

'Jaws', 'Inferno' Cheer Chile; Inflation Hurts; Import Taxes Lowered On Prints, Publicity

By HANS EHRMANN

Santiago.

In 10 weeks, "Jaws" drew 1,000,000 spectators in Chile, which means that one out of every 10 inhabitants has up to now viewed the film. "The Towering Inferno," over the same period, sold over 300,000 tickets which, in most other years, would have placed it at the top of the list.

"The shake-up provided by these two films," says Warner's manager Wilfred Dowding, "is good for business in general and brings people back to the cinema."

Only nine months ago, with near-empty houses and no big attractions in sight, it was a different story, with the trade moaning and wondering how it was all going to end. Inflation and the recession have not improved since then and people have no more spare cash than at that time, but — given a couple of blockbusters — audiences find the means.

Besides, although admissions — no longer government-controlled — keep up with inflation and the rising cost of the dollar, the cinema is still cheap here in comparison with other forms of entertainment and the trade has had the good sense not to price itself out of the market. Says Dowding: "Tickets now cost 60¢ downtown and 68¢ in suburban houses; in January 1975 they came to 50 and 58¢."

The U.S. majors have no remittance problems and recently had the pleasant surprise of finding ad valorem import duties lowered from 50 to 45%, a reduction equivalent to one per cent of the total cost of importing a print. Ad valorem duty on publicity material was also lowered (from 65 to 55%).

The Indies

The U.S. companies control 70% of the Chilean market; the rest is shared by a dozen independent distributors, whose association is headed by Enrique Cood. He is liable to remain president for some time as "elections" — even on this minuscule level — have been illegal in Chile since the 1973 military takeover. The indies, according to Cood, are feeling the hurt of the general economic situation: "Instead of 15 films a year, you now bring in five or six with practically the same capital." This situation is valid for most of the indies (Star and Action Films are the exceptions), who can no longer afford to take risks with quality material and are practically forced to play it safe. This also explains the proliferation of Italian westerns, chop socky (both diminishing) and any number of Italian "B" films, mostly a combination of violence and sexual soft core. The indies' problem is not to overstep the range permitted by the censors and self-censorship nowadays plays a considerable role in their selection of material.

Exhibitors

Santiago has a total of 57 cinemas; 37 are downtown and nine suburban; the remaining 11 are what is left of the formerly plentiful neighborhood houses, more than half of which closed down over the last decade.

There are three main circuits: the Compania Cinematografica Nacional (8 houses) Jose Daire's Nacional de Teatros (5) and Luis Gana's Socine (7). Qualitywise Gana's are lowercase and specialize in the actioner market, but he has recently been trying hard to

balance his circuit. Last month he won the bid for the large Santa Lucia, longtime home of Cinerama releases. The leases of two further firstruns (presently run by state-owned Chile Films) are running out and bids for same are bound to be very competitive next month. As one independent onlooker put it, "they're all going to go for bust and the winner may find out that he's undertaken to pay more than the houses are worth."

From another point of view exhibitors are not doing too well. Understandably, because they have been through some hard years, upkeep of many cinemas has been poor. Frayed carpets and loose seats are frequent and some of the second run houses are regular smelloramas where the patron also stands a fair chance of serving as fodder for the resident fleas. If business continues picking up, emphasis on remedying situations like these is certainly called for.

ARTKINO'S MAN FOR 35 YRS.; PERON'S VAN; AXIS LOSSES FIGURE

Buenos Aires.

Hugo Vainikoff of Argentina's Artkino Films has been distributing European Socialist Bloc product over the past 35 years. He has weathered the different political storms of his country and the fickleness of changing censorships. "During the first Peron era," he said, "all Russo films were completely forbidden in Argentina. Then Peron gradually changed his policy and let them in. During the Second World War the rules for importing films changed progressively as the war dragged on. At first no Allied films were coming through, but then as the Axis started losing, more and more Yank and East Bloc fare came in. One of the big hits in those days was 'Leningrad Music Hall'."

Artkino's keydays of East Bloc pix, said Vainikoff, came during the 1958-62 period when there was a spate of topnotch Russo and Czech product. "The Cranes are Flying"

sold 200,000 tickets in one week, he said. Also extremely popular was "I'll Buy Myself a Father." Later, in 1968, "The Sleeping Beauty" ballet did well, and in more recent times items such as Czech film "Closely Watched Trains" have done as well as Yank pix.

Artkino presently distributes about 15 pix a year. In 1975, 12 were Russo or Czech and the rest from Europe, mostly from France. "Russo and Czech pix have lost their appeal," Vainikoff, admitted "cause tastes are changing. The Russo items are antiquated, so I'm now scouting for product from other countries."

Vague Law Puts Arg. Censor In Driver's Seat

Buenos Aires.

Film censorship in Argentina largely depends on who runs the Film Classification Board. The provision of the law are so vague in its references to "the national style of life" and other matters, that any censor can accommodate them to his own ideas. For example, applying the same law censor Osvaldo Getino didn't ban a single film during his stay in office and censor Miguel P. Tato banned 135 in one year.

The main problem with the censorship law lies in that it empowers a Government official (the censor or his deputies) to decide on offences such as obscenity, national security or justification of crime, already covered by the penal code, and forbids appeal of his decisions in the courts. It is argued that an eventual test case on the unconstitutionality of the censorship law might be won, but nobody has started one hitherto.

The FCB can classify a pic on one of these categories:

a) without restrictions; b) banned for minors under 14; c) banned for minors under 18; d) totally banned.

Most distributors usually trade some cuts for a less severe classification. Nobody would admit he is doing that, of course.

Porno films haven't reached the Arg. screens so far, although there was some talk of letting them be shown in specialized houses and with restricted publicity. Another usual target of the FCB are the kung-fu and karate films coming from the Far East.

Venezuela Institute's Production: 9 Features

Caracas.

At the beginning of 1975, Venezuela's official Banco Industrial allotted 5,000,000 bolivares (about U.S. \$1,250,000) to a newly set up Film Institute in order to try to get local production rolling. The result was nine feature films, each budgeted at about \$200,000, all of them made by local talent. At year's end none had been released yet, though one, "Fiebre," reportedly the most promising of the neophyte efforts, was skedded to bow at Christmas. The Super 16 item is set during the Gomez dictatorship in the 1920s. It was processed abroad.

At presstime, the Banco said its plans for 1976 are ambitious, and it may finance as many as 20 films. A new official loan is on the verge of being granted. One government-sponsored pic, "Sacred and Obscene" reportedly grossed \$460,000. Eight other films have not bowed

yet.

The Film Institute is largely the brainchild of Marianela Saleta and Maria Isabel Loperena, the two alert young ladies who make the decisions not only on local production, but who also control coproductions and all matters relating to cinema in Venezuela. Both have spent a large part of 1975 touring the world film festival circuits, trying to promote Venezuelan product and attempting to attract coproductions to the country.

The nine films made last year by the Institute may be more a matter of prestige than business. Nonetheless they constitute an important first step towards hyping local production which, thanks to talent, easy currency conditions and lack of censorship, could turn Caracas into a major new Latin American production centre.

The Institute reports that it is ready to offer complete filming facilities, including equipment and technicians. However so far Venezuelan film infrastructure has relied mostly on local advertising filmlets, and work on features has been erratic, though over the past two years the number of copros has been increasing. Tough union demands have also at times hampered efforts by the Institute to attract coproductions and foreign lensing.

However the Institute is optimistic, and expects to continue pushing Venezuela as a film centre. At present Venezuela has copro deals only with Mexico and Spain, but there are plans to sign agreements with Colombia, Argentina, France, Italy and Brazil. Copro legislation stipulates that pix must be 30% Venezuelan. Virtually all other matters are negotiable.

Peru: All-Time Grossers

1. "Jaws" (first four weeks only; premed Dec. 25)	21,035,000 soles (\$470,000)
2. "The Exorcist"	20,993,000 soles (\$464,000)
3. "The Towering Inferno"	19,915,000 soles (\$443,000)
4. "The Poseidon Adventure"	15,954,000 soles (\$354,000)
5. "The Sting"	12,911,000 soles (\$287,000)
6. "Earthquake" (till Jan. 7, 1975)	12,708,000 soles (\$283,000)
7. "Airport 75"	10,025,000 soles (223,000)
8. "The Godfather, Part I"	9,335,000 soles (\$207,000)
9. "Papillon"	8,564,000 soles (\$190,000)
10. "El Profe" (Mexican)	7,343,000 soles (\$163,000)

FILM PROD. COSTS LOWEST IN WORLD IN ARG. STUDIOS

Buenos Aires.

Film production costs in Argentina are the lowest in the world nowadays for a country having studios, laboratories, well trained technicians, a lot of good actors and many excellent locations.

A normal Arg. pic costs near \$100,000. "Normal" means it doesn't include spectacular sequences of any kind. It also means a shooting schedule of six to eight weeks with a 27-men staff and crew, the minimum required by the Film Workers & Technicians Union (SICA).

A film with a few foreign names (director, writer, some players, maybe a key technician) can qualify as coproduction and be included in the benefits of the Film Aid Law. Subsidies are given to Arg. pix in a ratio with their grosses and can amount to as much as the 60% of the production cost recognized by the National Film Institute (or 90% when they are declared "of national interest"). Coproductions can get those subsidies in a proportion related with the Arg. participation in each of them.

Recently Aries joined with Impala, from Spain, to make "El muerto" (The Dead One), based upon a Jorge Luis Borges short story; Francisco Rabal and Antonio Iranzo were the Spanish contributions to the cast. Mural joined with unnamed American partners to do "Alla donde muere el viento" (Where the Wind Dies), with Tippy Hedren and John Russell.

30% Of Ticket Volume Is Tax; 'Jaws' In Front

Bogota.

Exact statistics are hard to come by for overall grosses in Colombia. The following feature films have been some of the top grossers in recent past.

"Jaws," still running after its Christmas preem in cities all over Colombia, is expected to make \$350,000 in rentals. Cinema International Corp., representing Universal, reported that for the 1974-1975 season ending June 1975 the distrib had grossed 32,128,000 pesos, or over \$1,000,000, which was \$470,000 above the previous year's results. For the 21 weeks after July 1, 1975, grosses were 15.5 million pesos, compared to 6 million the previous year. Total for 1975, per CIC topper Jaime Joseph, was expected to be around 40 million pesos, or about \$1,300,000.

Topping the C.I.C. list for 1975 were "Earthquake," with road show release at Cine Teusaquillo in Bogota in Sensurround. Pic grossed 3.2 million pesos (\$100,000) in the 550-seater in 24 weeks, setting a pre-Jaws record. "Airport 75," released in two Bogota salles, ran 9 weeks in both. Combined b.o. was 2.5 million pesos. "Chinatown," in one salle grossed 800,000 pesos (\$27,000), and "That's Entertainment" chalked up 405,000 pesos (\$15,000) in six weeks. "Godfather 2" was splashed in four salles, with total gross of 1,160,000 pesos (\$39,000). In Cali, "Earthquake" ran 7 weeks, grossing 1.5 million pesos (\$50,000). Big grossers from other distributors included "The Exorcist," about 13 million pesos (\$450,000) "The Towering Inferno," "Herbie Rides Again" and "Africa Ama," a documentary. "The Passenger" netted 130,000 pesos in its first week in Bogota, plus 110,000 in a suburban salle.

Of the above grosses, 30% goes to government for taxes, and of balance, 40% to exhib and 60% to distrib. Breakdown of a 15 peso first-run ticket is: 9.24 pesos for the feature; 2.30 pesos for the Colombian short and rest is taxes. Of the 2.30 pesos for short, 40% goes to exhib, 40% to producer and 20% to distrib. For pix released in 70m, distrib gets 11.55 pesos for the feature, with same amounts for short, and remainder, up to 18 pesos, in taxes. Per law, each distrib can earn up to 60% in key cities, and up to 50% in other areas.

Jim Kelly joins cast of "The System," indie crime meller rolling April 1. Kelly plays a government agent