

VARIETY

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Et in Arcadia ego

MILAN One year after its opening in the small town of Melzo, about 13 miles from Milan, the successful performance of the Arcadia cinema multiplex has proved that large investment in state-of-the-art technology and a nearly maniacal attention to details have positive returns.

In the 11 months since its launch, attendance for the five-screen, 1,530-seat complex has reached 800,000 visits. It packs audiences in at the highest rate among Italian multiplexes, running at 65% of capacity during the week and at 90%-95% of capacity at weekends. The reservation office has been known to receive up to 13,000 calls a day, and blockbusters often are sold out as far in advance as two weeks. In four months, "Titanic" cashed in more than 1.5 billion lire (\$860,000).

"The reason for the success of Arcadia is the optimum quality we offer, both in terms of cinema entertainment and services, with a financial effort that has exceeded \$17 million," says Piero Fumagalli, who owns and manages the Arcadia complex.

On top of being Italy's first full-fledged multiplex, the theater is equipped with the largest seamless screen in the world, courtesy of British company Harkness, with Perlux technology. It measures 98 feet by 54 feet. To accompany the gigantic screen, Arcadia installed Lucasfilm's THX sound system and both 35mm and 70mm projectors.

Fumagalli plans to open four more screens as soon as possible, and plans to equip the theater to screen Imax features.

Arcadia's accouterments include spacious seats and film projection consultants such as Oscar-winning d.p. Vittorio Storaro.

"After the success of Arcadia went even further than I had expected, many companies approached us to create other Arcadias in Italy," Fumagalli says.

So far he has accepted just one proposal: In October an Arcadia 2 will open in Rovato, near Brescia in Northern Italy. "The new theater will be exactly the copy of the Melzo one, it will belong to a building group and we will take care of the management," he says.

— Cecilia Zecchinelli