

## A Quick Chat with Dogwoof Pictures



By [Oliver Berry](#)

As one of the newest names on the British distribution circuit, Dogwoof Pictures has set itself some challenging goals: to bring high-quality foreign language films to a UK audience, and to convince the notoriously foreign film-shy British public to get out and see them. Oliver Berry discusses the company's aims and aspirations with Anna Godas, director of Dogwoof Pictures.

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### How did the idea of Dogwoof Pictures come about?

It came from a genuine passion for film, and the desire to bring UK audience good films.

### What are the main problems you see in the current UK distribution setup, especially with regard to foreign language and arthouse cinema?

There are many problems, but one of the main ones is that unfortunately what is shown and where it's shown is regulated by very, very few

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people. If to that you add that these few people have been working very comfortably with the same people for years, you can imagine how difficult it is to try to find a little gap to squeeze in.

**There are a number of independent distribution houses - notably Tartan, Artificial Eye and to a lesser extent the BFI - who are already distributing foreign language films in the UK. How does Dogwoof aim to be different?**

We aim at being very good distributors, as I'm sure the ones you mention are, but we are different because we are different people, and come from different backgrounds. We are fresh and new and still have that touch of naivety that I guess gets lost somewhere in the way to success.

**What's the main market you're seeking to tap with Dogwoof's releases? Foreign language films notoriously struggle with mainstream UK and US audiences, partly because of the language barrier and partly because of a popular aversion to "unfamiliar" styles of filmmaking.**

The main market is already there; it's a similar audience to the one for independent films, I'd say. We believe a universal story marketed the right way does crossover. We just have to find the right film, which is the hardest part.

**Why are English-speaking audiences so averse to foreign content? One of the main reasons other nations are so amenable to English-language cinema is, fundamentally, because they've got no choice if they want to watch the latest Hollywood film - but UK and US audiences don't grow up with that culture, so are far less receptive to foreign films. How do you plan to go about changing that?**

This is mainly because languages are a very small unimportant part of British early education; it's a logical consequence of not learning other languages and hence not being familiar with them. There is a significant foreign film audience in the UK, and there's an "in between" audience that would not usually go to see foreign films, but would if the film is appealing enough and marketed properly (i.e. Amélie, Amores Perros...) We aim to target these audiences by finding universal stories with characters with whom anybody could identify, and to market these films by focusing on their universal appeal, rather than the language in which they are spoken. We're also very interested in English-language independent films.

**You had recent success with Don't Move, an Italian language film starring Penelope Cruz, and your distribution network is currently geared towards Germany, France, Italy, Spain. Was this a conscious decision or a commercial necessity? Are you looking to open up to other national markets?**

Absolutely. We are looking for good stories with a sensible commercial appeal, regardless of where they come from. We are also establishing very good relationships with Asian and South American sales agents/producers.

**With all the exciting world cinema around at the moment, it makes the domestic UK film industry look even more depressing. Why do you think the British film industry can't get on its feet? Is it a funding issue, a lack of homegrown talent, an over-competitive marketplace, or something else?**

Personally, I don't think there's lack of talent at all. I've met so many talented British people in the film industry, most of them at the very bottom of the unreachable UK film industry ladder. When a country's film industry has not been successful for a while, it may mean that there's something wrong with the actual system, in other words, that either the people giving the

money or the people receiving it are the wrong ones, or both. It seems to me that unfortunately the system is ruled by power/money, rather than a genuine interest for good story telling and the art of cinema itself.

**One of Dogwoof's ideas to promote foreign-language film in the UK is the "Fête de Cinema". Can you explain how the idea came about, and what you hope to achieve with it?**

Fête de Cinema has the aim of getting as many people as possible to the cinemas. For that over 3000 cinemas across the UK will participate in the cut-rate ticket scheme, which allow audiences to see films for £1 following the purchase of one full price entry. The ultimate objective is to promote independent world cinema to the general public. It's hard to resist £1 cinema entry, even if it's not the film you'd ideally want to watch, don't you think? Maybe we'll even get "don't-do-foreign" people to see some foreign films...who knows?

**You've set yourself up as a distribution company, but do you ever see Dogwoof moving into the production side of the film business?**

Yes, if we come across a very interesting project, a brilliant piece of story telling, we'll do our best to back it as much as possible, whether it is distribution or getting involved in production.

**What else have you got lined up for UK release in the near future?**

A Spanish comedy, **Football Days**, a kind of Spanish Full Monty, and a brilliant Danish political thriller, **King's Game**.

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