

## Inflation Erosion Makes Distributors Reluctant To Release Good Bets

Buenos Aires. "With the situation the way it is in Argentina," said Distrifilm topper Luis Scalella, "it is madness to release product at the current admission prices. 'Perfume de Donna' ('Scent of Woman') has done fabulously well, with 600,000 tickets sold in Buenos Aires. It would have made about \$2,000,000 gross in normal times, but now it's a disaster." Scalella, one of the most respected distributors in the country, has such other product as "Paper Tiger," "Stavisky," "Che Vado de Amanti," "La Diva del Regimen," "Aces High" etc., about 10 in all, but

he's not anxious to release them. "I'm talking to producers to have them reconsider deals I've made with them, if I can honestly pull out of them, I will."

The money erosion is so rapid, said Escallela, that he figured one Yank major who had about \$1,500,000 to transfer at the beginning of 1975 wound up with only \$250,000 by the end of last year.

Distrifilm also controls one salle, the Cine Adan, and has produced such pix as "I Killed Facundo," lensed by Hugo Carril. Escallela is now studying possibility of doing a copro with some foreign country.

## Rodolfo Echeverria Is One-Man Army To Revitalize Mex. Cinema

Mexico City. It came as no surprise when Rodolfo Echeverria was named head of the National Film Bank, the local industry's most important post, late in 1970. His brother, Luis Echeverria, had been elected the nation's president and it appeared to be just another political appointment.

But Rodolfo Echeverria also was a former actor and one of the founders of the Mexican Actors Guild with a profound knowledge of motion pictures and the industry's problems. He took the reins of a floundering industry and in a few brief years has revitalized it.

After a thorough detailed study, Echeverria initiated a "state of the industry report" (now an annual event) which was an analysis of the industry's plus-and-minus signs. Then he began a complete overhauling of operational procedures in the agencies under the bank's jurisdiction: Churubusco Studios (production); Operadora de Teatros (exhibition); Pel-Nal, Pel-Mex and Cimex (distribution); Procinemex (promotion) as well as the bank's financing procedures.

He revived the Ariel awards for annual film industry achievements, fought for injection of new blood and ideas in the stagnating industry, badgered unions into accepting newcomers, mediated disputes in labor's ranks and entered wholeheartedly into the industry's life.

Echeverria personally launched a worldwide campaign to promote Mex product. He met with industry leaders in other countries — or invited them to Mexico — and improved exchange relations. He inaugurated Mexican Film Weeks wherever he went and offered reciprocal film weeks here in exchange. As a result, local film product is now finding its way into new markets.

### Foreign Filmmakers

He also invited foreign filmmakers to work in Mexico, helped facilitate productions and made a pitch for joint ventures (with some accomplished, and others pending).

On the local front, Echeverria promoted film weeks in important cities throughout the country and encouraged newcomers to change subject matter to generate greater universal appeal for Mexpix.

During his administration, Peliculas Mexicanas and Cimex merged into one global distributor agency, the Operadora de Teatros circuit expanded through purchasing indie theaters and building new ones, the government acquired the America Studios and state film production companies were created

(Conacine, Conacite I and Conacite II).

Echeverria's emphasis has been on an improved product and his open arm policy brought the local film industry close to an Oscar this year with "Letters From Marusia" under consideration as the best foreign film of the year. This pic, produced by Conacine, was written and helmed by Chilean exile Miguel Littin and stars Italy's Gian Maria Volonte.

## Rio's Shabby Part, But 'Beyond The Tunnel' Lies Moderne Glamour

Rio de Janeiro. Rio, for those who have never been there, or are not compulsive armchair travelers or guidebook buffs, is basically divided into two parts. First, there's the central office area, rather shabby in aspect, which is the old part of town, though virtually no buildings date back further than the 1930s.

### 5 P.M. Checkout

Modest office buildings, 6-15 stories high, are interspersed with some restaurants and shops. At five p.m. everyone lams out of the center as fast as possible, leaving the area virtually deserted, except for a small region near the Praça Mahatma Gandhi, called Cine-landia, where about a half dozen first-run film situations vie for attention. There's also a Teatro Municipal, not much used, plus a few hotels, mostly in demand when all the ones out of town are booked full. The unkempt aspect of the center of Rio is presently aggravated by the construction of a Metro or subway; blocks of houses have been demolished to make way for it. Digging began six years ago, and it'll probably be another six before the trains start running.

### Beyond The Tunnel

The second and far pleasanter half of the city is about five miles away, and is reached after passing through a long tunnel. This section of the city stretches out for miles from Leme to Ipanema past Copacabana along the superb beaches lined with luxury hotels, swank apartments, boutiques and restaurants — the calendar image most people have of Rio. Still hanging on from the days of yore is the Copacabana Palace hotel (see separate story), though most of the elegant highlife has moved on a mile or two to Ipanema, famed for its lolling bathing beauties. Most of the city's hotels, restaurants and first-run cinemas are in this part of town.

# Pix Bix In Arg. Awaits Gov't Moves To Solve \$ Crisis

By DOMINGO DI NUBILA

Buenos Aires.

None of the five pix that competed for the Oscar — "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "Jaws," "Barry Lyndon," "Dog Day Afternoon" and "Nashville" — has been released here. Neither have the winners of 1975 festivals: "Chronicle of the Burning Years" (Cannes), "Dersu Uzala" (Moscow), "Firtivos" (San Sebastian), "Swept Away" (Teheran).

Ditto many international hits of late 1975 and early 1976.

It is the result of frozen prices, the steady devaluation of the Argentine currency, the Central Bank delays in authorizing remittances abroad and some bureaucratic obstacles.

The top ticket price fell from \$1 at the beginning of 1975 to just over 17¢ in early March, 1976. Considering the 50% discount from Mondays to Wednesdays, and after deducting the exhibitors' share, taxes, advertising, prints, personnel, transport and general expenses, distributors were left with 5¢ or near for every ticket sold. This figure increased somewhat in the case of "supers" booked at higher percentages, but there were very few of them.

Then, in mid-March, the Peronist Government allowed an increase in the top price from 70 to 140 pesos, but maintaining the first three days of each week at half that top. A few days later the regime headed by Mrs. Isabel Peron was ousted by the military, who appointed businessman Jose Martinez de Hoz as Economy minister and changed policies overnight, from state controls to free market, in an effort to discourage speculation and to increase production.

One of the first results was a drop in the dollar quotation. The top film ticket price is now roughly the equivalent of 58¢ from Thursdays to Sundays, and 26¢ the remainder of the week.

Business commentators predict that the dollar may finally settle at 300 pesos per \$1 in the free market, since that rate of exchange is need-

ed to bolster the exports of industrial goods. Since all prices were unfrozen, the film trade is also speculating about how much can be charged in the near future for theatre admissions.

When the old top price was doubled on mid-March, attendance fell by 50%. There was some recovery in the following weeks. By mid-April it was 30% below the figures of one year earlier. It is expected that, if top product is released, attendance will further increase. But, at the same time, there is fear that the new liberal economic policy will reduce the purchasing power of most viewers, because while prices were freed, salaries were frozen. The cost of living increased by 38% during March. The rate of inflation was 51% in the last week of same month. In short, the public has been left with less entertainment money than ever.

### Hard Facts

Up to mid-March, the independent distributors, who buy the product not being brought here by the international majors, were braked by hard financial facts. They would have had to sell 1,000,000 tickets to collect \$50,000, a figure below the price they are asked for top attractions. But it was also risky for them to buy cheaper product.

That explains why most of the best grossers between Christmas and mid-April were pix released by American companies. Due to the constant changes in the dollar quotation during that period it is impossible to tell the results in terms of money. Approximate figures of attendance to firstruns are as follows:

"The Towering Inferno" (WB, 14 weeks), 412,000 tickets sold; still showing. "The Godfather Part II" (CIC, 13 weeks), 274,000. "Young Frankenstein" (Col-Fox, 10), 200,100. "The Return of the Pink Panther" (UA, 10 weeks), 193,000. "The French Connection II" (Col-Fox, 6 weeks), 184,000 and still showing.

"Shampoo" (Col-Fox, 5 weeks), 127,000. "A Mezzanotte va la Ronda del Piacere" (Rizzoli, Italian, 7

weeks), 123,000. "Love and Death" (UA, 4 weeks), 101,000. "The Passenger" (CIC, until 4th week), 94,000. "El gordo de America" (America's Fat) (Aries, Arg., 5 weeks) 84,000, plus fine in showcase. "Gun Moll" (UA, 3 weeks), 80,000. "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" (WB, 4 weeks), 65,000. "Le Mouton Enrage" (French, until 3rd week), 54,000.

"Earthquake" completed its first year at the Beta with 645,000 tickets sold. Italian comedy "Scent of Woman" (Distrifilm) is in its eighth month and it has been seen by 445,000 persons.

The first solid fall releases were "Three Days of the Condor" (Col-Fox) with \$10,200 in the first four days at the present rate of exchange, and Mexican "The Survivors of the Andes" (Peliculas del Plata) with near \$10,000, also in its first four days.

Arg. pix are usually released at a rate of one per week, to lessen competition between themselves. So, although they are a great help to keep the biz alive, they are far from filling the needs of theatre's programming. A normal supply of the Arg. film market requires from six to 10 new pix per week; during 1976, so far, the number of pix released rarely was above half that figure. And the native product was swept away by censorship after "El gordo de America" opened on March 11.

Censor Miguel O. Tato's objections halted the releases of "Adios Sui Generis" (Goodbye Sui Generis), filmization of a rock concert, and "El profesor erotico" (The Erotic Professor), a sex-comic item. Presumably fearing same fate, Argentina Sono Film postponed "El dia que hicimos el hurto" (The Day We Did the Stealing), another sex-comic entertainment. Then Tato banned Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's "Piedra libre" the night before its opening in over 40 theatres.

If same severity is applied by Tato to foreign pix, the prospects for a normal supply of the Arg. film market are dim.

## Shiro Kido Reports Cordiality In Rome

Tokyo. Shiro Kido, chairman of Shochiku, came back home to Japan recently after attending the Japanese Film Week in Rome. Kido headed the Japanese delegation and visited other European and American cities afterwards. Below are the main points of what he said about the Japanese Week and other impressions during the tour.

Italian people related in the event were very cooperative and the local papers played it up in a large way that never appeared in the Japanese papers. Italian motion picture producers association was also very cooperative and even gave a party for the Japanese delegation that was the first experience for the Japanese with this kind of event. About 200 celebrated persons attended the party. Japanese promoters too held a party which resulted in a great success with attendance of about 300, 100 more than the invited number. Before the party, Japanese delegation held a press conference and exchanged opinions on interchange and co-production between the Japanese film and that of Western and Eastern European countries.

Eastern European countries decided to buy Japanese films and Western European people, too,

## Tardy, Or Absent, Actors To Be Disciplined In Philippines

By AARON PINES

The day of the "no show performer" are numbered. Ma. Rocio de Vega, chairman of the board of censors for motion pictures, said that she would look into administering disciplinary action against actors or actresses who persistently or notoriously give problem to producers by not appearing on the set on time or not at all. She said that all she needed is for the producers who are the victims of such irresponsible behavior to file a formal complaint with the BCMP.

She said that since actors and actresses who are not being paid properly by producers have the right to complain against such producers, it is also but natural that producers who are being victimized by tardy or absent thespians have all the rights to file complaints against such actors or actresses. What is stipulated in the contract should be strictly enforced.

The big problem now is the fact that there are some actresses who commit themselves to do many pictures which are beyond their capacity as far as the time element

is concerned. This means lost production costs for the producers inevitably unserved by the bicycling talent.

(Mrs. De Vega also reiterated her stand that she would not allow the showing of pictures local or imported, which are nothing but trash. She meant "bomba" pictures which have nothing relevant to show except sex and violence.)

## Sultanate Of Oman Gets Its First Cinema

Muscat.

The first modern motion picture theatre in the Sultanate of Oman, air-conditioned and seating 1,200 has opened at Ruwi, just outside the capital. Deputy governor Sayyed Majid Bin Taimur officiated at the formal opening.

The house, which cost \$195,000, was built by a businessman who returned from exile in Saudi Arabia in 1972. All the theatres built prior have been open-air types.

The new house will show films in Arabic, English and Urdu.