

INDIE INFLUENCERS

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As the cinema industry emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, BOXOFFICE PRO and Spotlight Cinema Networks are partnering to profile movie theaters and influential industry figures from across the country and ask them to share their first-person accounts of bringing the movies back to the big screen.

STATE OF ART HOUSE CONVERGENCE

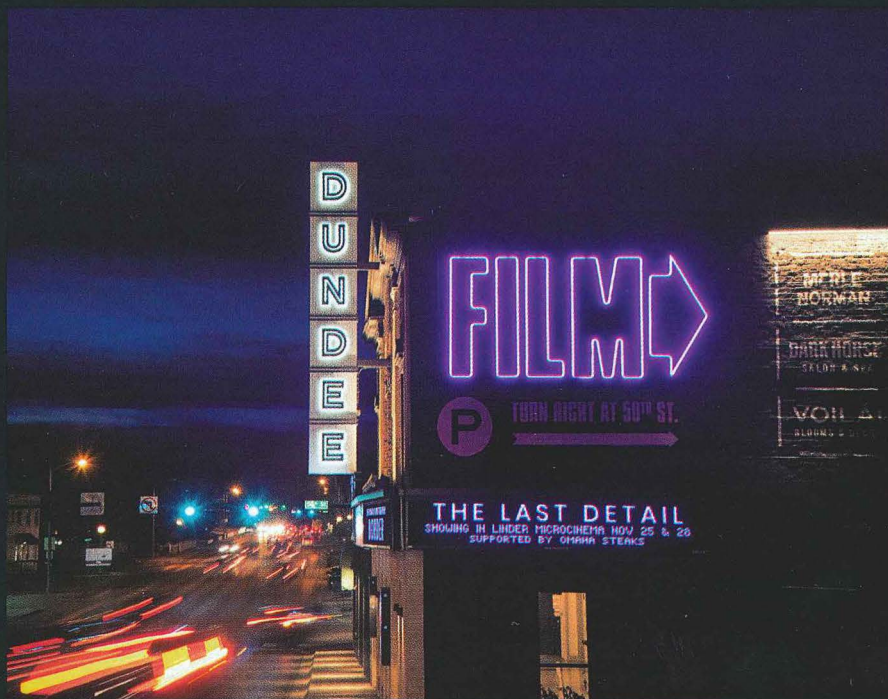
→ Hosted in January 2020, the Art House Convergence (AHC) trade show in Midway, Utah, was one of the last industry events to be held before the Covid-19 pandemic brought exhibition to a halt. Since then, AHC has reinvented itself, assembling a new board and renewing its commitment to art house exhibitors. In partnership with cinema advertising company Spotlight Cinema Networks, BOXOFFICE PRO presents this exclusive Q&A from the AHC board on the new incarnation of Art House Convergence and its plans to support the art house sector in 2023 and beyond.

What are the biggest obstacles and opportunities facing art house exhibitors in 2023?

Like elsewhere in our industry, the most challenging thing is figuring out how to navigate the “new normal” as audiences and programming continue to evolve. Many of the challenges are also opportunities: How do we diversify audiences across the board? How do we compete with the living room, and how do we continue to offer a wide range of unique art house programming? How do we navigate new models of windowing and advertising? Art houses are first and foremost community spaces with the ultimate goal of communing their audiences for stories that matter. That will always remain at the forefront of their missions.

AHC’s new board of directors was elected in October 2022, following two years of work by the AHC Transitional Working Group to better position AHC to serve its community moving forward. What are the major topics the board will be focusing on in 2023 and beyond?

The top priorities of the new Art House Convergence board are to determine the most appropriate foundation for the organization’s longevity and to assess how to bring back the in-person gathering that our community and membership want. We are building AHC anew to advocate for, and provide necessary resources for, the sustained health of not just brick-and-mortar cinemas but individuals in the art house community.





Are there any plans to bring back the Art House Convergence trade show or a similar event geared toward the independent/art house scene?

Absolutely. We have heard from the community that a meeting of the minds is what they would like. We are still determining what form and shape that will take, but it is on the forefront of our minds as a board of directors—and we hear you!

How can groups like AHC and the Independent Cinema Alliance help to advocate for art house cinemas in North America?

One of the biggest values of the AHC is the sense of community that it helps to establish for independent cinema exhibitors in North America—the majority of whom are nonprofit organizations. As a board, we'd like to work in step with organizations like the ICA, NATO, and the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) to figure out how we can all augment and advocate for art house cinemas, separately but together.

We're moving into a summer movie season slammed with blockbusters—what are some upcoming releases on the specialty side that have real potential for art houses?

For art houses, it's hard to go wrong with Wes Anderson, and Focus Features is releasing his latest, *Asteroid City*, in limited release on June 17, followed by a wide release the following week. As a board that is composed of community builders and cinema lovers, we can't wait to see what else comes down the pike this summer and for the remainder of the year, and what chances distributors might take on exceptional films. ▶

Art House Convergence encourages any individual interested in the art house sector to sign up for an AHC membership—which is currently being offered free of charge. While Art House Convergence is exhibitor focused, they acknowledge that the health and success of the art house community is tied to a confluence of individuals. Executive directors, theater owners, box office staff, projectionists, artists, community organizers, distributors, vendors, the list goes on. Anyone interested in sharing in the art house community and furthering the mission of AHC can become a member and participate in their in-person meetups at festivals and monthly Zoom calls. For more information, visit arthouseconvergence.org.

"Spotlight is dedicated to supporting our art house partners in exhibition. We saw a unique opportunity to support Art House Convergence when it was in its infancy and for a decade following. The AHC presents an incredible opportunity for art houses to share with and learn from one another, and we look forward to seeing the results of this collaborative experience as the Board moves the AHC to its next phase."

**Michael Sakin, President,
Spotlight Cinema Networks**

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AFI Silver Theatre

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