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Watershed July 2010 Podcast

Many apologies for the delay in getting this podcast to you. My excuse is that I have been jumping about Europe talking about and presenting Watershed as a case study. Why, you may ask, is Europe interested in what we are up to at Watershed? Well, it's to do with the impact of digital in general and how the internet is affecting cinema.

In Bologna at the Europa training sessions during Il Cinema Ritrovato I gave a talk about Watershed's **Decalogue** strand, our yearlong look at the first decade of the second century of cinema, as a way in which the internet can be used to engage audiences and publish talks and discussions. Basically, the films being screened as part of the strand become a route via the internet to have a wider engagement and discussion with you about cinema. It is my contention that audiences are interested in discussing issues and ideas generated by films as they are being entertained by them. The internet affords an exciting way to do this.

See www.watershed.co.uk/decalogue to get involved in the debate.

At the beginning of July I was at a conference as part of the Belgian Presidency entitled 'Towards a Global and Coherent Approach to European Cinema'.

I was speaking on a panel looking at 'The Role of Public Funding at all Stages of the Cinema Creation Chain' alongside Ken Loach's producer Rebecca O'Brien, a Dutch distributor, Unifrance – the French film export agency, the French Technicians Union and Aviva Silver, Head of the Media Programme for the EU.

What is obvious from the discussions is the way the Internet and digital - platforming, publishing and piracy - is challenging and changing the traditional model of the film business. The EU wants to explore these emerging new models and how they themselves might strategically support and indeed regulate the new media landscape. It's a difficult balancing act – regulation would seem to be anathema to the Internet - but clearly the cycle of film and audiovisual creation

needs to be financed and if traditional income streams are drying up - where is the money to come from?

Rebecca O'Brien talked about their pilot of trying to publish Ken Loach's films online via YouTube. They are streamed so you cannot download and they are geo-locked. The theory is that if other people are going to pirate and publish your work – usually in a diminished quality – why not take control of the process and publish yourself. What is interesting is that Rebecca is also asking the online community would they pay? And if so how much? So in effect the producer is talking directly to her audience. The consequence of publishing online was a spike in sales of Loach DVDs!

However her recounting of this was like a firecracker going off in the heart of Europe: "How could an auteur like Loach have his work made available free online via YouTube? Doesn't this not only diminish him but the cultural and financial value of his work and also the status of cinema going?!"

My own response was that it was great the films were available as it only increases the awareness of Loach and an appetite for his cinema. I remain convinced that when I screen a retrospective of Loach with his new film **Route Irish** an audience will want to see the films on the cinema screen even if they have watched them on the computer. Rather than diminish it, it makes them more accessible and I believe audiences will also want to experience them in the cinema. Personally I am looking forward to seeing **The Gamekeeper**, a film Loach made for television in the 80s which I would otherwise not be able to see...

If you go to youtube.com/user/KenLoachFilms you will find the site.

There were three panels and the other two were: 'How Can European Cinema be promoted through on-demand services?' and 'Cinema – Between Culture and Industry'. The results as it were and some of the presentations will be made available on the website: www.colloquemons2010.be/site/-Site-anglais,1908-

Back at Watershed, well online at **DShed.net**, we have published a few pieces which should hopefully be of interest. First we put together a retrospective of French director **Claire Denis** in June to tie in with the release of her new film **White**

Material which was released in the UK on 2nd July. As part of the retrospective we were hoping to get her to Watershed however this proved to be complicated so we went to London to interview her. You can watch the interview at dshed.net/intense-intimacy-cinema-claire-denis.

Also as part of the festival of ideas we had author **Clay Shirky** at Watershed discussing his new book about creativity and generosity in the connected age. We transmitted it live to Cornerhouse in Manchester and had the audience tweet questions and comments. The results can be seen at dshed.net.

Finally a word for the late great rebel **Dennis Hopper** – he was and is an icon of independent cinema. We are screening four of his classic films on Sunday lunchtimes throughout July. I had the great privilege of seeing Hopper in conversation with Wim Wenders and Wenders recounted the story of when they were making **The American Friend**. He was due to pick up Hopper at Hamburg airport from a flight from the Philippines where Hopper was on the set of **Apocalypse Now**. Hopper came off the plane dressed exactly as he was in Apocalypse Now complete with three cameras round his neck. He had been seriously bitten by insects in the jungle and was probably kept going by the alcohol and drugs in his system. Wenders took him straight to the hospital where fortunately they specialised in tropical diseases. Whilst shooting **The American Friend** Hopper's shambling method approach was seriously clashing with Swiss actor Bruno Ganz's classical style. The story is they came to blows. Hopper thought he should get his act together and dropped the partying for learning his lines meanwhile Ganz thought to hell with this I'm for the more relaxed approach... the result is a great film with great performances. When Hopper acted or directed in something that mattered to him he communicated a rare intensity and integrity which is a joy – sometimes terrifying as in **Blue Velvet** – to behold.