



THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR:

A Newsletter for Independent Filmmakers and Investors



LOUISE LEVISON, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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INDIES DOMINATED THE OSCARS! MORE THEATERS OPEN!

- ✓ New York City plans to fully reopen theaters and other businesses July 1, 2021
- ✓ “Like James Bond, the cinema industry refuses to die.” - Ad Exec. Kathryn Jacobs
- ✓ “The... impact of the pandemic on the release calendar is now resulting in a traffic jam on the boxoffice superhighway...” Comscore Analyst Paul Dergarabedian
- ✓ Be ready to make your film as soon as you can; don’t be last on the superhighway
 - FINISH YOUR SCRIPT
 - GET A BUDGET
 - HIRE A PROFESSIONAL TO WRITE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

“People are always going to demand and enjoy movies in the theatre,” Walt Disney wrote in 1953 as a *Variety* guest columnist. That hasn’t changed. Theater owners have continued to reopen their screens. Surveys indicate the number of people willing to go to a movie theater keeps increasing. The Small Business Association (SBA) opened the “**Shuttered Venue Operators Grant** which is available to movie theater owners.” <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/shuttered-venue-operators-grant>

The theater screens need your content! Studio blockbusters are necessary for their revenue, but independents on the rest of the screens in multiplexes bring in more audiences and profitability. “...the demand is there and it’s only increasing as time goes on...” Shawn Robbins, Chief Analyst at Box Office Pro wrote about the audience and theaters needing fresh content.

FREE CONSULTATION. Call 818-427-7108 now to discuss moving forward and explore the possibilities of getting your film financed and ready for production this year. ■

NOMADLAND TOPS OSCARS WITH BEST PICTURE

Independents dominated the 93rd Oscars taking 15 of the 23 awards for which 366 films qualified for Best Picture this year, the largest number since 1970 when 374 films qualified. *Nomadland* won Best Picture against a crowd of popular streaming films made eligible by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) which put aside the rule that required a theater release of a film. The main U.S. hub for the show being at L.A.'s Union Station of the Dolby theater with hubs in Europe, also, indicated it would be a different kind of show.

The Oscars also were notable for its award winners. *Nomadland*'s Chloé Zhao was only the second woman in the event's history to win Best Director, and the first Asian woman or woman of color to be nominated for the award. This also was the first time two women, the other being Emerald Fennell (*Promising Young Woman*), have been nominated for that award in the same year. At age 83, Anthony Hopkins, star of *The Father*, was the oldest Best Actor winner, as well as the oldest nominee ever.

The studios, who finance the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences (MPAA), tried many ways to have a better shot at the big prize by increasing the number of nominations and changing genre, as I said in *TFE*'s February 2020 newsletter. They are good with "checking all the boxes," as *Variety* described their system of calculating future profits for a film. Independents, particularly those with the smaller budgets, have a story they want to make, have a story they want to make and design all the aspects of production around that goal. [Ed. Note: An independent film is one which has equity/self-financing or was made by an independent company.]

Box office revenue for this year's Oscar nominees hit an all-time low due to the limited number of screens and audiences. The hybrid release for some Indie films - theatrical, DVD/Blu-ray, downloading, Premium VOD and streaming revenue - however, may bring them near profitability. As this issue goes to press, *Nomadland* is Number 1 on the Redbox On Demand chart and Number 2 on the Redbox disc rental chart.

With theaters opening wider, films that are released at the end of the year will be living in a totally different world than those released to-date. We have no idea how that will affect decisions of the MPAA for next year's Oscar night.

AND THE OSCAR WINNERS ARE . . .

AWARD	FILM	WINNER
Best Picture	<i>Nomadland</i>	Frances McDormand, Peter Spears, Mollye Asher, Dan Janvey, Chloé Zhao
Actress in a Leading Role	<i>Nomadland</i>	Emerald Fennell
Actor in a Leading Role	<i>The Father</i>	Anthony Hopkins
Directing	<i>Nomadland</i>	Chloé Zhao
Original Song	<i>Fight For You</i>	Music by H.E.R., Demst Emile II

		Lyrics by H.E.R., Tiara Thomas
Original Score	<i>Soul</i>	Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross, Jon Batiste
Adapted Screenplay	<i>The Father</i>	Christopher Hampton, Florian Zeller
Original Screenplay	<i>Promising Young Woman</i>	Emerald Fennell
Actor in a Supporting Role	<i>Judas and the Black Messiah</i>	Daniel Kaluuya
Actress in a Supporting Role	<i>Minari</i>	Yuh-Jung Yoon
Animated Feature Film	<i>Soul</i>	Pete Docter, Dana Murray
Documentary Feature	<i>Tenet</i>	Andrew Jackson, David Lee, Andrew Lockley, Scott Fisher
International Feature	<i>Another Round</i>	Denmark
Cinematography	<i>Mank</i>	Erik Messerschmidt
Film Editing	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Mikkel E. G. Nielsen
Visual Effects	<i>Tenet</i>	Andrew Jackson, David Lee, Andrew Lockley, Scott Fisher
Production Design; Set Decoration	<i>Mank</i>	Production Design by Donald Graham Burt Set Decoration by Jan Pascale
Sound	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nicolas Becker, Jaime Baksht, Michelle Couttolenc, Carlos Cortés, Phillip Bladh
Costume Design	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i>	Ann Roth
Makeup and Hairstyling	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i>	Sergio Lopez-Rivera, Mia Neal, Jamika Wilson
Live Action Short Film	<i>Two Distant Strangers</i>	Travon Free, Martin Desmond Roe
Documentary Short Subject	<i>Colette</i>	Anthony Giacchino, Alice Doyard
Animated Short Film	<i>If Anything Happens, I Love You</i>	Will McCormack, Michael Govier



FILM INDEPENDENT SPIRIT AWARDS

The 36th annual Film Independent (FIND) Spirit Awards took place on May 22, 2021 virtually on Thursday night rather than its usual time live Saturday night from Santa Monica beach the night before Sunday's Oscars. The event did everything it could to mimic the historical experience of the awards, including grouping Zoomed-in attendees by table, featuring a curated cocktail hour and hosting a casual afterparty. Josh Welsh, president of Film Independent, called it "the first ever pants-optional Spirit Awards."

The maximum film budget allowed by FIND for submissions was raised last year from \$20 million to \$22.5 million, still a relatively small budget as compared to the typical studio film. Searchlight, Amazon Studios and Netflix tied for the most wins by a distributor on the night with four apiece. Of all the nominated writers and directors, 57 percent were women and 48 percent were BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). Of all nominated actors, 69 percent were BIPOC. And of all the nominees, 42 percent were women and 37 percent were BIPOC.

Chloé Zhao not only was one of only seven women ever nominated for Best Director, she also is the first Chinese woman, and the first woman of color ever to be nominated in the category. "I'm really lucky to be able to do what I love for a living," Zhao said during her virtual appearance backstage, "and if these nominations mean it can help more people like me to live their dreams, I think they're wonderful."

New this year was the addition of what they term "independent television" with Best Ensemble Cast, Best New Scripted Series, Best Scripted Series, Best Female Performance in a New Scripted Series and Best Male Performance in a New Scripted Series. "2020 has been a year of endless change and chaos, so it's wonderful to be back with our friends at IFC," Welsh said. "As tough as this year has been, there's so much great filmmaking and yes, television, that has sustained us throughout the pandemic. We look forward to celebrating that work at the Spirit Awards.

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

AWARD	FILM	WINNERS
Best Feature	<i>Nomadland</i>	Producers: Mollye Asher, Dan Janvey, Frances McDormand, Peter Spears, Chloé Zhao
Best Director	<i>Nomadland</i>	Chloé Zhao
Best Screenplay	<i>Promising Young Woman</i>	Emerald Fennell
Best Female Lead	<i>Promising Young Woman</i>	Carey Mulligan
Best Male Lead	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Riz Ahmed
Best Supporting Female	<i>Minari</i>	Yuh-Jung Yoon
Best Supporting Male	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Paul Raci
Best First Feature	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Darius Marder
Best First Screenplay	<i>Palm Springs</i>	Andy Siara

Best Documentary	<i>Crip Camp</i>	Jim LeBrecht, Nicole Newnham
Best Cinematography	<i>Nomadland</i>	Joshua James Richards
Best Editing	<i>Nomadland</i>	Chloé Zhao
Best International Film	<i>Quo Vadis, Aida?</i>	Jasmila Žbanić
Producers	—	Gerry Kim
John Cassavetes Best Feature budget under \$500,000	<i>Residue</i>	Merawi Gerima
Robert Altman	<i>On Night in Miami</i>	Regina King
Truer Than Fiction	<i>Elegance Bratton</i>	Pier Kids
Someone to Watch	<i>Farewell Amor</i>	Ekwa Msangi, Director
AWARD	INDEPENDENT TV	WINNERS
Best Ensemble Cast In A New Scripted Series	<i>I May Destroy You</i>	Michaela Coel, Paapa Essiedu, Wruche Opia, Stephen Wight
Best New Non-Scripted Or Documentary Series	<i>Immigration Nation</i>	—
Best New Scripted Series	<i>I May Destroy You</i>	—
Best Female Performance In A New Scripted Series	<i>Unorthodox</i>	Shira Haas
Best Male Performance In A New Scripted Series	<i>Unorthodox</i>	Amit Rahav



IDFA MAKES MAJOR CHANGES FOR 2021

The International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) has revamped its non-fiction program, for the 34th edition which runs Nov. 17-28, 2021. “Documentary film is going through a phase of historical transformation,” IDFA Artistic Director Orwa Nyrabia said. “New waves of filmmakers are continuously challenging the art form, investigating its limits and sharpening its edges as they search for artistic liberty.” The “classical” feature documentaries are still the being acquired by U.S. distributors. “But it seems there is also a movement of filmmakers from around the world, and even more from the global south, who don’t have access to this market and are going in a much more experimental direction,” he added

New in 2021:

IDFA now has two main competitions for film: the International Competition and the Envision Competition. Next to these are the IDFA Competition for Short Documentary and the IDFA Competition for Youth Documentary. Each competition has its own award(s). Here are also three cross-section awards for best first feature, best Dutch documentary, and best creative use of archive. Films in the main competitions, Luminous, and Frontlight can be nominated for the first award. Films in all program sections can be nominated for the second and third award.

In place of the former competitions for Dutch, mid-length, student, and debut feature films, IDFA will now select these films in relevant competitions and sections throughout the program.

The competitions for shorts and youth films (previously known as Kids & Docs) are to stay unchanged as is the festival's competition for Creative Use of Archive. Submissions are now open. For more information on both the competition section and submissions, go to: <https://www.idfa.nl/en/info/idfa-festival-submissions>. 📌

ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE SURVIVES CLOSURE THREAT

The 41-location Alamo Drafthouse theater chain declared bankruptcy in March, and an auction was scheduled. It was cancelled, however, when an equity deal with Fortress Investment Group and Altamont Capital (an on-going investor in the company) received no competitive bids. Another victim of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alamo could not meet its debt obligations. Previous to the deal, Founder and Chairman Tim League had predicted a comeback for the chain, which was known for its premium in-theater dining, selection of classic and off-beat genre screenings and its “no talking” policies to improve the moviegoing experience. League and Dave Kennedy, a longtime investor and board member, will remain involved as minority partners.

As part of the restructuring, two Texas theater locations and one in Kansas City, Missouri are set to be closed. Development for another theater in Orlando, Florida, will be “permanently ceased.” Altamont and Fortress not only bought the majority of Alamo's long-term debt from other lenders but also will provide \$20 million in financing to allow the remaining locations to operate. As part of the restructuring, two Texas theater locations and one in Kansas City, Missouri are set to be closed. The group plans to reopen 15 locations in May, including venues in Brooklyn, N.Y., Los Angeles and Dallas. Alamo's Brooklyn theater is reviving its box office on May 7, while the Los Angeles (new this year) and Austin, Texas' Mueller locations are scheduled to reopen on May 28. By this summer, Alamo Drafthouse anticipates 30 of its U.S. locations will be back online. 📌

2021: THE YEAR OF GIVING (OR HOW WE TRIED TO SAVE THE WORLD FOR \$10,000)

Award-winning independent filmmakers **Rick and Maggie Pamplin** began production on their next feature film **2021: The Year of Giving (Or How We Tried to Save the World for \$10,000)** on January 1. The documentary explores their efforts for one year as they give away \$25 a day in donations and micro-loans to make a better world.

“A few years ago, we began giving micro-loans to artists and small businesses throughout the world, helping people in desperate situations survive, become self-supporting and successful,” said producer Maggie Pamplin. “We then started developing a movie about how a single \$25 investment could literally change the world,” said writer-director Rick Pamplin. “In one year, we want to do as much good as possible, document it on film and inspire others to step forward and do the same.”

Partnering with Pamplin Film Company is 10-time Telly Award-winning **Think Visual Group**. Production is slated for 14 months, ending in February 2022. See more at twitter.com/PamplinFilmCo.



MOVIE MONEY CONFIDENTIAL INSPIRED BY FILMMAKERS & FINANCING BOOK

Award-winning independent filmmaker Rick Pamplin has created, written and directed a new feature length documentary inspired by Louise Levison's best-selling book **Filmmakers & Financing: Business Plans for Independents**. Pamplin says, “We made a bold, truthful movie, which reveals many secrets about the often-mysterious world of film financing.” Pamplin, a Levison client, sees the film “as empowering a new generation of filmmakers” with insight, information and real-life advice from filmmakers, fundraisers, investors, lawyers, producers, movie stars and Louise Levison.

Pamplin and his crew shot 100 hours of footage and interviewed about 60 people including actress-producer **Salma Hayek** (*The Prophet*) and filmed one of the last interviews with the late screen legend **Burt Reynolds** at his acting school in North Palm Beach, Florida. The movie also filmed seminar-style panels with students at Saint Andrew's School in Boca Raton and an open-to-the-public event with artists and writers at Harold's Coffee Lounge in the Northwood Arts Village.

Pamplin's storied career spans 18 years in Hollywood and 14 years at Universal Studios in Florida before he relocated to Palm Beach. He has written and directed several award-winning films including **Hoover**, starring Academy Award winning actor **Ernest Borgnine**. **Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL** is a Think Visual Group Production in Association with Pamplin Film Company. Go to MovieMoney.com for upcoming screenings and release information.



Rick Pamplin on the set of *Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL*

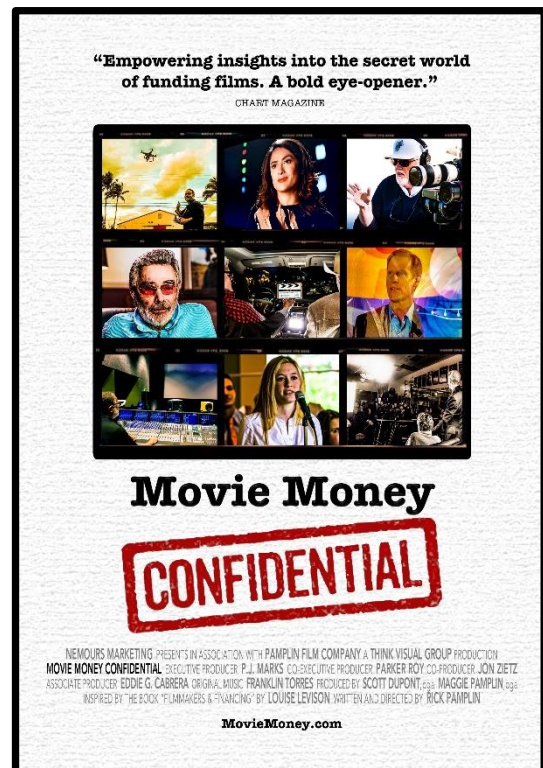
MOVIE MONEY CONFIDENTIAL WINS DOVE AWARD, RECEIVES APPROVAL AND "FANTASTIC" REVIEW

Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL, the feature length documentary film inspired by **Louise Levison's** best-selling book *Filmmakers & Financing*, has been awarded a prestigious Dove Foundation seal of approval, a "12+" rating and a "fantastic" review. The much-coveted Dove Awards are given "to encourage and promote wholesome family entertainment" and are used by schools, libraries, streaming services and churches for purchasing and licensing guidelines.

Producer **Scott duPont** was notified of the award in Hollywood and sent an advance copy of the review, now published online at **Dove.org**. "It is a great honor and achievement for our creative team and crew, and this award helps us reach an even wider audience," he said.

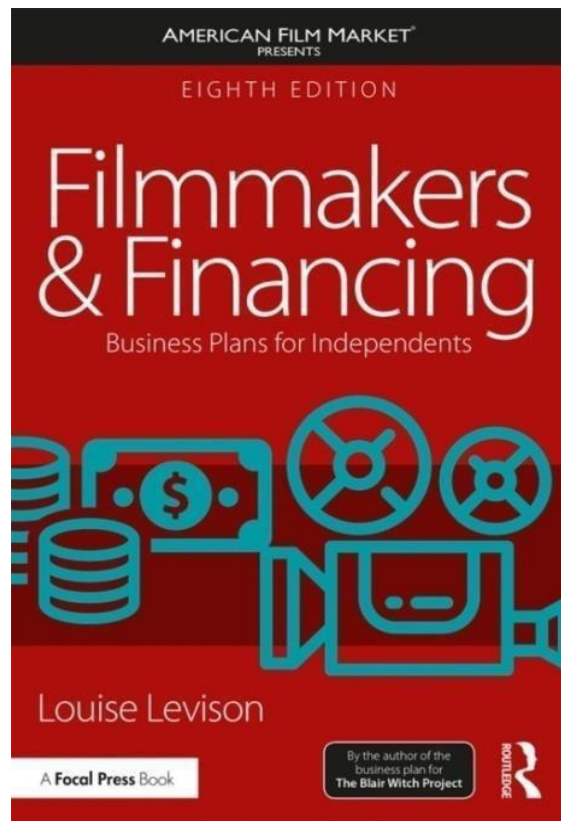
The review says, "With great advice from start to finish, *Movie Money Confidential* gives important details on how to create a film with little to no budget." It continues on, "This documentary is full of great information, including tips for people to start making their own films. It includes one-on-one interviews and panels with questions asked by real actors and aspiring producers."

Producer-Production Designer **Maggie Pamplin** noted the recognition for director **Rick Pamplin** and his collaborative partners at **Think Visual Group**: "*Movie Money Confidential* is a fantastic documentary with great visuals and audio. The information is thorough about how a filmmaker should deal with investors — telling them facts instead of what they want to hear, asking for their advice and how to avoid promising what you might not be able to deliver."



In summary, the review says "*Movie Money Confidential* contains information that can be valuable in every aspect of life for any person — not just aspiring filmmakers and producers. Its well-thought-out scenes and interviews provide priceless information and answers to questions that people may not have thought to ask. It is great for anyone to watch and learn from."

**The latest edition of *Filmmakers & Financing:
Business Plans for Independents***



In this new and updated ultimate filmmaker's guide, Louise Levison gives you easy-to-use steps for writing an investor-winning business plan for a feature film, including:

- Comprehensive explanations for each of the eight sections of a plan
- Full financial section with text and tables
- A sample business plan
- A companion website with additional information for various chapters and detailed financial instructions — advanced math not needed
- An explanation on how feature documentary, animated and large-format films differ
- A guide to pitching to investors: who they are, what they want and what to tell them
- Words of advice: Filmmakers share their experiences raising money from equity investors

Eighth Edition available for purchase: <https://www.amazon.com/Filmmakers-Financing-Business-Independents-American/dp/113894744X>

NEED MONEY FOR A MOVIE? DON'T GO IN EMPTY-HANDED. HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN.

The benefit of using a reliable business plan to raise financing for a film is that it allows the investors and the filmmaker to gauge the potential success of a film. Louise Levison, the President of Business Strategies, is a highly respected financial consultant in the entertainment industry, specializing in creation of film business plans. She is the author of *Filmmakers & Financing: Business Plans for Independents*, currently in its revised and expanded eighth edition (A Routledge/Taylor & Francis book, 2017). She also has a starring role in the feature documentary *Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL* which was inspired by the book. More information at moviemoney.com. Levison also is editor of the newsletter *The Film Entrepreneur: A Newsletter for the Independent Filmmaker and Investor (TFE)*.

A polished business plan with projections based on the worldwide results of other films and with clear explanations of the industry is far more effective than an incomplete document that leaves prospective investors wanting more information. In our “new normal,” *TFE* has developed (and continues to adjust) a new format for forecasting Indie films to include the current hybrid system of releasing films for a shorter span in theaters (currently mostly drive-ins but also the rest of the country’s cinema sites as the industry opens) and, often, into streaming rather than the standard online release pattern of DVD/Blu-ray and downloading.

Levison’s clients have raised money for low-budget films including *The Blair Witch Project*, the most profitable independent film in history, as well as for companies raising as much as \$300 million.

Among other clients’ projects are *The Prophet* (Kahlil Gibran’s), *Unlimited* (Nathan Frankowski), *Burning Bodhi*, *Greater*, *The Redemption of Henry Miller*, *Emoticon*), *Moving Midway*, *Redemption Road*, *Haunted* (2012), *The First of May*, *The Open Road*, *Aluna*, *Yak: The Giant King*, *Visual Acoustics: The Modernism of Julius Shulman*, *My Father and the Man in Black* and *Michael Winslow Live*. Her corporate clients include Danny Glover’s Louverture Films (2008 nominee for Best Documentary Academy Award *Trouble the Water*), Pamplin Film Company (*Hoover*), Majestic World Entertainment, Gundersen Entertainment and Tokuma International Ltd. Levison was an Instructor in the Extension Program at UCLA for 22 years before moving to Florida. She also has been a Visiting Professor at the Taipei (Taiwan) National University of the Arts, Chapman University (Orange County, CA) and the University of Montana (Missoula). She also has presented seminars and/or been on panels at festivals and markets around the world.

Contact Levison at louisel@earthlink.net to find out how you can put her 30 years of experience as a Film Business Consultant to work creating a business plan for your film.

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