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FNE Europa Distribution: Distributor of the Month: Sylvie Leray, Artcam, Czech Republic

by [Iulia Blaga](#)



FNE and [Europa Distribution](#) are launching a new chapter in our Distributor of the Month section focusing on new trends and challenges of film distribution. In the coming months we will talk with European distributors about the digital single market and VOD, trying to understand how they see the future through these lenses.

This month we speak with Sylvie Leray, Managing Director of [Artcam](#) since 2015. Film Distribution Artcam is a fully integrated distribution company focusing on independent and art house films based in Prague. Artcam runs also an art house theatre with 100 seats located in the historic center of Prague, and it also started production activity in 2015.

Artcam distributes in cinema theaters art house movies that are often awarded at the biggest international film festivals and that are distinctive European and non-European alternative titles.

It has released so far almost 100 titles, such as *Buena Vista Social Club*, *Mulholland Drive*, *Oldboy*, *Coffee and Cigarettes*, *Antichrist*, *White Ribbon*, *A Separation*, *Apollonide*, *Persepolis*, *No*, *Mommy*, *Jimmy P.*, *Dior and I*, *Marguerite*, *Mustang*, *James White*, and it will release soon *Long Way North*, *Viva*, *The Dancer*, *The Salesman* and *Fire at Sea*.

FNE: What impact would the digital single market have on your work?

Sylvie Leray: This is one of my daily concerns in 2016, because the schedule for releases and runs have been affected and changed by the increasing activity of VOD. The different windows of releases (theaters, VOD, SVOD, TVOD, TV, DVD) are closer in time than a few years ago, so they force us to consider the VOD release when we buy a movie and to be flexible with our schedule.

It is necessary to manage a complete catalogue available on different online platforms daily, to work on the rights, licenses, exclusivities, end of rights, attendance, results, reports, fights against piracy - it's a real expertise !

FNE: How important is VOD for your business? Does it bring in an important part of your income?

Sylvie Leray: The presence of films on the VOD market extends their runs, including the financial income. I've always seen VOD as a future important part of our business - we have even substituted the releases on DVD by VOD activity. The DVD market is hardly profitable for us. The costs are high, while the VOD represents a small additional cost for a distributor. Our income from VOD is about 20-25% compared to revenues from theaters.

FNE: Where do you see VOD five years from now?

Sylvie Leray: Theatrical releases and VOD shouldn't cannibalise each other, even if they are simultaneously activated by the distributor. It has to be a way for a film to maximise its chances to succeed, to meet all its potential audiences, or to get new audiences.

People want to see the films they're interested in, and they want to see them now. But if you don't allow them to see a film until a few months after the theatrical release, they will find other ways of watching it, in most cases through piracy.

Teenagers consume online music as a radio station; they have a payed subscription and launch the playlist as they would switch on the radio. Films start to be consumed that way too. Early theatrical and VOD releases (day-and-date) target an optimised visibility in order to meet the expectations of all audiences. Their relation to time and screens evolves and can give different potentials to movies.

Despite this, larger release, promotion and advertising costs mobilise limited or marginal extra costs, according to the distribution market, concentrated on a short period of time and shared between different windows of exhibition. Making a film available both in theaters and on demand comes with few extra costs for distributors.

In Europe the questions in front of us are for sure the cross-border content, services and cross-border portability. That means allowing consumers to access through payed subscriptions online content such as TV, films, music, wherever they travel in the EU. Although its flexibility and potential makes VOD appealing to consumers and distributors of audiovisual content throughout Europe, the impossibility to launch a cross-national service represents a huge barrier and it slows down its development.

FNE: How can VOD distribution for independent European films be improved?

Sylvie Leray: A successful VOD run and a successful theatrical run don't have to be mutually exclusive. One of the benefits of a day-and-date release is that the publicity surrounding the theatrical release is also helping the VOD platforms. You can still be successful in both realms if you have the right marketing campaign, the right film and the right release strategy. We should be creative!

FNE: What was your biggest hit in the last 12 months? Did you use any particular strategy?

Sylvie Leray: In 2015 we experienced a simultaneous day-and-date release with the documentary *Dior and I* by Frederick Cheng. The film was successful in cinema theaters - it was even our film with the longest run in theaters in 2015, with more than six months in many theaters. It was a simultaneous success on VOD too with up to 30% of total income.

We had a clear strategy for the theatrical release, focusing on a large event organised with Maison Dior, and we also organised a two-days film festival about fashion designers. For the VOD release

we gave exclusivity to a platform and we developed an advertising campaign together.

And recently we tried a reverse strategy of day-and-date release with Felix Van Groeningen's *Belgica*. The film is available on Netflix since April 2016, so we chose to wait two months for the theatrical release until the [Karlovy Vary IFF](#). During the festival a big event was organised with the director and the singer of the soundtrack attending, and an industry party on the theme of the film took place. Events can't be organised for the VOD, they support the theatrical release. Some few special screenings in bars, concerts venues and alternative locations were also successfully organised.

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