

The Secrets of the Black Box

Time to learn just what goes on in the Piazza's famous projection booth

It is 37 years since Livio Vacchini first developed the «theatre of the festival» project for the Piazza Grande. What he dreamed up was 1000 chairs, one huge screen and a futuristic-looking «Black-box» projection booth which he constructed from two polyester swimming pool shells. Last year, for the 60th anniversary of the festival, a new projection booth was built. **Blackbox3**, a new documentary by Patricia Boillat and Elena Gugliuzza, tells the story of how Locarno's latest spaceship landed on the Piazza.



Step number one: apply fibreglass sheets that are drenched with a polyester resin. Then, clean the walls and paint them black. The box comes in four parts. These have to be assembled, jigsaw-style, but that is only the beginning. Before the booth is ready to start showing films, the door, the projection windows, air conditioning and electrical wiring all have to be added. This was the routine in early July last year as the new booth was prepared for the festival.

The two previous projection boxes Blackbox and Blackbox2 now have new homes. The original projection booth designed by Vacchini and serving Locarno from 1971 to 1989 is in Robinson Park, a children's playground. Now painted in many colours, it sits in some trees besides some swings and looks like the perfect kids' cabin. Blackbox 2, which was designed by architect Roland Ulmi and served as the festival's projection booth from 1990 until 2006, is seen in the documentary at the Deposito Comunale in Locarno.

«It looked like a hamburger box,» suggests Boillat, co-director of the film, of its design.

Now, the third Blackbox has taken over. «The spaceship has landed on the Piazza,» was the reaction from the locals when the booth, designed by Alessandro Bonalumi, finally arrived in the square

last year. The new booth, now in its second year, uses state of the art technology. It is bigger than its predecessors.

As the documentary attests, considerable ingenuity and a lot of hard work are required to turn the Piazza into an open-air cinema. Erecting the screen is a delicate operation. «Dawn is the best period for the mounting screen ritual,» we are told. «Even a little wind could compromise the result.» Gymnastic technicians, looking like sailors scaling the masts of old ships, clamber up poles to tighten the ropes holding the screen to its moorings. Before the festival begins, the equipment needs to be tested thoroughly and the sound quality assessed. There are digital projectors as well as 35mm projectors. The filmmakers refer to «the delicate alchemy of know-how and technology»

behind every Piazza screening. The evenings of 8000 or more spectators depend on the success of their endeavours. Patricia Boillat works and lives in Locarno. A filmmaker, animator, photographer and self-proclaimed «multi-disciplinarian,» she is on the festival staff, responsible for «Image & Sound.» Her co-director Gugliuzza, also on the festival staff (co-ordinating «Image & Sound») likewise works and lives in Locarno. She is a graduate in direction and editing from the Conservatorio Internazionale di Scienze Audiovisive in Lugano.

(gm)

.....
Blackbox3 The Film

La Sala, 16/8, 10.00

La Sala, 16/8, 12.30

Carnet de bord



[Blurred text block]

[Blurred text block]

[Blurred text block]

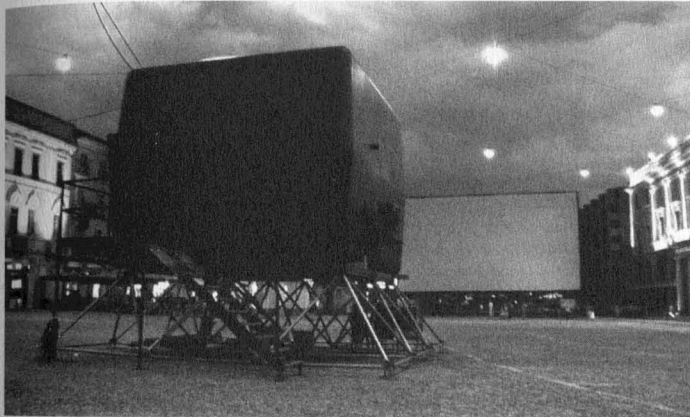
[Blurred text block]

[Blurred text block]

[Blurred text block]



BLACKBOX3 THE FILM



The genesis of an ephemeral cinema, or, the setting up of the Piazza Grande, the site that is emblematic of the Locarno film Festival, observed over 53 days. The building of the new projection booth – the third Blackbox – is a magnificent opportunity to discover what goes on behind the scenes in a world where skill and friendship combine to achieve a highly sophisticated screening, with unrivalled lyrical urbanity.

La genesi di un cinema dell'effimero o la preparazione della Piazza Grande, luogo emblematico del Festival del film di Locarno, osservato durante 53 giorni. La creazione della nuova cabina di proiezione – la terza Blackbox – è una bella opportunità per scoprire i retroscena di un mondo dove competenza e amicizia si coniugano con lo scopo di realizzare un sito di proiezione dei più sofisticati... ma anche di un'urbanità poetica senza equivalenti.

Director

Patricia Boillat, Elena Gugliuzza

Cinematography and sound

Patricia Boillat

Editing

Elena Gugliuzza

Cast

Fritz Bleuer, Eric Kernen,
Paul Kirby, Pierre Ebollo,
Lorenzo Morettini, Andrea Engeler

SWITZERLAND

Production and World Sales

La boîte visual art
Via panigari 13
6600 Locarno
Switzerland
Tel: +41 91 751 59 21
Fax: +41 91 751 59 21
Email: elena@laboite.ch
www.laboite.ch

2008 - Digital Cinema Package (DCP) - Color - 33'
Original Italian lang. version

La genèse d'un cinéma de l'éphémère ou la mise en place de la Piazza Grande, lieu emblématique du Festival du film de Locarno, observé durant 53 jours. La fabrication de la nouvelle cabine de projection – la troisième Blackbox – est une magnifique opportunité pour découvrir les coulisses d'un monde, où compétence et amitié se conjuguent, afin de réaliser un site de projection des plus sophistiqués, mais également d'une urbanité poétique sans équivalence.

Die Entstehung eines Kinos des Vergänglichen – oder die Vorbereitung der Piazza Grande als emblematischer Ort des Filmfestivals von Locarno, beobachtet während 53 Tagen. Die Konstruktion der neuen Projektionskabine – die dritte Blackbox – ist eine gute Gelegenheit, um eine Welt zu entdecken, in der Kompetenz und Freundschaft sich vereinen mit dem Ziel, einen der raffiniertesten Vorführorte zu kreieren... aber auch eine unvergleichliche Urbanität voller Poesie.