

Syria

So far Syria has based its entire film policy around the National Film Organisation, created in 1963 based on a Socialist model. Ever since then the NFO has kept the monopoly of production and of the distribution of foreign films. This policy seems to have produced results with the emergence of a generation of talented filmmakers such as Mohamed El Mallas. However, production has not exceeded the average of one film per year. The real change occurred at the beginning of the millennium with the boom in television production, namely of serials and children's programmes. Production companies such as Orient and Leen flourished. This trend gradually spread to the film sector. The NFO now produces between 3 and 4 feature-length films per year. On the occasion of "Damascus, Capital of Arab Culture for 2008", Syria announced its intention to produce between 5 and 10 feature-length films in 2008.

Population: 20 447 000 inhabitants (2008 estimate)

GDP in billions of USD (estimates): 35 (2007) and 36.8 (2008)

Currency/rate of exchange:

Syrian pound (SYP), 1€ = 75.51 SYP, 1 euro = 1.574800 USD

Sources: INED, FMI – World Economic Outlook Database, inforEuro

Public funds available for the cinema:

100m SYP (1.32m€) total amount of public support

PRODUCTION

Number of production companies:

5 active among a much greater number, but most of the films are produced by the National Film Organisation (NFO) which selects the scenarios of the films to be produced, sets the budgets, organises post-production and distributes in its own cinema theatres.

Number of (feature-length and short) films produced per year:

between 2 and 3 per year, but 4 feature-length and 5 short films are announced for this year.

Number of co-productions per year: 1

Average budget of a film:

Between 200 and 300 000 USD (127 000€ to 190 500€) for a feature-length film and between 15 and 25000 USD (9 525€ and 15 875€) for a short film, bearing in mind that equipment and laboratory and post-production work are paid for by the State under the form of a subsidy.

FILM LABORATORIES

The NFO has a modern laboratory equipped for 35mm, with telecinema and post-production equipment, as well as a subtitling machine.

CO-PRODUCTION AGREEMENTS

An audiovisual cooperation agreement with Arab countries

MAIN FESTIVALS

The Damascus Film Festival

organised by the NFO has acquired a solid reputation in the Arab film industry.

MAIN PRIZES OBTAINED

between one and three a year

TRAINING

- The audiovisual training centre is that of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) situated in Damascus
- The National School of Fine Arts in Aleppo and Damascus offers training in the graphic arts, photography and multimedia
- The Institute of Dramatic Arts trains candidates seeking to join the NFO. One or two film students study abroad each year with scholarships under contract with the NFO.

DISTRIBUTION, EXHIBITION

- Number of cinema theatres, screens: 50 cinemas and 60 screens
- Number of admissions: Not communicated
- Number of distributors: 5 but the main distributor is the NFO which distributes foreign films.
- Best box-office takings: Not communicated
- Number of European films screened per year: 15
- Number of US films screened per year: 250
- Number of other films screened per year: 20
- Price of an admission: 3 USD (1.91€)
- Cost of a one-hour connection to the Internet: 2 USD (1.27€)

MEDIA

Television

3 public + 2 private channels, including 1 satellite channel Spacetoon, viewed by many children throughout Arab countries (broadcast on 2 signals, Arabic and English).

Number of satellite dishes: no recent statistics available, but the estimate was 40% of households in 2005 (report on French audiovisual and media cooperation in the Near East, Middle East and the Maghreb 1995-2005 MAE – French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) , this trend has accelerated since 2005 to reach approximately 75% in all of the Arab countries.

Broadcast languages: Arabic and English

Number of national films broadcast on TV:
5

Radio

3 public + 3 private stations

"Crack"
Dir: Reem Ghazzy

Short documentary
filmed during the Workshops
of the Caravan of Euro Arab Cinema

