

# New collective innovative software for small-sized cinemas, Estonia

## Interview with Andres Kauts, Tartu Elektriteater

by Pavel Sladky

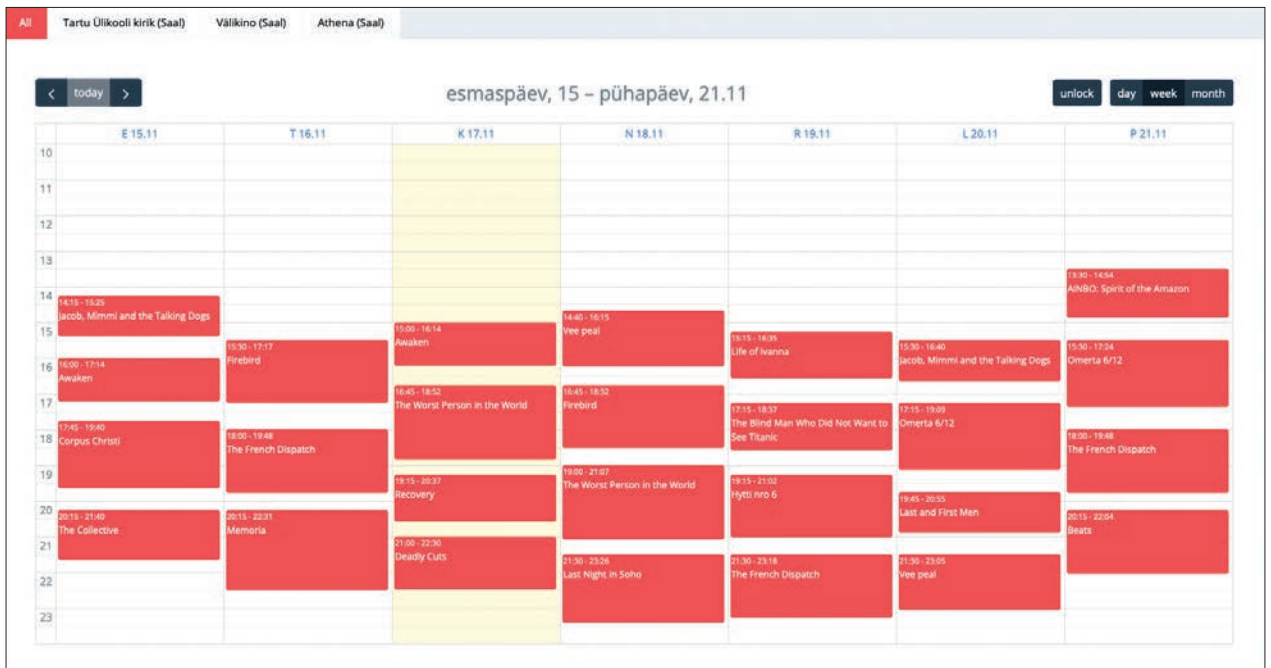
“Let’s make days in cinemas easier and happier.” Estonian Tartu Elektriteater is developing new software for small-sized cinemas. We talked about it with Andres Kauts from Tartu Elektriteater team via Zoom.

### How would you characterize Tartu Elektriteater?

We are an arthouse cinema in Tartu, the second biggest city in Estonia with around 150,000 inhabitants, including a number of students. We are a single screen cinema with 120 seats, and we have been operating for more than ten years. We started as a group of students, focusing on what we were missing, and it evolved over time, of course. I hope we host more diverse and rich programming now. We often screen a film just once in any given week, meaning we can easily end up with fourteen films showing in one week, even though we are single screen cinema. Our audience needs time to discover smaller independent productions, so that word of mouth has time to spread. We are the only

independent cinema in town and there are just so many great movies to enjoy!

**This wide range of programming is where your ideas for the software comes from, right? And the goal is to spend less time on the administrative work behind it?** Nobody wants to spend too much time on manual administrative work, I guess! We have had the idea in mind for quite a long time. We felt the work could be done more effectively if it was automated. I have a background in IT, so it felt even more natural for me to head in this direction. We have loads of Excel spreadsheets for shared data, but it takes so much time! A lot of this work is simply repetitive. We



Screenshot of calendar to prepare the film schedule.

want to think about the content of our cinema, not whether or not the data is correctly copied into all fields of a spreadsheet. And it also helps us to avoid spending extra hours on reports. That is a job a computer could do, if the data is in the correct format. We talked to other cinemas and realized they have similar issues. Two years ago, we decided to take action and see where it goes. When Europa Cinemas announced the Collaborate to Innovate initiative, we knew our project would fit perfectly.

There are big corporate softwares for cinemas, but we feel it is not for us. They are too big, expensive and don't meet our needs. We wanted it to be small and cute, but useful. As our colleagues from Riga say, "Software should work for people, not people for software." The software prototype is now ready, we are testing it before we start using it in December.

**How does it work?**

We use public movie databases as well as our own database as the sources of information. You can easily add new films to the system without filling in many fields. Afterwards, you can continue with scheduling, then it's ready to be published on your website. You can use different tags or labels to show whether the screening is a part of series, what the pricing is, etcetera. And you can add your own tags to projections. This helps later with statistics, where you can filter different tags, and it gives a perfect overview. Once it's on your website, cinemagoers can buy tickets, and use their membership cards. Scheduling takes little time. We plan to develop the reporting system further, so cinemas can retrieve ample data. It takes just a minute to generate the overview required. We want to ensure small cinemas have access to contemporary software to make their workflow easier and more efficient. Cinemas do have little reports they can use. Even the most basic statistic overview of a previous month is hugely advantageous.

**How many cinemas are there in the group planning to start using this software?**

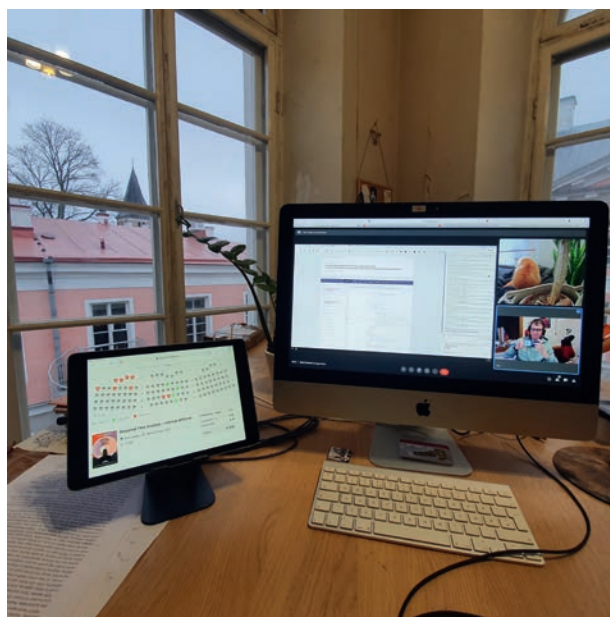
We are a group of four Estonian cinemas: Tartu Elektriteater, Kino Sõprus in Tallinn, Thule Cinema in Kuressaare, and Cinema Kannel in Võru.

**How do your partner cinemas contribute to your software? How would you characterize your cooperation?**

Partner cinemas contribute greatly in providing their input on what their biggest needs are and what tasks they would hope to automate. Their main input is in constant testing and feedback on what is working and what should be changed to make things better. We, in Elektriteater, together with programmers, are undertaking the technical work. But a lot of the thinking, finding the best solutions and, most importantly, in identifying problems to solve, is done together with all four partner cinemas.



Project partners in development team enjoying the cake to celebrate the milestone when booking with reserved seats was completed.



Online developing session.

**What languages does your software work with?**

To begin with, we have it in Estonian and English. But it is easy to add more languages and make it international.

**How are you going to evaluate whether your project is successful?**

The main criterion is simply whether cinemas use it and are happy with it—including us. It should make an operational cinema day happier and easier. It is hard to quantify, but, if more and more movie theatres adopt it, this will tell us that the software is useful and a success.

**Partner cinemas:**

- Tartu Elektriteater (Tartu)
- Kino Sõprus (Tallinn)
- Thule Cinema (Kuressaare)
- Cinema Kannel (Võru)