



THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR:

A Newsletter for Independent Filmmakers and Investors



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VOL. 28 NO. 12

December 2020

NEW: DISTRIBUTORS EAGER TO BUY INDIE FILMS **BREAKING: MOVIE THEATERS TO REOPEN IN 2021**

- **Theatrical releasing now favors “Flexibility of Independents”**
- **Distributors buying films from Sundance Film Festival 2021 lineup**
- **Equity investors remain optimistic during changes in distribution**

Distributors were eager to acquire Sundance 2021 films on December 16th as soon as the lineup was announced. With the festival more than a month away, they are demonstrating both their belief in the business of indie film and the likelihood of other filmmakers making deals either before, during or immediately after the festival. Not only do these early buys show belief in the value of independent film but it also begs the question of how much influence such success at this and other virtual festivals will have on future decisions by filmmakers and buyers to physically go to festivals. Word-of-mouth works whether someone is in Utah or in their office. On the other hand, many filmmakers and distributors may not want to miss the opportunity to network in-person.

Both Indies and Studios are optimistic about theaters reopening sooner rather than later now that the Pfizer vaccine is being distributed and Moderna has also been approved. “I think in April and May you’ll see theaters start to reopen, with masks and with social distancing. We see things starting to open up in the spring and summer, we think consumers will be in theaters (then),” Sony Pictures Chief Tony Vinciguerra said in a *Variety* interview.

LATE BREAKING NEWS: The Sundance Film Festival has announced the lineup for its seven-day edition, January 28 - February 3, 2021. Health restrictions permitting, Sundance programmers hope to show every film online as well as in the Ray Theater in Park City and on “satellite screens,” whether socially distanced art houses, purpose-built venues or drive-in theaters.

For the schedule, venues and tickets go to: <https://fpg.festival.sundance.org/film/films/schedule>. ■

AMERICAN FILM MARKET: PART II

The American Film Market (AFM®) held virtually from November 9th-13th set records with 82 countries and 45 states participating, more countries than any AFM in the last decade. Exhibitor participation in the 41st edition rose to an all-time high of 571 registered companies from nearly 50 countries. After the United States, the largest number of exhibitors were from Italy, the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, France Canada and the Republic of South Korea. In addition to industry office booths from leading sales and production companies, AFM's LocationEXPO presented 59 film commissions and productions facilities from around the world, including Film France, Film Liaisons in California Statewide (FLICS), Island Film Group, Nu Boyana Film Studios, the Polish Film Institute, Seoul Film Commission, and Turespaña (Spain), to name a few. There were 1,468 Buyers from 66 countries with the largest number coming from the United States, followed by Japan, the United Kingdom, Republic of (South) Korea, Spain, Germany, Italy, France, and Canada. Buyers from the world's leading digital platforms were also in attendance. In addition, 465 official films screened, 50 percent more than in 2019.

Another key difference in the online version was the market's unique interactive video networking capabilities. After all, "In our industry, it's all about relationships," explained Jonathan Wolf, AFM's managing director, in a conversation with bizbash.com. With technology provided by the company Filmocracy, participants were able to meet in the Networking Pavilion with 180 online tables for video discussions enabling AFM to provide the "face-to-face" connections that happen organically in Santa Monica.

On the first day of the market, Pfizer announced that its coronavirus vaccine was 90 percent effective. It gave hope that theaters will be open next year; nevertheless, the difficulty in being able to guarantee a film will be shot (with insurance) and delivered became a problem in closing sales. At an online AFM finance conference panel, Motion Picture Corporation of America CEO Brad Krevoy was bullish about a (near) future where a reliable vaccine makes production easier and theater-going safe again. "It will be the roaring twenty-ones!" he said. "Content is going to come back strong, and it is going to be happy times, it is going to be fantastic for all of us.... There's going to be tremendous demand." Buyers were still cautious, however.

"International buyers are willing to spend aggressively to secure a film which could form the pillar for their 2022 slate by which time there's a strong expectation of the global box office having rebounded," Stuart Ford of AGC Studios told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "We don't know when, and how, theaters are going to reopen so anything set to go before mid-2021 is a big risk for us," a French buyer added. Most of the business at AFM 2020 was focused on smaller genre titles, with domestic distributors like Voltage, IFC, Saban and Vertical Entertainment who could easily send films to both theatrical and the home entertainment market (premium video-on-demand and streaming). "If it's a proper big-budget film, our partners really need the security that comes with a guaranteed theatrical window —and...that is a really difficult thing to offer them," Kristen Figeroid, SVP Advisory, Film Group, Endeavor Content, told IndieWire. "For the first time in years, independent producers were on the right side of the supply-demand chain," The Hollywood Reporter summed up the market.

[Ed. Note: If you are new to the newsletter, you can check out the November issue for Part I of the AFM market discussion at www.moviemoney.com.] ■

HOME ENT. CONSUMER SPENDING \$22.2B Y-T-D SEPT. 22

Overall U.S. consumer spending on home entertainment exceeded \$7 billion for the third consecutive quarter, totaling \$22.2 billion year-to-date September 3, 2020, reports The Digital Entertainment Group (The DEG). That's a 23.3 percent increase over the same period last year. For the first time, the first three quarters each were more than \$7 billion. Spending to watch movies and television shows for home and personal viewing accounted for 7.3 billion in the third quarter, an almost 18 percent increase over the same period a year earlier.

The DEG also notes that consumer spending on theatrical titles through Internet Delivered on Demand (iVOD) rental platforms rose 23 percent during the quarter and 45 percent for the first three quarters of the year. Overall spending across iVOD rose 25 percent during the quarter and 46 percent year-to-date.

In addition:

- For the first nine months of 2020, total consumer spending on digital formats (including EST, VOD and subscription streaming) was strong, rising 34 percent from the same period in 2019, to almost \$20 billion, while subscription streaming climbed 39 percent. (Note that VOD spending does not include premium video on demand (PVOD). Including PVOD would increase the total consumer spend on digital.)
- Digital purchase (EST) and rental (VOD) transactions are up 20 percent year to date, over the same period last year.
- Rental spending (including DVD and Blu-ray Discs but not VOD) was down 27.2 percent from 2019, while VOD rentals were up 2.1 percent.
- Subscription streaming (SVOD) was up 38.7 percent (Note that The DEG sourced this number from Omdia at [technologyinforma.com](https://www.technologyinforma.com))
- Total digital including EST, VOD and SVOD was up 34.2 percent for the first three quarters.

For more information go to: https://www.degonline.org/portfolio_page/deg-q1-2020-home-entertainment-report-2-2

THE GOTHAM AWARDS

The 30th Annual Gotham Awards, produced by the Independent Filmmaker Project, announced their nominations for the 2020 edition being held January 11, 2021. They still are the first major show of the awards season even though they moved from their usual spot on the first Monday after Thanksgiving. The show will be virtual and without any in-person attendees. “We congratulate the 2020 IFP Gotham Award nominees. In this unprecedented year we look forward to bringing the industry together and shining a light on some incredible films and television shows. We are proud to be celebrating our 30th anniversary in our resilient city, and continuing the core mission of IFP, independent storytelling.” IFP Executive Director Jeffrey Sharp said in the nominations release.

Submissions in the film categories, as reported by *Variety* earlier, were: 154 narrative features, up from 138 in 2019 and 128 documentaries, no change from last year. Notable is that the five nominations for Best Feature Film (*The Assistant*, *First Cow*, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*, *Nomadland* and *Relic*) were directed by women. The eligibility period for the 2020 Gotham Awards ends February 28, 2021, meaning films that have yet to be released in theaters or PVD such as A24’s *Minari* and Searchlight’s *Nomadland* are eligible for prizes. Films with budgets exceeding \$35 million were automatically disqualified from Gotham Awards consideration.

For a list of the nominees go to: <https://deadline.com/2020/11/first-cow-leads-field-gotham-awards-nominations-1234613454/> 

PRODUCER’S GUILD AWARDS

The 32nd Annual Producers Guild Awards still will be on March 24, 2021; however, other dates leading up to it have changed. The new and confirmed key dates are:

- Announcement of Nominees for Documentary Feature Film - February 2, 2021
- Close of Nomination Polls for Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Motion Pictures, Television Series/Specials, Televised/Streamed Motion Pictures to March 7 at 2 p.m.
- Announcement of Nominees for Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Motion Pictures, Streamed Motion Pictures Monday, March 8
- Opening of Final Polls for Documentary Motion Pictures, Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Motion Pictures, Streamed Motion Monday, March 8

Motion Picture Eligibility Periods:

Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures, Documentary Motion Pictures: January 1, 2020 - February 28, 2021

Notice of Producing Credits Form Deadline

Documentary Motion Pictures: Friday, November 6, 2020

Theatrical Motion Pictures and Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures: Friday, November 20, 2020

Screener Submission Deadline

Documentary Motion Pictures ONLY: Friday, November 6, 2020

For more information, go to: <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/11/producers-guild-awards-pga-date-changes-1234598442>.

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

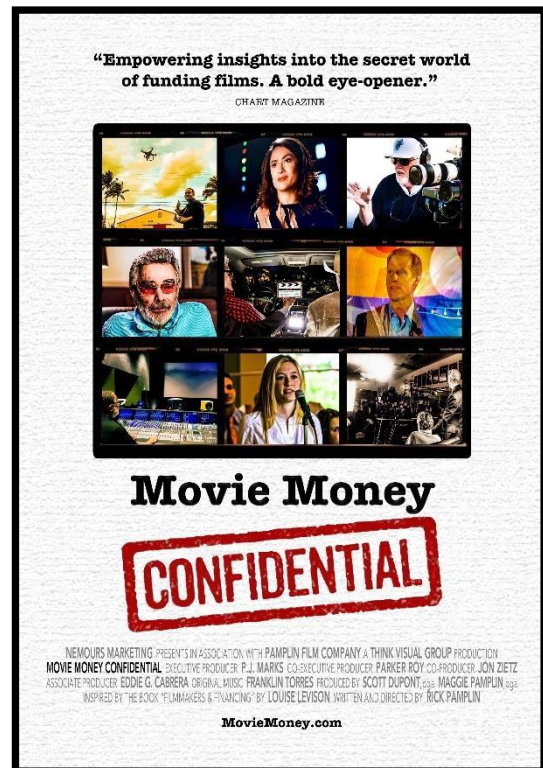
Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL, the feature length documentary film inspired by **Louise Levison's** best-selling book *Filmmakers & Financing*, has been awarded a prestigious Dove Foundation seal of approval, a "12+" rating and a "fantastic" review. The much-coveted Dove Awards are given "to encourage and 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."



ANTONIO SABÁTO JR. PLANS NEW MOVIE STUDIO, ANNOUNCES FEATURE FILM *TRAIL BLAZERS*

Hollywood actor, model, filmmaker, activist and author (*Sabato: The Untold Story*) **Antonio Sabáto Jr.** is launching **ConFlix Studios** as a place for conservatives and people of faith to tell stories that promote God, family and country. “There are so many people blacklisted over the years. I thought, ‘Why don’t we start a studio where we can produce and make our own stuff, have our own distribution and make movies we want to make?’”



After the 2016 election Sabáto found out he was virtually blacklisted in Hollywood. His agents and manager deserted him. Work dried up after a 30-year-career. He moved to Florida and got a job in construction. His comeback is producing (w/ **Kaya Jones** and **Nik Tizekker**), co-writing, directing and starring in *Trail Blazers*. The western feature film for his new studio has an all-star cast of Hollywood friends including **Kevin Sorbo**, **Scott Baio** and **Kristy Swanson** and is about an outlaw band of brothers who decide to change their ways to fulfill their father’s dying wish.

Sabáto, an international star who has over 40 movies to his credit, recently has been making media appearances, gathering public support on social media and connecting with like-minded **filmmakers and investors**. “We are putting together a plan to create a conservative movie studio for all patriots to do projects that Hollywood would never do,” he adds. For more information go to **conflixstudios.com** and join the mailing list for updates.

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.

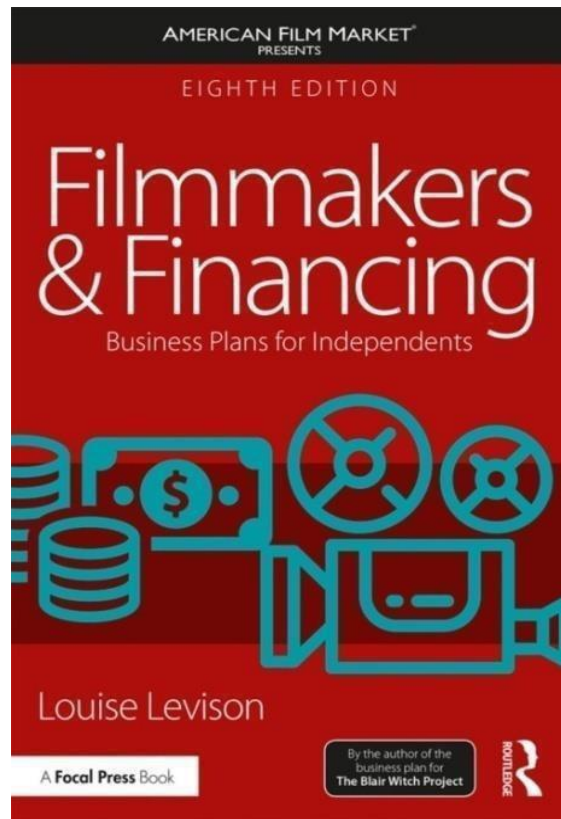
Pamplin and his crew shot 100 hours of footage and interviewed about 60 people including actress-producer **Salma Hayek** (*The Prophet*) and filmed one of the last interviews with the late screen legend **Burt Reynolds** at his acting school in North Palm Beach, Florida. The movie also filmed seminar-style 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*

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

<https://www.routledge.com/Filmmakers-and-Financing-Business-Plans-for-Independents/Levison/p/book/9781138947443>

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*.

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.

THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR is published by Business Strategies

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