



THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR:

A Newsletter for Independent Filmmakers and Investors



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ALERT! 73% OF DOMESTIC THEATERS OPEN TIME TO RAISE MONEY FOR YOUR FILM*

FACT: "...audiences continue to show a theatrical appetite, and the abundance of product at the multiplex makes for great business...That's with a domestic marketplace which has 73 percent of the over 5,000 theaters in operation," reports deadline.com for the June 4-5, 2021 weekend.

FACT: "...I think the movie theater experience is going to hold even more value for people..." said Comscore's Paul Dergarabedian on a Yahoo finance panel. He added, "the movie theater experience is completely singular and different than anything else...shortening windows, I think, is not going to hurt theaters. I think a 45-day window is totally reasonable.

FACT: "With change comes opportunity. Every studio is experimenting with different windows and bespoke business models. Movie theaters is where we want to see our work," Jason Blum, CEO, Blumhouse International

FACT: "It seems like each major studio comes out every week with their own different interpretation of the collapsed window, whether it's 17 days, 45 days. They've chosen a model that works for them. The great thing about being an indie is that we get to play with all of it...Now is about taking that access in this acceptability of the collapsed window and tailoring it to what makes sense for each title," Elissa Federoff, President of Distribution at Neon at the U.K.'s "Restart Conference."

***BE SMART: Call 818-427-7108 NOW TO DISCUSS A BUSINESS PLAN FOR RAISING MONEY FOR YOUR FILM(S). BE READY TO START PRODUCTION BY JAN 2022. ■**

AMAZON BUYS MGM AND THE STREAMING WARS CONTINUE

For the independent world, the two biggest pieces of news in June are: the box office is coming back and Amazon bought MGM. What do these two items have in common? Their futures look better every week.

Box Office Pro made five major points on their podcast over Memorial Day Weekend:

#1 - Theatrical exclusivity is “the turning point - the official start of this next chapter...We’re seeing more and more audiences come back.”

#2 - Paramount is back. Of the five major studios, Paramount was the only one not to have released any true tentpole titles in cinemas since the pandemic.

#3 - was the largest overall weekend since the pandemic

#4 - While several sequels have debuted theatrically since the pandemic, *A Quiet Place Part II* is the first to beat its predecessor on such a key metrics as opening weekend.

#5 - Lionsgate’s *Spiral*, a *Saw* franchise spinoff, continues to hold up well against the competition.

Ed. Note: As of the first weekend in June, *Spiral* has edged ahead of its \$20 million budget.

Major news stories from the streaming services were the purchase of MGM by Amazon for \$8.45 billion, and Discovery merging with Warner Media in a \$40 billion deal. Rather than the big streamers going after movie theaters, the studio business is the target. For the purposes of the independent world and future forecasting I will focus on MGM which was taken private in 2005. The company’s films include the James Bond and Rocky franchises. Entertainment industry analyst Rich Greenfield of Lightshed Partners called the acquisition a “watershed moment.” He and others say MGM’s much touted library of 4,000 films and 17,000 TV shows from many decades may be of equal value or more value to a company like Amazon as its so-called trophy assets, when it comes to retaining customers. “It’s not about Bond; it’s about all the other stuff they have,” Greenfield told *TheWrap*.

The sale might have failed, as the Bond Producers and Eon’s Chiefs Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson have always maintained control. In their original agreement with MGM, they were granted control over their films. Although MGM provides the financing and shares in the profits, Eon controls everything that makes Bond an independent film - script, actors, production, marketing and distribution. (*No time To Die* currently is scheduled for release October 8th.) Note that as this newsletter is being written final contracts haven’t been signed. Amazon still has to deal with other companies that have a form of ownership in the projects. It is reported that Amazon does value the theatrical film market and its revenue, as well as the attention those films bring to all their other businesses. Amazon’s global Prime membership has topped 200 million, and Jeff Bezos said in a first quarter earnings call in April that some 175 million viewed Prime Video last year.

What does this all mean for the future? As William Goldman said, “Nobody knows anything.” Likewise, nothing is guaranteed. At the moment, the box office, the theaters and the streamers are all healthy. It’s been a roller coaster since April 2021. Let’s hope that we really are on a long upward trend. 🍷

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HOME ENTERTAINMENT UP 10% FIRST QUARTER 2021

Consumers spent \$7.8 billion on movies and television shows consumed at home and on the go in the first quarter of 2021 up ten percent from the same period last year, reports the Digital Entertainment Group (The DEG). First quarter film and television offset pandemic decline in new release transactions. The overall change though came amid a nearly 94 percent drop in box-office performance for the films released in the period due to prolonged movie theater closures as a result of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Subscription streaming jumped 27 percent. Due to the spread of COVID-19, consumers started to stay home even before stay-at-home orders rolled out across the U.S. in mid-March and most of the theaters shut down March 31st.

The 2021 increase - including a 16 percent increase across all digitally delivered formats [electronic sell-through (EST), video on demand (VOD) and subscription streaming] came despite a dearth of new theatrical releases during the pandemic.

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Older library titles captured 76 percent of all consumer spending on digital purchases (EST) and rentals (VOD) compared to 37 percent in the first quarter of 2020. Spending on digital transactions rose more than 35 percent to \$608 million. Consumers also were keen to purchase TV titles, with TV EST rising almost 35 percent during the quarter to \$215 million.

Subscription streaming rose over 2020 as consumer choice continued to grow with the launches of Paramount+ and Discovery+ in March, as well as some major new releases sent to streaming on HBO Max, Amazon and other services simultaneous with or very shortly after theatrical release.

Note: Premium Video-on-Demand (PVOD) results, which would increase the total digital spend, currently are not included in industry reporting; however, early insights suggest that interest is high and results are strong. 📺

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL RESCHEDULED

“Cinema is not dead,” said Festival Delegate General Thierry Fremaux, as he and the Festival President unveiled the bulk of the Official Selection for the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival at its traditional press conference at the UGC Normandie cinema in Paris in June. More than 2,500 films were submitted for consideration for this year’s event, which was postponed from May to July 6 to 17 due to COVID-19. This year there will be pre-screenings June 21-25 to be run on the [marchedufilm.online](https://marchedufilm.com) platform, which will be a simplified version of the platform used for last year’s virtual edition. It will be available only to distributors and festival programmers. Fremaux also unveiled 65 titles compared to 54 in 2019. Of these, 24 were selected for the main competition, two of which are rollovers from last year’s selection: *The French Dispatch* (Wes Anderson) and *Benedetta* (Paul Verhoeven). The opening night film is Leos Carax’s *Annette*, a musical scored by Sparks and starring Adam Driver and Marion Cotillard.

“We have around 1,000 screenings, 61 percent of which will be market premieres, and 150 exhibitors, or sales companies,” said Paillard. “Many films will have two screenings so there will be around 500 films in total. The Marché team also continues to push on with preparations for the physical edition in July. Paillard revealed the International Village is booked to 60 percent capacity while the exhibition halls are around 50 percent full so far. “Most of the Europeans will attend.” He added there were already “good figures” for U.S. distributors as well as senior executives from key U.S. sales companies. He confirmed that the American Pavilion would not run this year but added that the team behind it was hoping to attend with a group of students to continue the work of its Ampav Worldwide Student Program. The organizers said they were confident of being able to host dinners and beach screenings alongside the main competition as some COVID-19 measures are lifted in France. While there will be no “kissing at the top of the red carpet”, restrictions should not be too onerous, festival director Thierry Fremaux said.

The annual Critics’ Week received 1,620 short films and watched 1,000 features. Each category counts about 30 percent female directors and 70 percent male directors. Among the 13 feature films selected, there are 11 first films and two second films. Seven features are from female directors. This year’s lineup will not include any U.S. indie films from Sundance or elsewhere. This year’s lineup will not include any U.S. indie films from Sundance or elsewhere. “We didn’t have Sundance and the virtual format isn’t the same as being there, we can’t forge bonds with filmmakers in the same way,” said Artistic Director Charles Tesson. “Usually we travel a lot, and we develop ties over time.”

The 53rd edition of Directors’ Fortnight will be held in Cannes from July 7-17. A non-competitive section, it is open to the public through a system of season tickets and individual screening tickets. This year, due to the pandemic, all Fortnight screenings will require online booking, as with the Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festivals. The section also will be organizing reruns of the selection following the festival, in Paris, Marseille and Bruxelles.

The ever-rumbling question of who will be allowed to travel to the festival has taken another major - and positive - turn, with fresh reports stating that France will now allow fully vaccinated travelers from the U.K. and U.S. to enter the country without being forced to self-isolate on arrival and there will no longer be evening curfews. Planning for the fest continues. 🇫🇷

CINEMACon

CinemaCon, the convention for theater owners where studios bring out stars and new footage, says it is back in Las Vegas at Caesar's Palace August 23-26. Among the participating studios are Disney, Warners, Universal, Paramount, Sony (which skipped 2019), Focus Features, Lionsgate and MGM (Amazon/MGM?) and its releasing arm United Artists Releasing. Having been sidelined by the pandemic in 2020, CinemaCon is gearing up for its most important outing to date. "Plans to celebrate our 10th edition last year may have been scuttled, but now it's time to get back to business. We are excited to be ramping up our efforts so the industry can gather, allowing us to do what we do best in celebrating the moviegoing experience," read the group's statement.

Staged in Caesars' Colosseum theater, the schedule will be packed with sponsored events, seminars, the trade show, screenings, product presentations and a gala award show. Due to the pandemic, everyone picking up a badge (staff, delegate, trade show guest, exhibitor trade show booth personnel) will need to show proof of a full COVID-19 vaccination or proof of a negative COVID-19 test conducted within 48-hours of picking up credentials.

For registration information:

<https://cinemacon.com/registration-information/> 

SUBMISSION PORTAL FOR THE PARE LORENTZ FUND OPEN!

The Pare Lorentz Documentary Fund provides annual production and post-production grants totaling \$115,000 to be used in the creation of original, independent documentary films that illuminate pressing issues in the United States. In 2021 the focus is "Challenging White Supremacy" with grants ranging between \$15,000 - \$25,000. Made possible by the New York Community Trust, the Fund supports feature-length documentary films that reflect artful storytelling, strong visual style, high production values, artistic writing, and outstanding music composition, as well as skillful direction, camerawork and editing. The group provides production and post-production grants to be used in the creation of original, independent documentary films that illuminate issues in the United States.

Grants made will range from approximately \$15,000-25,000. Eligible projects will be in production, having completed the bulk of research and development but still having substantial production or post-production related work and expenses remaining. Grant funds may be used for production and post-production related expenses incurred during the period of support.

The application deadline is Monday, June 28, 2021.

For guidelines, go to:

<https://www.documentary.org/parelorentz/application-guidelines> 

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

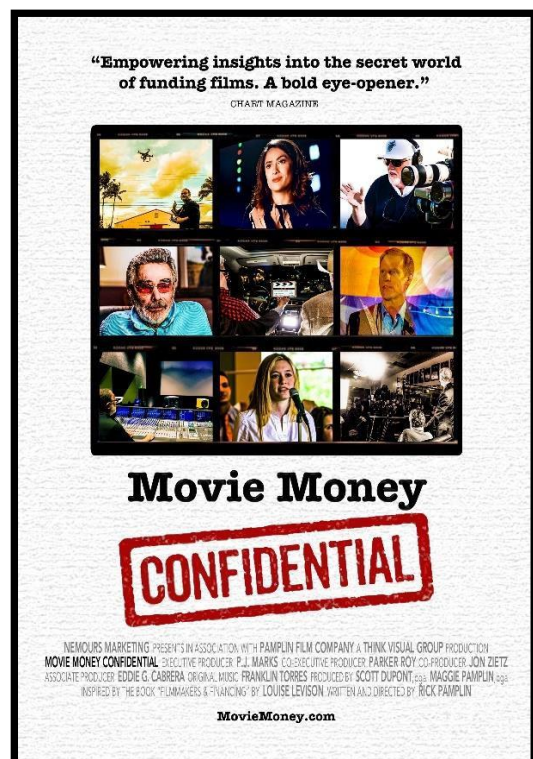
Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL, the feature length documentary film inspired by **Louise Levison's** best-selling book **Filmmakers & Financing**, has been awarded a prestigious Dove Foundation seal of approval, a "12+" rating and a "fantastic" review. The much-coveted Dove Awards are given "to encourage and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

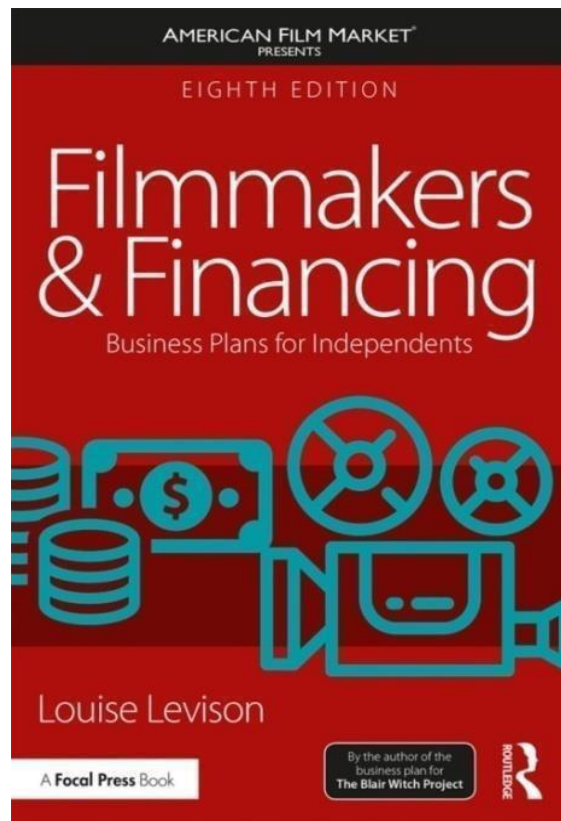
The review says, "With great advice from start to finish, *Movie Money Confidential* gives important details on how to create a film with little to no budget." It continues on, "This documentary is full of great information, including tips for people to start making their own films. It includes one-on-one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