

QUINTA

ESSENTIAL

As France's Quinta Industries continues to expand, Quinta founder Tarak Ben Ammar explains how he has transformed the outfit into a post-production market leader

Back in 2002, Tarak Ben Ammar, the Paris-based media mogul and founder of Quinta Communications, watched in surprise as an increasing number of French post-production houses struggled financially. How could this be in a country rich in production and subsidies, he thought.

Ben Ammar, whose assets span an Italian pay-TV company, a Tunisian film studio and a stake in The Weinstein Company (TWC), took a closer look and saw an opportunity. He began asking questions.

"I said to myself, 'With all these subsidies and 200 films produced each year all serviced in France, what's going wrong?'"

Then the acquisitions began.

In 2002, Quinta became the majority shareholder in the French group Datacine, launching Ben Ammar into the post-production arena. Five years on, Quinta Industries, as it was renamed last year, is the market leader in its field. Headed by Jean-Robert Gibard, Quinta

Industries' assets include the former Datacine companies, LTC, Scanlab and SIS; the post-production and sound giant Duran Dubois; and Les Audis de Joinville and Boulogne, which were added in 2006.

The deal that cemented Quinta's lead position in the market was the acquisition of a 43% stake in its main competitor, the Eclair Group, one of Europe's leading audio-visual players, in February this year. "The market leader was Eclair," explains Ben Ammar. "They used to have 70% of the business; now we have inverted it. The family that used to have majority control lost it a couple of years ago. They chose me as the future trustee for Eclair, and sold me 43%."

A second strategic partnership with Thomson, the electronics giant and owner of Technicolor, signed in 2004, ensures Quinta is staying at the cutting edge of digital technology. Thomson has a 17.5% stake in Quinta Industries with Quinta Communications holding the remaining 82.5%.

"I wanted a big group to help support a

transition from celluloid into digital," explains Ben Ammar. "It's like the French arm for Technicolor, which had no presence in France. We sold only a 17.5% stake to Thomson because we wanted to keep the independence of French cinema. We didn't want the industry to feel we were selling out."

A third deal to make a "major contribution" to French film-maker Luc Besson's La Cite du Cinema complex, announced in 2005, will see Quinta move part of its post-production facilities,

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Tarak Ben Ammar



The Valet



Les Bronzés 3: Amis Pour La Vie

SIS

Fifteen minutes from the French capital, SIS offers two recording studios; two Dolby stereo dubbing studios; 20 sound and image editing rooms; one projection room; one digital and magnetic re-recording centre; and a bar and restaurant. It also has TV dubbing and recording studios and 12 editing suites. Quinta's Cine Stereo facility offers optical transfer and sound re-recording in Saint Cloud. SIS and Cine Stereo's credits include Michel Hazanavicius' *OSS 117: Cairo*, *Nest Of Spies*; Francis Veber's *The Valet*; and Patrice Leconte's *Les Bronzés 3: Amis Pour La Vie*.



Tarak Ben Ammar:
Quinta is 'a one-stop shop'

including a 6,000 square-metre high-tech photochemical laboratory, to Besson's much-vaunted production/post-production village under construction on the outskirts of Paris.

For Ben Ammar, the strategy is clear. "We are a one-stop shop," he says. "Quinta is a vertically integrated group, offering finance, production, post-production, television, distribution and, through TWC, maybe a deal in the US. We are a great partner for film-makers and television producers. You get the same quality as in the UK, you can post here cheaper than there, and we can provide part of the capital. There really isn't any other group in Europe doing all of this in a profitable way."

More than \$40m has been invested in Quinta Industries so far, with annual turnover at about \$106m and the subsidiary valued at about \$60m, accounting for approximately 15% of Quinta Communications' business.

"Our plan was to be the leader in France," says Ben Ammar. "We already are." ■

ECLAIR GROUP

Founded in 1907, the Eclair Group consists of four companies: Eclair Laboratories; Teletota (television post-production); GTC (post-production and cinematographic laboratories); and Digital Cinema.

It is the leading post-production house and laboratory in France and has a large spectrum of activities including television post-production, sound post-production and special effects. It has worked on films including *Marie Antoinette*, *Alexander* and *A Very Long Engagement*.

Eclair Digital Cinema, the group's digital arm, offers frame-by-frame scanning and the digitisation of 35mm negatives, using SGI technology to perform restoration techniques or add special effects, and to transfer the digital frames back to film.



DURAN DUBOI

Post-production giant Duran Duboi was acquired by Quinta for \$4m; an additional \$13m was spent purchasing the building. Based at Boulogne-Billancourt, on the outskirts of Paris, Duran Duboi has a long list of international and local credits, including *Amelie*, *A Very Long Engagement*, *Alien Resurrection* and *2046*. It has worked on more than 500 TV dramas, 1,500 music videos, 2,000 ads and 130 feature films. The company has designed logos and IDs for all of the major TV broadcasters in France and for a large number of cable and satellite providers.

Duran Duboi's services include digital effects; 3D animation; and post-production, both visual and audio, for television, commercials and music videos. It was

the first production facility in Europe to install an in-house digital intermediate and grading system for film: Dubocolor, which has become an industry standard.

Opened in 1991, the Duboi digital-effects department provides a full range of services — from effects design to final product delivery. Duran Duboi began its 3D animation activities in 1998, working on music videos and commercial TV ads for Coca-Cola and Halifax, among others. Two years later, it began working on its biggest-budget production ever with Enki Bilal's *Immortal (Ad Vitam)*. The film took more than two years to produce and led to the development of new 3D software tools.

Other highlights include the half-hour animated TV series *Ugly Duckling And Me*, from Denmark's A Film, in co-production with Futuricon, Magma and Ulysses.



LES AUDIS DE JOINVILLE AND BOULOGNE

During the past 15 years, these two sound post-production facilities have worked on more than 600 international feature films, including *Paris Je t'Aime*, *Oliver Stone's Alexander* and *Roman Polanski's Oliver Twist*.

Situated 10 minutes from the centre of Paris, the Boulogne site offers two studios with variable acoustics specially designed for recording post-syncs and sound effects; two big dubbing studios for all Dolby stereo formats; 25 sound and image editing rooms; and a bar and restaurant for cocktails and previews.

Twenty minutes from Paris, the Joinville facility offers two recording studios; three Dolby stereo studios; 25 sound and image editing rooms; one digital and magnetic re-recording centre; and a bar and restaurant.

LTC AND SCANLAB

Based in Saint Cloud, in the Paris suburbs, a stone's throw from Versailles, LTC may not have entertained *Marie Antoinette* but the laboratory, launched in 1935, has been involved in international productions, including *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King*, *King Kong*, *Brokeback Mountain* and *Rush Hour 2*.

LTC offers both 35mm and digital laboratory facilities, as well as a whole range of extra services, including 35mm and digital screening rooms; 24-hour international delivery; sound transfers; and a subtitling partnership with SDR.

In 1998, LTC expanded into digital post-production with the launch of Scanlab where credits include Pascale Ferran's *Lady Chatterley*; Luc Besson's *Arthur And The Invisibles*; and Laurent Tirard's *Moliere*.

Scanlab is equipped to deal with both national and international productions. Its facilities include top-of-the-range video and digital laboratories, and its services include mastering and restoration; colour grading; high-definition; post-production; the telecine of rushes; scanning; digital visual-effects enhancement; kinescoping; HD shooting; mastering; digital restoration; and SD and HD duplication.

