasy adventure spin-off of the popular *Pet Pals* series. ***Little Heroes*** celebrates role models from different cultures, backgrounds and abilities, showing children that anyone can make a difference.

For kids and tweens, the selection includes ***DragoXP***, a Finnish animated comedy produced by Anima Vitae about a thirteen-year-old who is drawn into the world of the online game he is obsessed with; ***Myth Club***, produced by Cartobaleno, about five preteen mythological characters training to become heroes and gods; ***Mega Tree Majokko***, produced by Gigaciao, featuring three imperfect magical heroines in a world where technology has transformed nature; ***Bibioz Mysteries***, produced by Druzina Content, a Brazilian supernatural adventure comedy exploring identity, belonging and acceptance; and ***Sophie, If You're There Give Us a Sign!***, an Italian-Belgian-Spanish co-production by Brand-Cross, 20 Pictures to Midnight and Digitoonz Entertainment, a gothic supernatural story about grief, family and a girl trapped in a dangerous world of ghosts that encourages audiences to look beyond prejudice toward those who are different.

For teen and young adult audiences, the selection comprises ***Juniper Mae***, an Italian-British co-production by BBC Studios and Movimenti Production following a young inventor who embraces her creativity and becomes an unexpected heroine, challenging conventional gender roles; ***To Be Tween***, produced by Graphilm Entertainment, an anthology addressing contemporary adolescent experiences including social withdrawal, eating disorders and cyberbullying; and ***Rapunzel***, produced by Hathor Filmes, a Brazilian musical fantasy about a sixteen-year-old confronting social restrictions, the music industry and the supernatural power of her hair. Rooted in Black culture, the series tells a story of racial empowerment. ***Occupation: Witch***, a co-production involving Greece, Ireland, Moldova and Portugal led by Lazy Sunday, is a fantasy adventure about political conspiracies, conflict and a young witch's search for her own path. Representing Africa is ***Captain Shedeed***, an Egyptian stop-motion series produced by Divine Touch Productions. Its protagonist is a father who discovers extraordinary powers as he tries to save his daughter and stop a biological threat that endangers children.

What Stood Out at Cartoon Forum

By Monica Tasciotti

Despite the considerably smaller selection, the reported number of participants remained more or less unchanged at Cartoon Forum 2026 according to the numbers reported. The project attracting the highest number of buyers at Cartoon Forum 2026 was ***Emma Makes Waves***. Created by Italian artist Giulia Iacopini, with the support of French producer La Cabane Productions, which discovered her online, and Belgian producer Thuristar. The pitch attracted 214 attendees, ranking first among projects involving at least two countries and second for buyer attendance, with 84 buyers. ***Ernestine***, based on the award-winning debut graphic novel by French cartoonist Salomé Lahoche, who drew inspiration from iconic series such as *BoJack Horseman* and *The Simpsons* to create a decidedly unconventional character for young adults, caught the attention of 65 buyers. Also original is ***The Roots of My Hair***, an adaptation of the colorful graphic novel by French author and illustrator Lou Lubie. Its original French title, Racine, conveys more clearly the connection between hair roots and one's roots of origin. The six 13-minute episodes tell a story of liberation and reclaiming one's identity, aimed at teenage girls. French companies Gao Shan Pictures and Bigger than Fiction are producing.

An Italian project, ***To Be Tween*** (8x30') grew out of the multiple award-winning anti-bullying TV special *To Be*, created for Rai Kids by Maurizio Forestieri and Anna Lucia Pisanelli of Graphilm and now developing it as a 3D series that expands the range of social issues it addresses to include, for example, incel culture—associated with "involuntary celibates"—and gender-based hatred.

Read the full report by Monica Tasciotti at cinema.video

ANIMATION NEXT: ITALY

Italian animation gets the spotlight in the **Animation Next: Italy** export-oriented showcase at MIA 2026, designed to promote Italian productions and co-productions of animated series ready for prebuys or sales. This year's selection includes:

GMO Travels — Studio Campedelli
Mazukta & Shambabukli — Polydont Films
Melody & Momon — Mobo, Dami For Content, Xentrix, 20STM
Mindtoonness — Enanimation
Mr. Rossi - Modern Times — Studio Bozzetto
Pet Pals Return — Gruppo Alcuni
The Triplets — Peekaboo Animation, RainFrog, Sardinha em Lata

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FILMS TO BUY

Under the Spotlight

Atonement

by Reed Van Dyk

Following its world premiere at Cannes' **Quinzaine des Cinéastes** and North American premiere at the **Toronto International Film Festival**, ***Atonement***, the war drama by Oscar-nominated writer-director **Reed Van Dyk**, returned to Dallas, one of the film's principal shooting locations alongside Jordan, for a special local screening presented by **Katie Schuck** of the **Dallas Film Commission**, in collaboration with **DIFF Dallas International Film Festival**. The homecoming took place at the **Texas Theatre**, the landmark Oak Cliff movie palace that opened in 1931 and became part of American history as the site where Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Today, the restored venue remains an important part of Dallas' film culture and a center for collaboration among local institutions and distributors.

The Dallas event brought Palestinian actress **Hiam Abbass** (*Succession*), writer-director **Reed Van Dyk** and producer **Steven Demmler** to the Texas Theatre for the screening and a Q&A session.

Atonement marks the feature directorial debut of Van Dyk, whose short *DeKalb Elementary* was nominated for an Academy Award. Inspired by real events and based on Dexter Filkins' 2012 *New Yorker* article, the film stars **Boyd Holbrook**, **Hiam Abbass** and **Kenneth Branagh**, among others.

After filming, *Atonement* began its international festival journey with its world premiere on May 15 at Cannes' Quinzaine des Cinéastes. It continued with its North American premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, followed by the Dallas screening. In July, **Kino Lorber** acquired North American distribution rights ahead of the film's US theatrical release beginning **October 2, 2026**, while Goodfellas handles international sales.

The film was produced by **Star Thrower Entertainment** and **Redline Entertainment**, with **Talon Entertainment** and **Synergics Films** as co-producers. Production took place in Dallas and Jordan, combining the Texas shoot with filming in the Middle East. The Dallas portion of the production was hosted by **South Side Studios**, located just outside downtown Dallas. The facility underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation backed by the city and state as part of efforts to attract new productions to the Texan city. The investment, alongside the revitalization of state incentives and increased support from the Dallas Film Commission, is aimed at using film and television production to generate greater economic activity locally. *Atonement* has now given those efforts international visibility through its Cannes and Toronto premieres, while new projects are already heading to Dallas, including another title from the same director-producer duo, Reed Van Dyk and Steven Demmler.



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FILMS TO BUY

Under the Spotlight

LIFE IS LIFE

By Riccardo Milani

Following its domestic box-office success, **Riccardo Milani**'s ***Life Is Life*** (*La vita va così*) continues its international journey, with sales to 30 countries, theatrical releases across several territories and selections at major international film festivals.

The film was produced by **Ourfilms** (a Mediawan company) and **Wildside** (a Fremantle company), in association with **PiperFilm** and **Medusa Film**, in collaboration with **Circle One** and **Netflix** with the support of the **Italian Ministry of Culture – Directorate General for Cinema and Audiovisual** in collaboration with the **Sardinia Region**. International Sales handled by **PiperPlay**.

Presented as the Opening Film of the **Rome Film Fest** last year, the title launched internationally at the **International Film Festival Rotterdam**, where it premiered in the Limelight section.

Life Is Life was released theatrically in Italy on October 23, 2025 (Medusa), grossing over **$8M** domestically and recording over one million admissions.

The film received a theatrical release in Belgium and the Netherlands on July 22, 2026, through **Arti Film**, achieving particularly strong results with more than €420,000 at the box office and nearly 45,000 admissions.

Life Is Life has also been released theatrically in the United States on May 1 through **Distrib Films**, in Poland on June 9 through **Best Film**, and in Greece on September 3 through **Weird Wave**.

In Latin America, the film was the most-watched title at the Italian Film Week in **Buenos Aires**, held in early September, and is scheduled for a theatrical release in Argentina on October 8.

Alongside its theatrical releases, *Life Is Life* has continued to travel through the international festival circuit and Italian cinema showcases around the world. In addition to Rotterdam, the film was presented in the Spotlight section at **Filmfest München** and selected for the Boom Generation section of the **Warsaw Film Festival**.



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ROME

A Bit of Audiovisual History

European Audiovisual Observatory

Making Sense of the Industry

by Antonio Bracco

If you've been working in the audiovisual industry for a while now, and are therefore a seasoned professional, try to cast your mind back to the late 1980s and remember how you kept yourself informed at the start of your career, back when your hair wasn't grey yet.

Some of you probably used to leaf through *Sight & Sound* or *Screen International* in the UK, *Cahiers du Cinéma* or *Première* in France, *Rivista del Cinematografo* or the newly launched *Ciak* in Italy, *epd Film* in Germany, *Fotogramas* in Spain. As the decade turned into the early 1990s, more trade-oriented publications began to emerge, as attention gradually shifted from the film review to news about a sales deal, the week's box office takings, or a new state funding scheme. In the same years Cinema & Video International was coming to life (it was 1996).

General audiences read the glossy magazines with stars on the cover (which today aren't necessarily in the best of health), while those working in the industry had to get hold of, often at a price and weeks behind schedule, trade association bulletins, exhibitors' reports, and sheets of box office figures gathered city by city. A job made up of newspaper clippings, phone calls and, if you were lucky, a subscription to a trade magazine that arrived in your letterbox (more or less) on time.

Yes, it was a different world. No phones in your pocket, no perpetual connection. If you weren't physically at the Marché du Film in Cannes or the European Film Market in Berlin, finding out what sales agents had sold, which co-productions had been closed, or which titles were the hot properties of the market could take weeks. Weeks.

You had to wait for the news to appear in a trade magazine, for someone to tell you about it over the phone, for a printed press release to do the rounds of the newsrooms. And the decisive piece of technology, the one that really made the difference between being up to date and being left out, was certainly not a website or an email. It was the fax machine. The revolution in professional information for the European audiovisual industry ran through the noisy, slow and futuristic fax.

In an industry increasingly built on international co-productions — which in the 1980s were starting to multiply precisely in response to the growing fear of competition from commercial television and the VHS boom — this fragmentation of information had become a serious problem.

Every country had its own data, its own sources, its own methods for tracking box office results, often incompatible with one another. If an Italian producer wanted to understand how the public support system worked in Germany, or a French distributor wanted to know how well the Spanish home video market was really performing, there was no single place to find that data in comparable form.

It was precisely to meet this need that the idea of the **European Audiovisual Observatory** was born. The seed was planted during the European Audiovisual Assizes of 1989, a meeting convened to respond to the crisis facing European film and television production, which had been pushed into a corner by fierce competition from the United States and Japan. The Audiovisual Eureka program was set up, and on 15 December 1992 it led to the official founding of the Observatory, based in Strasbourg, in an Art Nouveau villa that still houses it today. At the time of its founding, there were thirty Member States, plus the Commission of the European Communities. Today there are forty-one (the forty-second being the EU, represented by the European Commission).

Try to picture its early days. A body created with the mission of collecting, analysing and distributing data on the European audiovisual industry, at a time when it didn't even have a website to publish that data on. In its first years of activity, the Observatory still relied on print publications, periodic bulletins and a network of national correspondents gathering information country by country — the very same craft-like work that, until then, every single trade publication had been doing on its own, but now finally brought together into a system, made comparable, made transparent.

The Observatory's original mission was, and still is today, to bring transparency to the European audiovisual market. Over more than thirty years of activity, that mission has evolved into a very concrete range of online tools, designed for those who work in the audiovisual industry every day.

At its core is the **Yearbook**, the annual report that gathers comparable data on cinema, television, video and on-demand services across Europe. Alongside it is **LUMIERE**, the database on admissions to films released across the continent, and **LUMIERE VOD**, which tracks the availability of European works on streaming platforms. On the regulatory side, the **IRIS** publication series (from the monthly IRIS Merlin newsletter to the more in-depth IRIS Special and IRIS Plus reports) tracks the evolution of national and European audiovisual legislation, while **MAVISE** catalogues television channels and VOD services operating in over forty countries, with information on ownership, licensing and target audiences.

Attention to today's most pressing issues is constant: from reports on cinema and TV market trends to the latest analyses on the impact of artificial intelligence on copyright. The European Audiovisual Observatory produces more than thirty publications a year, in English, French and German, aimed at an audience ranging from industry professionals to lawmakers, as well as market operators who need to make decisions based on real numbers. After all, we said it right there in the title: this is one organisation the audiovisual industry simply can't do without.





The Two-Year TV Experiment

by Luca Milano

Thirty years ago, **Rai Cinemafiction** was created within Italy's public broadcaster. Its life lasted only two years, but its impact was far greater than its short existence might suggest. The structure helped lay the foundations for the transformation of Italian television scripted programming, turning TV dramas into a central part of Rai's strategy and contributing to the growth of an independent production sector that would become increasingly important in the following decades.

The project, bringing together drama and film under the same structure, was launched in 1996. The idea may seem obvious today, but at the time it represented a significant change. Rai Cinemafiction viewed original content not only as an editorial priority, but also as an industrial asset. A broadcaster could maintain a strong position in a rapidly changing media landscape only by producing or commissioning its own premium content and building a library that could generate value over time. The principle later summed up by the expression "*Content is king*" was already at the heart of the project.

This approach produced a series of long-running successes. *Un medico in famiglia*, adapted from the Spanish format *Médico de familia*; and *Don Matteo*, the detective series centered on a priest which became one of Rai's most enduring franchises. Both series have attracted massive audiences over the course of more than 260 prime-time episodes each — and *Don Matteo* is still in production. The most significant international example was *Inspector Montalbano*, based on the novels by late novelist Andrea Camilleri. First broadcast in 1999, the 28-film series grew increasingly successful over the years, with reruns often drawing more than 10 million viewers. It also became one of Italy's major television exports, reaching more than 65 countries, including the UK, the US, and Australia. It was one of the first examples to demonstrate that a strongly local story, language, and setting could become an international asset rather than a limitation.

By 1998, the experiment came to an end, but its legacy survived in the creation of Rai Fiction and Rai Cinema, which are still the two major pillars of Italy's scripted and film production. That brief experiment created a model: a public broadcaster working systematically with independent producers allows the creation of original local stories and supports a sustainable industrial ecosystem.

Curated by Daniel Popa



VENETO
VENICE & BEYOND

Every year, the world's film industry comes to Veneto. From September 2 to 12, 2026, the Lido hosted the 83rd Venice International Film Festival, organized by La Biennale di Venezia and directed by Alberto Barbera. For the region hosting the festival, the event is also a showcase. At the Hotel Excelsior, the **Regione del Veneto** and the **Veneto Film Commission** ran the **Spazio Regione Veneto** throughout the festival, with more than **80 events**: screenings, press conferences, panels, presentations, awards and meetings for schools. This year's central moment was set for September 9, with the panel *Working Together For Cinema: The Role Of The Regions*. It was scheduled to bring together culture councillors from several Italian regions and **Federico Mollicone**, President of the Culture Committee of the Chamber of Deputies.

Beyond the festival, the Fondazione Veneto Film Commission, based in Venice, supports productions all year round. Its services are free for productions filming in the region. They include help with permits to use public land in the seven provincial capitals (Venice, Belluno, Padua, Rovigo, Treviso, Verona and Vicenza), location manager days and overnight stays, allocated by the Commission per project, and promotional support for Veneto productions selected at major international festivals.

In 2026, the Region's production call, financed through the European Regional Development Fund, is worth **€3.68 million** across two windows. It is open to film production SMEs based anywhere in the EU, and it offers productions with environmental certification non-repayable grants of up to €250,000 for features, €350,000 for series and €36,000 for documentaries, shorts and XR works. The second window runs from **December 1, 2026 to February 2, 2027**. In addition, a new €100,000 Development Fund supports Veneto-based companies, and a Location Scouting Fund covers transport, hospitality and location manager costs during pre-production.

The results are already visible. According to the Region, the first 29 works it supported, with about €4 million, generated **€12 million** in economic impact in the region. Long after the festival crowds leave the Lido, the work continues. The Region expects to invest about **€30 million** in the sector between 2018 and 2027.



CALABRIA
STRATEGY PAYS OFF

The **Calabria Film Commission** has drawn up a project to develop the regional film and audiovisual district and promote the region:

More than **100 productions supported** between 2022 and 2026 and the significant economic and employment benefits demonstrate how the strategic vision that integrates production, industry, training, theater protection, and tourism promotion is pointing the way for the region's development.

Over the last four years, incoming investments have reached a total value of just over **€16 million**, with a direct impact on the regional economy of approximately €23.5 million: "*Every €10 spent by us has turned into €14.50 spent locally.*" Sixty-one percent of the production days supported took place in Calabria; 47% of the workforce, approximately 2,500 out of 5,000, are local professionals; the artists, approximately 900 out of nearly 1,500, represent 61% of the resources employed.

Investment in festivals and events throughout Calabria for the "Bella come il cinema" project, averaging 24 annual events for 122 editions, amounted to €3 million over the four-year period, generating a total expenditure of **€7 million**.



PIEMONTE
AT THE FESTIVALS

Following the region's prestigious presence at the recent Venice Film Festival, **Film Commission Torino Piemonte** confirms its leading role in Italian cinema with 9 projects - 6 features and 3 documentaries - takes the spotlight in Rome. From ***Brianza*** by **Simone Catania**, which opens the Rome Film Fest's International Competition, to ***Idda*** by **Irene Dionisio**, the opening film of Alice nella Città, and ***Giorni Felici*** directed by **Susanna Nicchiarelli**: a varied range of productions and filmmakers spanning the entire program.

Regional Councillors **Marina Chiarelli** and **Andrea Tronzano** said: "*After our record presence at the Venice Film Festival, the nine titles selected across the Rome Film Fest and Alice nella Città are further confirmation of the growth of Piedmont's audiovisual sector. Five features are supported by the Piemonte Film Tv Fund, and four productions involved the Film Commission's regional network, bringing filming to several municipalities across the region. These figures measure the effectiveness of a system that can support projects from development through production while generating jobs, skills and benefits for local communities. The continuity between Venice and Rome strengthens the Region's decision to invest in the audiovisual sector as a strategic cultural and economic industry for Piedmont.*"

"*The Piedmont Cinema System is an important driver of development, with significant economic benefits for the region,*" said **Marco Gilli**, President of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo. According to **Beatrice Borgia** and **Paolo Manera**, President and Director of Film Commission Torino Piemonte: "*It is an outstanding result, the fruit of a clear strategic direction pursued under the banner of internationalism, quality and responsibility.*"

TOSCANA
DOUBLES DOWN ON ANIMATION

Toscana Film Commission was also among the Italian institutions in Toulouse. Animation is now an established presence in the region, and the commission has begun collaborating with Cartoon to support new talent. At the next Cartoon Springboard (Madrid, November 4–6) the Florence-based commission will present a new call for applications. This will be the second call, opening in November, for the free six-month **Animation AI Product Manager Lab**. The course combines online teaching with in-person sessions in Prato and Pistoia, with support from the **European Social Fund** and in collaboration with **Cartoon Italia**, the association of Italian animation producers.

Martina Capaccioni of Toscana Film Commission also announced that a new **€4 million production funding call** will open by November. The maximum awards will be €250,000 for feature films and TV series, €25,000 for short films and €20,000 for documentaries.



ÎLE-DE-FRANCE

HALF THE PICTURE

More than half of France's filming happens in one region. In 2025, **Île-de-France** hosted nearly 10,100 shooting days, over 50% of the national total. Its film and audiovisual sector employs 160,000 people across 6,700 companies.

At the heart of that activity is **Film Paris Region**. Created in 2004 as the Paris Region Film Commission, it became part of **Choose Paris Region**, the region's international attractiveness and promotion agency, in 2019. Its role is to support French and foreign productions, promote the region's ecosystem, and bring the industry together.

In practice, the commission offers a database of more than 2,600 locations, a directory of about 700 service providers, and connects productions with the filming permit offices of every town in the region. In 2025, it supported 228 projects: 34 feature films, 44 series and single TV films, and 150 short-form projects, including 29 international productions.

Funding comes from the Région Île-de-France, which invests an average of **€24 million** a year in the film and audiovisual sector and supported 131 works in 2025. Its Production Fund offers grants of up to €600,000 for films and €500,000 for TV works, plus bonuses of up to €100,000 for exceptional expenses, eco-production and innovative technology such as visual effects. Since 2025, these awards are investment grants that no longer have to be repaid. In 2026, the Region also added a bonus for original music created locally.

For international co-productions, the key tool is the **International Fund**. Created in 2020 for co-productions where the French share is a minority, it requires at least €100,000 of spending in the region. In return, it covers up to 50% of that spend, capped at €250,000, from an annual envelope of €1.5 million.

On top of regional support, international projects can access **France's Tax Rebate for International Productions** (TRIP), run by the CNC. It returns 30% of qualifying French spend, or 40% when French VFX spending exceeds €2 million, up to €30 million per project.

Finally, Film Paris Region brings the industry together each year at the **Paris Images Production Forum**.



PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

FINAL CUT

Filming in the region dates back to 1895, when the Lumière brothers filmed *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (*L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*). More than a century later, productions arriving in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur follow a well-mapped route, and it starts with a single contact.

That contact is the **Commission régionale du film**, a service of the **Région Sud** and a member of the national Film France network. Rather than working alone, the Commission leads and coordinates around 17 local film commissions and film offices, from Marseille, Nice and Aix-en-Provence to Arles, the Var, Luberon-Vaucluse, Toulon and the Southern Alps. In other words, wherever a production lands, a local contact is already waiting.

From there, the search for the right setting begins, and the choice is wide. The Region counts 2,500 hours of sunshine a year and 883 km of coastline, along with calanques, the Camargue marshes, lavender fields, the perched villages of the Luberon and the snow-capped Alps. When a shoot needs to move indoors, the region has options too, including Studios de la Victorine in Nice, Provence Studios in Martigues and La Bastide Rouge in Cannes, alongside post-production studios.

Of course, none of this happens without financing. In partnership with the CNC, the Region offers production grants of €100,000 to €250,000 for feature films and animated features, up to €150,000 for TV series and TV animation, and up to €100,000 for video games. Production companies from outside the EU apply through their French co-producer, and in return, spending in the region must equal at least 160% of the grant.

Beyond live action, animation stands out. The Region has supported it since 2010, and its animation fund, now worth €1.4 million, has financed more than 100 projects. On top of that, three new funds launched since 2024 have added €525,000. The sector draws on 15 regional studios and two schools, MOPA in Arles and ENSI in Avignon.

From the Lumière brothers' train at La Ciotat to today's network of local film offices, the region has long welcomed the camera.

Curated by Daniel Popa



ANDALUCÍA
A STRONG PRESENCE

Andalucía Film Commission hosted the professional cocktail reception Andalucía, Destino de Cine during the 74th San Sebastián International Film Festival. The gathering aimed to showcase the region's strengths as a filming destination and foster exchange among professionals, production companies and institutions from the Andalusian audiovisual sector.

Andalucía Film Commission president Carlos Rosado and director Piluca Querol welcomed guests alongside Agus Jiménez, director of the Asociación Andaluza de Productoras de Cine de Ficción, Documental, Animación y Seriado (ANCINE); Marta Velasco, president of the Academia de Cine de Andalucía; and Victoria Fernández Andrino, director of the Audiovisual Unit of the Junta de Andalucía's Andalusian Agency for Cultural Institutions.

The speakers highlighted the growth and diversity of Andalusia's audiovisual industry, the capabilities of its companies and professionals, and the wide range of locations that make the region stand out as a filming destination within Spain.

Andalucía Film Commission also underscored the work it has carried out since its inception with the Regional Ministry of Tourism, Justice, Deregulation and Administration to promote Andalusia as a destination for shoots and screen tourism through Andalucía, Destino de Cine and the strategy La Gran Ruta de Cine por Andalucía, which invites visitors to discover the region through its settings, heritage and the stories filmed there, via screen-tourism websites, routes, maps and apps.

The event also emphasized the importance of the festivals held in the region and the involvement of the organizations and institutions working to strengthen the sector and consolidate Andalusia's presence at leading national and international industry events. It further served as an opportunity to share information on the activity of the Andalusian audiovisual sector and to strengthen ties with professionals attending the Festival.

As part of its professional agenda in San Sebastián, Andalucía Film Commission also attended the presentation of the II Estudio del impacto económico, social y territorial de la producción audiovisual en España, commissioned by Spain Film Commission from Olsberg·SPI, which is working in collaboration with the Spain Film Commission Chair in the Film Production Industry at Pablo de Olavide University, as well as specialists from universities, companies and organizations representing the audiovisual sector. Funded by the Secretary of State for Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (SEDIA), the study will cover the 2023–2025 period and significantly expand the scope of the first report.

This year, Andalusia's presence in San Sebastián was further strengthened by the participation of an Andalusian delegation in Meet Them!, an initiative of the San Sebastián Festival's Industry Club designed to connect emerging producers with national and international industry professionals. The delegation's participation is backed by the Andalusian Agency for Cultural Institutions through its Audiovisual Unit.

The delegation comprises ten Andalusian production companies: Radioactividad Creatividad Audiovisual S.L.; Costas Films, represented by Paola García Costas; La Sobremesa Films; Rakia Films S.L.; ENTREFRONTERAS / AliquinDOC; Las Afueras Films S.L.; Nana Films; EGOA Producciones S.L.; Producciones La Cochera; and DANIDOGFILMS S.L. Taking part in Meet Them! gives them access to the Industry Club's professional activities and to the Festival's main industry programming, offering these emerging companies an opportunity to expand their professional networks, connect with the national and international industry, and explore new avenues for collaboration, co-production and financing.

Andalusian productions also feature prominently in this year's lineup. The Official Selection's special screenings include Sacamantecas, directed by David Pérez Sañudo and produced by La Claqueta PC, and Bajañí, directed by Fernando Trueba, produced by Womack Studios with the participation of Canal Sur.

They are joined by other Canal Sur-backed productions in the Made in Spain section, including Iván & Hadoum, by Ian de la Rosa, produced by Pecado Films; El abrazo de los peces (15 años después), directed by Chema Rodríguez and produced by Kuántika Films; and 200 vidas, Paco Rabal, directed by Seville-born filmmaker Vanesa Benítez and produced by Málaga's José Antonio Hergueta. Meanwhile, the documentary Caja de resistencia, directed by Alejandro Alvarado Jódar and Concha Barquero Artés, screens in the Jóvenes, cine, memoria y democracia section.

This presence reflects the creative diversity of Andalusia's audiovisual sector, with projects that demonstrate the capabilities of its production companies and the talent of its professionals in developing work that travels to major festivals.

Granada's locations also reached San Sebastián's screens with La bola negra, a film partly shot in the Andalusian city that is closely tied to the legacy of Federico García Lorca. Directed by Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi, winners of the Best Director award at Cannes, the film recently won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival and has been selected by Spain's Film Academy to represent the country in the Best International Feature Film category at the 99th Academy Awards.

Its participation in the San Sebastián Festival allows Andalucía Film Commission to continue promoting the Andalusian audiovisual industry, supporting the visibility of its companies, professionals and diverse locations, and reinforcing Andalusia's position as a filming destination — activities carried out in collaboration with the Junta de Andalucía's Regional Ministry of Tourism, Justice, Deregulation and Local Administration and with Radio y Televisión de Andalucía (RTVA).



SCOTLAND

IN CONFIDENCE

Finding the right location in Scotland starts with a free, confidential service. The Screen Commission, part of Screen Scotland, offers a fast, free and fully confidential locations service to help incoming productions make the most of the country. Screen Scotland itself sits within Creative Scotland and is funded by the Scottish Government and the National Lottery.

From there, the support builds step by step. For example, the Commission manages a database of location images, tells productions which location managers and scouts are available, and provides information on local crews, talent and facilities. It also works with regional film offices and national partners such as the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and Transport Scotland. In some cases, it can even help with recce funding and accommodation deals.

When it comes to money, productions in Scotland can claim the UK-wide Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit, at 34% for film and high-end TV, 39% for animation and children's TV, and 53% for independent films. On top of that, Screen Scotland runs its own funds. The Production Growth Fund targets large-scale film and TV projects with a minimum Scottish spend of £2 million. In addition, the Project Post Fund offers grants of £5,000 to £100,000 for post-production and VFX completed in Scotland.

Studio space is growing too, from FirstStage Studios in Leith and Wardpark in Cumbernauld to Glasgow's Kelvin Hall and The Pyramids in Bathgate. Meanwhile, recent returning series include The Traitors, Vigil, Shetland, Outlander: Blood of My Blood and Netflix's Dept. Q.

Looking ahead, Screen Scotland aims for the sector to contribute £1 billion to the Scottish economy by 2030/31.



LIVERPOOL

PLAYING EVERY PART

Liverpool can play many roles. Its streets have doubled for London, New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Berlin, Moscow and Madrid. Behind those transformations is the Liverpool Film Office, a department of Liverpool City Council and, since its founding in 1989, Europe's first film office.

What the Office does best is make filming easy, and its core service is free. Its team handles location finding, permissions, liaison, traffic control and parking, and helps productions source local crew and suppliers. In addition, it manages a free locations database, a crew database and a directory of film-friendly local businesses, from extras agencies to post-production studios. It even runs an introductory service for hotels and serviced apartments. Its reach covers the six boroughs of the Liverpool City Region: Liverpool, Wirral, Sefton, Knowsley, Halton and St Helens.

Permits follow the same one-stop approach. Filming on council land, buildings or public highways requires permission, with at least five working days' notice. Production companies registered in the city region pay no permit fee.

Beyond locations, the Office also manages The Depot, with two purpose-built stages of 20,000 sq ft each.

Liverpool also offers something different: investment. The Liverpool City Region Production Fund, supported by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, invests £100,000 to £500,000 per project in features and scripted TV. Rather than a grant, the investment is typically equity, recouped from revenues with a share of profits. It usually covers no more than 20% of the budget. To qualify, at least half of the financing must already be in place, and productions must keep a staffed base in the region through prep and shooting. Relaunched in autumn 2025, the fund backed its first feature, A Town in Nova Scotia, starring Bill Nighy, joining earlier investments such as This City Is Ours, The Responder and Time.

The results are measurable. Between 2019 and 2025, 1,607 productions filmed in the region, adding £150 million to the local economy and creating 5,408 full-time equivalent jobs. Today, the Liverpool City Region is the UK's most filmed area outside London, with credits including The Batman and Peaky Blinders.



NORTHERN IRELAND

BIG STAGES, SMALL MAP

The country the most compact 5,196 square miles of back-lot in the world. Within that space, productions can move between coastlines, villages, mountains, glens and loughs, as well as cities whose architecture runs from Victorian red-brick to 21st-century glass and steel. Behind that offer is **Northern Ireland Screen**, the national screen agency, funded by the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities. Its stated goal is for Northern Ireland to have the strongest screen industry outside London in the UK and Ireland.

The agency's main tool for producers is the **Northern Ireland Screen Fund**. It offers a recoupable award with profit participation, or in limited cases a grant, designed to close the gap on productions that are almost fully financed. Accordingly, projects must already have at least 65% of their funding in place.

On top of that, qualifying productions can claim the **UK-wide Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit**, at gross rates of 34% for film and high-end TV, 39% for animation and children's TV, and 53% for independent films.

Studio space has grown too. **Belfast Harbour Studios** offers more than 107,000 sq ft of sound stages, and its second phase opened in autumn 2024. Meanwhile, **Titanic Studios** combines the original Paint Hall with the Hurst and MacQuitty stages, and **Studio Ulster** specializes in large-scale virtual production.

The results show. Between 2022 and 2026, productions backed by Northern Ireland Screen generated more than **£477 million** for the local economy, beating a £442 million target. Credits include *Derry Girls*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Blue Lights* and *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*. Just as importantly, 73% of heads of department and 88% of crew on major productions are now resident in Northern Ireland.

Looking ahead, the agency's new strategy, The Full Picture, launched in April 2026, promises stronger ties with major studios and streamers, plus an all-island approach that encourages projects to use incentives on both sides of the border.



SAUDI ARABIA
KINGDOM OF LOCATIONS

Saudi Arabia aims to position itself as a global destination for film production. The **Saudi Film Commission**, a government body under the Ministry of Culture, leads the effort. Founded in February 2020 and based in Riyadh, the Commission regulates the sector, trains local talent and promotes Saudi cinema at home and abroad. Its production incentives run through the Film Saudi program, managed via the film.sa portal.

The main draw is a cash rebate of up to **60%** of eligible production expenses. The update also brings faster payments to ease cash flow for producers, and a new model for managing and disbursing incentives, being launched with the Cultural Development Fund. The program covers feature films, feature documentaries and animated features.

International companies can apply through a local entity or an official co-production agreement with a licensed Saudi company. The incentive agreement must be signed before filming begins. The rebate is usually paid after the Commission approves a final audit of the production accounts.

The program also offers non-financial support. The Commission works with the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Investment, and with customs and civil aviation authorities, to help productions obtain permits and approvals. It also organizes scouting visits for international productions. Its online location database covers deserts, mountains, volcanoes, caves, islands, coastlines, green spaces and historical sites across regions from Al Bahah and Hail to Aseer, Tabuk and the Eastern Province. A service provider directory lists crew, equipment rental, VFX, animation, logistics and casting companies in Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam and AlUla.

The updated rebate is part of the Commission's wider plan to build an integrated production ecosystem covering infrastructure, production services and national talent development, in line with **Saudi Vision 2030**.



ABU DHABI
POINTS OF VIEW

In Abu Dhabi, the more a production embraces the emirate, the more it can earn back. The **Abu Dhabi Film Commission** (ADFC), part of the **Creative Media Authority** (CMA), has offered a cashback rebate since 2013. From January 1, 2025, its base rate rose from 30% to 35%.

On top of that base, productions can reach up to 50% through a points system. For example, featuring Abu Dhabi on screen earns 20 points. Filming a TV series entirely in the emirate earns the same, as does hiring a UAE National as writer, director, stunt coordinator, stunt performer or lead cast. Similarly, content reflecting UAE history, culture, identity and values adds 10 points, and so does completing full post-production locally. Meanwhile, feature films gain one point per main-unit shooting day, up to 60. As a result, 15 points unlock a 40% rebate, while 85 or more reach the full 50%. However, the enhanced rate applies only to narrative, animated and IMAX features, high-end TV drama, narrative TV and animation.

In addition, rebates are capped at $10 million for features, IMAX films and high-end TV drama, $2 million for TV series and entertainment shows, and $500,000 for short-form content. Qualifying spend covers below-the-line costs such as crew, locations, equipment, construction and post-production. Fees for above-the-line talent such as producers, directors and lead cast do not qualify, but their flights, hotels and per diems while working in Abu Dhabi do.

To apply, productions work through a CMA-licensed company and must submit at least 30 business days before shooting. Once the final certificate is issued, payment follows within 30 business days.

Beyond the rebate, ADFC provides free scouting assistance and helps with shooting permits, visas and customs clearance. Productions filmed in Abu Dhabi include *Dune*, *Dune: Part Two*, *F1*, *Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

According to the CMA, the scheme supports a local ecosystem of more than 800 media companies and a 1,000-strong freelancer pool. Full guidelines and applications are available at film.gov.ae.



DUBAI
DOUBLE FEATURE

Dubai's film and video game industries now share a single commission. Established under the **Dubai Media Council** following Law No. 29 of 2024, the **Dubai Films and Games Commission** (DFGC) succeeded the former Dubai Film and TV Commission with a mandate that covers both industries.

As a result, the DFGC sets regulatory frameworks for film and gaming, oversees digital platforms for producing and distributing both, and promotes local films and games in international markets. In addition, it organizes events, training programs and workshops, and produces sector reports and data to guide policy.

On the film side, the Commission has been busy on the international circuit. For example, a DFGC delegation attended the Cannes Film Festival in May 2026, where the Commission said it continues to explore additional incentives for larger international productions. Earlier that year, it ran a Talent Development Programme with the UK's National Film and Television School and Prime Video, helping Dubai-based writers and producers develop scripted TV series. Meanwhile, recent international productions serviced in Dubai include Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan: Ghost War.

Gaming, however, gets equal billing. In August 2026, the DFGC led Dubai's pavilion at Gamescom in Cologne for the first time.

Then, in September 2026, the two sectors met at the **Arab Media Summit**, where the DFGC organized a dedicated **Films Forum and Games Forum**. Topics ranged from co-production and investment to talent development and emerging technologies.

Ultimately, Dubai's pitch rests on speed. According to the Council, studios choose the city for its processes, infrastructure and access to markets, not for cost factors alone. As **Nehal Badri**, Secretary General of the Dubai Media Council, put it, "*Dubai is no longer just a backdrop.*"



POLAND

THE NATIONAL LINK

From period architecture to modern cityscapes, and from forests and mountains to the coastline, Poland offers a wide range of settings within relatively short distances, according to the **Polish Film Institute** (PISF). At the center of the country's production offer is the Institute itself. Based in Warsaw, it is Poland's national film body, supporting Polish film from development to production and running the national production incentive.

The headline is a **30%** cash rebate on eligible Polish production costs. Set in national law and funded directly from the state budget, the rebate is administered by the Institute. It covers feature films, animation, documentaries and series, including fiction, animated and documentary series. It is also open to Polish productions, international co-productions and production services for foreign projects. In addition, at least 10% of each year's budget is reserved for animation.

International producers need a Polish partner or a company registered in Poland. A service company can only receive support when neither the producer nor any co-producer is based in Poland. Projects must also pass a cultural qualification test, which looks at Polish or European cultural heritage, a story set in Poland, and the use of Polish crews, service providers and film infrastructure. Support is capped at PLN 15 million (about €3.5 million) per production and PLN 20 million (about €4.6 million) per applicant each calendar year. Beyond the rebate, the Institute also connects producers with the regions. Through its portal, **Polish Film Commission**, it presents a network of regional film commissions and funds that support productions at every stage. For example, the **Łódź Film Commission**, set up in 2009 as the first of its kind in Poland. Similarly, the **Kraków Film Commission**. Meanwhile, **Wrocław**, **Poznań**, **Mazovia Warsaw** and **Silesia** run their own commissions.

A network of regional film funds adds its own money. They usually open competitions once a year and can cover up to 50% of a film's budget, with higher shares possible for documentaries and animation. In several regions, including **Łódź**, **Małopolska**, **Mazovia**, **Silesia** and **Lower Silesia**, the commission and the fund work side by side.



HUNGARY

THE FULL EQUATION

Blade Runner 2049, *The Martian*, *Dune*, P*oor Things*, *Alien: Romulus*: all appear on the National Film Office's list of client productions. Behind them sits an incentive that has operated for more than 20 years, and a national film body that brings the whole industry together.

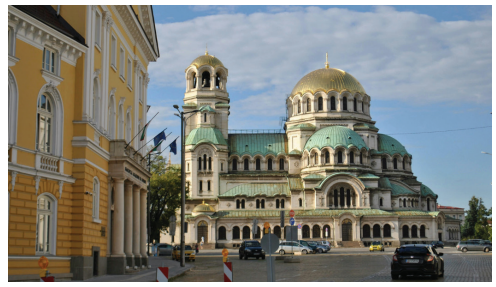
That body is the **National Film Institute – Hungary** (NFI). Besides managing the incentive, it presents Hungary to international producers as a destination where, in popular Budapest alone, productions can find everything from dramatic history and flamboyant architecture to healing thermal waters and opera houses. In addition, the NFI runs its own studio complex, **NFI Studios** in Fót, just outside Budapest. According to the NFI, its expansion, relaunched in early 2025, added four new 2,500-square-meter soundstages, bringing total studio capacity to 12,670 square meters.

The incentive itself is simple. Films for cinema and television produced in Hungary are eligible for a 30% rebate on all direct production costs spent in the country. Non-Hungarian costs can also be added, up to 25% of the Hungarian spend, which extends the rebate to 37.5% of eligible Hungarian spend. Approved by the European Commission, the scheme is secured until the end of 2030.

Hungarian companies that support films receive tax relief in return, while the State guarantees the support through a collection account managed by the NFI. Productions then receive a cash refund after spending. For 2026, the account makes HUF 70 billion available, about **€191 million**.

Meanwhile, the National Film Office runs the system day to day. It registers production companies, certifies costs and issues the tax certificates. Foreign producers work through an assigned Hungarian production company, and every film must pass a cultural test based on European standards. Royalties and producers' fees are each capped at 4% of the Hungarian budget, reality shows, soap operas and commercials are excluded, and principal photography must begin within six months of registration.

Today, after more than 20 years, the NFI still calls the incentive the driving force of the Hungarian film industry.



BULGARIA

EURO VISION

February 2026 marked a turning point for Bulgaria's film incentive. That month, the Council of Ministers raised the maximum rebate per project up to **€5 million**. That makes the cap five times higher, and it is now set in euros. The goal, according to the government, is to attract more high-budget international productions.

Behind the change is the ***Bulgarian National Film Center*** (NFC), the state agency that funds Bulgarian cinema and administers the country's 25% cash rebate. Under the **Film Industry Act**, productions can recover up to a quarter of their eligible costs incurred in Bulgaria. The scheme covers feature films, documentaries, animation, and films and series made for TV or streaming, provided they pass a cultural test and are made wholly or partly in the country.

Producers, co-producers and service companies registered in Bulgaria, the EU, the EEA or Switzerland can apply. So can companies from other countries, once registered for at least two years. Meanwhile, a foreign producer without a European partner can apply through a Bulgarian service company, which becomes the applicant.

The process follows three stages. First, the project is registered and approved by a commission. Next, within twelve months, the applicant applies for the rebate amount, with all Bulgarian costs fully financed. Finally, once production wraps, the rebate is claimed and a decision follows within a month. Applications are handled in the order they arrive, and work must begin only after the first application is filed.

Beyond the cash rebate, the NFC has built a practical tool for international producers: **Filmcenter.bg**. The platform brings together searchable databases of locations, crew, companies and actors, as well as job listings, in one place.

So far, the approach is working. According to the NFC, the scheme brought more than BGN 170 million (about **€87 million**) in foreign investment to Bulgaria between 2022 and 2024. Projects supported include Disney's *Young Woman and the Sea* and *Hellboy: The Crooked Man*. With a higher cap now in place, Bulgaria is making room for bigger productions.

Curated by Daniel Popa



LITHUANIA

THE SECOND CITY

Kaunas aims to become an attractive filmmaking destination. Lithuania's second-largest city is showcasing its unique architectural heritage and creative potential to international and Lithuanian filmmakers. It is backed by its own film office and by a national incentive that drew a record €25.6 million from Lithuanian companies in 2025, nearly 42% more than in 2024. Among the official bodies supporting production are: the Kaunas Film Office in Kaunas, the Vilnius Film Office in the capital, and the Lithuanian Film Centre, which administers the national incentive.

THE CITY

Kaunas sits at the confluence of the Nemunas and Neris rivers, 100 km from Vilnius, and in 2023 its interwar modernist architecture was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. According to the city, it is becoming an increasingly popular destination for filmmakers, with both modern and historical districts suited to film and advertising projects.

Productions are welcomed by the Kaunas Film Office, part of the public institution Kaunas IN, which creates favorable conditions for business, tourism, film and international marketing in the city. The office provides comprehensive support, from obtaining permits to handling logistics and arranging local services. In practice, it supplies detailed information on filming conditions and regulations in Kaunas and the surrounding region, and it takes care of all the necessary permits. It also carries out location scouting and management, and acts as an intermediary between local authorities and filmmakers. In addition, it shares information on all services related to filmmaking.

The city's filmography shows the range on offer. Productions made in Kaunas include Jonas Åkerlund's series Clark, Jérôme Salle's Kompromat, Young Wallander: Killer's Shadow and the documentary series Rise of the Nazis.

THE COUNTRY

Like the rest of Lithuania, Kaunas points producers to the national Film Tax Incentive, administered by the Lithuanian Film Centre, a budget institution under the Ministry of Culture. In effect since January 2014, the incentive offers the opportunity to save up to 30% of the film production budget through a private investment scheme. Unlike a traditional rebate, the money comes from local businesses. Companies allocate funds to film production on a non-repayable basis, in exchange for a reduced corporate income tax. The incentive applies to funds provided for film production until December 31, 2028.

The incentive is available for feature films, TV dramas, documentaries and animated films, including domestically produced films, co-productions and commissioned films produced under a service agreement. At least 80% of eligible production costs must be incurred in Lithuania, and total eligible spend there must be no less than €43,000. Films must also meet cultural content and production criteria. Foreign filmmakers have to cooperate with a local production company, which submits the application and takes responsibility for finding a local donor. Producers may apply at any time during the year.

In 2025, 108 films benefited from the incentive: 68 national films, 21 co-productions and 19 service projects, with service projects receiving €16.7 million. According to the Centre, foreign filmmakers spent nearly €56 million in Lithuania that year. The largest investment, €6.9 million, went to the first season of the US series Star City, followed by the German series Mozart/Mozart and the Netflix-produced Polish film Riot (Bunt). Since 2014, Lithuanian companies have provided more than €133 million in investments, supporting 669 films in total.

THE CAPITAL

In Vilnius, the Vilnius Film Office, a public company of Vilnius City established on November 23, 2011, provides free location permits, free shooting in public places, location scouting, and contact details for film and media professionals, service companies, production facilities and equipment. Its locations guide ranges from the Old Town, castles and mansions to modern architecture, industrial sites, socialist modernism, natural landscapes and the lake region of Lithuania.

The capital also offers the Vilnius Film Fund, Lithuania's first city-level film financing initiative. It invests in documentary, animated and feature-length co-productions that unite Lithuanian and international filmmakers, with a total annual allocation of €150,000 and a maximum investment of €30,000 per project. Applications require prior approval and funding through the Lithuanian Film Centre within the current or preceding calendar year. Projects are evaluated on criteria including how they incorporate Vilnius into the narrative and engage local creative talent, vendors and suppliers.

For Laimonas Ubavičius, Head of the Lithuanian Film Centre, the incentive consistently strengthens Lithuania's position as "an attractive film production hub in the region."

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