

Serge BROMBERG,
Lobster Films

I initially created Lobster in 1985 as a small production company. I have been, by my own personal choice, a lover of the cinema since long before. *Lobster* came to specialize in searching for films in basements and attics and forming a kind of small archive for films, documents, etc. It is nothing compared to the Danish Film Institute or the *Netherlands Filmmuseum* or the Bologne Film Archives, but it is a very dynamic little film archive. Our only resources are what we earn from showing these films, and this must pay for their maintenance and restoration, when there is restoration to be done. This has caused us to form very successful relationships with many film libraries in Europe.

We have the same problem as all film libraries: when we show the most popular or accessible 5% of our films, everybody comes to watch, but when we show the other 95%, the theatres are deserted. Our libraries' long-term problem is embracing the cinematographic and audio-visual experience in its entirety. It seems more and more difficult to showcase the full spectrum of cinema and attract the interest of a large audience.

Attracting an audience. One of our main focuses for interesting people in our work was through television. In the early 1990's, we were among those who proposed silent films that were broadcast at acceptable hours like seven or eight PM. We have since restored numerous silent films, which we set to music and offered to television stations, who agreed to broadcast them. We have clearly explored the possibilities of the international market through distribution and DVD's. But the limits of this model very quickly presented themselves. Once again, when we sell the DVD version of *Nosferatu*, we have no problem, but things are different when we offer a silent film by Augusto Genina. It's as simple as that. The same question comes up again with the new media as with the old.

With new technology, the number of things that we can do is infinite. The number of things that someone is willing to do is perhaps less clear. Who will take advantage of all our services if they are all overshadowed by the giant Google, Youtubes and Dailymotions?

My grandmother used to tell me an old joke. She said: "*The difference between dictatorship and democracy is very simple. Dictatorship is, 'Shut your mouth' and democracy is 'Blah blah blah.' We have definitively re-entered the era of 'blah-blah.'* Anybody can offer anything on the Internet, but beyond the issues of cost and making content available online which we have already mentioned and which are very problematic, the real question is, "Who is going to be interested in this?"

This brings me back to our initial question. Can we export masterpieces? Yes. We can export them, but since they are masterpieces that by definition are part of the 5%, they don't need our help. Film archives will show them, they will be released on DVD and they will sell easily because they are recognized masterpieces. In a way, exporting masterpieces is our responsibility - film archives for older films and rights holders for more recent ones.

Behind all this lies the relativity of the term masterpiece. What is considered a masterpiece in one country can be seen as mediocre in another. Cultural, linguistic, artistic and commercial

criteria must be taken into account. The masterpiece is subjective. If you will permit me, I would like to make the distinction, not between masterpieces and non-masterpieces, which is highly subjective, but between films that drew interest and the other films, the 95% that are unknown, that scarcely draw attention anymore, and that we are responsible for restoring, promoting, showing and – we hope – sharing.

This is not an issue for all these cultural organisations - the FIAF and all of the national and regional film archives and museums that are not part of the FIAF. They show films which people are interested in, as well as films no one is interested in. Archives, museums and film libraries are rarely blamed for having shown a film that failed to fill the theatre, at least for now.

This work is done by film libraries and archives with easily imaginable limits. Their audience consists of visitors to the museum, people who have access to film libraries and who are familiar with them. If they are unacquainted, then they go to Youtube, Dailymotion or Google like everybody else does, and will go to see the aforementioned, inescapable 5% of films.

With these new VOD technologies, with DVD's, on which more and more films are released, and with festivals that are ever more numerous, we notice that there are real efforts being made to show these films and make them accessible. The problem of “geographic limitation” has been solved, in a way, by all of these new media that travel much more easily than a film shown in a given place at a given time, which was the reality of film archives up until now.

We have found a few solutions to these problems with *Catch-up TV*, themed TV stations and DVD's. However, the ideal solution would be Video On Demand. This would be great if it were not, from the beginning, so limited by the size of the screen. Ideally, everybody should have a movie screen in their homes. Supposing this were the case, one would be able to recreate the cinema experience in their homes with the help of VOD. It is impossible for technical reasons, and also because cinema is a collective experience. Watching a movie means going to a cinema theatre to watch together. We enjoy leaving our homes and sharing the experience as much as the film itself – just like we find it nicer to go to a restaurant with friends than just eating alone in front of our refrigerators.

As one of the media that can give us hope, VOD offers a number of services. Under the *Media* heading, we will later discuss the *European Film Gateway*. Yesterday, we spoke about MIDAS' *filmarchives online*. MIDAS is a filmography of existing films and where they can be found. However, MIDAS is not yet telling us how to find them. Once we have that information, we must start over, however difficult the access may be.

Lobster has pondered this question. The problem is not so much showing films. Everybody knows that there are a huge number of DVD's being released, most of which are concentrated on the 5% that draw public interest. We decided that we were going to try, not just to say, 'let's show films' but also to say two things through a program called *Europa Film Treasures*. These two things are, firstly, that the remaining 95% are marvellous, should be discovered and in order for them to be discovered, we must whet the public's appetite. Once your interest has been stimulated, go to the people responsible for film selection, who have chosen films that suit you and who are opening more and more places where you can see images whose rights issues have been resolved. You will discover incredible things.

Whetting the audience's appetite. When I say audience, I am not talking about cinema specialists, or researchers or people who have a natural interest in the cinema. I am talking about the audience that goes to McDonald's when for the same price they could go to a restaurant that offers something different and much more enjoyable, where they could be seated, waited on, etc. Let's whet appetites, but let us not forget another important dimension: this interest can only be stimulated and satisfied with the work of all the film archives in Europe and worldwide.

Film archives have been doing incredible work in conservation for more than half a century. To understand why they have done this and to discover the incredible joy of appreciating something besides what can be seen on YouTube, one should look into the European film libraries as a whole.

Beyond the collective effort of film archives, every country restores its heritage. Now that we are all united in a manner of speaking, a European memory has emerged. But, beyond this, this memory must be shared. And now comes the time to use a dirty word, though not for everybody: we must do some marketing.

What is marketing? It is opposing the offer of a product (another dirty word) to a solvent demand, or in our case, an interested demand. Now that we have the offer, the product, we must recreate this taste, this desire. Yesterday, we saw the success of Europeana, which blew up the system. It is an incredible joy. Beyond this effect; this effort must be long lasting and the public must be willing to try something different.

For the public to be willing, one has to make them want it. You could open the best restaurant, but if it's in an area that nobody visits, it will not be successful. At the beginning, with *Europa Film Treasures*, our idea was to say, "*Come to this site and see the diversity of cultures, the incredible things we have restored. You will have such a good time that, for every film you watch, you will be able to visit the film library that restored it and see other similar films. In short, you will be able to see films.*" The only goal is to help people discover film libraries and whet their appetite.

The *Europa Film Treasures* site offers two versions. One for low speed (a kind of simple viewing) so that countries that do not have high-speed connections can still discover the films. When you connect to the site, a program detects the speed of your computer and connects you at the optimal speed for your system. You can watch films at a quarter of your screen size or in full-screen mode. Our goal is to whet your appetite, and for you to be interested, we must show quality films in high quality versions, with quality metadata or quality commentaries. This is done with the help of MEDIA, which has been supporting *Europa Film Treasures* since earlier this year. Every film is presented and available in five languages. We must subtitle the films, write explanatory data sheets and provide links to the appropriate film library in five languages (French, English, Spanish, Italian and German) as well as the original language. A Dutch or Danish film will be presented in its original Dutch or Danish version with five different language versions. For silent films, we make music as part of the *Europa Film Treasures* program. Making films accessible also means returning to them certain dimensions that they no longer have, that they have lost. From time to time, we even do some image cleaning on films that require it before being presented. To stimulate interest; every film library offers three films. No need to propose 50,000 works. Surely, that is marketing.

Today, we have 26 film libraries and archives online. 37 film libraries had subscribed to the program, but we have huge legal, technical and political problems. Some film libraries are afraid of the Internet, and are very cautious. By the end of 2008, we will have reached a total of 30 film libraries online representing 23 countries. I am happy to announce to you today that among our new film libraries we have Nederland Filmmuseum – Thanks to Mark-Paul Meyer – Bologne Film Library – Thanks to Gian Luca Farinelli – and finally, the Friuli Film Library in Italy, which organizes the *Giornate del Cinema muto* in Pordenone.

Up to now, we have 54 films in their full versions. They date from 1899 to 1999. The 1999 film is a production from the Austrian film library, concerning the Saturn film company.

I will give you some fun facts about some of the titles. There are still, however, some very big problems:

- Format limitations. The Internet has a preference for short programs.
- Low number of films. It took a colossal effort to put 50 films online.
- Rights limitations. We cannot put everything online. Film archives cannot put everything they want online because of copyright owners. Even if there are no copyright owners, there are always underlying rights on music, the screenplay... INA (French National Audiovisual Institute) knows something about this. They have mountains of images and for each image they have the exact same problem. Please remember that orphan films have the particularity that nobody is interested in them. If somebody were interested, they wouldn't stay orphans for long. If we are now focusing on orphan films, it is by default, because other films are not available to us. But, our desire is to eventually try to resolve the copyright problems that Mark-Paul spoke of and that are familiar to all film libraries, so that our sites offer, not only orphan films, but also slightly more ambitious or less orphan works. Works that can attract people.
- There are serious financing problems. Beyond its excellent intentions, MEDIA only covers 50% of our actual expenditure. We were hoping to gain the support of many foundations, sponsors and patrons of the arts. But you are familiar with the context. These people have not come, or have come in a very limited manner. The CNC is by our side, and I thank them. As for France, we have obtained a partnership with Orange, but all of this is still much less than we had hoped. There is still the question of the day-to-day workings and the future continuity (three, five, ten years) of this kind of sites. Bandwidth is very expensive. Information is like people: when it wants to travel, it has to buy a train ticket, a little bit of bandwidth. Multiplied by millions, it is extremely expensive.

I am going to tell you the films that have achieved the wonderful honor of being the most viewed. You are going to be amazed.

The most viewed film is *The Apple-Knockers and the Coke* (viewed 28,757 times), which has two big advantages. It is an erotic film, a little strip-tease that we didn't know much about. We investigated and the result is good. The other advantage is a Marilyn Monroe look alike. When you click on Marilyn Monroe, you are taken straight to it. We were convinced that it would be quite successful.

Farfale (17,580 visits) is number three on our top 10. It is a hand-colored film of Italian Dance, produced by the CINES Company in 1907. In this film, there is nothing erotic, no star, just beauty, with a serpentine group dance that is absolutely marvellous.

Number five on our list is the oldest of them all. Is that why it has been so often clicked? I don't know. This film, *Gordon Highlanders* from *Scottish Screen Archive*, is less than a minute long (it is actually marked 0 minutes in my inventory). It is about a parade in 1899. It has been viewed 13,953 times, which is enormous. To give you an idea, we go crazy when a DVD sells 3,000 copies. We invite all our friends and drink all night.

The CNC and the film archives proposed *Bucking Broadway*, a film by John Ford from 1918 that was discovered in France and restored here. It has been viewed 10,645 times. It's stupendous.

Deutsche Kinemathek offered us *Der Luftkrieg der Zukunft*, the war of the future. This film imagines that one day we may be able to fight wars with airplanes. It was incredible at the time, as there were not many airplanes. The film is totally surreal, excellent. The final numbers: a huge success. 8,071 people have viewed this film by Walter R. Booth filmed in 1909 and produced by Urban.

Czar Nicholas II's Visit in Helsingør is number 13, viewed 6,914 times.

Barcelona by Tram from Filmoteca Española has been viewed 5,424 times.

Der Magische Gürtel, a German film offered by the *Imperial War Museum* sold 200 copies on VHS several years ago. It has been viewed by 4,179 people. And so on...

The final film is *Da Makkin o' a Keshie*. It is about the manufacture of a straw backpack. It is an absolutely wonderful film, made by an amateur in 1932 and produced by Jenny Brown, offered by the *Scottish Screen Archive*. Despite its weak score, it has been viewed by 1,134 people, which is huge.

After viewing a film, people may link to the film library that supplied it. What happens after that, we don't know. It takes place on the sites of the respective film archives or on the author's site (we provide links whenever we can). We are the menu that gets put outside the restaurant, to pique your interest and whet your appetite.

To end this brief presentation, I would like to tell you that we must go further to convince rights holders that putting their films on our heritage sites is not leading them astray, but participating in a global effort to highlight them. All people familiar with the Internet, VOD and film heritage are probably convinced, but it is on the others, and firstly the commercial and legal departments, that we must make an educational effort so that businesses and holders of large catalogues of films will join us.

I think that we must insist for them to understand that we, the film libraries, the archives, the museums, and people organizing events with the support of MEDIA, we are there to stimulate their activities, to bring their dead films back to life again and we are offering our services to them because we love their films and believe in them.

Don't be afraid of working with rights holders. I know they can understand. Working together will help us export other films besides masterpieces. Everything can be exported. Everything can be shown.

If I could end on a brief conclusion, I would say that films are like rugs. There are only two possibilities. Either it is a flying rug and that will take us on a voyage and make us dream, or it is just a rug that we wipe our feet on. Thank you.

The principle behind *Europa Film Treasures* is to use the work of film libraries, which are also our contacts. We ask film libraries to offer us a number of films, and we harmonize and coordinate them (our council includes Bryony Dixon from BFI, Stephane Droessler from Munich, Lenny Borger, Eric Lange and myself). From ten films, the archives know that we will take one, two, three, four, who knows how many.

These archives must offer available films. Our development budget does not allow us to go see all rights holders. Imagine that we are in Serbia. We would have to know Serbian law and we would have to go see all the Serbian rights holders. In short; we are asking the archives to choose appetizing films to which they hold the rights, whether it be because there is no copyright or because they know the rights holders and have requested their permission. We consider ourselves as fully authorized to show these films by the film archives' guarantee. Since there are no ticket sales, nobody can accuse us of robbing them.

On the other hand, the copyright holders might not understand. They may ask, "*Why would I give you these films?*" The film libraries' response is this: "*Give them to us just because we restored them, and, in the same way that you authorized us to show them in our theatres, non-commercially, what we will do with them now is also a non-commercial work of promotion.*"

As you may have understood, most of the films watched are short films. Today, we do not have more than three or four feature length films. We realize that the Internet, maybe because of defragmentation, limits us to relatively short films.

Bucking Broadway is 50 minutes long and more than 10,000 people have seen it. We have put *El sexto sentido* from the Filmoteca Española online with accordion music by Marc Perrone. It is an hour and a half long and has been viewed more than 5,000 times.