

PRESS STATEMENT

UNIC ISSUES INDUSTRY RALLYING CALL WITH CINEMAS SET TO STORM BACK IN 2022

Brussels: Friday 14 January 2022 - The International Union of Cinemas (UNIC), the industry grouping representing the interests of European cinema trade associations and operators across 39 territories, has today issued a rallying call for all involved in the European and global cinema industry to support the sector as its strong recovery from the impacts of COVID accelerates into 2022.

Having faced the unprecedented challenges of the COVID pandemic, 2021 saw cinemas across the globe move swiftly along the road to recovery, with all signs suggesting that 2022 will be a pivotal year for the industry.

Across Europe in particular, last year saw significant gains on 2020 box office revenues as cinema audiences flocked back to an exciting and diverse slate of new releases.

Leading industry analysts Gower Street Analytics estimate that 2021 box office for the EMEA region was, at \$4.4 billion, 45 per cent higher than 2020. Underpinning that strong performance, UK and Ireland (+85 per cent), Russia (+78 per cent), Portugal (+50 per cent), France (+47 per cent), Spain (+45 per cent) and Germany (+26 per cent) all recorded significant box office growth, this despite experiencing months of closure during the year.

Focusing on the period when cinemas were open, they also confirm that Q4 results for 2021 in the UK and Ireland were just 11 per cent below the average for 2017-19, with positive performances in France (-18 per cent), Russia (-29 per cent) and Germany (-36 per cent) amongst other territories. Total box office for EMEA in Q4 2021 was just 26 per cent below the same pre-pandemic average.

The release of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* in particular saw 2021 finish on a high, with several markets including the UK and Ireland, France, Russia, Italy and Spain recording their highest-grossing week of the year upon its release.

Even as *Spider-Man* dominated at the European box office, many local titles also performed well into the new year. In the first week of January 2022, three local titles featured in the top 5 of Russian box office, with *Posledniy bogatyr 3* even reaching the global box office top 10 last weekend - a feat also achieved by *Les Tuches 4* in France during the previous month. Local films were also included in national top 5 listings at the beginning of 2022 in France, Italy, Finland, Czech Republic, Norway, Spain and Poland.

Looking ahead, Gower Street Analytics forecast an even better outlook for 2022, with a tentative estimate of \$7.8 billion (+75 per cent on 2021) and \$33.2 billion (+55 per cent) for EMEA and global box office respectively.

Welcoming these latest numbers – and Gower Street Analytics' positive forecasts for the coming year – UNIC Chief Executive Laura Houlgatte said:

'These hugely impressive figures – and the predictions for 2022 - provide ample demonstration of the resilience of the cinema sector, underpinned by the insatiable public appetite for the Big Screen Experience. It is clear that recovery is now well underway, with cinemas across Europe now storming back from the ravages of COVID.

Cinema operators will of course play their part in ensuring that the recovery continues to accelerate, investing time and money to ensure that cinema-going is as safe and enjoyable as possible.

But we are also of course dependent on a strong and diverse film slate, catering for all audience tastes.

Online platforms will continue to have their place in the film ecology, but when decisions are made which result in these being seen as a substitute for the theatrical experience, that invariably only results in disappointed cinema audiences, rampant piracy and - crucially - reduced overall revenues.

Today we call on all of those involved in the cinema ecology, but in particular content providers and the creative talent and investors behind them, to recognize the economic as well as cultural value of our proven business model, and to redouble their efforts to support a strong, diverse and reliable supply of film content to cinemas.'

Notes for Editors

UNIC

The Union Internationale des Cinémas/International Union of Cinemas (UNIC) represents the interests of cinema trade associations and cinema operators covering 39 countries in Europe and neighbouring regions.

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