

## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES EXTRA: TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE

A star is rising over Moscow, shining bright with 11 wall-to-wall screens, digital sound systems and the most state-of-the-art moviegoing experience available to local film lovers. Dubbed the KinoStar de Lux, the ambitious new theatre is the flagship Russian site for Rising Star Media, a joint venture between Dedham, Mass.-based exhibition giant National Amusements and international cineplex developer Soquel Ventures. The plex is just the first of what the company hopes will be a circuit of modern moviehouses in the major urban markets of the emerging territory.

The KinoStar, which was launched in grand style in September, was—by all accounts—a long time in the making. “This is probably the longest due diligence period in history to get a project underway,” says National Amusements president and Rising Star Media chairman and CEO Shari Redstone.

Both Redstone and Paul Heth, CEO of Soquel Ventures and president of Rising Star, trace the birth of the idea for an ultra-luxurious cinematic venue in Russia back to the early 1990s, when Heth paid a courtesy visit to Redstone’s office with the intent of sharing his



The “De Lux” lobby at the KinoStar in Moscow.

insights about the state of exhibition in the former Communist country. “A 15-minute appointment turned into an hour-and-a-half appointment, talking about cinema strategy,” he says. And while Redstone notes that “the timing didn’t seem right for a lot of reasons” during their initial conversation, the pair maintained a professional relationship that eventually led to their respective companies’ partnering on The

Bridge—Cinema de Lux concept, which comprises two upscale multiplexes in Los Angeles and Philadelphia.

With the success of The Bridge banner of theatres bolstering her enthusiasm, Redstone says that she found the courage to begin exploring the potential of the Russian market. “Frankly, it probably took me less than an hour into my trip to realize that this was the opportunity of a lifetime,” she says. “I

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