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A stronger presence, through a better exposure of the Belgian film industry abroad - this is the immediate result of a series of rewarding initiatives that have been initiated in the small kingdom. The country was already known for the quality of its film-training institutions and for the competitiveness of its post-productions services, now, from award winning Belgian film projects to the launch of new festivals, it is the diversity of its film sectors “in large” that is exposed.

The move from a period where Belgium was a dormant player on the European film scene to its today’s position was not simple. The country dimension and its languages specificities are enough to discourage any film business-plan. Belgium is the country of not more than 10 million inhabitants, its language divisions are drastically limiting all kind of film services and film funding. No wonder then, that till recently, the data’s on the Belgian cinema sectors were hardly available.

The country may still face internal political instability - with no long-lasting government to expect soon, but on the film business side, things are improving at rapid a path. During the past three years, the country has attracted the world attention on its film production, awarded in Cannes with the most prestigious prize attributed to the brothers’ Dardennes (Palme d’Or.).

In 2007, film such as “VOLEURS DE CHEVAUX “ – a feature co-produced with Belgian majority – had made well even in Asia where it was presented in the World Cinema section of the last Pusan International Film Festival. The harvest for 2008 is promising; with a new project by the two award-winning brothers and, with a rich selection of features and shorts that are going to be premiered in Cannes, or in Venice.

In general, all kind of films “made in Belgium” have gained an increasing popularity at international festivals. Unfortunately, the national production, which mostly consists of art-house films, will continue struggling for screens – that are rare abroad and at home. Belgian films have their aficionados around the globe, but author films are meeting the same difficulties everywhere around the globe – they can hardly be seen out of festival, Eric Fransen from the WBIMAGES reminded.

A recent trend in the Belgian film sector is definitely the involvement of productions dealing with Asia. In its film catalogue “De Long En Large” for 2007 – 2008 the French Community Centre for the Audiovisual and the Cinema (CCA) presents not less than three Belgian projects that have received a support by the CCA. Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth film “KHADAK” is a movie on the men, nature and horse relation in Mongolia. The film received the support of both the Flemish Fund and the Walloon TELEDISTRIBUTEURS.

The Brussels Company ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP is working on “SOLEIL AVEUGLE” a project by Wang Bing set in the sixties, in Western China. A production with the Shanghai studios is also in preparation; and. the end of the year will see the shooting of Marc-Henri Wajnberg feature film based on Zhang Le-Ping hero, San Mao. This latest project may launch a Belgian-Chinese co-production treaty which, according to the author - is in discussion

The success for Belgian productions in terms of number of films produced, and in terms of diversity of sources of funding results in the improvement of the film policy, which accompany the talent of local filmmakers. The tax shelters system that have been adopted by the Belgian government in 2002, allows companies willing to invest in audiovisual productions to recover about half of their investment in the form of tax saving.

In this positive context, a recent initiative by the Brussels based Wallonie Bruxelles Images (WBIimages) comes at the right time to better inform on – what is being done, and what is available – for the different film sectors in Brussels and in the Walloon region. The new English section of the company website was launched at the end of January. Its “FOCUS” offers a great panorama on the Belgian film industry. With its updated news, festival information and database on the main film sectors, the FOCUS is today, the richest English compilation on the Belgian cinema available on the internet.

WBIimages – formerly known as WBI, is the official agency for the promotion and the exportation of the French Speaking Community of Belgium's audiovisual. It is an information office supporting the industry from producers to sale agents, buyers, distributors and festivals. For those of you, who have already bookmarked the agency URL, be informed that during this year, the domain name [www.wbi.be](http://www.wbi.be) will be changed into [www.wbimages.be](http://www.wbimages.be). The existing domain name will be attributed to the Belgian governmental agency of the French Speaking Community for the International Relations, which is changing its name into Wallonie Bruxelles International - WBI.

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[About SAN MAO by Marc-Henri Wajnberg](#)

We don't have to cover 500 years of history to find this cultural icon. The beloved Chinese cartoon hero "San Mao" is coming back. The three-haired homeless orphan comes alive once more through a joint effort by Shanghai Film Group and Belgium's Wainbrosse Film Production Company. Shooting just got underway in Shanghai, where the original three-haired hero's story took place.

[LE VOLEUR DE CHEVAUX SOLD IN ASIA](#)

EAVE proudly announces the strong presence of EAVE projects and producers at this year’s 58th edition of the Berlin Film Festival. Among these; "HORSE THIEVES" , the debut feature by Micha Wald, lauded at the 2007 Cannes Critics’ Week, has been bought for US distribution by Picture This! Entertainment from French sales agent Rezo Films. The film is set to be released under the title of IN THE ARMS OF MY ENEMY. Distribution rights have also been bought for Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and in Europe, for Spain, Poland, Greece (Seven Media) and Cyprus.

*By Gyora Gal Glupczynski*


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