

20 May 2013

Competition Commission (Cineworld/City Screen)

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email to: cineworldcityscreen@cc.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

I am writing, in relation to the above case, as a former producer who, from time to time needed to find a way of releasing films into the specialised (non-mainstream) marketplace.

In my view, truly independent distributors are an endangered breed, and anything that secures the financial future of an organisation committed to the release of specialist (non-mainstream) films should be of help to the long-term future of the industry as a whole. The Picturehouse chain is a very important part of the national framework of independent cinemas and its cinemas are key for European and world cinema programming in the UK.

It is clear to me that the Picturehouse chain has a very different film offering to the multiplexes and serves very different audiences. In fact the art house and independent programming that lies at the core of the companies offering - a highly differentiated choice - is quite different to that of the multiplexes.

Indeed, in many other respects the Picturehouse customer experience is significantly different from that of the average multiplex – the cinemas have very distinctive buildings, there are fresh food offers in the restaurants which often form an integral part of their cinemas, at the heart of which lie the type of film and arts events that weld them to their local communities.

Even though there is some crossover with the mainstream, it is simply not accurate nor appropriate to look at Picturehouse, and multiplexes such as Cineworld, as being one and the same.

Picturehouses are located in town and city centres where they have often had a very positive effect on local regeneration, and they have always been programmed and operated to serve the tastes of their local audiences. The cinemas in Brighton, Cambridge, Aberdeen and Southampton are all key 'art-houses' in the national framework of independent cinemas.

Access to the funding of a public company such as Cineworld can only be good news for the further growth of such cinemas and for their audiences.

In short, I believe that the deal brings tangible benefits to both consumers and the UK film industry.

I hope this note goes some way towards alleviating concerns that the Commission may have in respect of this particular acquisition.

Yours faithfully,

Lord Puttnam, CBE.