



## JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2010



In January 2008 there was a great **article in MovieMaker Magazine** that discussed the road ahead and what the landscape could look like. In 2010 the market is flatter than ever, and this article made good sense then and holds true today. In the next couple of weeks the Sundance Film Festival will help set the standard for the next year. I find this article to be very insightful and wanted to share it with you guys. The distribution world is changing everyday, however it still holds true if you make a great film people will want to see it. The old model of distribution is not working anymore and the independent filmmaker needs to take more control of the outcome of his/her film. With today's technology the door is wide open for changes and remember there is always a silver lining at the end of every cloud. In my book **"So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker"** we go into very specific detail on many issues presented below.

### **Navigating the New Independent Film Marketplace**

In the January 2008 issue of MovieMaker Magazine, there was a great article discussing the pervasive role that fear would likely play throughout the 2008 Sundance Film Festival marketplace. As predicted, fewer companies acquired less films and paid modest, if any, minimum guarantees. Fear contributed to an ultra-conservative market atmosphere that discouraged risk-taking by distributors, producers, financiers and moviemakers.

What role will the "fear factor" play within the Sundance and "Indiewood" marketplace this year? How can independent moviemakers and producers best succeed inside this specialized and competitive arena?

Keen observers anticipate a continued flat market with even fewer "marquee" seven-figure acquisitions. The escalating costs required to release a film theatrically will continue to drive distributors away from significant commitments for multiple screens in numerous markets. The majority of independent films acquired last January underperformed with their traditional theatrical releases in 2008. Fear figures to play a prominent role again this year given the surplus of films in the market, the present recession, the credit crunch and competition for audiences who are viewing

many of last year's independent films on their televisions and computers through broadcast, VOD, downloads and streaming.

Given this uncertain and challenging marketplace, how can the independent moviemaker navigate the choppy waters to a safe distribution harbor? This article offers some practical advice.

1. Action cures anxiety: As soon as possible, if you have not already done so, organize a marketing and distribution game plan. Create marketing materials that embrace the unique aspects of your film and your anticipated target audience. This exercise helps focus your team (sales consultants, publicists, etc.) on your film's key selling points and facilitates getting everyone on the same page. Additionally, busy distribution executives appreciate user-friendly materials that minimize their time expended and money spent.

2. Create your own DIY distribution platform: Develop your own your Plan "B" distribution strategy. This will be vital in the event you do not hit a grand slam and secure a significant distribution deal from a mini-major. The exercise will also help you to better understand the current distribution landscape and will provide leverage and confidence as you assess your distribution options at the bargaining table. Seek advice from other moviemakers, producers and leading industry professionals about their experiences. Recruit experts to guide you down this specialized road, but do not take your hands off the steering wheel. The savvy independent moviemaker understands that he or she must also retain direct involvement in the marketing and distribution of his or her film.

3. Manage expectations (yours and others'): The road to investment recoupment can be long and bumpy. Be realistic and examine all distribution options. For the most part, a substantial distribution deal with a mini-major is unlikely in today's marketplace. You may find yourself carefully assembling your distribution choices like pieces of a puzzle. Pay particular attention to the digital horizon where the greatest number of people will eventually view your film. Understand the immense value of your digital rights; they may be your primary route to future revenues. Finally, avoid so-called "digital rights experts" seeking disproportionate commissions from your gross revenues to secure deals that may already be within your grasp.

4. Be prepared with distribution-ready elements: If you have not already done so, prepare your film's elements, including E&O insurance and all music licenses (sync and master use), so that you are capable of prompt and seamless delivery. Your ability to deliver your film may influence a distributor's decision to work with you. At a minimum, it will accelerate the payment of any minimum guarantee. Needless to say, having a delivery-ready project will also come in handy, should you decide to release the film yourself.

5. Be optimistic: There is a silver lining in every cloud. In fact, these are favorable times to create and distribute breakthrough independent films. In the new marketplace, you can have more involvement and control with your distribution matters and greater opportunity to share your film before larger audiences. While it is useful to understand how fear has transformed the traditional

marketplace for distributing independent films, it is even more important to focus on the emerging opportunities to manage your film's distribution in the new marketplace.

If you really want to learn more about how this works and of course how the whole business operates, pickup a copy of “**So You Wanna Be A Filmmaker**”, you will not regret it.

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If you have any questions about this newsletter or the book, send me an email at [info@film3001.com](mailto:info@film3001.com) and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Thanks,  
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