



THE FILM ENTREPRENEUR:

A Newsletter for Independent Filmmakers and Investors



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THEATERS ARE RETURNING; BUYERS SEEK PRODUCT!

- ✓ **The top 3 moviegoing markets - New York, L.A. and San Francisco - have started reopening!**
- ✓ **“Independent distributors worldwide, buoyed by vaccine rollouts and the promise of theaters reopening, looked ready to go all-in on major projects,” THR headline during Berlin Film Festival**
- ✓ **“It feels like everyone senses the light at the end of the tunnel. In some countries, the light is even almost out of the tunnel.” - Susan Wendt, Managing Director, TrustNordisk**

NOW IS THE TIME TO HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN AND RAISE MONEY FOR PRODUCTION!

The variety of genres at the box office continues to grow. As of March 11th, the thriller and crime categories are 55 percent of the revenue for indie films released since April 1, comedies are 28 percent and horror films 19 percent, (per Business Strategies based on boxofficemojo.com reports.) Family films are starting to grow in number among both studio films and indie films. More animated films also are being released.

Theaters and studios need each other to create positive revenue streams. Even as digital streaming changes “legacy” revenue in segments such as music and television, the film industry has continued to bet on box office paydays with increasing blockbuster releases. Open theaters welcome quality independent films to help build revenues. The number of theaters will be different from the past 20 years, but many in the industry think it is an adjustment that previously needed to be made, anyway. Nevertheless, the results are estimated to be comfortable for both independent and studio earning needs.

An example of this type of thinking is Neon CEO Tom Quinn’s statement: “Neon’s entire mission is built around the power of cinema,” he said in a *Variety* podcast this March. “Cinema for us starts in the theater, a collective body of strangers coming together to see a director’s vision - unedited, uninterrupted - and with that comes great power.” 🍷

BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL

With additional vaccine releases, buyers were more active than expected at the virtual 71st Berlin International Film Festival (Competition and a new Encounters section) and European Film Market (EFM) which ran March 1st to 5th. In the past, the Berlin was often a second stop for a film after being acquired at Sundance and Cannes. The event was split with the five days in March, and a future more public Summer Special (June 9th-20th). “There is light at the end of the tunnel. Theaters will open (rather later than sooner, but they will),” Constantin’s Martin Moszkowicz said. In 2022, The Berlinale plans to return to its traditional February slot (10th-20th). If other plans stay the same, the event will be sandwiched between the BAFTAs and Oscars, as it has in previous years.

Multiple buyers were able to watch all films without the networking necessary at a live event, as with previous virtual fests. Watching the films this way was not a substitute to watching films on a big screen, but “...there is a purity of experience that’s not falsely elevated by an audience reaction,” said Dylan Leiner, Exec. V.P., Acquisitions and Production at Sony Pictures Classics. “An audience reaction such as a standing ovation in Berlin and Cannes can affect the sales process and lead to bidding wars.” AGC Studios’ Chairman and Chief Executive Office Stuart Ford said, “In the end the volume of top tier commercial projects available to buyers was comparable to EFM’s past...business was solid but not stellar.” He also said that where theatrical distributors “still face a challenge: Can they commit the kind of minimum guarantee “...bigger independent films require from the U.S. for their financing whilst their domestic distribution model is in a period of significant flux.”

Producers participating in the EFM were happy to declare themselves platform-agnostic when it comes to reaching eyeballs at a time with only a little under 50% of North America’s theaters open under restricted capacity, an exhibitor reported to screendaily.com. “I’m completely open to how it gets out,” said Jennifer Gibgot, producer on the YA *After* series sold by Voltage Pictures. “You have to be in this climate. I believe once people get vaccinated and [Covid-19] numbers go down, people will return to movie theatres. I also believe people like watching from their homes.”

Netflix, which for the past two years had kept a lower acquisition profile at EFM, made initial big purchases with \$18 million for *The Ice Road* and \$15 million for North and Latin American rights to *Operation Mincemeat* early in the Berlinale. As it came to a close, the streamer also made a jaw-dropping \$55 million pre-buy deal for worldwide rights to *The Pale Blue Eye*, a Gothic horror-thriller set in 1830.

A disturbing rumor during the fest was an alleged letter (shown to *The Hollywood Reporter*) proposing to introduce mandatory “buy-back” clauses to films being pre-sold to foreign territories. The idea, which several sources told *The Hollywood Reporter*, was floated by the U.S. talent agencies. It would require international distributors to promise to sell back a film they have bought for a small “kill fee” should the movie, once made, fetch a bigger price from a global buyer, such as a streamer or major studio. Such deals have voluntarily been made. For example, in order to obtain international rights for *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, Netflix paid what some buyers call “incredibly high premiums” for the pre-sold international rights.” David Garrett, CEO of global

sales group Mister Smith Entertainment and veteran of the independent film scene, acknowledges that individual distributors could agree to "buy-back" deals as a favor to sales companies or agencies. Introducing an industry-wide contractual "buy-back" clause into pre-sale deals would be "utterly unworkable" and would kill the independent distribution business for good.

The Competition section was limited to 15 films, even though the number of submissions was the same as last year, 2,587. With an additional 100 films in the EFM, they were worried about the number of films the industry could watch in five days, Berlin Co-Head told *Variety* in an interview. He and Co-Head Mariette Rissenbeek also had caused a stir with announcing in August there would be gender-neutral awards for acting categories in both leading and supporting performances. Chatrian said he felt that rather than penalizing women, "getting rid of the male/female distinction is more adequate to the world we are living in, and also more adequate to the city in which the festival is taking place... In [roughly] half of the films we have a strong female leading performance and, in the others, a strong male one. The result is that the starting point is equal in our selection. Female actors and male actors start out with the same possibilities."

AND THE WINNERS ARE . . .

AWARD	FILM	FILMMAKER
GOLDEN BEAR	<i>Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn</i>	Radu Jude
SILVER BEAR	<i>Mr Bachmann and His Class</i>	Maria Speth
Grand Jury	<i>Wheel of Fortune and Fantasy</i>	Ryusuke Hamaguchi
Best Director	<i>Natural Light</i>	Dénes Nagy
Best Performance	<i>I'm Your Man</i>	Maren Eggert
Best Supporting Performance	<i>Forest - I See You Everywhere</i>	Lilla Kizlinger
Best Screenplay	<i>Introduction</i>	Hong Sangsoo
Outstanding Artistic Contribution	<i>A Cop Movie</i>	Yibrán Asuad (editor)
ENCOUNTERS		
Best Film	<i>We</i>	Alice Diop
Special Prize	<i>Taste</i>	Le Bao
Best Director tie:	<i>The Girl and the Spider Social Hygiene</i>	Ramon Zürcher, Silvan Zürcher Denis Côté
Special Mention	<i>Rock Bottom Riser</i>	Fern Silva

GENERATION KPLUS (Crystal Bears by youth jury; other prizes by adult voters)		
Grand Prix for Best Film	<i>The Fam</i>	Fred Baillit
Special Mention	<i>A School in Cerro Hueso</i>	Betania Cappato
YOUTH JURY GENERATION 14PLUS		
Crystal Bear for Best Film	<i>Summer Blur</i>	Han Shuai
Special Mention	<i>Cryptozoo</i>	Dash Shaw



TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL

The 48th Telluride Film Festival will run from September 2nd to 6th. Organizers currently are planning an in-person gathering in Colorado due to progress with vaccines for the Coronavirus. “Our position within the festival calendar gives us hope that we will be able to hold the festival this year,” Telluride Executive Director Julie Huntsinger said. “We are guided by science and are continuously evaluating the global pandemic in relation to health, travel and live events. Time will tell, but in the meantime, we are busy planning for and putting together an incredible program.” She added, “As a result of the festival’s 2020 cancellation, the majority of passholders requested to roll over their passes to 2021. 🍷

SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON GOES VIRTUAL

The 2021 San Diego Comic-Con, the largest fan convention in North America, will be virtual from July 23rd-25th. In addition, Comic-Con International, the organization parent organization, SDCC, is planning an in-person convention in San Diego to be held in November 2021. “While we are buoyed by the rollout of the vaccine and the growing number of individuals being inoculated, it appears that July will still be too early to safely hold an in-person event of the magnitude of Comic-Con,” organizers said in a statement. “While we lament the postponement of the in-person Comic-Con, our commitment to this community of fans and our celebration of comics and the related popular arts endures as an important part of who we are.” 🍷

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Alamo Drafthouse, the largest privately held theater chain in the U.S., declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The company joins Studio Movie Grill and Cinemex, two other sizable theater chains that also found they could not survive the prolonged shutdown and the absence of new releases without bankruptcy protection. Alamo, which could not pay debts to several banks due to the impact of Covid-19, was sold to Altamont Capital, funds managed by affiliates of Fortress Investment, League and other original investors. Tim League founded the 40-cinema theater chain in 1997 as a single-screen mom and pop repertory theater in Austin, Texas. He and Dave Kennedy, a longtime co-owner and board member, remain involved as minority partners with Altamont and Fortress. “We’re excited to work with our partners at Altamont Capital Partners and Fortress Investment Group to continue on that path of growth on the other side of the pandemic, and we want to ensure the public that we expect no disruption to our business and no impact on franchise operations, employees and customers in our locations that are currently operating,” said CEO Shelli Taylor.

Seed&Spark is ending its proprietary subscription service later this month as it shifts its distribution focus to new impact-driven initiatives. The company will be heading to IndieFlix in two moves executives said will strengthen both companies in a media landscape increasingly driven by corporate heavyweights. The Seed&Spark titles will join a 4,300-strong IndieFlix library that includes everything from *Sid and Nancy* to festival-favorite shorts and *Bonanza*. Seed&Spark’s streaming platform allowed filmmakers to submit their work directly; accepted projects which enjoyed a 50-50 revenue split. About 100 creators, representing about 200 titles, opted to have their titles transferred to IndieFlix. Similarly, IndieFlix allows filmmakers to submit their work directly to the platform for consideration. They’re paid based on a model that pools subscription revenue and pays filmmakers on a minutes-watched rate. IndieFlix and Seed&Spark are among very few companies in this independent digital entertainment space who have survived the last decades, while also contending with these tremendous market forces of monopolistic power and consolidation at the top,” Seed&Spark CEO Emily Best. “We have stayed deeply focused on delivering on our mission, including shuttering business units that we don’t feel like completely serve, while finding business lines that nobody else is finding because they’re still competing in the monopolistic space.”

Feature film producers Matthew Cooper and Jessamine Burgum are launched production company **Pinky Promise**. The company aims to empower up-and-coming storytellers, especially those with underrepresented perspectives. It is founded on a belief that the best stories are yet untold. Between 2021 to 2024 they will aim to produce 10 high-concept, independent feature films ranging from low to mid seven figures. The company says that it will “use a proven venture fund model that discovers world changing entrepreneurs” and “Pinky Promise is committed to finding, nurturing and launching new storytellers.” The company’s first feature is *Tankhouse*, which focuses on two Upper East Side New Yorkers who, after being blacklisted from the NYC theatre industry, decide their only course of action is to move to Fargo, North Dakota and start a theatrical revolution. 🍷

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

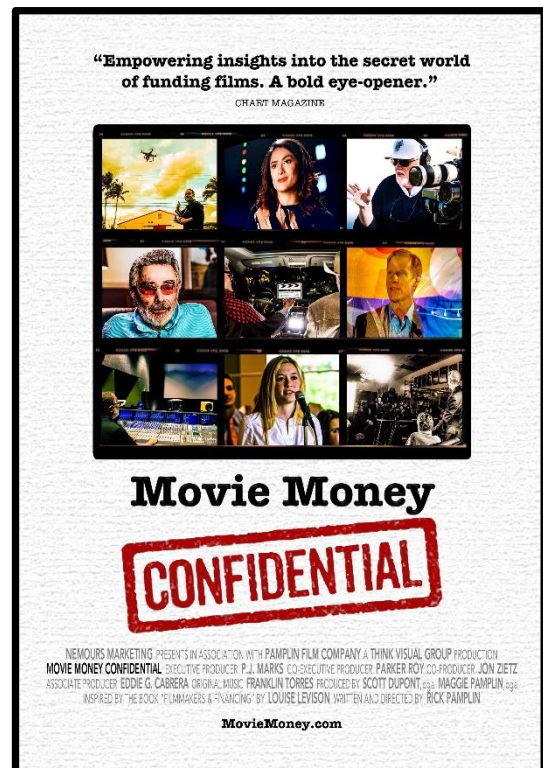
Movie Money CONFIDENTIAL, the feature length documentary film inspired by **Louise Levison's** best-selling book *Filmmakers & Financing*, has been awarded a prestigious Dove Foundation seal of approval, a "12+" rating and a "fantastic" review. The much-coveted Dove Awards are given "to encourage and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

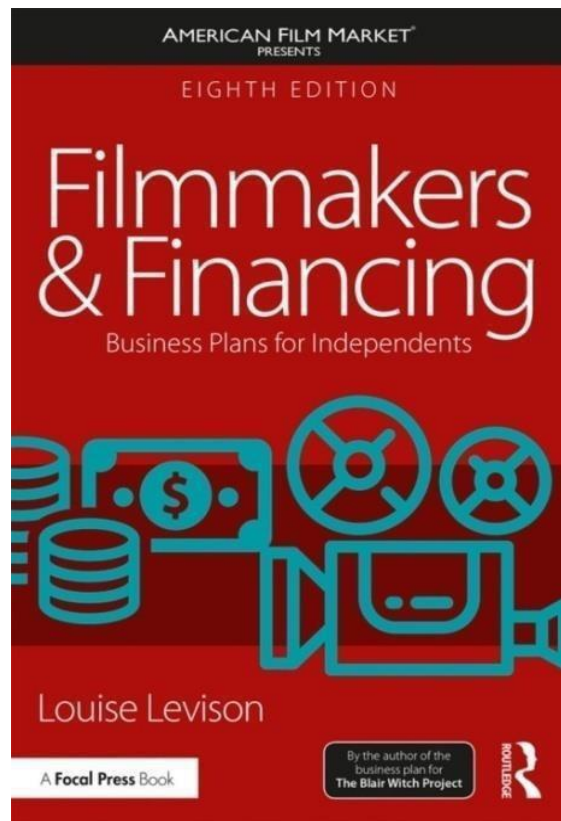
The review says, "With great advice from start to finish, *Movie Money Confidential* gives important details on how to create a film with little to no budget." It continues on, "This documentary is full of great information, including tips for people to start making their own films. It includes one-on-one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