



**Beyond the TIFF Panel: A Q&A with Rob Friedman,
Co-Chairman and CEO of Summit Entertainment**

September 20, 2010 by Paul Chodirker

On Monday, September 13, 2010, Ernst & Young and Heenan Blaikie LLP hosted a TIFF panel discussion at the Park Hyatt in Toronto. We hope to have an audio version of the panel discussion available on this blog in the coming days. In the meantime, I was able to ask some follow-up questions to one of the panellists following the conclusion of the film festival.

Rob Friedman, Co-Chairman and CEO of Summit Entertainment, was kind enough to extend the panel discussion onto this blog and share his thoughts on TIFF and beyond.

Q: The final question of the panel was in regards to who the big players are in film financing. Before time ran out, the next question was going to be about what your own financiers are telling you.

A: *Everybody is ready, willing and able to continue to lend. Obviously, pricing is different than it was when we first got our facilities in place and we still have plenty of time on our facilities, but we are exploring new banking arrangements and everybody wants to play.*

Q: There was an interesting conversation on the panel with regards to genre and impressions from various financiers with regards to producing certain kinds of films. Are you feeling any external pressure in terms of what should be produced?

A: *No, not as it relates to financiers. You tend to get a different appetite in the users in the international marketplace but you never discuss specific movies with the financiers – at least I don't.*

Q: It was reported in a local paper that deal making has been “as slow as molasses” this year at TIFF. Was that your impression this year?

A: *Well a lot of the movies that were there already had distributors. The last week has shown a lot of deal making. I just don't think that there was the usual bidding frenzy because I think there were a lot of movies that were well received but didn't necessarily fill the needs of distributors.*

Q: Have you seen a shift in the kinds of films that are being showcased at festivals like TIFF? What is the current trend?

A: *I think you saw a fair number of more exploitive films for "midnight madness", but I think the mainstream fare was pretty consistent – smattering of comedies, a smattering of dramas, obviously great filmmaking prowess. Year in and year out it is different just because the movies are different. I didn't see any trending.*



Q. In the next year or so, what do you think the biggest difference will be in the marketplace in terms of what distributors will be doing.

A. I don't think you are going to see any big change. I don't think we are going to see any massive life changing event. I think you are going to see slow progress to exploring new windows and new distribution opportunities. I think it's going to be slow and steady. I don't think you are going to see anything dramatic.

Q. A few years ago and even now, 'pirating' became the most terrifying term in the industry. What are distributors afraid of these days?

A. I think it's the fractionalization of consumer decision making as it relates to viewing their content. I think the sooner that can start to coalesce into some very specific trends, it will help everybody.

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