

# Thanks COVID!

15 Lessons for Film Distribution from the First Wave

 Veria.ca

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## Preface

*The following is a summary of lessons gleaned from a review of over 50 feature films from around the world that had to pivot from a planned theatrical to a digital release of some sort between March and September 2020 because of COVID-19. This major pandemic swept the world and left much devastation in its wake. However, it also created new and unexpected opportunities for some who were nimble enough to take advantage of this extraordinary time and provided many lessons for the film industry in Canada and abroad.*



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## Lessons in Partnerships

### 1. Distributors as VOD platforms

Many of the independent distributors in the US had already launched or were in the process of launching their own Video-On-Demand (VOD) platforms in early 2020. These distributors pivoted quickly to providing a premium VOD or virtual cinema option for filmmakers, distributors, and exhibitors to preserve some kind of “theatrical window” release in the time of COVID.

#### *Examples:*

- *Bacurau* (Brazil)  
Brazilian feature film *Bacurau* was the first example of this, pivoting from physical to virtual theatrical for its American release, using the recently launched Kino Now platform by distributor Kino Lorber, which was rebranded as Kino Marquee. This pivot happened in less than two weeks, included 223 arthouse movie theatres in the US and grossed an estimated \$100K by the end of the first month with a 50/50 revenue share with the theatres.<sup>1</sup>
- *Saint Frances* (US)  
Distributor Oscilloscope was two weeks into the theatrical release for the American feature film *Saint Frances* in 30 theatres and then pivoted to virtual cinema release on 126 virtual screens. It was also part of the Oscilloscope VOD platform, O-Scope and its “Circle of Quarantine” digital deal (10 films to digitally own not rent for \$49.99 US, with \$10 from each donated to Cinema Workers Solidarity Fund).<sup>2</sup>
- *Le Rire* (Canada)  
Quebec distributor Maison 4:3 quickly launched a VOD boutique and offered several films for digital rental or purchase leveraging the Vimeo On Demand/VHX OTT platform. *Le Rire* was one of these feature films. Maison 4:3 also used a strategy where every Tuesday they would offer free screenings of one of their films for 24 hours. *Le Rire’s* free day was on April 7. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://filmmakermagazine.com/109713-are-virtual-theaters-here-to-stay/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://variety.com/2020/film/news/oscilloscope-quarantine-movie-offer-1203539737/>

next day Maison released a behind-the-scenes documentary and then hosted a livestreamed Q&A with the filmmaker and lead actress on Facebook.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Theatres & VOD platforms as specialized curators

By forcing people to stay home, the pandemic created a huge increase in people's free time and attention. While we looked for ways to fill this time, we also looked for recommendations from trusted sources. Lists of TV shows, books, recipes and more circulated on social media, but VOD platforms and local arthouse theatres also endorsed films through virtual cinema programming or specialized algorithmic recommendations.

### *Examples:*

- *Blood Quantum* (Canada)  
Shudder is a specialty SVOD platform for scary movies and TV shows. When *Blood Quantum* had its planned theatrical run cancelled, it was released sooner (and by surprise) on both Crave and Shudder. The latter made sure to include this film as part of its special "Halfway to Halloween Month" programming event, with its community of subscribers quickly helping it achieve a 4/5 skulls rating.<sup>4</sup> It has done so well on the platform that it was also a part of Shudder's pop-up drive-in events for Halloween in the US.<sup>5</sup>
- *Song Lang* (Vietnam)  
Laemmele is one of the arthouse theatre chains in the US that decided to launch its own VOD platform to have more control of its virtual cinema experiences (instead of letting distributors be in control). The Vietnamese queer drama *Song Lang* is one of films on this platform that leveraged the communities Laemmele has developed around its theatres across the US.

It is important to note that independent movie houses have especially seen a surge in support both online and off. As big multiplexes, which are more dependent on Hollywood tentpole films have struggled and even had to shutdown,<sup>6</sup> these small theatres with local, loyal audiences have been able to create opportunity<sup>7</sup> for both the venues and indie filmmakers alike as they fill their screens with classic movies and new independent cinema. It harkens back to an older model of theatrical release that allowed films to stay on the big screen longer and gain word of mouth, and even included theatrical runs in drive-in theatres.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.orcasound.com/2020/04/06/le-rire-online-for-free-on-april-7/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nexttv.com/news/shudder-sets-early-release-zombie-film-blood-quantum>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dreadcentral.com/news/351212/shudder-drive-in-nights-pop-up-events-happening-in-california-texas-new-jersey/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/oct/08/uk-independent-cinemas-boom-as-multiplexes-close-doors>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/27/movies/nyc-indie-movie-theaters.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/24/us/coronavirus-drive-in-movie-theater-trnd/index.html>

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### 3. Festivals as local virtual cinema experiences

Many film festivals were postponed or cancelled because of COVID-19, but many others decided to go forward with online programming. Longstanding industry policies prohibited virtual festival experiences because it interfered with potential future distribution deals, but the industry as a whole came together to strike deals to allow these to go forward. There was even a “Film Festival Survival Pledge” started by crowdfunding/VOD platform Seed&Spark that has had more than 300 festivals and other industry organizations sign on to waive rules and build in flexibility to address the challenges of this time.<sup>9</sup> These new virtual festivals often include limited tickets, time frame, or access to a specific geographic area (geo-fencing) to allow these events to proceed and some revenue to be generated for the festivals, filmmakers and distributors.

#### **Examples:**

- *First We Eat* (Canada)  
Hot Docs was one of the first Canadian film festivals to commit to going online with its programming. It offered films like the Canadian feature documentary *First We Eat* the opportunity to screen to a local Ontario audience behind a paywall with limited tickets for sale. These initial tickets sold out quickly due the film’s popularity and more tickets were released. This positive audience reaction helped with online engagement and amplification around the film on social media where people who had seen the film were encouraged to vote for it as a favourite. This strategy paid off and *First We Eat* became one of five films to win a Hot Docs audience choice award.
- *Miss Juneteenth* (US)  
Even when a festival is cancelled (sort of) there can be opportunities. SXSW was cancelled as a physical real-world event, but there were digital opportunities created for the films that had been scheduled to screen at the festival. It provided an exclusive online screening library for press, buyers and others and still ran its juried competitions. *Miss Juneteenth* was one of the films that won an award, the Lonestar Award for best film from Texas. It was also picked up by a distributor, Vertical Entertainment, which struck a subsequent deal for a wide release on cable and digital TVOD on June 19, 2020, the 155<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Texas.<sup>10</sup> Vertical has also submitted the film to the Oscars for potential nomination.

### 4. Other distribution partners

When rethinking release strategies because of COVID, many films took alternative paths, looking beyond theatrical partnerships to others who have significant and specific built-in audiences. These included:

- **Organizations with members:** The documentary *Spaceship Earth* (US) worked with its distributor Neon to partner with over 250+ virtual cinema partners, drive-in movie screenings, and urban projections. The cinema partners were often not cinemas at all, but museums and

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<sup>9</sup> <https://try.seedandspark.com/film-festival-pledge/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://deadline.com/2020/04/miss-juneteenth-release-date-vertical-entertainment-1202907705/>

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other science-based organizations interested in the story of the vintage biosphere depicted in the movie.<sup>11</sup>

- **Companies with customers:** *Five Seasons: The Gardens of Piet Oudof* (US) is another documentary with a unique digital distribution opportunity. A lush film about a famous landscape and garden designer, the global art gallery chain Hauser & Wirth approached the filmmaker to provide the first digital screening of this film. The connection being that one of their galleries had been landscaped by this artist. The creation of this unique event created opportunities for the filmmaker (who received a screening fee and increased his email subscribers by over 3000 and received many other requests for virtual screenings), for the film (which was seen by approximately 1.5 million viewers all over the world) and for Hauser & Wirth who were able to provide this exclusive experience to their fans and customers.<sup>12</sup>
- **Influencers with followers:** Another potential alternative partner to cinemas in the digital ecosystem (although no specific examples could be found in this time frame) are influencers. These could include YouTubers, TikTok creators, Instagram stars, bloggers and even reporters, really anyone who has gained a significant online following and comes with a built-in audience. This is frankly the basis of the Hollywood star system. Partnering or collaborating with these kinds of influencers can have benefits for a filmmaker creating any kind of online event.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://variety.com/2020/film/news/neon-spaceship-earth-release-coronavirus-1234585849/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://vimeo.com/445516763>

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## Lessons in Virtual Cinema Tools & Resources

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The first wave of COVID was a time of great experimentation and learning. There have been successes and there have been failures and, in some cases, some great sharing of best practices, especially when it comes to what is needed to hold live, online events. These lessons learned for the virtual cinema space are invaluable and include the following:

### 5. Resources needed

The documentary *College Behind Bars* was an initial test case for distributor Picture Motion on creating an online screening in conjunction with a live Q&A panel. They generously shared the best practices learned with the social impact documentary community through Together Films in the UK.<sup>13</sup> Other films have also shared some bits and pieces of learning which have been incorporated below.

- **Platforms & tools:**

- **Video-On-Demand (VOD) platform**

Your film must be available online in some way. Usually it is up to the audience to watch it on their own on a VOD platform (preferably one which provides encryption to protect your film) which is often supplied by the distributor, exhibitor, partner or filmmaker (i.e. Vimeo on Demand, Kino Marquee, Laemelle Virtual Cinema, etc).

- **Co-viewing platform**

Another possibility is to use a co-viewing platform to create a shared online film watching experience for the audience (i.e. Teleparty, Disney+ GroupWatch, Facebook Watch Party, Zoom, etc<sup>14</sup>).

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.crowdcast.io/e/digitalresourcesweek3>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.vox.com/2020/3/21/21185750/how-to-group-chat-watch-movies-games-netflix-discord-zoom-coronavirus-internet>

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○ **Communications tools**

- To further increase immediacy, you could consider using a **tool for the audience to communicate with each other** during the screening (note: many of the co-viewing platforms above have text chat, but if you want video or voice communication that usually involves using another tool like Discord).
- For the panel discussion you will need a **video conferencing/streaming/webinar platform** preferably with some kind of “green room” for panelists or others to wait in before going live (i.e. Zoom, Crowdcast.io, etc).
- And to make a live event as smooth as possible it is a good idea to have a **separate communication channel for the team** putting on the event to help keep everyone connected behind the scenes (i.e. WhatsApp, Slack, etc).

• **People:**

- You will need a **technical producer** who manages the backend of the event, switching people and assets in and out of the virtual room and managing any tests or rehearsals ahead of time.
- A **talent producer** who is the point of contact for everyone who will appear onscreen during the event and who makes sure the talent knows what is required on their end in terms of equipment, timing, and so on.
- **Chat moderators** who will monitor the chat for any questions (or bad behaviour) as well as to do any technical troubleshooting for the audience (ideally this would be two separate people).
- And of course, the **onscreen talent** themselves who are taking part in the event including the filmmaker, actors, or subject matter experts in some cases.

## 6. Timeframe required

A digital release can and should be very nimble and responsive to opportunities as they come up. Typically, only about 10 days+ are needed to pull together a virtual cinema event (as opposed to many months for theatrical, physical events). One of the great things about these kinds of digital events is that they can be pulled together relatively quickly (as demonstrated by the quick pivots from theatrical runs that happened at the beginning of the pandemic, such as the Kino Marquee’s virtual cinema run for *Bacurau*<sup>15</sup>). Leveraged fully, this is a real gamechanger for the potential success of a film, empowering the filmmaker like never before.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://filmmakermagazine.com/109713-are-virtual-theaters-here-to-stay/>

## 7. Private vs public

Whether a virtual cinema event is closed and private or open to the public is a fundamental question that needs to be answered. Also, whether it will be limited to a specific geographic area (i.e. the geofencing that many festivals had to use). Some things to consider:

- Does this film want/need to protect its windowing, festival, or awards eligibility? Private, exclusive events behind a paywall, especially for screenings, are the best way to preserve these options.
- Does this film already have distribution deals or commitments? A private/public hybrid may be needed to honour these deals, although there is a lot more flexibility right now because of COVID.
- Has this film completed its festival run and exhausted or already secured distribution? A public event with the widest exposure possible is probably the best bet for everyone involved.

## 8. Other tech & logistical best practices

- The most important thing you can do to ensure a successful online event is **test, test, test and rehearse** ahead of time. Make sure onscreen talent is testing the actual equipment (computer, camera, microphone, etc) and internet connection they will be using and that everyone on the team is comfortable with the logistics and timing of managing and putting on an event like this.
- Also, it is important to have technical resources ahead of time for audience members to make sure they are setup properly and have support during the event (as mentioned above) to troubleshoot any potential problems live.



## Lessons in Marketing & Promotion

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Once you have your partners secured and the tech and logistics worked out, you will need to bring an audience into the virtual experience. What are the lessons that have been learned so far in terms of marketing and promotion?

### 9. Specific audience targeting & engagement

The more specific these films have been in targeting audience, the better the results. Some examples include:

- The documentary *The Great 14th: Tenzin Gyatso, The 14th Dalai Lama In His Own Words* (US) was released online as part of a special event on the Dalai Lama's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Highly targeted social media advertising and engagement with Buddhists worldwide resulted in attracting over 48,000 views from 146 countries in 48 hours.<sup>16</sup>
- *White Riot: When Punk Rock Fought the Nazis and Won* (UK), a documentary about the Rock Against Racism punk movement in the 1970s found great success online with the increased visibility and conversation about the Black Lives Matter after the murder of George Floyd. As a film about the music industry and racism, it transcended (but also leveraged) social media moments like Blackout Tuesday to maximize impact and exposure.<sup>17</sup>
- It also helps to have a cast that has a strong social media following with an online release (even more than with traditional theatrical). The feature film *Infamous* (US) saw its young star Bella Thorne using her social media clout to support the VOD/drive-in day and date release. The film quickly topped both iTunes and the American theatrical box office in the first week of its release.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.peterbroderick.com/distributionbulletins/files/6bb402a8b5c7aee19178048f73125403-49.html>

<sup>17</sup> [https://exclaim.ca/music/article/white\\_riot\\_documentary\\_rubika\\_shah\\_film\\_review](https://exclaim.ca/music/article/white_riot_documentary_rubika_shah_film_review)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-8430591/Bella-Thorne-goes-glam-red-crop-celebrates-Infamous-topping-box-office.html>

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- And for those wanting to reach true cinephiles, there has never been a better place to reach them than the online community of Letterboxd. Reviews, discussions, and film diaries on the platform create an evergreen opportunity for movies, as can be seen with the Brazilian film *Bacurau* which continues to win much love and support on the platform.<sup>19</sup>

## 10. “Eventizing”

Even in the world of theatrical releases, smaller films have often found success by creating special events around these moments. This has continued to be truer than ever for online releases during this time of COVID. Examples of these include:

- Canadian Indigenous horror film *Blood Quantum* created and participated in several successful online events. On May 5 (#MMIWG Awareness Day) people were encouraged to watch the movie, livetweet the experience on Twitter and then join in a livestreamed conversation with the filmmaker and cast moderated by #NativeNerd Vincent Schilling of Indian Country Today.<sup>20</sup> #BloodQuantumWatchParty quickly trended #4 on Twitter in Canada. Almost two weeks later the filmmaker participated on an Indigenous sci-fi/horror panel at HomeCon (an online fan convention) on the gaming platform Twitch<sup>21</sup> and he continues to participate in special events both online and off hosted by the Shudder SVOD platform.<sup>22</sup>
- The documentary *Fantastic Fungi: The Magic Beneath Us* (US) is about the amazing underground global connection created by the fungal mycelial network. A real-world Fantastic Fungi Day had been planned well before the outbreak of COVID. This was cancelled and quickly pivoted to a series of online events from March 26 leading up to Earth Day on April 22. Activities included music, deep conversations about the environment, how fungi are connected to the environment and different types of environmental solutions. It leveraged film festivals, arthouse cinemas and other partners to expand the reach and engagement around the film.<sup>23</sup>
- The anti-racism music documentary *White Riot* has also made the most of its connection to the music industry with an online tour in conjunction with live music festivals like the Green Man Fest that had to be cancelled because of COVID. These included exclusive virtual preview screenings, with online Q&As, and live musical performances across the UK.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://letterboxd.com/film/bacurau/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://youtu.be/b86yo8iCn-U>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/623897232?collection=CQe48ayfDxZiEA>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nexttv.com/news/shudder-sets-early-release-zombie-film-blood-quantum>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.5280.com/2020/03/celebrate-the-magic-of-mushrooms-on-march-26-virtual-fantastic-fungi-day/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.modernfilms.com/whiteriot/tour>

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## 11. Press coverage & paid promotion

- Conventional press has traditionally been difficult to get with any kind of online release. During the time of the initial pandemic lockdown it was a bit easier to get the attention of journalists and reporters. This was especially true for some of the first films with virtual cinema releases like *Bacurau* and *Saint Frances*,<sup>25</sup> and for those that had screenings with bigger online festivals like *First We Eat* at Hot Docs<sup>26</sup> and then VIFF.<sup>27</sup> Even bigger films are finding new ways to innovate with traditional press junkets, setting up filmmakers and stars in a safe, well lit location with great camera and sound for zoom interviews with reporters.<sup>28</sup> It may get more difficult to get this kind of attention for purely virtual screenings as pandemic fatigue sets in, unless you are able to create a buzzworthy event like those mentioned above.<sup>29</sup>
- Many of the screenings limited to specific geographic areas have also benefited from highly targeted paid advertising, especially on the big social media platforms like Facebook, as demonstrated by the online release of *Five Seasons*.<sup>30</sup> Strategic targeting and supporting ad creative were key to the success of these indie films reaching specific audiences of interest.

## 12. Other marketing & promotion tips

- Hitting pause in rollout can stop momentum, so once you get your film out there (however that happens) you should keep going. This is a stumbling block some films hit as they tried to guess whether and when theatres would open and how worthwhile that would be for them.<sup>31</sup>
- Make sure to provide resources for partners/co-hosts for screenings, especially regarding marketing and promotion, such as can be seen [here](#) for the *White Riot* screening tour.<sup>32</sup>
- Stay nimble and responsive, you never know what opportunities might inspire. *Spaceship Earth* created biosphere zoom background images<sup>33</sup> early in the pandemic that got some traction and generated interest in the film when we were all trapped indoors like those scientists in the 1970s.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://filmmakermagazine.com/109713-are-virtual-theaters-here-to-stay/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-june-2-2020-1.5594625/this-yukon-woman-wanted-to-live-off-local-food-for-a-year-that-meant-getting-her-teenagers-on-board-1.5594781>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/10/06/reviews/three-last-viff-picks-2020-festival-nears-its-end>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/04/virtual-press-junkets-netflix-quibi-120223291/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2020/09/07/filmmakers-relying-on-virtual-world-to-build-buzz-at-toronto-film-festival/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.peterbroderick.com/distributionbulletins/files/9ba9fd852931cccb323c7c7c91014c6e-47.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/amid-film-delays-move-theater-closures-can-hollywood-be-saved-n1242206>

<sup>32</sup> <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59776bc229687fa9649b8698/t/5f49234c63f3ce4c85cc3ef8/1598628705671/WHITE+RIOT+Press+Kit.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://filmmakermagazine.com/109705-a-virtual-promotional-tour-setting-up-a-home-zoom-studio-for-spaceship-earth/#.XzA9NChKg2y>

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## Lessons in Maximizing the Virtual Opportunity

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### 13. Impact

The value in these virtual events is often to create positive impact, for the filmmaker professionally or to shift hearts and minds on important issues like the environment or racial justice. Here are a few lessons learned on maximizing this kind of impact:

- If you are trying to have **professional impact for the filmmaker**, then the filmmaker needs to have visibility in the online events (which is often the case for the Q&A type panels that are a key element). A good example of this is for *First We Eat* filmmaker Suzanne Crocker whose family features in her documentary and Louie Schwartzberg who was the star of many of the Fantastic Fungi Day events and panels. It is important to have clear calls to action that are filmmaker-centric, like encouraging people to sign up for the filmmaker's email newsletter.<sup>34</sup>
- If you are trying to have **positive social impact**, you can look at a film like *Miss Juneteenth* that leveraged the festival celebrating the 155<sup>th</sup> Juneteenth in the US to further the conversation about racism and the history of emancipation. In conjunction with the virtual screening and live Q&A, the audience was also encouraged to share "pictures of their oldest relatives" and given "information on how to host a festival watch party, Juneteenth recipes, a copy of General Orders 32 that ended slavery in North Carolina and Genealogy 101. In addition, there is a student toolkit with stories, coloring pages, word searches and simple face painting." This Celebration Kit helped expand the impact of the film and event overall.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <https://firstweeat.ca/>

<sup>35</sup> [https://journalnow.com/entertainment/miss-juneteenth-film-by-winston-salem-native-will-highlight-virtual-celebration/article\\_5908a463-4bab-5c78-9d0d-a97dfdd65663.html](https://journalnow.com/entertainment/miss-juneteenth-film-by-winston-salem-native-will-highlight-virtual-celebration/article_5908a463-4bab-5c78-9d0d-a97dfdd65663.html)

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## 14. Revenue

Making money from your creative work is of course a significant goal for any filmmaker and there are many ways these virtual events helped make this happen across several different models:

- **Charging admission or encouraging donations** on a sliding scale people could afford for virtual screenings of *The Great 14<sup>th</sup>* allowed the film (which had been fully and privately financed) to raise money to translate it into 21 other languages.<sup>36</sup>
- The documentary *Spaceship Earth* allowed its partners to use screenings as a **fundraiser** for their organizations, something much needed by not just small movie theatres but the museums, bookstores and others that had been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown. As with most virtual screenings, there was a 50/50 split, in this case between the partner host and the distributor Neon.<sup>37</sup>
- With his partnership with Hauser & Wirth, *Five Seasons* director Thomas Piper received **direct filmmaker fees** for his participation in the online events sponsored by the art gallery, not to mention the other benefits outlined previously.<sup>38</sup>
- And there are always opportunities to create other revenue streams from the **sales of merchandise and supplemental products** such as the beautiful coffee table companion book to the *Fantastic Fungi* film.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.peterbroderick.com/distributionbulletins/files/6bb402a8b5c7aee19178048f73125403-49.html>

<sup>37</sup> <https://filmmakermagazine.com/109705-a-virtual-promotional-tour-setting-up-a-home-zoom-studio-for-spaceship-earth/#.XzA9NChKg2y>

<sup>38</sup> <https://vimeo.com/445516763>

<sup>39</sup> <https://fantasticfungi.com/book/>



## 15. Resiliency & the future

There is no doubt the pandemic has caused and will continue to cause much disruption in the traditional life of a feature film. But all these lessons add up to this one - be aware, be nimble, do not give up. Yes, there will be challenges but there are also going to be opportunities for those who are paying attention. The audience has never been more digitally savvy and while their attention continues to be turned online, our films and filmmakers can meet them there and achieve amazing things.



## Methodology

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The study initially researched and surveyed 54 feature films from around the world with planned theatrical releases that were interrupted in the Spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic when theatres were shut down. The final 14 included in this report were those that met the following criteria:

- Their planned theatrical release was interrupted,
- The release happened between March and September 2020,
- Canadian films were to be included but examples from elsewhere in the world could provide further insight,
- No Hollywood tentpole films,
- The majority needed to have a distributor attached,
- They included a balance of directors, at least half of which represented an equity-seeking group,
- And there needed to be public disclosure of information in terms of process undertaken during the pivot to some kind of alternative release and results to date (with an understanding that full impact of this change in release strategy would unlikely be apparent for a number of years).

The final 14 films that met these criteria and were used as specific examples in this study are:

Film	Distributor Attached	Director	Country	Genre
<i>Bacurau</i>	Kino Marquee (US) & others	Juliano Dornelles & Kleber Mendonça Filho*	Brazil	Action Thriller
<i>Blood Quantum</i>	Elevation Pictures (Canada except Quebec), Entract Films (Quebec), Shudder (U.S., UK/Ireland & Australia/NZ) & others	Jeff Barnaby*	Canada	Horror
<i>College Behind Bars</i>	Self-distributed	Lynn Novick*	US	Documentary
<i>Fantastic Fungi</i>	Self-distributed	Louie Schwartzberg	US	Documentary
<i>First We Eat</i>	Blue Ice Docs (Canada)	Suzanne Crocker*	Canada	Documentary
<i>Five Seasons</i>	Self-distributed	Thomas Piper	US	Documentary
<i>Infamous</i>	Vertical Entertainment (US) & more	Joshua Caldwell	US	Thriller
<i>Le Rire</i>	Urban Distribution International	Martin Laroche	Canada	Drama
<i>Miss Juneteenth</i>	Vertical Entertainment (US) & others	Channing Godfrey Peoples*	US	Drama
<i>Saint Frances</i>	Oscilloscope (US)	Alex Thompson	US	Drama
<i>Song Lang</i>	Rain Trail Pictures (US) & others	Leon Le*	Vietnam	Drama
<i>Spaceship Earth</i>	Neon (US)	Matt Wolf	US	Documentary
<i>The Great 14<sup>th</sup></i>	Self-distributed	Rosemary Rawcliffe*	US	Documentary
<i>White Riot</i>	Film Movement (US) & others	Rubika Shah*	UK	Documentary

\*Director represents an equity seeking group.

Besides these final 14 films, the additional 40 films listed below were reviewed as part of the initial research for this study (country of origin noted):

#### Canada

- *American Woman*
- *Anne at 13,000 Ft*
- *Antigone*
- *Flashwood*
- *I Propose We Never See Each Other Again After Tonight*
- *It Must be Heaven*
- *James vs His Future Self*
- *Mon cirque à moi*
- *Nadia Butterfly*
- *Once Were Brothers*
- *Rustic Oracle*
- *The Cuban*
- *The Wretched*
- *White Lie*

#### Austria

- *Earth*
- *The Tobacconist*

#### China

- *The Wild Goose Lake*

#### France

- *Someone, Somewhere*
- *La Vérité (The Truth)*
- *And Then We Danced*
- *Zombi Child*

#### Iceland

- *A White, White Day*

#### Portugal

- *Vitalina Varela*

#### Romania

- *The Whistlers*

**Russia**

- *Beanpole*

**UK/Ireland**

- *Extra Ordinary*
- *Sorry We Missed You*
- *The Roads Not Taken*

**United States**

- *Driveways*
- *Eating Up Easter*
- *Fourteen*

- *Mossville: When Great Trees Fall*
- *Pahoee*
- *Porno*
- *Short History of the Long Road*
- *Slay the Dragon*
- *Straight Up*
- *The Booksellers*
- *The Dog Doc*
- *The Hottest August*

## About the researcher

Annelise Larson, Digital Strategist & Mentor, [Veria.ca](http://Veria.ca) & [StorypreneursUnite.com](http://StorypreneursUnite.com)



Annelise Larson comes from a background as an independent film producer, with training at such prestigious institutions as UBC Film, the Canadian Film Centre and Banff Centre for the Arts. Since 1995 she has been working in the field of online marketing and is an avid gamer and consumer of digital content. She works extensively with government organizations, educational institutions, creative industry associations and media production companies in North America & Europe. Her focus is helping creatives and storytellers use the digital opportunity to define, find, attract and engage their audiences and work toward strategic and sustainable business models. Her podcast [STORY+AUDIENCE](#) with screenwriter Jill Golick can be found on all major podcasting platforms. And she is just launching a new on demand “[Digital Marketing for Media](#)” webinar series in conjunction with the National Screen Institute – Canada (NSI) to make her methodology for developing a digital strategy as accessible and affordable as possible.



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