

**The World of Independent Film
in the Time of COVID-19**

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Submitted to the Department of Arts Management
School of SUNY Purchase
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The film industry is an important source of entertainment and media in our world. The pandemic that started in 2019 hurt everyone in the industry just as much as everyone else in the world, but just like everyone else, we can adapt and keep going. And the part of the film industry that has the best chance at coming back the quickest is the independent film sector. What I want to do with this paper is give you, an independent filmmaker, pointers on what to look out for and give you things you'll need to know outside of production itself to help you make your films successfully.

Let me first clarify what I mean by "independent film," though, because it's a vague subject. In short, I'm referring to a film produced without backing from a studio. However, that doesn't mean the film's budget has to be small, even though it can. "The King's Speech," directed by Tom Hooper, had a budget of \$15 million, and that was an independently produced film. Nor does the film have to reach a very small audience. "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," directed by Joel Zwick, made \$374 million in worldwide box office sales. Those of you reading this probably don't have multi-million dollar budgets, so those were purely examples. Starting out in the beginning as an independent filmmaker, you'll likely not make much, if not any at all, and that's fine. Most of you will be either seniors in college here at Purchase and looking into making your own independent film after you graduate, or have already graduated and are in the process of producing one in some fashion. I want to give you an outline of subjects that are related and important to your independent filmmaking. I'll go over COVID protocols in New York State and the US, and how things might change in the future with the vaccines coming out. I'll also go over a good resource for getting money for your film,

crowdfunding, and good practices in it so you have the best chance at getting people's attention and support. It's always been a good backbone for independently produced projects, but I think now with COVID and everything moving digital faster than it was before, it's even more valuable. Finding an aggregator is also important if you have a budget, if not more than everything you would have completed beforehand. You have to have a way to get your film to audiences beyond those who supported you in crowdfunding or other forms of donation. If you're trying to aim high with the release of your film, you'll have to get help from distribution companies and aggregators. *Distribber* was a really popular one, but it declared bankruptcy in 2019 and has since shut down. I'll go over what they are, and why they can be really useful-- and also why they might not be.

THE WORLD OF FILM AND THE WORLD OF COVID

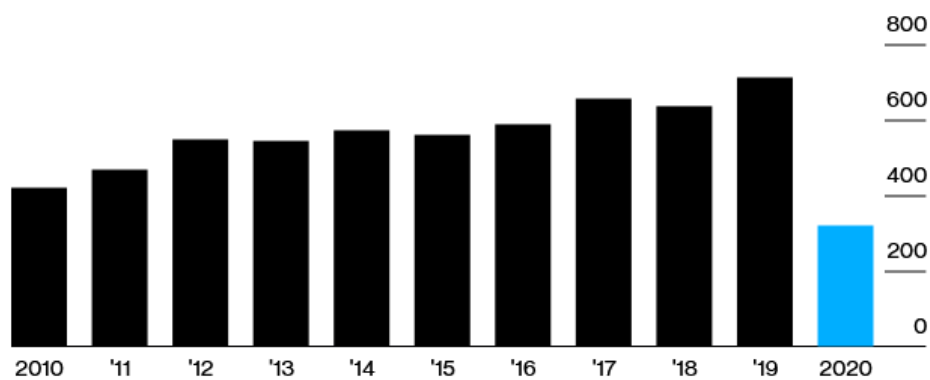
It's no secret that COVID-19 has affected the independent film industry, or even the film industry as a whole. Most, if not all of the movie theaters in the US closed at the start of the pandemic, and by the end of last year, only a little more than half of them had reopened. From an article on *Screen Daily*, as of now, pretty much every movie theater is open, but most of them still are only open to limited capacity, the percent of which varies depending on the state. According to the Motion Picture Association of

America, in 2019, about 711 independent films were released over the course of the year in the US. In 2020, that number dropped down to only 320. 2019's number seems a little strange since that was the year the pandemic began, and 2018's number of independent films published was 637. The number was likely influenced by the fact that Netflix joined the MPAA in 2019 as the graph mentions. Netflix is the first non-hollywood studio to join the MPAA, and it hosts a decently large library of independent films. While Netflix doesn't typically accept movie pitches from directors with little to no reputation, if you eventually want to work your way up the ladder and get one of your films on the Netflix library in the future that could be a long-term goal. A way you could do that is through a distributor, but I'll go into that later.

The pandemic has also caused a hiccup with production insurance. It's more of a significant problem for films with a much larger budget, but I think it's worth mentioning. With the restrictions and risks with filming during the pandemic, COVID-specific insurance policies have started to come up. From an article on *Forbes* by Jeff Ewing, he says "the issue is that not only is such insurance more difficult to acquire, but it's

Plunging Production

Independent film releases in the U.S. have tumbled this year



Sources: ComScore Inc., Motion Picture Association
2020 year to date. Netflix joined MPA in 2019

currently far more expensive than the business-interruption insurance of yore.” In another article by Courtney DuChene on *Risk & Insurance*, she talks about how because insurance underwriters have been receiving a huge amount of claims, they’ve either been writing up coverage for less people or none at all. As for the insurance policies being given to people, a lot of them are excluding coverage for things like COVID-19 setbacks or troubles because that could potentially cost way more than normal. The upside to having really small indie film projects is that insurance might not even be in the budget at all. Zach Watson on the website *Soundstripe* talks about how having a small cast and crew can be really beneficial for filming during the pandemic. The fewer people you have working with, the easier everyone is to monitor for the virus. Likewise, if someone does catch it, it’ll be easier to contain and get back to working once it’s passed.

COVID PROTOCOLS DISCUSSION

The New York State government created two documents for their COVID-19 guidelines titled “[Media Production Guidelines for Employers and Employees](#).” Half of the document goes over mandatory protocols, and the second half are ‘recommended best practices.’ The second document was made by the NY Department of Health, titled “[Interim Guidance for Media Production During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#).” Both documents include similar content, but they’re both useful to read through. The second one contains a listed series of events in which governor Cuomo enacted executive orders. These were created during the summer of 2020, and since then, things have changed with vaccines being created and becoming more widely accessible. I think the mandatory guidelines should be followed until New York State

puts out a notice saying they're not needed anymore, but the 'recommended best practices' I think are worth going over and talking about how they might change and how I think you should consider them going into the future. Let me note this, though-- *still follow them*, unless you are certain you can be more lax with the practices. These are some of them:

- "Perform media and production activities remotely to the greatest extent possible (e.g. meetings, casting, scouting, editing)."

I feel like starting soon, if not now, some of these can be done less remote.

Things like scouting and casting I'd argue could be done in-person with multiple people, provided the precautions are made. By which, I mean making sure the people involved are either vaccinated, or they have been tested negative and have self-quarantined for a sufficient amount of time (which I believe is still 2 weeks). Meetings can also be done more in-person now, I think, but still take those same precautions. One of the mandatory guidelines states that if it's an indoor activity, occupancy shouldn't be above 50% of the named max capacity for a space. However, if your meeting happens to take place outdoors, you wouldn't have to worry about it.

- "Ensure all scouting activities take place virtually, where possible. If individuals must travel in person, scouting should occur in small groups that can maintain social distance, with all individuals wearing face coverings."

Like I was saying before, I don't think it will be as important to keep scouting virtual in the future. It will still vary depending on the location, though. If it's someplace indoors, still take as few people as possible. If it's an outdoor location, it might be fine to bring all relevant people to scout it. However, that would depend on if there are other

people in the location besides yourselves. If it's an outdoor location frequented by pedestrians or others, I'd say be careful about the number of people, but if it's someplace mostly/entirely empty, don't worry about it.

- "Eliminate open calls in favor of scheduled appointments."

Regardless of everything, including this pandemic, I think this should be something everyone practices. It might just be a personal thing, but scheduled meetings and appointments are always a good idea, in my opinion. They help with keeping things on track and moving, and you know when to expect a call or go to a meeting so you can prepare prior to it and after it accordingly. However, some people's schedules are left much more open because of the pandemic, so open calls may be easier for some.

- "Have cast, including extras, arrive at the media production facility or location 'camera ready,' to the extent possible (e.g. having completed hair, makeup, and wardrobe off site or through remote instruction)."

For this guideline, I would say still follow this, but if there are exceptions like the people helping the actor get camera-ready and the actor themselves having been vaccinated, you might be able to have them prep on set if the situation allows for it. By that, I mean are people working on the set location, including cleaning it, finished with their task or able to make a space for the actors and other staff to prepare? It kind of ties into the following recommendation:

- "Ensure that employees, cast, and crew are given adequate time throughout the day to periodically clean and disinfect their gear/equipment (e.g. cameras, props) if multiple people use or handle such equipment."

It ties back with the practice I listed before because employees and crew who are cleaning up things on set might or might not be able to make space for the actors and other employees. Again, it depends on your situation, like where the location is, how much time you have, how many crew members are there, or even how many are vaccinated and unvaccinated.

- “At a minimum, screening is required of employees, cast, and crew members, and, where practicable, contractors and vendors, and must be completed using a questionnaire that determines whether the individual has: a) Knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who has had symptoms of COVID-19; b) tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days; and/or c) has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.”

This practice and the next few I’m going to show you are ones that I still think you should follow more closely, because they pertain to actual screening and testing protocols, which are really important. When it comes to quarantining and testing prior to the start of a project, I know from personal experience that I had to get tested around 15 or 16 days prior to the start, self-quarantine for two weeks after that even if I test negative, test again after two weeks, and self-quarantine for another two days before the project begins. For what I was doing, we had to be more careful, but depending on how many people you have on your film and how well you know and trust them, including staff and other crew, you may or may not have to go to such lengths. The testing protocol to come back to Purchase College campus was fairly simple, just test two weeks prior and maintain self-quarantine until we come back; you could

theoretically just do that. Although, in regards to the screening process practice I mentioned, the employees, crew and staff should do that during their self-quarantine. Unless they're vaccinated, but even then it wouldn't hurt to do it anyway.

It also mentions that the questionnaire can either be done remotely or outside the location. So you could have a system that's similar to Purchase's daily COVID-19 screening that they send out via email, or simply ask the same questions to the staff upon their arrival. I would personally recommend doing a digital form for it, because you don't want someone on the crew or anyone else driving all the way to the shoot just to be told to go back home. One of the ways I think you could make the questionnaire, even though it's fairly rudimentary, is through Google Forms. It would be something you'd have to create daily to get a fresh set of answers each time, but it's the least that can be done. When sending out the forms, do it via email, and I know Gmail has a system where you can set a date and time for something to send. This way, you can prepare an email message to go out the morning after you create it. Purchase's email notifications get sent out at around 6AM, so you can create it during the evening or at the end of the work day, set it to go out the next morning, that way you don't have to worry about creating a whole new form and email for it every morning before everyone else is likely to wake up.

“In the case of an employee, cast, crew, or contractor testing positive, the Responsible Parties must cooperate with the state and local health department to trace all contacts in the media production facility or location and notify the state or local health department of all individuals (as applicable) who entered the media production facility or location dating back to 48 hours before the person(s) began experiencing COVID-19

symptoms or tested positive, whichever is earlier. Confidentiality must be maintained as required by federal and state law and regulations.”

Confidentiality, meaning keeping the information on who tested positive from anyone who doesn't need to know exactly who, from what I can understand that includes the people who were in possible contact as well. I haven't been in a workplace situation where a coworker tested positive yet, but from people I know that have, even if they were told they were in possible contact with the person, they had no idea who the person in question was; they were never told. By default, according to the US Occupational Health and Safety Administration requires that the health facility that tested the employee would only tell the employer if someone in the workplace tests positive. Employees have a general right to privacy as anyone else does, and if the person who tested positive says nothing, then the information is kept. However, it's up to the employee if they want the information let out or not. Nothing is stopping them from contacting a coworker and/or friend/family member on the phone or through email and telling them about it. The New York Department of Health also wrote a brief document [*Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following a COVID-19 Infection or Exposure*](#). As the title suggests, it goes over the protocols people should follow if someone's infected or exposed.

“If an employee tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of whether the employee is symptomatic or asymptomatic, the employee may return to work upon completing at least 10 days of isolation from the onset of symptoms or 10 days of isolation after the first positive test if they remain asymptomatic.”

'At least 10 days', I think, should be interpreted as 2 weeks to be on the safe side. Regardless of work or employment, I remember that the government's recommendation for self-quarantine was 2 weeks around when the pandemic began. Although, for the people who have come into possible contact or close proximity to the person who tested positive, the document explicitly states that they have to self-quarantine for 14 days.

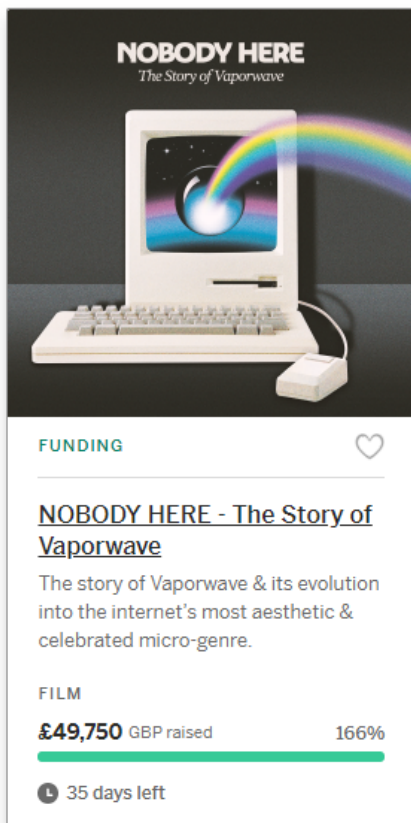
Those were the regulations and practices that I thought were notable enough to talk about, but there are a lot more in the documents themselves, plus all the mandatory rules written in them. Those aren't talked about here because I think they speak for themselves and you should look through the documents in their entirety.

CROWDFUNDING

Given everything surrounding COVID-19, you still have to make your film and get it out there into the world. I can't tell you how to make your film, but I can help you with getting money for your budget (if you have a budget), and at the same time, marketing it. The method being crowdfunding. Using websites like *Indiegogo* or *Kickstarter*, and getting the news about your film out through people that want to donate to it, is a really common thing; and has been for a long time, especially the past two decades. People and organizations do it for things like films, live events, and even video game development. Crowdfunding is exactly how it sounds. You get donations and funding from everyday people on the internet. Established indie filmmaker and author of the book *Crowdfunding for Filmmakers: The Way to a Successful Film Campaign*, John Trigonis, broke the process of making a campaign into three general aspects: The invitation, the incentives, and the interactions.

Invitation

The invitation is important, because that's what gets a passing viewer among the thousands that browse a site like *Kickstarter* to stop scrolling after seeing an attention-grabbing "cover," if you will. What the cover consists of are a header image for the project, the project's name, and the space for approximately one sentence maximum that tells what the project is. While it's not the most important component, it's pretty close since if your cover isn't interesting to someone, you can't even hope of trying to get them to donate because they've already scrolled past. The best thing you can do here is have an image that is simple, but shows a part of the film's story/concept that makes them ask questions or have to take a second to analyze the image. The example of a cover is from the project *NOBODY HERE - The Story of Vaporwave*. It's more of a documentary film than a narrative, but that shouldn't change anything.



Like the image on the left shows, this is a cover tab people will see when looking through people's projects on *Indiegogo*. It has the image at the top, a title spot, space for a short description, and around the bar showing how much money has been raised, shows what kind of project it is and how much time is left before the campaign ends. The example for *NOBODY HERE* has an image that at least has me asking questions about it. I see a really old computer, and it piques my curiosity because I wasn't born around the time computers

looked like this, so I want to know more. The rainbow going into the screen that has this space-themed look in it hints that the ‘aesthetic’ that the description mentions, and much like the intrigue I have for the old computer, I want to know the story behind it.

When someone is thinking about giving money to a person/group of people they don’t know, the first things that they want to know are who you are, and what you can do. Most crowdfunding sites have a space at the top of the page for frontline photos or videos. A short trailer is a good way to say “this is who we are” or “this is what we’re doing” immediately without needing to do any reading. This is an excellent spot to showcase your talent as a filmmaker as well, and if you get creative enough, you can do both at the same time. A perfect example that goes above and beyond that Trigonis gives in his article “Three Ways to Get a Crowd into Crowdfunding your Indie Film” is Kenny Gee’s promotional video for his short film “The Body.” The page doesn’t exist anymore because the campaign ended, but the trailer is still up on Vimeo. The video he produced for the page not only showcased his talent for filmmaking, but immediately turned the video from a gruesome interrogation scene to almost comical by integrating information about the film itself plus how to donate. Although if you choose it to be, it can just be a video talking about what the film is and general information related to the crowdfunding project. You’ll also want every piece of information that is said in the videos to be written in the text below it. That way, if people don’t have the ability to watch the videos you made, they can still see it.

There’s no standardized method of organizing your introduction because it comes down mostly to stylistic choice. From the numerous campaign pages I’ve seen, you’ll want to include these three things (again, in no particular order): A plot synopsis;

short bios of the people involved with the production; and talk about some of the technical aspects of the film, like where the sets are, what equipment is either being used or needed, or an overview of the proposed production plan to name a few. Again, stylistic choices are up to you, but the other most important thing is transparency. People donating want to know as much as they possibly can, and because they give you their money for it, it's one of the things you have to do. The other being making the film.

I should also note quickly while I'm on the subject of money that depending on the crowdfunding platform, while some donations are sent to you as they come in, most have a system where the donations are stored in a record, and no official transaction is made until the goal is reached. Maureen Ryan makes it a point in the fundraising section in his textbook "Producer to Producer: A Step-by-Step Guide to Low-Budget Film Producing," that if you put all the expenses for producing the film on your credit card, you need to be certain the goal has been reached and that you have received the donations. If you go and purchase with credit all the equipment; site reservations; put possible people on payroll if that's in budget; or anything else before the donations are all pooled together, and it doesn't reach the goal by the deadline, those donations are gone and you've got no way to pay for them when the bills show up. Or better, she recommends simply to not put them on a credit card at all because that might happen if you're not careful.

Interactions

Once you have people interested in your project, the next important thing is the interaction with your audience. Those people are putting aside their own money for your

project, so they'll want to know how progress is going. One way is to keep updates on social media; and to have links to your social media page(s) on the crowdfunding site. It's a way to communicate with your audience openly, and answer questions that anyone might ask in comments. It would be beneficial if you already have a social media following to begin with to hit the ground running with the campaign, but if you don't, reach out to family and friends and have them spread the word about it and/or even donate. Ryan (Producer to Producer) points out those people are a good place to start because those people close to you typically want to help and support you. I personally disagree with Trigonis on the frequency of social media posting-- you don't need to update people on what's going on every single day, multiple times a day, because that could lead to information overload for some people and clog up their social media feeds.

It's also important to know what to put in your posts for social media. Most people that enter your social media page will be through your campaign site, but there are going to be people that enter the page either by browsing on social media, or a friend/family member told them to give it a look. There's ways to balance posts that are more appealing to both those types of audiences, and according to Capacity Interactive, a marketing consultant company, it's called the 70/30 rule, or 80/20 depending on where else you look. The concept is more directly applied to social media marketing specifically, but it can be loosely adapted for sharing your project. The idea is that most of your posts that are about a product should involve a personal response to seeing it, and once you have enough traction, you can post more direct sales-related posts. This is how you can apply that concept to connecting to your crowdfunding audience and

expanding it on the same platform: People will initially be coming to your social media page from the crowdfunding site, so they'll already know what the project is that you're posting about. You don't need to take the text/image space to show what it is, so you can be more personal with your audience, talking about progress or other things related to it (70%, personable style post). As more people find your social media page and it begins to be the location that people first encounter your project, you'll then be able to create posts that introduce what the project is, and direct people to the crowdfunding page (30%, "sales" style post).

Another form of social media posting, according to Natalie Martell of Capacity Interactive, is this topic of "bottom-funnel vs. top-of-funnel" posts. The bottom-funnel posts are similar to the 70% posts. They are geared towards the audience that knows the project/ product; that are familiar with the who's, what's, when's, where's, and how's. The insider posts, if you will. The top-of-funnel posts are more focused on the attention of people that don't know the project, and typically fall in line with the 30% posts. They're either seeing information about it for the first time, or have only seen little or just heard of it, and are being directed to go to something to see more.

Incentives

The incentives are the things that are the answer to a possible donor's question of "what's in it for me?" because almost everybody expects something in return when they give something. People are giving their money to you, so it's only fair that you give something back to them as a thank you. The directors of "The Cosmonaut" gave out raw film footage and the ability to obtain some of the film's profits as incentives for people to donate. A few other possibilities for incentives that Trigonis and Ryan outline are putting

the contributor's name in the credits at the end of the film, giving contributors a free physical/digital copy of the film (maybe even a special edition), and inviting contributors to meet with the cast and/or crew over Zoom or some other video call. Or if the proper precautions are made, even an in-person meet-up. Trigonis likes to categorize types of incentives/perks into 3 main concepts: mandatory, experiential and personalized incentives. The mandatory incentives are the easy ones: a shout out on social media; a free copy of the film; a direct thank you sent to your email or physically mailed to you; access to merchandise. The experiential incentives give the donator an extra experience related to the film, hence the name: a thank-you in the credits; invitations to an insider meeting with the cast/crew; an invitation to an early screening (with safety measures taken). The way he puts it, exclusive access to content and experiences that are beyond what a person would experience if they simply bought the film after its release. Personalized incentives are perks that are given individually to donors and are personalized specifically to them. Signed merchandise, a personalized thank you video, a personal letter in the mail, photographs of the movie set/crew/cast with the donor in them, or carefully crafted gifts. For his film "Around Here," Tim Sparks wrote each contributor who gave over a certain amount an individual ukulele song about that donor. Trigonis, for his movie, "Cerise," wrote poems for over 100 people who donated over a certain amount. For the film "Hybrid Vigor," the people who donated only \$1 or more got a custom movie poster for the film, with their face on it, made from a photomosaic. Although for some projects, an increasing level of merchandise might be the ideal route.

There is no standardized set of incentives to provide per project type, it largely depends on what your project is, and what you want to give back to the people that

support you that you think they'll enjoy. Also if it's worth it. For instance, the "Nobody Here" documentary campaign uses solely various forms of merchandise and other items for its incentives to donate. The lower incentives they give are various forms of copies of the documentary and accompanying music album; and it goes up to various hats, shirts, and other merchandise; and the highest incentives include everything listed before plus more expensive items like premium cases, bonus albums, vinyl versions of all the music, and other things. Whether it's things or experiences that are personalized for the donors, or just *stuff* to give to people, or a combination of the two, what goes into your incentives entirely depends on what your project is and what makes the most sense.

The three overarching aspects of crowdfunding; the invitation/introductions; the interactions; the incentives; are all integral to the process of creating an effective fundraising campaign. The invitation and introductions are where you showcase yourself to your audience, the interactions are your methods of communicating with your audience on a consistent basis, and your incentives are what you promise to give back to your contributors as thanks for donating. As I have stated before, there is no standardized format for how it should be made, as it largely relies on stylistic choices you make; but this is meant to provide guidelines for you to follow and create your own online fundraising campaign. Crowdfunding is a very popular method of funding projects, films in particular, without having to pay for it out of pocket, and this paper is meant to help those who are new to that world of online crowdsourcing.

DISTRIBUTION

Once you get your film funded and made, you have to get it sent out to publishers. There are a number of ways you can do this, and they depend on how high

you want to reach on the ladder of publishing. And if you went with crowdfunding, you can use the marketing and attention from that to help get your film seen by more people faster. There's different kinds of platforms that you can have your film published on. Some of them you can publish yourself, while some you have to have a distributor or aggregator help get them published. Platforms that you can publish something on by yourself without any third party middle-man are things like Vimeo, YouTube, or Amazon's Prime Video Direct. While they don't have as much in the way of promoting your film compared to something like having your film shown at a (digital) film festival, they're at least a guarantee that your film gets on a platform and can be seen. Maybe having it up on something like Prime Video Direct is all you need as you're not at the point where you can get your film on one of the more high-profile platforms like Netflix or Hulu, or even iTunes and Google Play. But if you are looking to use an aggregator or distributor, either now or down the line, here's what they are.

Film aggregators, according to Phillip Paquett on *Wrapbook*, are third party companies that aid you in the release of your film. They'll have an employee of theirs work with you personally to help with things like reaching out to those bigger companies, and getting your film set up with the right formats and creating things like official closed captioning. Distributors, on the other hand, take full control over getting your film to other platforms, and the rights to the film as well, for however long your contract lasts with them and whatever other details you have in it. How you pay them depends on the company. Some have an upfront fee, some keep a percent of the money made by the films once they're published on platforms, and some have a combination of the two. The benefit of a distributor or aggregator is that they're what get

your films onto larger streaming platforms, least of all because they need to be formatted differently than something like a simple .mp4 file. They either help with, or entirely take care of the pitching process to streaming platforms and it can make your life easier.

The downside of distributors and aggregators comes with the risks. The first one being that they could be charging you significantly more money than they need to and giving excuses for it. There's an article on the site Filmmaking Stuff by Jason Brubaker titled "Seven Lies Film Distributors Like to Tell Filmmakers." The excuse for charging you more money is one of them. The only things they really have to pay for are the technical processes like encoding. Another shady thing is calling them a distributor, and specifically not an aggregator as an excuse to be lazy with getting the films they're handed onto the market. They're lazy about it because they take on way more films than they should-- Brubaker mentions that some of them even handle dozens of movies in a month. Another false claim is something like "we have a direct relationship with X platform" or "we can get you an exclusive spot." While Brubaker says it's possible for a distributor to have a direct contact in a platform, that doesn't mean that it'll guarantee your film will do well on that platform, and it definitely doesn't mean that it'll get any special treatment. Another thing with distributors and aggregators is that it's important to keep in contact with them to know how things are going with the distribution process. .Another one of Brubaker's warnings is if they try to tell you to not worry about it at all and 'leave it to them', so to speak, that's a red flag because responsible distributors know that they need to keep in contact about it. Lastly, if the distributor says they'll market your movie, that's also something likely to be false. Brubaker talks about how

distributors might have thousands to tens of thousands of people on their email list, but most of them are probably not your target audience, as he puts it. Public marketing for your film isn't something that distributors are responsible for. If you had a successful crowdfunding campaign for your film, you already have a solid base for your marketing for it, so keep building the marketing off that. I wish I didn't have to spend that long talking about the negatives of distributors, but it's important to know and look out for what will probably harm your film.

CONCLUSION

It's important to follow protocols for preventing the spread of the virus, and containing it if need be. Crowdfunding, if you choose that route to get money to make your movie, is a daunting task that could go poorly if not done right. The distribution of your film, once it's done, is the most important part because without it, your film won't get seen by a wider audience. Applying to get your films featured in festivals is also a good way to get your name out there. Most film festivals nowadays are still either not happening, or they still take place digitally. A digital film festival isn't as effective for making connections with people as an in-person festival can be, but it's absolutely better than not having them at all. Film festivals show different genres of films, depending on the theme of the festival. If your film is a documentary, it would be best to submit it to a documentary film festival. If your film has LGBTQ+ representation, try submitting it to a festival that supports that community, like NewFest. The world will likely never go back to the way it operated before this pandemic, despite how much we recover from it and it no longer becomes a threat. It's taught us things we need to do that are safer, and while not all the precautions we take now will be present in 10 years,

that awareness will still exist. My hope is that this paper helped you build that awareness, so you're better equipped to handle filmmaking now and in the future.

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